



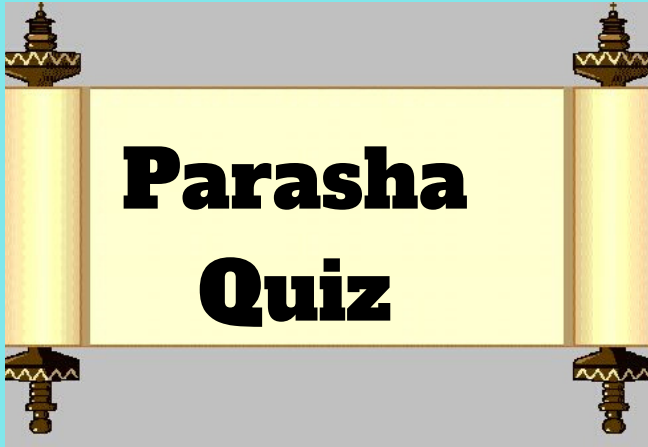
# KMS Family Parasha

LEARN ABOUT THE PARASHA WITH THE KMS YOUTH DEPARTMENT

Behar-Bechukotai - בְּהַר-בְּחֻקֹּתַי

5.16.20

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## Elementary:

- 1) How often does Shmittah occur and what happens during that year?
- 2) How often does Yovel occur and what happens during that year?
- 3) What pasuk in Behar appears on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia?
- 4) What is the Ribis and why is it prohibited?
- 5) What is Maaser Sheni and how does it work?

## Middle/High School:

- 1) What does Rashi (25:1) learn from the words "בהר סיני"?
- 2) According to Rashi (25:17) what is אֲנֻאָת דְּבָרִים?
- 3) According to Rashi (25:18) what is the punishment for not keeping Shmittah?
- 4) What does Rashi (26:3) learn from the words "אם בחקתי תלכו"?
- 5) According to Rashi (26:42) why is the name Yaakov written with an extra Vav?

## What would you do?

Discussion starter for your Shabbat table..

**If you could choose 3 people (not related) from history to be quarantined with who would you choose and why?**

## Did You Know?

Onaot Devarim - Rabbi Shraga Simmons (Aish.com)

In Leviticus 25:14, the Torah prohibits harming others financially, for example by charging inflated prices. Then in verse 17, the Torah prohibits harming others with words.... The Talmud discusses exactly what is included in this prohibition of "harming others with words."

One idea is that we shouldn't remind someone of his negative past. Acting in a misleading way is another aspect of "harming others with words."

Let's say you're not looking to buy a new computer, but are just curious about what new models are available. So you go into the computer store and begin asking a bunch of questions. The salesperson, of course, thinks you're interested in buying, and as the conversation continues - about features and prices - the salesperson builds up hope that you will actually buy. There is an unstated assumption that you entered the store to buy. Your words are, in effect, misleading the salesperson, even unintentionally. In such a case, the Torah would permit you to satisfy your curiosity in the computer store - providing that you make it clear from the start that you "are only looking, with no intention to buy."

At first glance, we might think that harming others financially is more serious than harming others with words. In fact, the opposite is true. A person's property is only peripheral to him, yet his feelings are an essential part of who he is. Being sensitive to another's feelings is, in the eyes of Torah, a great mitzvah, that we should always strive to fulfill.



### Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The book of Vayikra draws to a close by outlining the blessings that will follow if the people are faithful to their covenant with God. Then it describes the curses that will befall them if they are not... It has long been a custom to read the tochachah, the curses, both here and in the parallel passage in Devarim 28, in a low voice in the synagogue, which has the effect of robbing them of their terrifying power if said out loud. But they are fearful enough however they are read. And both here and in Devarim, the section on curses is longer and far more graphic than the section on blessings.

This seems to contradict a basic principle of Judaism, that God's generosity to those who are faithful to Him vastly exceeds His punishment of those who are not. "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands ... He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6-7). Rashi does the arithmetic: "It follows, therefore, that the measure of reward is greater than the measure of punishment by five hundred to one, for in respect of the measure of good it says: "maintaining love to thousands" (meaning at least two thousand generations), while punishment lasts for at most four generations. The whole idea contained in the 13 Attributes of Compassion is that God's love and forgiveness are stronger than His justice and punishment. Why, therefore, are the curses in this week's parsha so much longer and stronger than the blessings?

The answer is that God loves and forgives, but with the proviso that, when we do wrong, we acknowledge the fact, express remorse, make restitution to those we have harmed, and repent.... The reason the curses are so dramatic is not because God seeks to punish, but the precise opposite. The Talmud tells us that God weeps when He allows disaster to strike His people: "Woe to Me, that due to their sins I destroyed My house, burned My Temple and exiled them [My children] among the nations of the world." The curses were meant as a warning. They were intended to deter, scare, discourage. They are like a parent warning a young child not to play with electricity. The parent may deliberately intend to scare the child, but he or she does so out of love, not severity....

In their new book, *The Power of Bad*, John Tierney and Roy Baumeister argue on the basis of substantial scientific evidence, that bad has far more impact on us than good. We pay more attention to bad news than good news. Bad health makes more difference to us than good health. Criticism affects us more than praise. A bad reputation is easier to acquire and harder to lose than a good one. Humans are designed – "hardwired" – to take notice of and rapidly react to threat. Failing to notice a lion is more dangerous than failing to notice a ripened fruit on a tree. Recognising the kindness of a friend is good and virtuous, but not as significant as ignoring the animosity of an enemy. One traitor can betray an entire nation. It follows that the stick is a more powerful motivator than the carrot. Fear of the curse is more likely to affect behaviour than desire for the blessing. Threat of punishment is more effective than promise of reward. Tierney and Baumeister document this over a wide range of cases from education to crime rates. Where there is a clear threat of punishment for bad behaviour, people behave better.

Judaism is a religion of love and forgiveness. But it is also a religion of justice. The punishments in the Torah are there not because God loves to punish, but because He wants us to act well. Imagine a country that had laws but no punishments. Would people keep the law? No. Everyone would choose to be a free-rider, taking advantage of the efforts of others without contributing oneself. Without punishment, there is no effective law, and without law there is no society. The more powerfully one can present the bad, the more likely people are to choose the good. That is why the tochachah is so powerful, dramatic and fear-inducing. The fear of bad is the most powerful motivator of good.

I believe that being warned of the bad helps us to choose the good. Too often we make the wrong choices because we don't think of the consequences. That's how global warming happened. That's how financial crashes happen. That's how societies lose their solidarity. Too often, people think of today, not the day after tomorrow. The Torah, painting in the most graphic detail what can happen to a nation when it loses its moral and spiritual bearings, is speaking to us in every generation, saying: Beware. Take note. Don't function on autopilot. Once a society begins to fall apart, it is already too late. Avoid the bad. Choose the good. Think long and choose the road that leads to blessings.