

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON BEHAR BECHUTOSAI - 5758

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Tonight, the evening of Friday, May 22, will be day 42, which is 6 weeks of the omer. Don't Forget! Yours, The people at Project Genesis

weekly@virtual.co.il Torah Weekly - Behar Bechukosai
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Insights Behar The 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 previous year, the sixth year, which will keep them going for that year, the next year and the eighth year. Because, of course, seeing as nothing was grown in the seventh year, there will be nothing to harvest in the eighth year." "Irv! Are you crazy?! How can you predict the future?! Your religion is going to fall flat on its face in the 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 it was on Mount Sinai that Hashem told Moshe about the mitzvah of shemita? Weren't all the mitzvos told to Moshe on Sinai? The reason that the Torah connects Mount Sinai specifically with the mitzvah of shemita is to tell us that just as shemita provides a verifiable test of the Torah's veracity -- for it would be impossible to invent a religion with such a commandment -- so too the rest of the Torah, which was given on Sinai, is authentic in both its generalities and specifics. Sources - Rashi, Chasam Sofer, Rav Yehuda HaLevi - Kuzari

Insights Bechukosai A Candle In Hell "But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them..." (26:44) It was the first night of Chanukah. The single light of the menorah gleamed with a strange radiance. Its light came from neither wax nor oil. For this was a very special menorah; a very special Chanukah. This menorah was an old wooden clog. This candle was made from boot polish. This was Chanukah in Bergen-Belsen. The Bluzhever Rebbe chanted the first two blessings in the customary festive tune, but the sound of his voice was dulled with pain. He was about to make the third blessing but then he stopped. He paused, and for what seemed like a long moment he looked around the room at each and every face. And then he made the blessing, his voice filled with strength: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, who has kept us alive, preserved us, and brought us to this time." "Amen," whispered the huddled throng. Later, one of the men came over to the Bluzhever Rebbe and said "May I ask the Rebbe a question?" "What is your question?" said the Rebbe. "How can you possibly make a blessing thanking G-d for bringing us to this time. Should we thank Him for bringing us to Bergen-Belsen? For bringing us to a time like this?" "You know" said the Bluzhever Rebbe "I had exactly the same thought. That's why I stopped in the middle. I was about to ask the Rabbi of Zaner and some of my other colleagues if I could really make that blessing. But then, I caught sight of all the faces looking so intently at that wooden clog filled with black camp shoe polish. I thought, here we are in the depths, in the blackest hole that this world can support. And here are some Yidden lighting Chanukah candles. In spite of all the evil that those murderers are doing, we are lighting candles. And I thought to myself: Master of the Universe! Who is like Your people Israel? Look how they stand, with death staring them in the face, and lovingly hang on to every word of the blessing: Who did miracles for our fathers, in those days at this season. "And I thought -- if now is not the place to thank

B'S'D' G-d for bringing us to this time -- then I don't know when is. It my holy duty to say that blessing now." In every generation they rise up to annihilate us, but The Holy One rescues us from their hands. A generation is not a long time. Maybe fifteen or twenty years. Our eyes have seen that in every generation they rise up to wipe us out. Take a walk through the streets of Jerusalem and hear the holy voices of little children learning Torah. That's a sound that echoes down the ages. That's a sound that enemies of the Jewish People have tried to obliterate in every generation. But even in the lands of our enemies, G-d will not forget His people. In spite of our rejection of Him, He will not become revolted by us. He will not reject us. He will gather us from the four corners of the Earth to His land. And He will wipe the tears from our eyes.

Busy Body "Your threshing will last until the vintage, and the vintage will last until the sowing; you will eat your bread to satiety and you will dwell securely in your land." (26:5) Such will be the fruitfulness of the land: You will still be busy threshing when the time comes to harvest the grapes, and when the time comes to plant next year's grain, you will still be harvesting the grapes. (Rashi) There's an old saying that goes "If you want something done, ask a busy person." Constant activity is a blessing. When we are busy, we feel fulfilled and healthy. When we are idle, we look for ways of killing time. We seek amusement and entertainment to take our minds off the emptiness we feel. We become restless and bored. We want to travel, trying to make our life into a glamorous travelogue. This false sense of movement is but a poor substitute for the real voyage, which is spiritual. And that most fascinating and educational of journeys cannot take place in stagnation or boredom, but only in constant activity.

