

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 27 Iyar 5778, the 42nd day of the Omer. We bensch Rosh Chodesh Sivan which will be this Tuesday. The re-appearance of the moon will be Tuesday morning at 5:21 a.m. and 6 chalakim (20 seconds), Jerusalem time. We do say Av HaRachamim.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 531 Hz) (p. 764 S) (p. 448 Hi) (p. 696 AS)
BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI
בהר-בְּחֻקוֹתַי

(Leviticus 25:1)

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus, Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. Although the Torah gave Jewish men the right to sell themselves to fellow Jews, they are not slaves in the generally accepted sense of the word. They do not lose their status in the religious or civil community, and in only one case are they excused from a commandment: under limited circumstances, their masters may mate them with non-Jewish slave women (see Exodus 21:4). Rather than slaves, they are "indentured servants," who, for a specific period of time, are not free to resign their employment, but whose masters must treat them with such delicacy and consideration that the Sages said (Kiddushin 15a), "One who buys himself a slave buys himself a master." "Do not work him with slave labor." (25:39). Do not assign him to do the sort of degrading tasks that would be given only to a slave, such as having him bring his master's personal effects to the bathhouse, or putting on his master's shoes for him. Rather, he should be assigned to skilled work or field labor, like other hired help. (Rashi, Sifra).

2. Ramban explains the difference between a residence in a walled city (which can be redeemed for only one year), a field (which can be redeemed at any time after two years), and a house in an unwalled city (which can be redeemed at any time). Since one's livelihood is not affected by his move to a new home, the Torah limits the right of redemption. True, the sale of one's home is traumatic and one feels an urgency to redeem it, but if a year has gone by and the seller has not done so, he has made peace with the idea and will get over the loss. A field, however, affects the livelihood of an entire family; therefore, after giving the buyer an opportunity to realize at least two crops, the Torah permits the original owner to buy it back. If he does not do so then, it will revert back to his family in the Jubilee Year. A house in an unwalled city may always be redeemed, even before two years have gone by. It is regarded as important to the family's livelihood because it is usually used as a convenient place for the owner or his workers to live in so that they can be near the fields.

3. The prohibition of idol worship appears numerous times in the Torah, but seems to find emphasis at the end of Chumash Vayikra, which we read today, and in Mishpatim in Chumash Shemot. Mishpatim focuses on man and Behar focuses on the sanctified place. The spotlight in Mishpatim is to the individual Israelite who must not remember other gods. Not only is ritual-religious worship prohibited, but also

abstract sectors of philosophical thought are forbidden. In comparison, in our Parsha the prohibition stems from the concept that the land of Israel is a sanctified place where idol worship cannot be tolerated. The difference between the two Parshiot in expressing these laws encapsulates the basic difference between these two books in a more general way. The Book of Shemot focuses on the nation of Israel and the details that embody the people. The Book of Vayikra, on the other hand, is a book about holiness, focusing on a sanctified place which demands special behavior from man. Because its focus is on the place and not the person, one might have concluded from the previous parshiot of Sefer Vayikra that a connection with God is possible only in the Mikdash proper, and that there is no direct connection to God in any other place. The Parshah of Shemittah and Yovel balances this impression to a certain extent. (Rav Yonatan Grossman of Yeshivat Har Etzion).

4. Although the commandments of the Torah are decrees it is proper to meditate upon them and seek reasons. The reason both animals are sacred in the case of *temurah* (a substitute) is because the Torah descends to a person's subconscious thought and his possible evil inclination. After having sanctified an animal, someone may change his mind and feel that he should not have parted with a valuable asset. He may wish to retrieve it by substituting an inferior animal for it, so the Torah penalizes him by decreeing that both animals are sacred. The same penalty applies even if he substitutes a better animal for an inferior one, because if people were permitted to substitute in some circumstances, they might feel free to do it in other cases as well. For the same psychological reason – that a person may wish to regain control of something he has sanctified – the Torah requires that an owner who redeems an object must add a surcharge of one-fifth, as in 27:13 (Rambam, Hil. Temurah 4:13).

