

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET
ON PARSHAS BEHAR BECHUKOSAI - 5756

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Torah Weekly - Behar/Bechukosai

* TORAH WEEKLY * Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemiros Parshas Behar/Bechukosai For the week ending 22 Iyar 5756 10 & 11 May 1996 Ohr Somayach

Summary

Behar The Torah commands the cessation of farming the Land of Israel every seven years. This "Shabbos" for the land is called Shmittah. (5754 was a Shmittah year in Israel.) After every seventh Shmittah, the fiftieth year, Yovel (Jubilee), is announced with the sounds of the shofar on Yom Kippur; this was also a year for the land to lie fallow. Hashem promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the Shmittah and Yovel years to sustain the Jewish people. In the year of Yovel, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to only the first year after the sale. The Levites' cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of each other by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment. Bechukosai The Torah promises prosperity for the Bnei Yisrael if they will follow Hashem's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring Yisrael to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. Sefer Vayikra, The Book of Leviticus, concludes with a detailed description of Erachin -- the process by which someone can make a vow to give to the Beis Hamikdash the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

FATHERS OF INVENTION "...on Mount Sinai..." (25:1) An imaginary conversation -- "Sol; Let's invent a religion. In this religion we tell people that every seven years they have to stop working the fields, down tools, do no planting or harvesting. But we promise them that they'll miraculously get a bumper crop the year before, in the sixth year, which will keep them going for that year, and the next year and the eighth year." "Irv - Are you crazy?! How can you predict the future?! Your religion is going to fall flat on its face in its first seventh year when everyone starts starving and there's no bumper crop and nothing to eat!" This week's Parsha starts with the words "And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai..." Why, specifically, does the Torah record that in was on Mount Sinai that Hashem told Moshe about the mitzvah of Shmittah. Weren't all the mitzvos told to Moshe on Sinai? The reason that the Torah connects Mount Sinai specifically with the mitzvah of Shmittah is to tell us that just as Shmittah provides a verifiable test of the Torah's veracity (for it would be impossible to invent a religion with such a commandment), similarly the rest of the Torah, which was given on Sinai, is authentic in both its generalities and specifics. (Based on Rashi and the Chasam Sofer)

ECO-LOGICAL "...The land shall observe a Shabbos to Hashem..." (25:2) When the Jewish People were enslaved in Egypt, Moshe went to Pharaoh and tricked him into lightening the work-load of the Children of Israel. He pointed out to Pharaoh that if you work slaves without rest, eventually they die. And so, under the guise of giving Pharaoh advice how to increase production, he suggested that Pharaoh give the Jewish People one day off a week. Pharaoh adopted his advice, and allowed Moshe to choose the day. When subsequently Hashem gave the commandment that Shabbos was to be a day of rest, Moses was happy that he had anticipated which day was the day of rest. In other words, the Jewish People had Shabbos in Egypt, but it was only as a respite from the back-breaking work, not as a commandment. However, when Hashem commanded the mitzvah of Shabbos: "You will observe my Shabbosos", then Israel rests on Shabbos, not because we need a rest, but only and entirely because it is the will of Hashem. We find a similar idea in this week's Parsha: "...The land shall observe a Shabbos to Hashem..."

In the seventh year when we let the fields of Eretz Yisrael lie fallow, it is not to give them a rest, to improve their performance and allow the ecological processes to rejuvenate them. Rather, we let the fields lie fallow only because it is a command of Hashem. (Kedushas Levi)

FIXING THE ROYAL APPLE "If you will walk in my statutes and you will guard my mitzvos" (26:1) "...that you should be laborers in Torah." When you come before the king to ask him for a request to be granted, you stand before him in fear and trembling. However if you're the electrician and you have to go into the throne-room to fix the royal computer or the royal telephone, you behave in a normal fashion and go about your work as you would do in any other place. For, if you were to behave with the fear of someone coming before the king with a request, you would never be able to get your work done. If you dedicate your hours to learning and wrestling with the complexities of the Torah, then you become to Hashem like that workman fixing appliances in the throne-room of the king. You can behave with a certain freedom, for `You will not find a free man except one who is involved with the Torah.' However, if you dedicate your life to material pursuits, even if you do this altruistically, then you will have to conduct yourself with the fear and trembling of a supplicant in front of an all-powerful monarch. For you will need to be constantly on your guard against acting out of self-interest and aggrandizement. It will require tremendous effort to ensure that all your actions are really `kosher.' (Rabbi Moshe-Leib from Sasov z"l in Mayana Shel Torah)

THE CRITICAL MASS "But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not be revolted by them nor will have I rejected them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them -- for I am Hashem, their G-d." (26:44) `He who thinks that Berlin is Jerusalem...there will come a thunderous and violent wind that will uproot him from his source.' These words, written by Rav Meir Simcha, the Ohr Somayach, are an uncanny prediction of the storm which was to engulf Europe a number of years later. From the moment of Hashem's irreversible covenant with Avraham Avinu, the survival of the Jewish People becomes a natural imperative, no less than the rising of the sun or the flowing and ebbing of the tides. Anti-Semitism is

placed into nature with its sole purpose to prevent the Jewish People from disappearing into the melting pot amongst the nations, and `annulling' the irreversible covenant with Avraham Avinu. Assimilation is like a nuclear chain reaction - when a certain critical mass is reached, then the atom bomb of anti-Semitism results. There was no nation that represented the summit of culture and refinement more than pre-war Germany, and yet within a few short years it turned into a savage animal. When the Jewish People forget their purpose to be a holy nation, separated from the other nations, then the non-Jewish world will turn around and remind them of their purpose, and the degree of the ferocity of that reminder will depend on the determination of the Jew to assimilate and disappear.

Haftorah: Yirmiyahu 16:19 - 17:14 Gilt-edged security
"Blessed is the man who will trust in Hashem, and Hashem will become his security." (17:7) "Rabbi" said the disgruntled congregant. "Rabbi. I once prayed and prayed to G-d for something I really wanted but my prayers weren't answered." "Yes, they were." said the Rabbi, "The answer was `No!'" The greatest blessing you can have is to trust Hashem. Because, even if you don't get what you prayed for, nevertheless you succeeded in gaining faith and trust in Hashem. And what blessing can be greater than that! But if you put your trust in Man, even if you get what you asked for, you've turned "your heart away from Hashem." (17:5) However, when someone puts his trust in Hashem, he wakes up in the morning and goes to sleep at night a happy man, confident that all is for the best. That's what you call security!

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.
Baruch Hashem Yom Yom - "Blessed is Hashem Each Day..."
"May the Merciful One bless Israel with peace, and may they merit to see children and grandchildren studying Torah and engaged in mitzvos, bring peace upon Israel."
If three consecutive generations of a family are Torah scholars, say our Sages, there is a guarantee that succeeding generations of that family will be Torah scholars as well. This guarantee applies, however, only when these three generations of scholars see each other and thus absorb the influence of example and form an unbreakable chain of family tradition. We therefore pray in this song that we may actually merit to see the next two generations involved in Torah study, for this will bring peace upon Israel by developing families with an unbroken Torah tradition

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"RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Behar-Bechukosai -

Parshas Behar-Bechukosai: Make Peace and Greet Moshiach

Parshas Bechukosai contains words of blessing and words of rebuke. The Parsha begins with the message that the world is set up, such that, if the Jewish people keep G-d's mitzvos, blessings will come automatically. Rains will fall at the most convenient of times, ..., ..., and the Jewish people will be able to rest securely in their land.
The Toras Kohanim on this pasuk [verse] asks, "Does this mean we will only dwell securely in Eretz Yisroel, but not in Chutz L'Aretz? What does this mean -- we do have food and drink?" The Toras Kohanim answers that if there is no peace, there is nothing. As long as we are living in exile under a foreign government, there is no Shalom. Without Shalom there is nothing. Shalom is equivalent to everything, the Toras Kohanim continues, as we say in our prayers, "He Makes Shalom and Creates Everything".
As we all know, without Shalom -- Shalom in a community or Shalom in a family -- Shalom between communities and between nations, nothing has any worth. This is not just a Toras Kohanim, this is a Mishneh -- the last Mishneh in Shas [Uktzin 3:12]. "The Holy One, Blessed be He, found no vessel to hold Blessing for Israel other than (the vessel of) Peace."

The Kesav Sofer explains, that when there is no peace, it is usually because people are jealous of their neighbors. When people are constantly comparing themselves to the Joneses or the Goldbergs or the Cohens, then they will never be happy. People will never be satisfied, no matter how many blessings, no matter how much food and drink they have. If one is being eaten up by that "cancer" which is called kin'ah [jealousy], then he will never ever have an appreciation for what he possess. Therefore, there is no vessel which can hold the blessings -- other than the vessel of peace.
Today, we have in Klal Yisroel a lack of Shalom, even, unfortunately, among our own people. And if we are lacking Shalom, we cannot appreciate our blessings.

In 1980, Rav Yaakov traveled to the Knessiah Gedolah (of Agudath Israel) in Jerusalem. At that particular time in his life, Rav Yaakov felt extremely weak. Rav Yaakov did not feel that he was physically up to making the trip to Eretz Yisroel. But, Rav Yaakov's arm was twisted, he was prevailed upon, and he made the trip. [He was so concerned about his health, that he felt he would not make it back home. He even left word that if he were to die in Eretz Yisroel, he wanted to be buried there, of course.]
Because of his physical condition, Rav Yaakov did not travel around much, nor did he give shiurim, while in Eretz Yisroel. However, Rav Yaakov said, "I want to go to one Yeshiva -- I want to go to Yeshivas Kol Yaakov." Rav Yaakov was taken to this Yeshiva and he got up to speak. Rav Yaakov was crying as he told the students, "My entire life I wanted to greet Moshiach. I now feel that I won't have this merit; I don't feel that I'll live much longer. But, if I can't greet Moshiach, at least I want to be among a group of people that I know for sure, will be among those who greet Moshiach. I know that this Yeshiva will be among those that will greet him."

What was so special about this Yeshiva? Did they know Shas by heart? In Kol Yaakov, are all the Bochrin careful to be on time when davening [daily prayer] starts? Not necessarily. This Yeshiva was so special because they make peace between Ashkenazic and Sephardic bochrin. It was one Yeshiva that had both students of European-Russian descent and of Spanish-Turkish-North African descent and they made Shalom between these two (sometimes at odds) segments of the Jewish people.
We must take this advice from Rav Yaakov. If we want a Segulah that we will be from those who greet Moshiach, we must take action to make Shalom -- between husband and wife; between man and his fellow; between Chassidim and Misnagdim. Make Shalom, and, Rav Yaakov says, be among those who greet Moshiach.

Good News in the Middle of the Tochacha

There is a very long and interesting Ramba"n in this week's Parsha. The Ramba"n tries to show that all the terrible things in the Tochacha, that the Torah predicts will happen, if we do not keep the mitzvos, did indeed happen.

For instance, the Ramba"n says that the pasuk "G-d will return you to Egypt in boats" refers to the days of Titus when the Jews were loaded onto boats and shipped as slaves to Egypt. The Ramba"n brings many different examples ... "The King which you will appoint over yourself..." refers to Agrippa. The pasuk hints at the fact that he was not worthy of being a King. Finally, the Ramba"n says that the pasuk [26:32] "I will make desolate the Land, and your enemies who dwell upon it will be desolate" (V'shamemu aleha oyeveichem hayoshvim bah) is not a Curse, rather it is a Blessing. It is "Good News" in the middle of the Tochacha. The pasuk tells us that our Holy Land will not accept our enemies upon it. This, says the Ramba"n, is a great proof (of the Divine Hand) and Promise for us. "For there cannot be found throughout the world a land that had been so good and fertile (which now became so desolate and inhospitable)".

