

Parsha Plug: Parshat Behar-Bechukotai

Vayikra 25:35-38	ויקרא כה:לה-לח
<p>35 If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him-- a convert or a resident, so that he can live with you. 36 You shall not take from him interest or increase, and you shall fear your God, and let your brother live with you. 37 You shall not give him your money with interest, nor shall you give your food with increase. 38 I am the Lord, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be a God to you.</p>	<p>לֹה וְכִי־יָמוּךְ אָחִיךָ וּמְטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ וְהִחְזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ: לֹה אֶל־תִּקַּח מֵאִתּוֹ נֶשֶׁךְ וְתַרְבִּית וְיִרְאַתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ וְחִי אָחִיךָ עִמָּךְ: לֹה אֶת־כֶּסֶףְךָ לֹה־תִתֶּן לוֹ בְּנֶשֶׁךְ וּבְתַרְבִּית לֹה־תִתֶּן אֹכְלֶךָ: לֹה אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִתֵּת לָכֶם אֶת־אֶרֶץ פְּנֵעוֹן לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים:</p>

Rashi on Vayikra 25:35,36	רש"י ויקרא כה:לה, לו
<p>You shall support him: Do not allow him to fall down and collapse altogether, in which case it would be difficult to pick him up again. Rather, support him while his hand is still faltering. To what can this be compared? To a load on a donkey, while it is still on the donkey. One person can grasp it and hold it in place. Once it falls to the ground, however, five people cannot pick it up.</p>	<p>והחזקת בו: אל תניחה שירד ויפול ויהיה קשה להקימו, אלא חזקהו משעת מוטת היד. למה זה דומה, למשאוי שעל החמור, עודהו על החמור אחד תופס בו ומעמידו, נפל לארץ, חמשה אין מעמידין אותו:</p>

Baal HaTurim on Vayikra 25:36	בעל הטורים ויקרא כה:לו
<p>‘Let your brother live with you’ is juxtaposed to ‘You shall not take from him interest or increase’. This hints that anyone who lends on interest will not live. As it is said, “Gave out on interest, accepted increase on loans -shall he then live? He shall not live!” In Gematria, נשך is equal to נחש.</p>	<p>והי אחיך עמד. וסמך ליה אל תקח מאתו נשך ותרבית. רמז שכל המלוה ברבית אינו חי. וכן הוא אומר (יחזקאל יח יג) בנשך נתן וגו' והי לא יחיה. נשך בגימטריא זה נחש.</p>

Pesikta Zutarta, Vayikra 73:2	פסיקתא זוטרותא ויקרא, עג:ב
<p>‘I am the Lord your God’: From here they say that anyone who accepts the yoke of the laws of increase, accepts on himself the yoke of Heaven; and anyone who separates from the yoke of the laws of increase, separates from the yoke of Heaven. ‘I am your God Who took you out’: I took you out on the condition in order that you would accept upon yourselves all of the commandments. We learn from this that anyone who rejects the yoke of the laws of interest,</p>	<p>אני ה' אלקיכם. מכאן אמרו כל המקבל עליו עול רבית מקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים וכל הפורק מעליו עול רבית פורק ממנו עול מלכות שמים. אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי. על תנאי כן הוצאתי אתכם כדי שתקבלו עליכם כל המצוות. למדנו שכל הכופר בעול רבית כופר ביציאת מצרים. לתת לכם את</p>

<p>rejects Yetziyat Mitzrayim. 'To bring you to the land of Canaan to be your God': From here they say that anyone who lives in the land of Israel accepts upon himself the yoke of Heaven.</p>	<p>ארץ כנען להיות לכם לאלקים. מכאן אמרו כל היושב בארץ ישראל מקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים:</p>
---	---