HAFTORAH
(p. 551 Hz) (p. 789 S) (p. 887 Hi) (p. 1178 AS)
JEREMIAH יְרֵמְיָהוּ
(Jeremiah 16:19)

As the prophet of the Destruction, Jeremiah's message was much like that of the Sidrah: if the Jewish people are devoted to the Torah, they will enjoy respect, prosperity, and blessing. If they forsake the Torah, they will suffer contempt, poverty, and curse. The prophet begins with a scathing description of how deeply ingrained is the national sin of idolatry and the coupling of a lack of faith in God with an absolute faith in frail man. The latter part of the message is indeed timeless. But, Jeremiah warns, these illusions will all be in vain; any good that comes of them will be fleeting and end in humiliation and tragedy. Like even the fiercest prophecies, however, this one ends in words of hope and consolation, as does the frightful admonition of our Sidrah. No matter how dark the present and how ominous the imminent future, God does not forsake Israel forever, nor does Israel cut its bond to God. The covenant of the Patriarchs remains intact, hope and healing will yet come, for Hashem is our salvation and praise.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHIOT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI 5778
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

From the Text

1. What happens to the fruit growing on trees during the Sabbatical year? (25:6)
2. What determined the value of a field when it was being sold? (25:16)
3. How many cities were given to the Leviyim? (Numbers 35:6)
4. What will happen to the Land of Israel when Bnei Yisrael are exiled from it? (26:34,35)
5. "I take upon myself to pay to the Holy Temple the value of this man." The man is 18 years old. How much do I pay? (27:5)

From Rashi

6. Why is it recorded that the law of the Sabbatical year was communicated at Mt. Sinai? (25:1)
7. What important lesson is the verse "when you make a sale to your fellow [Jew]..." teaching you? (25:14)
8. When is the best time for rain to come? (26:4)
9. What is the greatest blessing offered? (26:6)
10. For what sin was Bnei Yisrael exiled? (26:34,35)

From the Rabbis

11. Who is required to count the 49 years leading to the Jubilee year? (25:9)
12. Why are you not permitted to charge interest of a fellow Jew? (Seforno 25:36)
13. Why are two different words used to define "interest"? (A Jew is not allowed to charge interest on a loan issued to another Jew.) (Kli Yakar, 25:36)

From the Haftorah

14. If Jews are not trusting in Hashem, in whom are they putting their trust?

Relationships

- a) Yocheved – Calev
- b) Rachav – Noon
- c) Adah – Yitzchak
- d) Haran – Nachor Sr.
- e) Rivkah – Elifaz

ANSWERS FOR PARSHIOT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI 5778

1. Anyone may enter and eat of the fruit.
2. The value of a field is determined by the number of years that it will yield produce until the Yovel year.
3. 42 Levitical cities plus 6 Cities of Refuge = 48.
4. The land will rest – meaning it will not produce for the new people who are now inhabiting it.
5. Twenty shekels.
6. To teach that as this law was received at Sinai, with all its minute details, so were all the commandments of the Torah.
7. This verse teaches us, according to Rashi, that when you do business you should try to do business with your fellow Jew, preferably with a Jew than with other people.
8. On Friday night when people are at home and not traveling.
9. Peace.
10. The non-observance of the Shemittah and Yovel years.
11. The Beit Din in Yerushalayim.
12. The best way to help a fellow Jew financially is to lend him money without interest.
13. One Hebrew word, Neshech, interest, is derived from the same root as biting, and describes what happens to the borrower; the transaction "bites" into his wealth. The word Ribit means "increase", and is describing what happens to the lender; his fortune increases.
14. The sin is that they are trusting another man and not Hashem.

Relationships:

- a) Mother-in-law Yocheved
- b) Father-in-law Noon
- c) Father-in-law Yitzchak
- d) Grandfather Nachor Sr.
- e) Grandmother Rivkah