If you want to be a Believer, says the Ramba"n, all you have to do is look at Eretz Yisroel. Look what happened there for 2000 years when it was occupied by Arabs and by Romans and by Turks and by the British. It had been the most beautiful and under foreign dominion it became the most desolate. The Torah assured us, that from the day we left Eretz Yisroel, it would not accept any other nation or populace. They all tried to settle it, but none were successful.

This is what the Torah means when it says "Your enemies will be desolate

upon it". No nation will ever be successful in inhabiting Eretz Yisroel, except Klal Yisroel.

What would happen, if the Indians came to the Federal Government and said "You know, 200 years ago we made a silly mistake. We sold you Manhattan Island at a rock bottom price -- \$24. We realize you're entitled to a profit, we'll give you \$48 for Manhattan. We'll give you 48 million dollars? We'll give you 48 billion dollars?" Guess what? No sale. What has happened to Manhattan Island in those 200 years? For what it is worth now, there is no way the Government would ever consider giving it back.

Imagine if the Goyim would have been successful in making Eretz Yisroel profitable. Imagine if in 1948, it was a beautiful and productive land. Would they have consented to returning it to the Jewish People? But as the Ramba"n says, they were not able. In 1948, when we came to ask, "Can we have the land back?" "You mean that strip of land, that's hard like iron, in which nothing grows? That worthless strip of land in the middle of the desert? Good Luck with it!". This is Divine Providence, as promised by the Torah in this week's parsha.

I have always wondered - one looks in the Middle East -- Saudi Arabia has oil, Qatar, Iraq, Yemen, every country has oil. Egypt even has oil. How is it, that from our Holy Land, the choicest of all lands we can not squeeze a drop of oil? This is "The Eyes of the L-rd are upon it from the start of the year to its end"?

But what would have been in 1948, if the British were sitting on a Saudi Arabia? What would have been if they were sitting on Kuwait? Obviously they would not have been so eager to give up black gold. This is part of "Your enemies will be desolate upon it".

The upshot of all of this, is that if we seek a lesson in Emunah, if one does not believe in G-d for all the other miracles and wonders that He has done... Just look at this Ramba"n, just look at this Pasuk, just look at that Land. If one's eyes are open and one is not blind, one will see the Hand of G-d and the Divine Providence upon us and upon all the Jewish people.

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Parashat Bechukotai 5756 - "Live, and learn!"

The Weekly Internet

P * A * R * A * S * H * A - P * A * G * E

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This week's Parasha-Page has been sponsored by Mrs. Miriam Triebitz in memory of her grandmother, Rebbetzin Zipporah Chava Lifshitz of blessed memory, and in honor of her two-month-old baby who proudly bears her great-grandmother's name.

Parashat Behar-Bechukotai 5756

LIVE AND LEARN!

If you do not listen to Me and do not keep all of these commandments... I will scatter you among the nations ... and your land will be desolate.... Then I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and I will remember My covenant with Avraham, and I will remember the Land. The Land will be deserted and will be appeased for its Sabbatical years [which were not observed]... because you rejected My laws....

(Vayikra 26:14,33,42,43)

In this week's Parasha we read the "Tochechah" -- the lengthy litany of curses with which Hashem warned the Jewish people of what will befall

them should they not remain faithful to His words in the Torah. When reading these words of admonishment, one is immediately struck by one seemingly misplaced verse. After listing the many punishments and afflictions that Hashem would bring upon the people, the Torah tells us that Hashem will eventually remember His covenant with our forefathers and His Promised Land (v. 42). Then, the very next verse goes on to describe yet more curses and warnings, as if nothing had been said about the reconciliation of Hashem with His people! How can the apparently inappropriate placement of this verse be accounted for? The Shlah (Rav Yeshayah Horowitz, 17th cent. Poland-Israel) quotes a tradition from his teachers that offers a highly interesting and original explanation for the positioning of this verse.

II

People from different backgrounds are held accountable for their actions to varying degrees. Consider, for example, a person who was brought up in a household where where spiritual values are held in high regard and another who grew up in a home where corruption and immorality were the norm. Obviously, we should expect more from the person with the positive upbringing. If he decides to pursue a life of sin and depravation, he would be held more culpable than the other person, who was taught by example a corrupt lifestyle.

This, explains the Shlah, is the meaning of the verse in question. This verse is not meant to be taken as an isolated statement of consolation surrounded by curses (the way Rashi and most other commentators seem to understand it), but is rather to be understood as one more component in the series of curses that make up the Tochechah. Hashem will recall that He had made a covenant with the forefathers of the Jewish nation, and that will cause His anger with them to *grow*, rather than to abate. He will say, "The Jewish people had such illustrious ancestors from whom to learn the ways of Torah and righteouness, yet despite this fact they veered from the proper path and pursued lives of sin. This is cause for an even more intense punishment!" That is why the next verse continues with the list of curses that began earlier in the chapter -- there is actually no interruption in theme at all.

The Shlah goes on to explain the end of the verse in question ("...and I will remember the Land") in a similar fashion. The Land of Israel is especially conducive to learning the principles of justice and the Torah way of life (see Parasha-Page, Ekev 5755). Hence, when Hashem recalls the Land He has even more reason to be angry with its inhabitants, since they did not allow the spiritually positive character of the Land to influence their own behavior.

We may add that another difficulty may be resolved by the Shlah's reading of this verse as well. As noted by the commentators, this is the only place in the Bible where the three Patriarchs are mentioned in reverse order: "...the covenant of Yaakov... of Yitzchak... and of Avraham." What is the significance of this unusual order? According to the Shlah, we may answer as follows.

Rabbenu Bachya (13th cent. Spain -- in his commentary to Bereshit 11:9, Bemidbar 1:51, ibid. 5:15 and in his work Kad HaKemach, entry on "Purim") tells us that a backwards arrangement of letters or words can indicate a reversal in intent. For instance, the four-letter name of Hashem (the Tetragrammaton) is known to be the Name which represents His attribute of mercy. When this four-letter name is spelled (in an acronym) backwards, however, it is an indication of Hashem's attribute of strict justice. Perhaps we may say, then, that when the Patriarchs are listed in their proper chronological order, it indicates that Hashem in His mercy is recalling the righteousness of the Patriarchs on behalf of their descendants. In this instance, however, they are listed in reverse order because it is *not* Hashem's mercy and kindness which are being aroused. Rather, by recalling the saintly lives of the Patriarchs His attribute of stern justice is aroused, as the Shlah explained.

III

We learn from the words of the Shlah that there are two sides to the association with people of high spiritual stature. Exposure to saintly, pious people can be on the one hand a tremendous opportunity for spiritual growth. On the other hand, if one does not take advantage of this opportunity, the experience can become a source of tragedy. This theme is borne out in several places in Tanach and Midrashim as well.

In I Melachim 17:10-18 we read about the prophet Eliyahu's (= Elijah's) stay at the house of a woman from Tzarfat (a city in Israel). One day, his landlady's young son died. The bereaved woman came to Eliyahu and exclaimed bitterly, "What [malice] is there between me and you, man of G-d, that you have come to call attention to my sins and to put my son to death!" Rashi (loc. cit.) explains based on a Midrash that what she meant to say was, "Your very presence in my home, Eliyahu, has caused Hashem to judge me according to a higher standard than usual. Until now, I was judged according to the standard of the ordinary people of my town. Now that you have come here and live in my proximity, I am judged in comparison to your saintly behaviour!"

Similarly, we read in Bereishit 19:19 that Lot (Avraham's nephew), when he was saved from the destruction that befell Sodom, told the angels who were escorting him, "I cannot escape up to the mountain, for evil will reach me there and I will die." Rashi (loc. cit.), quoting from the same Midrash, explains that Lot pleaded with the angels not to take him back to live in the vicinity of Avraham (where he had lived before moving to Sodom). Living in proximity to such a great saint would certainly lead to "evil reaching me, and I will die." While living in Sodom, Lot explained, he could be considered in a favorable light. He would only be compared to the other citizens of Sodom, who were notorious for their wickedness and immorality. But if he took up residence with Avraham he would be judged according to a much stricter standard, one which he was sure he could not withstand. (See Bereishit Rabba, 50:11.)

How are we to understand this Midrash? Hashem can certainly discern the evil in a person even if it is not contrasted with the righteousness of his surroundings! Apparently, this Midrash is a reflection of the Shlah's principle. When people are exposed to a righteous surrounding, they are expected to absorb that holiness into their own personalities. If they do not do so, they are punished for their shortfall. On the other hand, living among wicked people and yet managing to maintain an average standard of decency is considered to be a virtuous accomplishment. This is why Hashem takes a person's neighbors and environment into consideration when the person is judged.

IV

I once heard from Rabbi Israel Dissin (presently of Jerusalem, Israel) that this principle can be used to deal with another difficult passage from the Torah. In the beginning of Parashat Vayera we are told that three people/angels came to visit Avraham. Their missions were to inform Avraham and Sarah that they would soon have a son (Bereshit 18:1-15). After having fulfilled these tasks, two of these angels went on to their next mission -- the annihilation of the wicked populations of Sodom and its environs and the salvation of Lot, Avraham's nephew, from the devastation. Two angels were required to accomplish this, one for each of these two tasks (Rashi 18:2). Rashi (ibid.) explains why it was necessary for the angel that saved Lot to first visit Avraham. However, he offers us no insight as to why the angel of destruction was first sent to the house of Avraham, rather than going directly to his true destination, Sodom. Rabbi Dissin suggested the following explanation.

One of the most outstanding of Avraham's virtues was his extraordinary kindness and compassion. Rashi (18:4) tells us that when Avraham saw the three angels travelling in the desert, he did not realize the true nature of these "men" -- he in fact believed them to be idolatrous Arab nomads. Nevertheless, he ran out into the desert, despite his age (99) and weakened condition (post-circumcision) and despite the intense heat of the day, to invite the men into his house. He then prepared for them an extravagant meal.

The contrast between Avraham's attitude and that of the Sodomites is striking. The people of Sodom were extremely inhospitable to strangers, to the point of seizing and molesting them (see ibid. Ch. 19). It was precisely this contrast between their own behavior and the behaviour of their illustrious neighbor (for Sodom was not far away from where Avraham lived -- see ibid. 19:28) which sealed their fate for destruction. They could have learned from the righteous actions of Avraham, yet they chose to ignore him and continued in their path of wickedness. This is what made their evil behavior unforgivable.

Perhaps, then, this is the reason that the angel of destruction was sent to

Avraham on his way to punish the people of Sodom. The angel's journey was meant to enact the cause of Hashem's outpouring of wrath towards Sodom. As Hashem would view Avraham's whole-hearted acts of compassion, His anger at Sodom would grow greater and greater until it finally took its toll!

The verse tells us that Hashem felt He had to inform Avraham of His plan to destroy Sodom before that plan was put into action, "so that [Avraham] would teach his descendants to observe the ways of Hashem, to act in righteousness and justice" (ibid. 18:17-19). Perhaps Hashem wanted to demonstrate to Avraham the importance of having *others* learn from one's own personal example. The extreme consequences that the members of his household would suffer if they would *not* learn from his example were underscored by the punishment of Sodom.