<p>Bava Metzia 61b</p>	<p>בבא מציעא סא:</p>
<p>Rava says: Why does God mention Yetziyat Mitzrayim in the context of the prohibition against interest? And also with regard to the mitzvah of tzitzit? And also in the context of the prohibition concerning weights? Rava explains: The Holy One Blessed be He said: I am He Who distinguished in Egypt between the drop of seed that became a firstborn and the drop of seed that did not become a firstborn. I am also He Who is destined to exact punishment from one who attributes ownership of his money to a gentile and thereby lends it to a Jew with interest. And from the one who buries his weights in salt. And from one who hangs ritual fringes dyed with indigo on his garment and says it is techeilet.</p>	<p>אמר רבא למה לי דכתב רחמנא יציאת מצרים ברבית יציאת מצרים גבי ציצית יציאת מצרים במשקלות אמר הקב"ה אני הוא שהבחנתי במצרים בין טפה של בכור לטפה שאינה של בכור אני הוא שעתידי ליפרע ממי שתולה מעותיו בנכרי ומלוה אותם לישראל ברבית וממי שטומן משקלותיו במלה וממי שתולה קלא אילן בבגדו ואומר תכלת הוא.</p>

<p>Tur Choshen Mishpat, Siman 97:1-3, 6</p>	<p>טור חושן משפט צז: א-ג, ו</p>
<p>1. It's a positive mitzvah to provide loans to the needy. 2. It's a mitzvah greater than charity, for the receiver of charity already needs to ask, but the borrower does not do this. 3. One gives first to needy family members, then to others in need, then to the poor of the city and then to the poor of another city. 6. Just as it is prohibited for the lender to pressure the borrower, it is also prohibited for the borrower to hold back the money from his fellow and to say, 'Go and return, and tomorrow I will give' even though he has it.</p>	<p>א מצות עשה להלוות לעניי ישראל: ב ומצוה גדולה היא יותר מן הצדקה שהמקבל הצדקה כבר נצרך לשאול וזה שלוה עדיין לא הגיע לידי כך: ג וקרובו עני הוא קודם לעניי אחרים ועניי עירו קודמין לעניי עיר אחרת: ו... וכשם שאסור למלוה לתובעו כך אסור ללוה לכבוש ממון חבירו ולומר לו לך ושוב ומחר אתן ויש אתו:</p>

<p>Gittin 36b-37a</p>	<p>גיטין לו: י"ל.</p>
<p>What is the meaning of the word 'prosbul'? — R. Hisda says: Pruz bulei u-butei-- the benefit of the bulei and the butei. 'Bulei' means the rich, as it is written, "And I will break the pride of your power" (Vayikra 26:19), and Rav Yosef explained: These are the bulaot (the rich) in Judea. 'Butei' means the poor, as it is written, "You shall surely lend him sufficient" (Devarim 15:8).</p>	<p>מאי פרוסבול? אמר רב חסדא: פרוס בולי ובוטי, בולי - אלו עשירים, דכתיב: ושברתי את גאון עוזכם, ותני רב יוסף: אלו בולאות שביהודה; בוטי - אלו העניים, דכתיב: העבט תעביטנו.</p>

Rambam Mishneh Torah Malveh veLoveh 1:1	רמב"ם משנה תורה מלוה ולוה א:א
<p>The laws of lending and borrowing: They contain twelve mitzvot: four positive commandments and eight negative commandments. They are: 1) to lend to a poor and destitute person; 2) not to press him for collection; 3) to press a gentile for collection of a debt he owes; 4) not to forcibly take collateral from a borrower; 5) to return collateral to its owner when he requires it; 6) not to delay giving the collateral to the poor man who owns it when he requires it; 7) not to take collateral from a widow; 8) not to take utensils used to prepare food as collateral; 9) that a lender should not loan at interest; 10) that a borrower should not take a loan given at interest; 11) that no one should be involved with the lender and the borrower of a loan given at interest - not to serve as a witness between them, not to draw up a promissory note, nor to serve as a guarantor; 12) to borrow and lend money to a gentile at interest.</p>	<p>הלכות מלוה ולוה. יש בכללן י"ב מצות, ארבע מצות עשה, ושמונה מצות לא תעשה, וזהו פרטן: (א) להלוות לעני ומך. (ב) שלא יגוש אותו. (ג) ליגוש את העכו"ם. (ד) שלא ימשכן בעל חוב בזרוע. (ה) להחזיר המשכון לבעליו בזמן שהוא צריך לו. (ו) שלא יאחר המשכון מבעליו העני בעת שהוא צריך לו. (ז) שלא יחבול אלמנה. (ח) שלא יחבול כלים שעושין בהן אוכל נפש. (ט) שלא יתן המלוה בריבית. (י) שלא ילוה הלוה בריבית. (יא) שלא יתעסק אדם בין מלוה ולוה בריבית שלא יעיד ביניהן ולא יכתוב שטר ולא יערוב. (יב) ללוות מן עכו"ם ולהלוות לו בריבית.</p>