Avraham, in turn, understood the hint. He realized that he was, in a sense, responsible for the annihilation of Sodom. This, Rabbi Dissin pointed out, may be the reason that he offered such a lengthy, impassioned plea on behalf of the Sodomites, begging Hashem to spare them (ibid. 18:23-33). He knew that it was his exemplary behavior and virtuous way of life that was reinforcing the guilt of the people of Sodom, and he thus felt a personal responsibility to intercede on their behalf!

May we all take this message to heart and take full advantage of the examples of Torah learning and sanctity that are available to us

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DRASHA PARSHAS B'HAR -- B'CHUKOSA I... BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK 5/10/96 Vol 2 Issue 31

The Torah does not usually leave room for official questions of faith. It tells us, in no uncertain terms, what our responsibilities are and the commitment we must make to be observant Jews. Every mitzvah entails sacrifice.

Sometimes it requires a monetary commitment, sometimes a commitment of time and morals. Not often does it consider the human trials one encounters in mitzvah performance. They are our problem and we must deal with them as human beings and as Jews.

Yet this week the Torah uncharacteristically provides leeway for those who may waver in their commitment. In Parshas Behar the Torah charges the Jewish people with the laws of shmittah. Every seventh year, we are told that the land of Israel is to lie fallow. No work is to be done with the earth. There is not to be a harvest, nor may the ground be sown or reaped.

Observing shmittah is a true test of faith. Imagine! One must not harvest his grain but instead rely on pure faith for his daily fare. Yet the Torah does not leave us with the austere command. The Torah deals directly with the human emotion related to the issue. In Leviticus 25:20 the Torah foretells a human side. "And if you will say in your heart, 'what shall we eat in the seventh year, behold the land has not been sown nor has it been reaped?'" Hashem reassures the people that His bounty will abound in the sixth year and they will live the seventh year in comfort.

This is not the only time the Torah realizes human wariness. In reference to the command of conquering the Land of Canaan, the Torah states in Deuteronomy 7:17: "Perhaps you shall say in your heart, 'these nations are more numerous than me. How will I drive them out?'" Once again Hashem reassures His nation that He will not forsake them.

The question is glaring. Why does the Torah answer to human psyche? Why doesn't the Torah just command us to let the land lie fallow, or conquer the Land of Canaan? If there are problems or fears in our hearts, they are our problems. Those fears should not be incorporated as part of the command.=20

Isidore would meet his friend Irving every other week while doing business. "How are you Irving?" Isidore would always ask. "How's the wife and kids?" Irv would always grunt back the perfunctory replies. "Fine." "A little under the weather." "My son, Jack, got a job."

This one sided interrogation went on for years until one day Isidore exploded. "Irv," he said abruptly. "I don't understand. For six years I ask you about your wife, your kids, and your business. Not once mind you, not once did you ever ask me about my wife, my kids, or my business!"

Irv shrugged. Sorry, Izzie. I was really selfish. So tell me," he continued, "how is your wife? How are your kids? How is your business?" Izzie let out a sigh of anguish and began to krechts. He put his hand gently on Irv's shoulder, tightened his lips, and shook his head slowly. Don't ask! Reb Leible Eiger (1816-1888) explains that there are many questions of faith that we may have. The faithful may in fact fear the fact that there is fear. "Is it a flaw in faith to worry?" "Am I committing heresy by fearing the enemy?" "Am I allowed to ask?" The Torah tells us in two places, "you will have these questions. You will ask, 'how am I going to sustain myself and family?' "You will worry," 'how will I conquer my enemies?' 'Will I be destroyed?'" The Torah reassures us that there is no lack of trust by asking those questions. We mustn't get down on ourselves and consider questions a breach of faith. Life and sustenance are mortal attributes. They warrant mortal fear. Adam, the first man was originally blessed with eternal life without having to worry for his livelihood. After sinning, he was cursed with death and was told that he would eat by the sweat of his brow. The Torah assures us that it is not only human but acceptable to worry about one's livelihood and survival. As long as we believe the reassurances that follow the worry. Good Shabbos (c) 1996 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Yeshiva of South Shore 516-328-2490 Fax 516-328-2553 Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Torah Facsimile on the Parsha which is a project of the Henry & Myrtle Hirsch Foundation Mordechai Kamenetzky Ateres@pppmail.nyser.net

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P. Behar-Bechukosai

HALACHA FOR 5756

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SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS

BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Do not take from his interest... (25:36) Interest (Ribbis) With A Corporation
QUESTION: Although it is explicitly forbidden for an individual to charge or pay Ribbis, does the prohibition of Ribbis apply also to corporations?
DISCUSSION: There is some misunderstanding regarding this Halacha. A lenient ruling by Harav M. Feinstein(1) holds that a corporation may pay Ribbis for deposits, loans or credits which they receive, even if the corporation is totally owned by Jews. The reason for the leniency is that a "borrower" in Halacha is defined as someone who has personal responsibility to pay a loan. When a bank or another corporation is the "borrower", the loan is guaranteed by the company's assets, but not by any individual. Thus there is no Jewish "borrowers" and Ribbis may be paid by the bank or the corporation.

This ruling of Rav Moshe has been accepted by some Poskim and rejected by others(2). Obviously, if possible, a proper Heter Iska(3) should be made before drawing interest from a Jewish owned bank. If it is difficult to do so, there are Poskim who allow taking the interest, as per Rav Moshe's ruling. [Note that a Heter Iska does not allow a Jewish-owned bank to offer free gifts to depositors if the gift is chosen and delivered at the time of deposit, since such gifts are a form of Ribbis(4).]

Under no circumstances, however, is it permitted to borrow money from a Jewish-owned bank or corporation. Since the borrower is an individual who accepts personal responsibility to repay the loan, the above leniency does not apply(5).

Similarly, lending money to a Jewish-owned corporation with the personal guarantee of repayment by the owners would be prohibited even according to Harav Feinstein's lenient opinion.

For the above reason it is prohibited to buy shares in a publicly traded bank which has a majority of Jewish owners and does not use a proper Heter Iska(6). A company in which most of the shareholders are not Jewish but the Jewish minority has significant enough holdings that their opinion carries weight in management decisions, is also considered a Jewish company according to the opinion of many Poskim(7).

Neighbors Borrowing Goods

QUESTION: Does the prohibition of Ribbis apply to neighbors borrowing goods from each other?

DISCUSSION: The prohibition of Ribbis applies to goods borrowed between neighbors. A neighbor who borrows two Challos may return only two Challos to the lender(8). If a 5 lb. bag of sugar is borrowed, only that amount may be returned. There are, however, several notable exceptions to this prohibition:

If the difference between the item borrowed and the item returned is insignificant to the degree which people generally do not care about, the prohibition does not apply; a slightly bigger Challah, therefore, may be returned(9).

When neighbors have a type of relationship where they are in the habit of borrowing from each other without being careful to return everything they borrow, then the prohibition of Ribbis does not apply. This is because the neighbors are not "borrowing" from each other; they are giving each other gifts(10). [Note that most neighbors do not have such a relationship.] When the borrower is uncertain of the precise amount he borrowed, he may return an amount which is great enough to assure that the loan is paid up(11). A neighbor who borrows an item from his friend may return that item exactly as borrowed, even if the price of the item has gone up in the interval. This is permitted because prices tend to fluctuate by small amounts and neighbors generally are not particular about such a small difference(12).

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FOOTNOTES:

1 Igros Moshe YD 2:63.

2 See the various views in Har Tzvi YD 126; Rav Y.E. Henkin in Eidus L'yisroel pg. 170; Minchas Yitzchok 1:3;4:16-17; Chelkas Yaakov 3:190; Minchas Shlomo 28; Bris Yehuda 7: fn66.

3 One must investigate the validity of the Heter Iska before dealing with a Jewish owned bank. See Kol Hatorah # 40 for an excellent review of the recently discovered Halachic problems with the Heter Iska of Israel's banks. Note that many Israeli banks have branches abroad.

4 Bris Yehuda 38:fn10.

5 Igros Moshe, ibid.

6 Bris Yehuda 40:fn21

7 Harav M. Feinstein and Harav Y. Roth (quoted in Mishnas Ribbis 2:fn7).

8 YD 160:17.

9 Bris Yehuda 17:fn6; Mishnas Ribbis 6:fn5. See also Shu"t L'ehoros Nosson 6:76.

10 The Laws of Interest pg. 35.

11 Minchas Yitzchok 9:88.

12 Mishna Berura 450:2 based on Rema YD 162:1. See Shaar Hatzion, ibid.

PARASHAT BEHAR - BECHUKOTAI
SICHA OF HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL SHLIT"A
Summarized by Rav Eliyahu Blumenzweig

Overview and Detail

"And God spoke to Moshe at Har Sinai saying..." (Vayikra 25:1) "Just as both the general concepts and the finer details of the laws of shemitta were given at Sinai, so were both the general concepts and the finer details of all the other laws given there." (Rashi)

Sometimes a person grasps a general idea without understanding all the details which it involves. And sometimes he understands a multitude of details but fails to make of them a complete

system in his mind; despite his command of the details themselves, he has no concept of how the whole is made up.

In the case of Torah and mitzvot, such a situation is unacceptable. The overall concepts and the details are interdependent and inseparable. A defect in the smallest detail affects the entirety: a scribe who neglects to fulfil a seemingly minor halakha while writing the parshiot for a pair of tefillin has in fact nullified the entire mitzva.

This does not mean that there is no distinction between general concepts and details in the Torah. It means rather that the all-encompassing light illuminates and influences even the smallest details. The overarching inspiration penetrates and amplifies the whole system of tiny details such that every small detail contains some of the illumination of the totality. On the other hand, when a detail is neglected, then damage is done to the totality. Hence this concept works in both directions - every detail is nourished by the totality, and the totality is not complete without the entire system of details.

In the Torah's description of the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai we are told, "And the whole nation saw the sounds...." The faculty of seeing is associated with totality - with one single glance a person can grasp a great deal, an entire picture. Hearing, on the other hand, is associated with detail - a person cannot pay attention to two voices at the same time and understand both simultaneously. The "seeing of the sounds" at Har Sinai hints at the unity of general concepts and details in the Torah. It was a comprehensive "seeing" that took in every detail, as well as perceiving their unity in a whole.

Both general concepts and details of the Torah were given at Har Sinai, the place where this complete unity between them was revealed.

This idea finds expression specifically in the mitzvot of shemitta and yovel, which our text connects to Har Sinai. Shemitta comes to bring everyone together, to break barriers, to cancel private ownership. Yovel, in a certain sense, comes to preserve the uniqueness of each individual by returning his property to him.

This unity applies not only to each separate mitzva and its details, but also to the Torah as a whole. All 613 mitzvot together form a closely knit system and they cannot be separated. This sheds light on the Maharal's teaching that every time Moshe wanted to teach Bnei Yisrael a new mitzva, he reviewed the whole Torah with them - because no single detail or law can be detached or separated from the entirety that is the Torah.

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Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

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Parshas Behar-Bechukosai

this week's Torah reading (Leviticus 25-27). A wealth of insight lays in its words. Many are the commentaries on the first verse of Parshas Bechukosai. Here is a theme that I found particularly interesting.

The words of the parsha begin as follows. "If you will walk in my laws and guard my commandments and fulfil them" (Leviticus 26:3). The Torah then enumerates the utopian blessing which lays in store for those who live by the precepts of the Torah.

Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch explains these words in the following manner. "If by wandering in the paths of His laws we make ourselves into morally pure men, by studying and taking to heart His commandments, into intellectually clear thinking and conscientious beings...G-d undertakes to raise our land out of the political and physical dilemmas of the rest of the world. He sets heaven and earth into such harmonious concord with such men and their efforts that nothing is in opposition to them, and everything works together to further their progress, which is then nothing else but the realization of G-d's Will for the world and humanity.

How timely these words are, even though they were written over 100 years ago. Rashi, the middle-age commentator, explains that the Torah enjoins us to "toil" in the learning of Torah, just as Rabbi Hirsch comments, that we learn in order to embody these laws, and elevate our behavior. The Chassidic leader, The Sfas Emes, comments that every act must done with

premeditation. It all boils down to living one's life with direction and goals. This is what Torah study gives a sincere learner; direction.

By way of illustration, Rabbi Issur Zalman Meltzer, of blessed memory, lived in Jerusalem during the war in 1948. In every courtyard was a bomb shelter which unfortunately, was frequently used. Grenades would often find their way into his courtyard, and his wife would beg him to come into the shelter. Reb Issur Zalman preferred rather to stay in his apartment in front of his tractate of Talmud. One time when the bombing was quite heavy, Rebbitzin Meltzer prevailed upon her husband to close his book and come into the shelter. As he came down into the courtyard a grenade fell and exploded, sending shrapnel into the leg of Reb Issur Zalman. His wife began shouting for help, but Reb Issur Zalman stopped her. He would not allow someone else to endanger their lives to come and help him until the bombing had eased. How did he have the presence of mind to think of that when he was so in need of help? It is only because he taught himself to THINK before he ACTED.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter was laying on his death bed. Next to him sat a young man, unaware of just how close Rabbi Yisroel was to death. Reb Yisroel began to speak with the man about being in the presence of a dead body. He told him that there is nothing to fear, that there is really nothing horrifying about a lifeless body. The young man did not understand that Reb Yisroel was speaking with him about an imminent concern. When he was sure that the young man would not be afraid he ended the discussion. On that very same day, Rabbi Yisroel passed away. Then the young man understood that in the very last hours of his life, Reb Yisroel was still concerned for his fellow, that he might have been faced with something that would cause him great fear.

These are the fruits of "toil in Torah". This is what the sages of the Talmud meant when they said, "Great is the Study of Torah, for it motivates action."

Good Shabbos. Rabbi Dovid Green (dmgreen@skynet.net) (dmgreen@michiana.org) Moderator, Dvar Torah Project Genesis DvarTorah, Copyright (c) 1996 Project Genesis, Inc.

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PARSHAT HASHAVUA
PARSHAT BHAR-BCHUKOTEI
by Menachem Leibtag

***** IN
MEMORY OF LEAH RUTH BAT NATAN NASO (Illoway)

"And God spoke to Moshe on HAR SINAI saying..." (25:1)

Why does Chumash go out of its way to tell us that this parsha was spoken at HAR SINAI? Normally, Chumash simply tells us that God spoke to Moshe ("va'y'daber Hashem el Moshe lay'mor..."): rarely does Chumash inform us WHERE He spoke.

This opening pasuk suggests that Parsha Bhar belongs in Sefer Shmot, together with the other mitzvot which God gave to Moshe on Har Sinai. Why then is it included in Sefer Vayikra?

To answer this question, and many others, this week's shiur investigates the combined structure of both Sefer Vayikra and Sefer Shmot.

BACKGROUND / REVIEW

In our previous shiurim, we posited that there are two distinct halves to Sefer Vayikra, the first half focusing on the laws of the "kedusha" INSIDE the Mishkan, the second half focusing on the "kedusha" OUTSIDE the Mishkan, i.e. in our daily life in the Land.

The second half begins in chapter 18 with a general introductory statement instructing Bnei Yisrael to follow God's laws in the Land which they are about to enter (18:1-5), followed by a warning that should they not follow these laws, the Land will 'kick them out' (18:24-30).

We also posited that the second half of Vayikra follows the following pattern, reflecting the three basic realms of "kedusha" which emanate from the Mishkan:

KEDUSHAT ADAM [MAN] (chapters 18-22)

Laws governing how Am Yisrael should behave

KEDUSHAT ZMAN [TIME] (chapters 23-24)

Laws of the Holidays

KEDUSHAT MAKOM [PLACE] (chapters 25-26)

Laws of the Land ("ha'aretz") - shmita and yovel

Although this general outline explains the structure of most of Sefer Vayikra, we find many exceptions when examining Parshiot Emor and Bhar more carefully.

TOO MANY EXCEPTIONS

Almost all of Parshat Emor (chapters 21-24) seems to contradict our model of the 'two halves of Sefer Vayikra'. As the following summary shows, most all of its 'parshiot' contain laws relating primarily to the Mishkan (and thus, according to our 'model' belong to the first half of the Sefer): * Chapter 21 - laws pertaining to KOHANIM; * Chapter 22 - animals which cannot be offered as KORBANOT; * Chapter 23 - the special KORBANOT which are to be brought to the Mikdash on the holidays; * Chapter 24 - how the MENORAH is to be lit, and the weekly "lechem ha'panim" offering on the SHULCHAN.

The end of chapter 24 poses an even greater difficulty, for it contains a NARRATIVE - the story of an individual who curses God's name in public and his subsequent punishment. Not only is this story totally unrelated to either half of Sefer Vayikra, it also contradicts our assumption (see the introductory shiur) that Sefer Vayikra does not contain any narrative (aside from the story of the dedication of the Mishkan).

Parshiot Bhar and Bchukotei present a different type of difficulty. Although the laws of shmita and yovel ("kedushat makom", chapter 25) fit nicely into the model of the 'two halves of Sefer Vayikra', the header of this Parsha states that it was revealed at HAR SINAI. This suggests that this Parsha, and the "tochacha" in Parshat Bchukotei which follows, really belong in Sefer Shmot, together with all of the other laws which were given to Moshe at Har Sinai!

Separating Bhar and Bchukotei, we find three psukim which present yet another difficulty, for they constitute simply a repeat of the first four of the Ten Commandments (26:1-4). Why are these psukim included in Sefer Vayikra? Furthermore, why are they inserted here?

Must we conclude that Vayikra is simply a random collection of 'parshiot'?

Must we re-write all of our shiurim on Sefer Vayikra?

A SUPER-STRUCTURE

Although these questions appear to shake the very foundations of our understanding of the structure of Vayikra, a careful examination of their order shows a precise structure. Incredibly, this structure ties together Sefer Shmot and Sefer Vayikra and provides a solution for the questions raised above!

To uncover this structure, we must re-examine each of the exceptions noted above. First, we must review why each parsha appears to be 'out of place', and then we must determine precisely where each parsha DOES belong in Chumash.

For the sake of simplicity [soon you will see why], we will begin with the "tochacha" in chapter 26 and work backwards, marking each 'parsha' with a letter of the alphabet for future reference.

(A) - THE TOCHACHA (26:3-46)

The "tochacha" (chapter 26) explains the reward which Bnei Yisrael receive should they keep the mitzvot, and their punishment should they not. This "tochacha" includes the details of the "brit" (covenant) made at Har Sinai (see Dvarim 28:69). The basic principles of this brit were first given to Bnei Yisrael in Parshat YITRO, in the chapter preceding the giving of the Ten Commandments:

"And now, IF YOU SHALL LISTEN TO ME and KEEP MY COVENANT faithfully, then... (Shmot 19:5-6)

[Compare carefully with Vayikra 26:3,12,23!]

Even though this parsha relates thematically to "kedushat ha'aretz" and the second half of Sefer Vayikra, nevertheless, it was given to Bnei Yisrael on Har Sinai, and could have been included just as well in Parshat YITRO. [Note that the 'dibur' which begins in 25:1 continues until chapter 26 and is summarized by the final pasuk of the "tochacha" (26:46). See also Chizkuni on Shmot 24:7. He posits that B'har/Bchukotei actually comprise "Sefer ha'Brit" upon which Bnei Yisrael proclaimed "na'aseh v'nishma"! See also

Ibn Ezra on Vayikra 25:1.]

(B) The 'MINI-DIBROT' (25:55-26:2)

These three psukim at the very end of Parshat Bhar, (also given on Har Sinai), form a brief summary of the first four of the Ten Commandments. Even though the first pasuk (25:55) provides a reason for the laws of redeeming a slave that precede it (25:39-54), the next two psukim (26:1-2) appear to be totally unrelated. Their 'natural' location would seem to be in description of Matan Torah in Parshat YITRO together with the other Commandments.

(C) The laws of SHMITA & YOVEL (25:1-25:54)

[the Sabbatical and Jubilee Year]

The opening pasuk of this parsha tells us precisely where it belongs - together with the other laws given to Moshe at Har Sinai, i.e. at the end of Parshat Yitro (see 20:19-23) or in Parshat Mishpatim. As a matter of fact, the general principles of the "shmita" laws are actually stated in Parshat Mishpatim:

"Six years you shall sow your Land and gather your produce and the seventh year... (Shmot 23:10-11)

[See Ramban 25:1!]

Once again, even though Parshat Bhar is thematically related to the second half of Vayikra ("kedushat ha'aretz"), it also provides the specifics of laws given at Ma'amad Har Sinai, as recorded in Parshiot Yitro/Mishpatim.

(D) Parshat "ha'M'KALLEL" (24:10-23) - The 'blasphemer'.

This lone narrative of the second half of Sefer Vayikra leads into a small set of civil laws ("bein adam l'chaveiro") relating to capital punishment. These laws are almost identical to certain "mishpatim" recorded in Parshat MISHPATIM. [Compare Vayikra 24:17-21 to Shmot 21:12,23-25.]

For example:

Shmot 21:24 - "ayin tachat ayin, shayn tachat shayn..."

Vayikra 24:20 - "ayin tachat ayin, shayn tachat shayn..."

This story of the punishment of a blasphemer may thematically relate to Sefer Vayikra, for his action is antithetical to the concept of "kedushat Am Yisrael"; nevertheless, the laws which follow this narrative clearly belong in Parshat MISHPATIM.

(E) THE MENORAH AND SHULCHAN (24:1-9)

The laws of lighting the MENORAH (24:1-4) with olive oil and the weekly offering of "lechem ha'panim" ('show bread') on the SHULCHAN (24:5-9), don't belong in Sefer Vayikra at all! Instead, they belong in Sefer Shmot together with the other laws concerning the "keilim" (vessels) of the Mishkan as recorded in Parshat TRUMAH/TZAVEH.

Actually, 24:2-3 is almost a word for word repetition of the first two psukim of Parshat Tzaveh. [See Shmot 27:20-21, see also 25:30 - the first mention of "lechem ha'panim at the conclusion of the commandment to build the MENORAH.]

(F) PARSHAT HA'MO'ADIM (23:1-44) [The HOLIDAYS]

As we explained in last week's shiur, the Torah presents the "mo'adim" together with the laws of "shabbat". Thematically, these laws are related to the second half of Vayikra, for they relate to "kedushat zman & kedushat ha'aretz"; nevertheless, they are also related to the laws of "Shabbat" which were introduced together with the laws of the Mishkan - Shmot 31:12-17 & 35:2-3.

Note the obvious textual similarities:

* "sheyshet yamim tay'aseh m'lacha, u'va'yom ha'shvii..."

[Vayikra 23:3- Compare with Shmot 35:2!]

* "ACH et shabbtotei tishmoru... ki ani Hashem M'KADISHCHEM" (Shmot 31:13/ compare with 23:3,39)

Therefore, the "mo'adim" in Sefer Vayikra could be juxtaposed with Parshiot KI-TISA/VAYAKHEL in Sefer Shmot.