George Robinson, <i>Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals</i>
<p>It should be noted that the halakhah [applicable Jewish law] regarding free loans apply only to loans made to other Jews. It is permissible to make loans with interest to non-Jews. Clearly, this policy is discriminatory. To some extent, it is the result of living in an agrarian society in which one's neighbors (likely to be fellow Jews) would seek out a loan to tide them over until the next harvest; by comparison, the non-Jew might well be an itinerant merchant who needed the loan purely for business reasons. Moreover, there are several halakhic rulings that mitigate it. Rabbi Isaac Abrabanel, a 15th-century commentator, says that the acceptance of interest from non-Jews does not apply to Christians or Muslims, because their faith systems stem from Judaism originally and therefore share a common ethical basis. Likewise, the medieval commentator Rabbi David Kimchi (known as the Radak) says that a non-Jew who has shown consideration for Jews is to be treated with the same consideration when he borrows. Clearly, the roots of the discrimination between loans to Jews and to non-Jews are to be found, first, in the often violent tensions between Jew and non-Jew, particularly before the Emancipation resulted in the increased integration of Jews into non-Jewish societies and, second, in the more extreme strictures against idolators and polytheists that are present throughout halakhah dictating relationships with non-Jews.</p>

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch on Vayikra 35:36

The Torah in no way looks at interest on loans as anything which is morally wrong. Otherwise it would not forbid with equal solemnity the paying of interest as it does the taking of it, nor would it restrict the prohibition to Jews only. But it is rather a great act of acknowledgment, of recognizing God as the Lord and Owner of our moveable property, just as *shmitat karka* and *yovel* are, regarding His Mastery and right of disposal of our landed property...The thought of God as the Owner of our possessions, when introduced into the social relations of man to man, makes the otherwise justified interest on loans into *נשך* and *תרבית*, and interest-free loans become the greatest act of sacrifice with which we have to seal our homage to God.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *Markets and Morals*

[Rambam teaches that ‘t]he highest degree of charity, exceeded by none, is that of a person who assists a poor Jew by providing him with a gift or a loan or by accepting him into a business partnership or by helping him to find employment – in a word, by putting him where he can dispense with other people’s aid. With reference to such help it is said, “You shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you” (Leviticus 25:35), which means to strengthen him in such a manner that his falling into want is prevented’...Above all, from a Jewish perspective, economic growth has religious significance because it allows us to alleviate poverty. Judaism’s early sages had the sanest view of poverty I know, and they did so because most of them were poor men. They refused theologically to anaesthetise its pain. They would utterly have rejected Marx’s description of religion as the opium of the people. Poverty is not, in Judaism as in some faiths, a blessed condition. It is, the rabbis said, “a kind of death” and “worse than fifty plagues”. They said, “Nothing is harder to bear than poverty, because he who is crushed by poverty is like one to whom all the troubles of the world cling and upon whom all the curses of Deuteronomy have descended. If all other troubles were placed one side and poverty on the other, poverty would outweigh them all.”