(G) ANIMALS THAT CANNOT BE KORBANOT (22:17-33)

In this parsha we find the prohibition of offering an animal with a blemish or an animal less than eight days old.

The 'natural' location of these laws would be Parshat VAYIKRA, which describes the animals which one CAN bring for a korban (see 1:2).

(H) KEDUSHAT KOHANIM (21:1-22:16)

Parshat Emor opens with laws which explain when a Kohen CAN and CANNOT become "tamey" (ritually impure by coming into contact with a dead person). Even though these laws deal with Kohanim, they govern their

daily life OUTSIDE the Mishkan. [Because they work IN the Mishkan, they must act in a special manner even when OUTSIDE the Mishkan (see 21:6)]. Therefore, the first section of this parsha fits into the category of "kedushat adam" of the second half of Sefer Vayikra.

Nevertheless, the continuation of this parsha (21:16-22:16) prohibits certain Kohanim from working in the Mishkan and therefore belongs in the first half of Sefer Vayikra. The precise location is obviously Parshat TZAV, since this parsha, like Parshat Tzav, details the type of "kodashim" which Kohanim who do not work in the Mishkan are permitted to eat. WHAT BELONGS WHERE?

The following table summarizes these numerous exceptions, noting where each seemingly 'misplaced parsha' belongs. Note that the parshiot that appear to be out of order beginning from Parshat Bchukotei backward correspond with the order of the Parshiot in Sefer Shmot and the beginning of Vayikra!

PARSHA OUT OF PLACE	BELONGS IN PARSHAT...
(A) THE TOCHACHA	YITRO (before the 'Dibrot')
(B) THE MINI-DIBROT	YITRO (the 'Dibrot')
(C) SHMITA AND YOVEL	YITRO/MISHPATIM (after the 'Dibrot')
(D) M'KALLEL & mishpatim	MISHPATIM
(E) MENORAH AND SHULCHAN	TRUMAH /TZAVEH
(F) MO'ADIM IN EMOR	KI-TISA/ VAYAKHEL (shabbat)
(G) ANIMALS FIT FOR MIZBAYACH	VAYIKRA
(H) KEDUSHAT KOHANIM	TZAV

THE CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF SHMOT & VAYIKRA [The following concept of 'chiastic structure' is based on shiurim given by Rav Yoel bin Nun several years ago at the Yeshiva.]

Chiastic structure (A-B-C-B-A) is a literary tool which emphasizes unity of theme and accentuates a central point (C). In order to find this central point, let's summarize the basic units in Sefer Shmot (from the time of Bnei Yisrael's arrival at Har Sinai), as we have discussed in our shiurim on Sefer Shmot:

(A) BRIT - prior to Matan Torah (perek 19 & parallel in perek 24)	(B) DIBROT - the Ten Commandments (20:1-14)	(C) MITZVOT - immediately after the dibrot (20:19-23)	(D) MISHPATIM - the civil laws in Parshat Mishpatim (21->23)	(E) T'ZIVUI HA'MISHKAN - Parshiot Trumah/Tzaveh (25->31)	(F) SHABBAT (31:12-18 followed by 35:1-3)
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[Why we skip Chet Ha'egel (32->34), is explained in the Further Iyun Section.] (G) LAWS OF THE KORBANOT which the individual can bring to the Mishkan. (Vayikra 1->5) (H) LAWS FOR THE KOHANIM - who serve in the Mishkan (6->7) (I) THE SHCHINAH ON THE MISHKAN:

The dedication ceremony of the Mishkan (8->10); laws governing proper entry (11->15); the yearly 're-dedication' ceremony on Yom Kippur (16->17)

AND ITS AFFECT ON THE NATION

Kedushat Ha'AM v'ha'ARETZ climaxing with "KDOSHIM T'HIYU"

The following chart illustrates this structure:

A) Brit - before Matan Torah
B) Dibrot
C) Mitzvot - after Matan Torah (bein adam la'makom)
D) Mishpatim - civil laws
E) T'zivui HaMishkan - Commandment to construct Mishkan
F) Shabbat
G) Korbanot - which animals can be a korban
H) Kohanim - how they offer korbanot
/ * Shchina on Mishkan
D) It's dedication and proper entry
\ * Shchina in the Camp /Land
proper behavior, lest you be kicked out
H) Kohanim - who CANNOT offer korbanot
G) Korbanot - which CANNOT be a korban
F) Mo'adim
E) Menorah & Shulchan
D) Mishpatim in aftermath of the M'kallel incident
C) Mitzvot at Har Sinai, shmita & yovel (B'har)

B) Dibrot (first 4)

A) Brit - Tochachat Bchukotei

Thus we find a chiastic structure (ABCDEFG-I-GFEDCBA) which connects together all the mitzvot given to Bnei Yisrael from the time of their arrival at Har Sinai. At the center of this structure lies the theme of Sefer Vayikra - (I). In our table, (I) is simply the kernel of the two halves of Sefer Vayikra!, i.e. the shchinah dwelling on the Mishkan and its subsequent effect on the nation. As we explained in the previous shiurim, this model reflects the funnelling of the 'concentrated' level of the kedusha in the Mishkan to the entire Land, and its impact on the spiritual character of the entire Nation in all realms of daily life.

Furthermore, this focal point also relates to theme of Sefer Shmot, as introduced at the very BEGINNING of the chiastic structure - Brit Har Sinai (A). Recall that when Bnei Yisrael first arrive at Har Sinai, God proposes a covenant: "im sh'moah tishmu b'koli, ushmartem et BRIT... v'atem t'hiyu li Mamlechet KOHANIM v'GOY KADOSH" ["And if you listen to Me and keep my COVENANT... you shall be for Me, a kingdom of PRIESTS and a HOLY NATION."] (See Shmot 19:5-6)

This covenant at Har Sinai, the climax of Sefer Shmot, is fulfilled when Bnei Yisrael follow the mitzvot of Sefer Vayikra! By keeping the mitzvot of both halves of Sefer Vayikra, we become a "mamlechet Kohanim and goy kadosh".

At the very end of this chiastic structure, once again, we find this very same covenant. In the tochacha of Bchukotei, the Land serves as God's agent to reward Bnei Yisrael should they keep His covenant, and punish them should they not.

It is not by chance that Sefer Vayikra concludes with mitzvot which were given "b'HAR SINAI", for in this structure, HAR SINAI 'surrounds' the MISHKAN. The entire purpose of the Mishkan, and its location at the center of the camp, is to serve as a vehicle through which Bnei Yisrael can translate the fundamentals of Har Sinai into the norms of daily life. This is not only a common theme to Sifrei Shmot and Vayikra, it is the eternal goal of the Jewish nation.

shabbat shalom
menachem

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Haftorah behar-bechukosai

MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH PARSHAS BEHAR BECHUKOSAI
Yirmiyahu 16:19

This week's haftorah teaches us a profound lesson in trust and faith in Hashem. The prophet Yirmiyahu introduces the haftorah and proclaims, "Hashem is my strength, my stronghold, my refuge in the day of trouble." Yirmiyahu proceeds and admonishes the Jewish people who sought other avenues and engaged in foreign practices in order to find their security. He warns them that all of their wealth and hidden treasures will be forfeited in response to their open involvement in idolatry.

Yirmiyahu delivers his final blow and says in the name of Hashem, "And you will forsake your land and you are to blame for having mistreated your inheritance which I gave you and I will enslave you to your enemies in a foreign land." (Yirmiyahu 17:4) These words refer to the dreaded prophecy of the pending Jewish exile from their precious inheritance, the land of Israel. However, the prophet seems to focus on one specific detail as the cause for this exile. Immediately following this statement Yirmiyahu reprimands the Jews and says (ibid), "So says Hashem, 'Cursed is the person who trusts in man...and turns his heart away from Hashem. It will be like a single tree in the plain which will not benefit from goodness and will dwell on parched land...Blessed is the person who trusts in Hashem...It will be like a tree planted by water which strikes its roots by the water sources.'" The position of these words suggests that the Jewish exile was caused by a lack of trust in Hashem. The commentators (see Rashi, Radak ad loc.) develop this theme and explain that this criticism relates to the failure of the Jewish people to observe properly the laws of Shmitta. The Jews were reprimanded for mistreating their inheritance and failing to return the land to Hashem during the Shmitta year. This is what Yirmiyahu means when he says that the Jewish people are to be blamed for their forsaken land. They failed to treat it

as the land of Hashem and were therefore forced to forsake it. This explanation requires much reflection and consideration. Although the mitzva of Shmitta is truly a significant one, it seems to be dealt with on a plane of its own. In connection to their lack of Shmitta observance, the prophet curses and blames the Jewish people for their total lack of trust in Hashem. This suggests that one who doesn't properly observe the laws of Shmitta possesses no trust and faith in Hashem!?! Such a statement is quite difficult to accept considering the extreme demands of Shmitta. During that year, one was expected to place his complete faith in Hashem without exerting any effort towards his sustenance or livelihood. If one didn't stand up to that test and demonstrate perfect faith can he be compared to an agnostic who lacks all faith?

A similar question can be raised regarding the severe repercussions of dealing with Shmitta fruit. In addition to the Shmitta prohibition from agricultural development a special restriction was placed on profiting from the fruit which grew on Shmitta. The Talmud (Kiddushin 20a) reveals the hardships one will suffer for violating this prohibition. They begin with the sale of his household possessions and fields and eventually result in the sale of his house and even his daughter as a maid servant. Once again, these punishments seem to be very severe for the offense one has committed. Certainly there are graver sins than profiting from Shmitta fruit yet their punishments are trivial compared to the one of Shmitta.

The answer to this can be found in the classic words of the Malbim in this week's haftorah. He explains that the prophet refers to three attitudes of individuals regarding faith in Hashem. Yirmiyahu expresses words of praise and blessing for one who places total faith in Hashem, relying solely on Hashem's assistance and not on one's personal involvement and efforts. Although conceivably effort must be exerted his source of trust and faith remains to be Hashem. There exists another attitude amongst many who place their trust dually in Hashem and in their personal efforts and involvement. Although this is not the supreme form of service and doesn't deserve words of praise it is nonetheless acceptable. However a third attitude regarding trust exists which is totally unacceptable and is actually condemned by the prophet.

Yirmiyahu curses the one who places his total trust in his personal involvement and doesn't even include Hashem as a factor in the equation. This person has completely disregarded Hashem's involvement and feels that success and fortune can be derived completely through personal efforts. With this insight in mind we can place the mitzva of Shmitta in its proper perspective. Every seventh year Hashem reminds us that He is constantly involved in our lives and accomplishments. In order to facilitate this, Hashem restricts us from being personally involved in our livelihood that entire year. If one does involve himself in securing his livelihood during Shmitta he clearly demonstrates his total faith in his personal efforts.

Hashem has definitely banned such efforts and will obviously not be involved in helping them bear fruits. This open demonstration truly reveals a total lack of faith and will inevitably force Hashem to respond by showing that sustenance and provisions are in fact from Hashem. As a nation, such defiance will ultimately result in forfeiting Eretz Yisroel, the land of Divine Providence. And on an individual basis such people will be forced to sell all of their possessions in order to provide for their sustenance. We conclude from here the importance of realizing at all times that our sustenance and destiny are ultimately in the hands of Hashem and that one may never rely totally on his own efforts.

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OU Torah Insights Project Parashat Behar-BeChukotai 5756

22 Iyar, 5756 - May 11, 1996 by Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

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Parashat Behar - Bechukotai May 11, 1996 We live in an age of sound bytes, powerful phrases that are quoted and requoted to simplistically convey an

immediate, compelling message. However, the use of such phrases, often out of context, is not a new phenomenon. Consider a two-century-old example, rooted in American history. Engraved on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia is the well-known phrase "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land unto all the Inhabitants thereof." Taken from Parashat Behar, this phrase accurately conveys the aspirations of the United States as it strove to break the bonds of oppression and chart a bold new course toward freedom. But the quotation is incomplete. A visit to the original Biblical text reveals that the sentence continues: "...a jubilee year it shall be for you, and you shall return every man unto his heritage and every man unto his family you shall return." The entire text, detailing the laws of the jubilee year, speaks of steps that will follow the proclamation of liberty. What then is the significance of the mandate to return to one's family and heritage? How does this return relate to the acquisition of liberty? On a technical level, every word of the text carries great weight. From the phrase "You shall return every man unto his heritage" our Sages learn that property reverts to its original owners on the jubilee year. Likewise, "Every man unto his family you shall return" includes the indentured servant who had previously indicated his desire to remain in servitude, the Talmud explains. Even an individual who has clearly renounced his claim to freedom is released on the jubilee year. Yet, an additional explanation of the Biblical text can perhaps be proposed, an explanation that may have caused some consternation among this country's Founding Fathers. Through the laws of the jubilee year, the Torah informs that freedom can not be gained through a complete severance with the past. In order to chart a new course toward the future, the past, with all its complexities, must be reckoned with: lessons must be learned, successes cherished, failures confronted. The Torah turns to the Jew who has sold himself into servitude because of poverty or thievery, and forces him to go free. "You can not run away from the past," instructs the Torah. "You must return to society and confront your failure." Likewise, the Torah instructs the property owner who has sold his cherished heritage, again because of poverty: "Learn from your errors, so that you will succeed tomorrow." By speaking to these individuals, the Torah, as always, speaks to us all. "Brave new worlds" are alien to Jewish thought. As we strike off toward a new dawn, we take a simultaneous step back, into our own complex past. Therein lies the wealth of experience that will guide us in our emerging endeavors. A healthy respect for that past is the best insurance for the future. Engraved on the Liberty Bell is only part of the story. Any proclamation of liberty must be accompanied by a sense of responsibility emerging from the past. Only then do we stand a chance of succeeding as individuals and as a people. The Torah Insight Series is brought to you every week as a service of OU Online torah@ou.org

behar-bechukotai 1994

'Shabbat Shalom', by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

AN EVERLASTING MARRIAGE TO THE LAND

"God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, telling him to speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you come to the land that I am giving you, the land must be given a rest period, a sabbath to God. For six years you shall plant your fields, prune your vineyards and harvest your crops, but the seventh year is a sabbath of sabbaths for the land." (Lev. 25:14)

THIS week's double portion of Behar-BeChukotai opens with the laws of shmitta, the manifestation of God's total involvement in the Land. These days, when the issue of land is on everyone's mind, we have to remind ourselves how it was possible that despite almost 2,000 years of exile, the Jews never stopped dreaming of their return to Israel - and have indeed returned in our generation. Wherein lies the origin of this relationship?

Ordinarily, Jewish law divides along two lines: requirements between humans and God, and requirements between one human and another. But there is a third realm: the duty of a Jew toward his land.

Our portion of Behar, the climax of Leviticus, emphasizes this third realm, replete with laws of tithing, the necessity of allowing the land to lie fallow during the shmitta year, and the command to return all property to its original owner in the Jubilee year.

But in order to grasp the full symbolism of a Jew's relationship to the Land, and how it is at the crux of our experience as Jews, we must note a much earlier biblical incident, when our first patriarch purchased a plot for his wife's gravesite, paying an astonishingly high sum for a relatively tiny piece of land. Abraham's purchase not only provides us with proof that our claim to Hebron reaches back to our earliest beginnings; it inextricably links the founders of our faith/nation with the Land of Israel.

Furthermore, this purchase echoes the commitment which the Bible expects a husband and wife to have for each other, a commitment which extends beyond physical life and involves a significant monetary expenditure. Indeed, the Sages of the Talmud derive our form of engagement, kidushin (with any object of material value), from Abraham's purchase of the plot that would serve as Sarah's burial place (B.T. Kedushin 2a).

The Talmud deduces the "taking" of a wife in marriage from the "taking" of the land. Thus, Halacha creates a metaphoric parallel between marriage, land and eternity, alluding to the magnificent ideal that we must develop an eternal relationship of love and commitment to our land, paralleling the relationship of love and commitment to our spouse.

But to understand what it means to be "engaged" or "married" to the land, let's first isolate three components of marriage, and then trace these components back to our portion of Behar-Bechukotai.

First of all, marriage contains the physical or sexual component, called *biya* (lit. entrance), expressing the exclusivity of the love relationship.

Second, there are the fundamental obligations to one another outlined in the Bible (*Mishpatim*, *Shmot*) and clearly delineated in the fifth chapter of tractate *Ketubot*.

Third, the Tora sees marriage as an eternal relationship. Abraham's obligations to Sarah continue even beyond her lifetime, as we have seen, and the prophet Hosea describes God's engagement to Israel: "I shall betroth you to me forever." (Hosea 2:21)

Although divorce is allowable if there is no better solution, the rabbinic view is that "Even the altar of the Holy Temple weeps when a husband and wife are divorced." (B.T. *Gitin* 90b)

Even when psychologies collide, biology heals, for the birth of a child and the eternal potential of this new creature declare the true continuity of the marital relationship.

Turning to this week's portion, we find that these elements relate to the land of Israel as well! The very opening words - "When you come into the land" - include the verb whose root refers to sexual relations between husband and wife. And when we're told to hallow the 50th year, (Lev. 25:10) the Tora employs "kidashtem," the rabbinic expression for marriage.

Second, no sooner have we entered the land than the Tora instructs us concerning our obligation to it (much like the obligations which a husband has to his wife).

Third, just as there is an eternal aspect to marriage, there is an eternal aspect to the Jews' relationship to their land. During the Jubilee, the Tora commands that all land sold in the previous 50 years return to its original owner (Lev. 25:13).

People love the land of their birth - a love so central that one's homeland is often called "motherland" or "fatherland." These terms are absent in the Hebrew language; our relationship to the land is not one of child to parent, but of husband to wife.

May we be worthy of each other.

Shabbat Shalom

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B"H

Torah Studies

Adaptation of *Likutei Sichos*

by

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

BEHAR

In the Sidra of Behar, instructions are given about the observance of two special kinds of sanctified year - the seventh year (*Shemittah* or "release") when the land was rested and lay fallow; and the fiftieth year (*Yovel* or "Jubilee") when the Hebrew slaves were emancipated and most property reverted to its original owner.

The two institutions were connected, the Jubilee being the completion of seven seven-year cycles.

It was not, itself, counted as a year in the seven-yearly reckoning.

The Jubilee lapsed as a practical institution when some of the Tribes went into exile. But we can distinguish three periods in its history:

- (i) a time when the Jubilee was observed,
- (ii) a time during the second Temple when it was not observed but was still counted for the purpose of fixing the seven-year cycle, and
- (iii) a time (like the present) when neither Temple stood, and the seven-year cycle was counted without reference to the Jubilee.

The Rebbe explores the spiritual meaning of the seventh and fiftieth years, and thus gives an inward interpretation to the three periods, and the religious consciousness they represent.

THE JUBILEE

"And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a Jubilee unto you; and you shall return every man unto his possession, and you shall return every man unto his family."

In this connection, the Talmud states: "When the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Menasseh went into exile, the Jubilees were abolished, as it is said, 'And you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof, - that is (only) at the time when all its inhabitants dwell upon it, but not at the time when some of them are exiled.'"

Despite the fact that the Jubilee - as a time of emancipation of slaves and restitution of property - lapsed, the (Babylonian) Talmud notes that even during the period of the second Temple, "They counted the Jubilees to keep the years of release holy."

Every seventh year was a year of release ("*Shemittah*"), a sabbatical year for the land when it was "released" from cultivation and lay fallow. In this cycle, according to the Rabbis, the fiftieth year was not counted, so that they had to continue counting the Jubilees in order to be able to observe the *Shemittah* years of release in their proper time, to ensure that release was observed in the seventh year after the Jubilee rather than after the forty-ninth year.

Tosefot raises an objection: The Jerusalem Talmud states, "At a time when the Jubilee is not observed as a year of release, neither do you observe the seventh year as a release." If so, during the second Temple period, when the Jubilee was not observed, merely counted, it should follow that the seven-year release of *Shemittah* should also have lapsed.

Rashi's opinion is that the seventh year was observed during the Second Temple, only as a Rabbinic law. In other words, the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds are not in disagreement, the Jerusalem Talmud asserting that the sabbatical year was not (while the Jubilee was in abeyance) a requirement of Torah law, the Babylonian Talmud mentioning that it was nonetheless continued, by Rabbinic decree.

But according to Tosefot, the two Talmuds conflict, the Babylonian asserting that the seventh year was obligatory under Torah law, independently of the Jubilee, in disagreement with the Jerusalem Talmud.

THE SPIRIT AND THE LAW

The legal decisions of the early Rabbis, the Tannaim and the Amoraim, were not made merely as a result of a this-worldly reasoning.

They were men of great spiritual insight, who saw matters in a spiritual light and then translated their vision into intellectual and legal terms.

Since their souls differed in the visionary heights they were able to reach, so also their practical decisions differed, and this was the source of their legal disagreements.

Seen in this way, we might say that the disagreement (according to Tosefot) between the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds as to whether the *Shemittah* year of release was required by Torah law during the second Temple period,

has its origin in the different levels of spirituality these two works represent. The Babylonian is the lower level. "He hath made me to dwell in dark places" - this, said Rabbi Jeremiah, refers to the Babylonian Talmud."

At the higher level of the Jerusalem Talmud, it required the sanctity of the Jubilee to complete the sanctity of the Shemittah year. At the lower, Babylonian, level, the seventh year was complete in itself even without the Jubilee.

THE LAPSING OF THE JUBILEE

When the Second Temple was destroyed, the year of release was counted in a new way.

While the Temple stood, the fiftieth year was not counted as part of the seven-year cycle. But "during those seventy years between the destruction of the First Temple and the building of the Second, and also after the destruction of the Second, they did not count the Jubilee year, but only (unbroken) seven-year cycles."

Why, then, is there a difference between the way we count the year of release now, and in the Second Temple, when the Jubilee had ceased to be observed? Using our previous concept, we might say that while the Temple existed, the level of spirituality was so high that the Shemittah year of release needed the higher sanctity of the Jubilee for its completion - at one period, the actual observance of the Jubilee at another, at least the counting of it. But when the Temple was destroyed, spiritual achievement sank to the point where the year of release no longer had any connection with the Jubilee.

THE INNER MEANING OF THE SEVENTH AND FIFTIETH YEARS

To understand all this, we must discover the equivalents of the seventh and fiftieth years in the religious life of man.

The seventh year, the time of release, represents the "acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven." This is when man suppresses his ego in obedience to G-d (bittul ha-yesh). His ego still exists, and continually needs to be silenced. That is why, as every seventh year approached, its claim would be heard: "What shall we eat on the seventh year? Behold, we may not sow, nor gather in our increase."

Even though on each previous occasion it had seen for itself the fulfillment of G-d's promise, "I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth produce for the three years," it always renewed its anxieties.

The Jubilee, on the other hand, represents the complete abnegation of one's being to G-d (bittul bi-metziut). There is no longer a contending ego.

Instead of serving G-d through an effort of willpower, one serves through understanding, an understanding so complete that it breaks through the curtain of self-deception that separates man from G-d.

It is the "year of freedom," meaning, freedom from concealment and from the ego that holds man in its chains.

TWO KINDS OF OBEDIENCE

Each of these levels has a certain merit vis-a-vis the other.

Bittul bi-metziut, or the obedience that comes from understanding, has the advantage of being extensive. It encompasses the whole man in its orientation towards G-d.

Bittul ha-yesh, or the obedience that comes from an effort of will, has the advantage of being intensive. It is an intense spiritual struggle within the soul of man.

To give an analogy: There are two kinds of relationship between a servant and his master. There is the "simple" servant, whose real desire is to be free, but who serves because he accepts the burden of his situation. And there is the "faithful" servant, who serves his master out of love and a genuine desire to obey.

Whereas the obedience of the latter is more complete, since his whole nature affirms his service, the obedience of the former is more intense because it is a result of a deliberate subjugation of part of his character. It cost him more in terms of inward effort.

THE THREE AGES

We can now see the full significance of the three periods in Jewish history with respect to the Jubilee and the year of release.

When the first Temple stood, both were observed, that is, Jewish spirituality combined obedience through love and understanding with obedience through effort and subjugation. Love lay even in their subjugation; their effort was

also with understanding. The love which transcends the self returned to fill the self.

At the time of the Second Temple, the Jubilee was no longer observed but it was still counted. Love and understanding still counted, still left their traces, in the service of effort and will.

But when the Second Temple was destroyed, all that was left was the year of release, the intense struggle to conquer the ego, and obey for obedience's sake. No trace of the Jubilee, of inward unanimity, remained.

A DISAGREEMENT EXPLAINED

So now we no longer see the things of the spirit with the clear light of understanding. We are forced to act against our reason, in a gesture of reluctant obedience. True inwardness is beyond us. And yet, the ultimate inwardness never departs. The essence of the soul is always present. In the current spiritual darkness of exile, it still works its subconscious, subliminal influence.

And this is the ultimate source of the disagreement between the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds as to whether the year of release is a matter of Torah or of Rabbinic Law in our time; that is to say, whether it still exists in its own right, or merely as a Rabbinic remembrance of times past, when the Jubilee was celebrated.

To the Babylonian Talmud, the product of exile, the observance of the seventh year and its corresponding service of "acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven" seemed like an act in itself, with no connection to that higher state of the Jubilee and the service which came through love and understanding.

The Jerusalem Talmud, with its higher spiritual awareness, still felt the Jubilee and its service as a continuing, if subliminal, presence. So they saw the year of release as still connected with, and observed in remembrance of, the time when it belonged together with the Jubilee, when the first Temple stood.

Similarly, it is also a preparation for the time when that former state will return, with the building of the third Temple, when the Messiah comes.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. VII, pp. 170-174)

BECHUKOSAI

The Sidra of Bechukosai begins with the words, "If you walk in My statutes," and the Sicha is in effect a profound commentary - almost a meditation - on this single phrase. It explores two central themes: The nature of Torah learning, and the relationship between faith and understanding.

"MY STATUTES"

Our Sidra begins with the phrase, "If you walk in My statutes," and the Sifra comments, "One might think that this denotes the fulfillment of the commandments; but when the Torah goes on to state, 'and you shall keep My commandments and do them' it is plain that in this passage the fulfillment of the commandments is mentioned. How then must I explain 'If you walk in My statutes?' (It means) that you should labor in the study of the Torah."

If "you walk in My statutes" referred to the commandments, we could understand why only statutes (chukim) were mentioned, without referring to the other kinds of command, testimonies (edut) and judgments (mishpatim). The reason would then be that these other commands, which have a rational explanation, should be performed with the same unconditional acceptance as statutes, which are beyond our understanding.

But since we must understand the phrase as referring to the study of the Torah, why is the word "statutes" used at all? The study of Torah is, for the most part, an act of intellect and understanding.

The labor involved is not merely to learn, by rote, the details of the law, but also to understand their reasons, as explained in the Written and Oral Torah. But, although statutes are beyond our understanding - as Rashi says, "It is an enactment from before Me; you have no right to speculate about it" - they form only a small part of Torah, the majority of which is susceptible to explanation.

The Written Torah itself is small in comparison with the vast mass of oral tradition. And with the Written Torah, understanding is not crucial, so that a man must make the blessing of studying or being called to the reading of the Torah even if he does not understand what is being read. Whereas the Oral Torah does require comprehension if one is to make a blessing over it.

The quantitative difference between the Written and Oral Torah is further

emphasized by the fact that the Written Torah consists of a specified number of words and verses. There can be no additions. But the Oral Torah is open-ended. A finite quantity has already been revealed. But new discoveries are always possible - "whatever a worthy pupil will come in the future to discover." To it, there are no limits.

Similarly, within the Written Torah itself, the "statutes" - laws for which no reason has been communicated to us - form a minority of the commandments. So the question becomes more forcible: Why in the context of the study of the Torah, are only statutes mentioned? Why cite a minority instance to cover the whole of the Torah? And why, in an activity of understanding, cite precisely those cases which cannot be understood?

LEARNING AND ENGRAVING

In Likkutei Torah, the Alter Rebbe explains that the word "statute" (chok) is related to the word "engrave" or "carve out" (chakikah).

Thus the phrase in question uses the word "statute" to suggest that study must be an act of "carving out," engraving the words of Torah on the soul.

What is special about engraving as a means of writing?

Firstly, the words are not added, as something extraneous, to the material on which they are written. Rather, they become an integral part of the material itself.

Secondly, and more importantly, the letters have no substance of their own. Their whole existence is in virtue of the material out of which they are carved.

So, when we are told by our verse that our learning should be "engraved" in us, we are not simply being taught that a Jew must become united with the Torah (unlike the superficial learning exemplified by Doeg, of which the Rabbis comment that it "was only from the surface outward"). For unity can sometimes come about by the joining of two separate things (as ordinary writing brings together ink and paper). And this, in learning, is not enough. Instead it must be "engraved," meaning that the person learning should have no substance, his ego should have no voice whatsoever. His whole being must be the Torah.

The great example is Moses, the first recipient of the Torah. So complete was his selflessness that he could say, "I will give grass in your field." "The Divine Presence spoke through his throat." He was a void filled by G-d.

The same is true of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, who said: "I have seen superior men and they are but few. If there be a thousand, I and my son are among them. If there be a hundred, I and my son are among them.

If only two, they are I and my son. If only one, it is I." These are words of self-praise; and self-praise is not the way of the righteous. He could say them only because he was so selfless, so filled with G-d, that it was as if he were speaking about someone else.

THE EXPLANATIONS RELATED

All explanations in the Torah have an inner unity. And the interpretation of "statutes" as "engraving" complements, rather than conflicts with, its literal sense, as laws which are beyond our understanding.

To learn Torah as if it were composed entirely of statutes is to study in a state of unconditional commitment. This does not rule out the pursuit of understanding. Indeed, the point is to understand. But only if this is accompanied by commitment. Not "I will do when I understand"; nor "I will understand because I enjoy the search for knowledge"; but "I will do, and because I am commanded, I will try to understand." This is true "labor," meaning an effort undertaken beyond the promptings of pleasure.

When learning is of this order, then it becomes "engraved." The person learning, and the Torah which is learned, become literally one thing.

"GOING"

This explains one part of the phrase "If you walk in My statutes." But what of the word "walk?" "Walking" or "going" (halicha) suggests a number of levels, and a progression from one level to the next.

For example, in the emotional life, one "goes" or ascends from the lower to the higher form of love. But surely in absolute commitment, there are no levels. It seems like a state, rather than a process.

The Alter Rebbe writes that "going" relates not to a man's task but to his reward. If one's service is, in both senses, "in My statutes," then the reward is "you shall go" - always higher. And true "going" is without limits.

FAITH AND UNDERSTANDING

However, the simple reading of the verse takes the whole phrase "if you walk

in My statutes" as man's task, and understands the reward as beginning in the next verse, "Then I will give your rains in their seasons."

It is written in Likkutei Torah that the principal element in faith lies in those levels of G-dliness which are beyond the scope of comprehension. What can be, must be understood. Faith begins where understanding ends.

This is the distinctive quality of Jewish faith. It is a faith beyond, not because of, understanding.

Now, intellect has its levels: "Days shall speak, and the multitude of years shall teach wisdom." And as one comprehends more, so one raises the threshold of faith. Yesterday's faith becomes today's understanding. This is why "statutes," too, have their levels. What was incomprehensible yesterday - a statute - is understood today and ceases to be a statute.

So, for example, G-d said to Moses, "I will reveal to you the reason behind the Red Heifer."

The Red Heifer is for us a statute. For Moses it was not, from that point onwards. It was not that Moses lacked the notion of "statute," but that for him the threshold of incomprehensibility lay higher than for us.

This is the meaning of "If you walk in My statutes." By "laboring" in the Torah, by straining to the limit, one daily raises one's understanding, and thus one raises the stage at which a law is a "statute." This is the "going": The progression to an ever-higher faith through ever-higher understanding.

And the reward is then, "I will give your rains in their season... and make you go upright" which is the unlimited "going, from strength to strength" of the future revelation, and which leads, in turn, to what lies beyond the "going" - "to the day which is wholly Shabbat and rest for life everlasting."

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. III, pp. 1012-1015)

enayim l'torah - behar-bechukotai behar-bechukotai

Enayim LaTorah Parshat Behar-Bechukotai Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University

Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land by Rabbi Joshua Hoffman

The Talmud (Bava Metziah 58b) explains that the Torah's two articulations of the prohibition of ona'ah (once in Vayikra 25:14 and once in 25:17) refer to: ona'at mammon, oppression in monetary matters, and ona'at devarim, oppression by verbal means. Both these prohibitions are written within the context of the laws of yovel (jubilee).

The first of these prohibitions, ona'at mammon, seems to flow naturally from the halachot of yovel, since we must set the purchase price of fields keeping in mind that they will revert to their original owners on the yovel. The prohibition of ona'at devarim, on the other hand, appears to be mentioned here only because it is another type of ona'ah, and not because of any essential connection between the prohibition of ona'at devarim and yovel. In 1924, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, while in America on a fund-raising tour for yeshivot in Europe and Eretz Yisrael, visited Philadelphia and delivered a speech at the Liberty Bell. He noted that the verse from the parasha of yovel, "proclaim liberty throughout the land," (Vayikra 25:10) is engraved on the bell, and continued to extol the virtues of freedom in America. His words were not mere rhetoric, but deeply felt; in Rav Kook's world-view, freedom is the ability to develop the inner self, the unique aspect of one's personality. Through exercising freedom in this way, one attaches himself to G-d. Apparently, Rav Kook felt that the political freedom enjoyed in America allowed its citizens to realize this more significant form of freedom.

With Rav Kook's understanding of the concept of freedom as a backdrop, the various halachot of yovel, whose overriding theme is the proclamation of liberty, can be seen as conforming to a certain pattern. Slaves are to be freed, so that they can develop their individuality without being subject to the will of another. Similarly, and perhaps, symbolically, the land is to be left fallow, so that it can develop on its own, without the imposition of any outside efforts. Within this context, the inclusion of the prohibition of ona'at devarim is very appropriate. The Talmud mentions the following two examples of what constitutes ona'at devarim: reminding a baal teshuva of his past deeds or reminding a convert of his previous status. Remarks of this nature freeze a person's self-image at a particular point in time, and do not allow him to move beyond it. In effect, they constitute the imposition of

someone else's image of a person upon him. An unkind remark can cause an emotional scar that will last a lifetime, and, thus, prevent its recipient from ever fully realizing his true identity. Everyone loses as a result, because the world will, thereby, never benefit from the contribution which only that person could have made. By avoiding any violation of the prohibition of ona'at devarim, we can help assure the fulfillment of ve'shavtem ish el achuzato - the return of each person to his own unique spirituality.

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"HaShem spoke to Moshe at Mt. Sinai, saying: Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them that when they come to the land which I am giving them, they shall let the land rest, a Sabbatical for HaShem. Six years you will seed your field, and six years you will prune your vineyard, and gather its produce. And in the seventh year will be a Sabbatical for the land, a Sabbatical for HaShem - you will not seed your field, and you will not prune your vineyard... And the land will give forth its fruit, and you will eat to satisfaction, and dwell securely upon it. And if you will ask, 'what will we eat in the seventh year? Behold we are not seeding nor gathering our crop!' I have commanded my blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will produce a crop to last three years." [25:1-4, 19-21]

Here Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki) asks a question, which has been repeated countless times as the paradigm for "what has one thing to do with the other?" "Ma Shmitta Etzel Har Sinai?" - What do the laws of Shmitta, the Sabbatical of the Land, have to do with Mt. Sinai more than any other Mitzvah? The entire (Oral) Torah was given to Moshe at Mt. Sinai - so why the emphasis on Shmitta?

The above is a reprint of my post last year on this parsha, but now I would like to explore an entirely different answer, offered in the Kometz HaMincha L'Maharal Charif:

Some people have a conception of G-d as so high and exalted, ruling over the highest heavens, that it is beneath His dignity to trouble himself with the mundane affairs of our lowly physical world. The Maharal Charif explains that the commandment of Shmitta offers a response to the error made by these thinkers, and should train us to think otherwise.

The commandment of Shmitta and the corresponding blessing - the special crop of the sixth year - are very much tied to the physical world. Even though G-d is so high and mighty, or even better, because G-d is so high and mighty, He is concerned with the smallest detail of the lowest of His creations.

The best proof of this synthesis between G-d's height and humility is His choice of the mountain upon which He gave His Torah to the Jewish people. Sinai is not a tall and mighty mountain - to the contrary, it is itself lowly and modest. The mountain teaches us that G-d is indeed concerned with the low and humble, and is therefore the clearest proof to the commandment of Shmitta. No matter how low our situation, G-d is concerned for each of us, as well.

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BeHar - BeChukosai

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz - Bircas Hatorah

"And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine for you are (temporary) dwellers and (enduring) inhabitants with Me." (25,23)
The Chasam Sofer explains that the prohibition to sell his land in perpetuity might make it appear (to the owner) as if it did not really belong to him,

since he can not do with the field as he wishes - to sell it in perpetuity. (He may feel as if) he is merely a (temporary) dweller on his field. But the truth is that through this very prohibition, the field remains his for ever, as an inheritance from his forefathers, generation after generation, for eternity. And (as a result) he is a true inhabitant, for ever. And so (as a result of) "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity" (for if he tries to sell it, the sale is not valid) it turns out that we are simultaneously both dwellers and inhabitants, (as a result of the decree of HaShem DR) "with Me."

"And I will give your rain in its (appropriate) time" (26,4)
The Meshech Chochma quotes the Toras Cohanim (that the appropriate time is) on Shabbos nights (when the rain will not inconvenience anybody) ... (and it occurred in the time of Shimon ben Shatach ... that the rains fell on Shabbos nights and the wheat grains grew as fat as kidneys ... and the olives grew to the size of golden Dinars, and the sages gathered some of them to keep to show future generations to demonstrate) how much harm transgression causes, as it says ... "and your sins have held back good from you" (Yirmeyahu 5,25).

The Meshech Chochma explains that (when HaShem uses) the means of miracles (to control the world), this is not oriented towards the ultimate objective (of the Creation), for HaShem created the world (in such a way) that it should follow the way of nature, which is the D-ivine measure, and can provide (literally contain) everything. For the way of nature can provide overflowing blessing and enormous happiness. But this can only occur if the person recognizes that nature is really D-vine Providence (controlling) every detail; nature is nothing but a sequence of miracles, which the observer has grown used to (and does not recognize as such).

And when a person walks righteously in the ways of HaShem, he can receive a blessing even through the means of nature. This is the blessing which Yisroel received "If you will go in My ways" (26,3), for then (if Yisroel go in the ways of HaShem) the laws which govern the behaviour of heaven and earth will manifest themselves in the appropriate way (literally go in the straight way).

For all the laws of nature are focused and limited by the ways of the Torah and the mitzvos, as Hashem arranged them in his infinite wisdom. However in order to prevent a person from erring and forgetting the Creator, who arranges and oversees nature, and so that he should not, through familiar habit, come to regard nature as an independent entity, distinct from the Creator, the supernatural (aspect of the creation was established). But this is not the ultimate purpose (of creation), for miracles are merely to provoke the hearts of men to remember the actions of the Creator in nature. For nature is merely His pure guiding hand.

This is why our sages declared that a person who recites Hallel Hagadol (Tehillim 136, which recounts the miraculous deeds of HaShem DR) every day is merely disgracing and insulting (Shabbos 118b); for this (daily recitation) implies that it is only fitting to praise HaShem for those deeds which are miraculous, but the ways of nature no longer depend on HaShem after He created them. On the other hand, one who says Ashrei (Tehillim 145) every day, is assured that he will receive a portion in the next world (Berachos 4b) because this recalls His acts which correspond to the natural order.

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behar

Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZTL on Parshas Behar

The Rav analyzed the connection between the Parsha and the Haftorah (which is read only in leap years). The prophet Jeremiah is told that he is to redeem the field of his relative, Chanamel, who had apparently fallen on difficult times and was forced to sell his ancestral property. We find in Parshas Behar, that the Torah commands that if one is forced to sell his ancestral property, a relative shall be allowed to redeem it for him.

The Rav asked why was it necessary for Chanamel to approach his relative, Jeremiah, and request that he redeem his field? Why did Jeremiah wait for a prophecy from Hashem before acting? After all, he was undoubtedly aware of the Parsha of Sdeh Achuza in Parshas Behar, and his obligation, as a close relative, to aid in redeeming the property of his relative. He should have stepped forward on his own to do this.

The Rav explained that Jeremiah was well aware of his obligation, yet he was troubled by the situation that was facing Bnay Yisrael. As he describes, the armies of Kasdim were poised to invade the city and exile the people. What purpose would be served by helping his relative redeem his field? He and all those who owned property will soon be evicted by the hordes that were about to invade the city. He could not see the reason to throw good money away on a futile act of redemption. His prophecy explains the unfolding events and commands him to act.

Jeremiah does not understand that there is a purpose behind the redemption of Chanamel's field. Jeremiah is commanded to prepare 2 documents, a Shtar Chasum (hidden contract) and a Shtar Galuy (an open, visible contract) "Sefer Hamikneh Es Hachasum Hamitzvah V'hachukim Ves Hagaluy". The contents of one document are visible to all while the other's are hidden and known only to the parties to the contract. The Haftorah concludes with the statement that Hashem is Gd of all living things, that nothing is beyond His capabilities.

The two documents are symbolic of the relationship between Hashem and Bnay Yisrael. At times, Hashem deals with Bnay Yisrael in an open and evident manner, Derech Galuy. For example, when the Jews are living securely in Eretz Yisrael, there are no massed armies of Kasdim surrounding them ready to attack, they enjoy the obvious protection of Hashem and they accept, understand and perform the Mitzvos of Hashem. Within this context, the possibility of a Jew becoming poor and selling his ancestral property is understandable, as is the obligation of his relatives to redeem that property.

There are other times when Hashem relates to Bnay Yisrael through a sealed and complex manner, a Derech Chasum. It is difficult for us to understand what exactly Hashem wants from us. The mitzvos that were obvious to us within the context of Galuy relationship with Hashem become closed Chukim which we do not understand in a Chasum relationship. Within such a context, it is difficult to rationalize the obligation to redeem the field with the reality of impending or continued exile. What once was a simple Mitzvah, has transformed into a Chok, a mitzvah that we do not understand.

Jeremiah thought that even if he redeems the property, Chanamel will derive limited benefit from it, as the exile was poised to begin. And with the conquest of the land, the original Kedusha of the land that was consecrated through the conquest of Joshua would be nullified. "Ancestral land" would have no meaning any more. Hashem commanded Jeremiah to redeem the property of Chanamel to show that even though Bnay Yisrael were about to enter the period of Derech Chasum, where they will have difficulty understanding the Mitzvos, that period will be followed by one that will be Galuy. The Jews will return to their lands after 70 years and once again they will dwell there and perform the Mitzvos in a Derech Galuy. Perhaps Chanamel will not derive benefit from his property. However his descendants will, when they return after the exile. Hashem told Jeremiah that he, Jeremiah, is looking at the short term situation. He must view things through a longer perspective. Therefore what Jeremiah thought was a useless act has deeper significance for future

generations. Jeremiah was commanded to take the 2 documents and place them in an earthen vessel so that they may last a long time and testify to the promise that, eventually, the people will once again buy and sell homes and property in Eretz Yisrael and that they will return. Hashem guarantees their return through His omnipotence in the concluding verse of the Haftorah.

The Rav added that the Jubilee year, as it relates to the return of property, is to be viewed from 2 perspectives.

On the one hand, the Torah requires that ancestral property revert to its original owners. On the other hand, it is to be viewed as a promise and a gift. For example, imagine that a destitute man sells his field. His descendants may not even be aware that at one point in time their father owned that field. When the Shofar is sounded to announce the Yovel, an emissary from Beis Din knocks on the door of the family and informs them that the property sold years ago by their ancestor is reverting to their ownership. They had no knowledge that they were entitled to this property; the guarantee that it will revert to them is a truly remarkable gift. In a microcosm, this sense of joy as it applies to the individual Jew relates to Knesses Yisrael in general. At the time of redemption, Hashem will, Kvayachol, knock on the door of the Jewish People and inform them that they are returning to their ancestral lands and are granted ownership of it again.

The Rav mentioned that he recalled as a child discussing with his father at length Seder Zeraim and the concepts and requirements of Mitzvos like Bikurim from the sections of Eretz Yisrael conquered by Joshua, those that were settled by the Babylonian returnees, individual conquest and national conquest and the status of the surrounding lands of Ever Hayarden. The Rav mentioned that his grandfather, Reb Chaim, was attracted to these topics as spent a lot of time studying them. The Rav mentioned that as a child in Russia he asked the same question asked by Jeremiah: the land has been conquered by our enemies and is no longer ours. So why are we still studying the laws of Zeraim that only apply to Eretz Yisrael? The Rav answered that It is hard to understand these laws in the context of Derech Chasum that we find ourselves. The same promise given to Jeremiah applies to us as well. We have faith in the promise of the Torah that our Yovel will come, and we too shall return to Eretz Yisrael and practice our Mitzvos in the context of Derech Galuy. We have faith that there is no task too difficult for Hashem, and that we will return to Eretz Yisrael as He promised.

In summary, The Rav related the Haftorah from Jeremiah to the Parsha as indicating that we must view the concepts of Sdeh Achuza as symbolizing both the short term, Shtar Chasum, and the long term, Shtar Galuy, that we hope to see in our days with the coming of Moshiach.

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