The Spice Of Life "And I will destroy your sun-idols." (26:30) It's difficult for us to understand the desire that existed once for idol worship. Nowadays it seems unbelievable that someone would want to worship a doll. But had we been living when the urge for idol worship was alive and well, we would have cheerfully hiked up our coattails and run to prostrate ourselves in front of some piece of wood. At the beginning of the Second Temple, however, the Sages killed the desire for idols. We now live in a world where we do not know what the desire for idol worship is, and we cannot know. That desire no longer exists. When the Sages destroyed the desire for idol worship, a figure like a lion of fire came out of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The prophet said: "This is the same yetzer hara (desire for evil) which drew people to idol worship." The question remains, however, what was this creature doing coming out of the holiest place on earth? Was that an appropriate home for such a beast? The urge for idol worship had a holy purpose: that we should overcome it. Overcoming the urge for idol worship was a rung on the ladder to holiness. When the Sages destroyed the lust for idols, they knocked the gloss off the desire for holiness as well; now we live in a world where we have no real idea of what holiness is. We know something is lacking in our lives, but we just can't put our finger on what it is. After the the Sages killed the desire for idols, they attempted to end the desire for immorality as well. For three days no chicken laid an egg. Seeing that the world couldn't exist without physical desire, the Sages restored it to the world. The Talmud tells us that Hashem said "I created the yetzer hara (negative urge) and I created the Torah, its antidote." The word used by the gemara is tavlin -- which also means spice. Not only is the Torah the only way that a Jew can harness his physical desire so that it does not run riot with destruction, but it is also the spice that puts the zing into life, long after others have become jaded and spent.

Sources: . A Candle In Hell - Story heard from Ilan Grossman . Busy Body - Based on the Haemek Davar . The Spice of Life - Avnei Ezel
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mj-ravtorah@shamash.org May 21, 1998 behar.98 Shiur HaRav Soloveichik
ZT"L on Parshas Behar (Shiur date: 5/6/75)

"If a man shall sell a residence house in a walled city, its redemption can take place until the end of the year of its sale; its period of redemption shall be a year. But if it is not redeemed until its full year has elapsed, then the home that is in a city that has a wall (written "Lo" with an Aleph) shall pass in perpetuity to the one who purchased it, for his generations, it shall not go out in the Jubilee Year". (Vayikra 25:29-30) The Gemara (Erchin 32b) says that even though the word Lo is written (Kesiv) with an Aleph (that it has no wall), there is a tradition that it is read as Lo with a Vav (to him) (Kiree). The Gemara applies the concept of Kidsha Leasid Lavo, the land is consecrated forever. The Rav explained that there are two practical aspects to this eternal Kedusha. The first is, that as far as the land itself is concerned, Kidsha Leasid Lavo has an impact on the obligation to separate Terumos and Maasros and Shemita in modern times. The second aspect is the concept of Kedushas Mechitzos, does Yerushalayim retain its same Kedusha as a city that was once surrounded by walls, does the concept of Batay Aray Choma (homes in a walled city that are sold) apply nowadays as well? The Rambam (Shemita Vyovel 12:15) is of the opinion that we apply the concept of Kidsha Leasid Lavo with regards to Kedushas Mechitzos. Once a city was surrounded by a wall, even though the wall was subsequently destroyed, that city still retains Kedushas Mechitzos. The Gemara in Erchin derives it from the verse quoted above, based on the Kiree and Kesiv of the word Lo. Yerushalayim is sanctified because it was part of the greater Mikdash. There were 3 Machanos, camps surrounding the Beis Hamikdash. The first was Machane Shechina which extended from the Sanctuary inward. The second was the temple mount area itself, which was the Machane Leviim. The third was all Machane Yisrael which included the rest of the city of Yerushalayim, for example the sacrifices could be eaten in the city, as the city itself was sanctified. We understand that Yerushalayim with its subdivisions of Kedusha, both within and without, was a city of Mechitzos, both physical and spiritual. How does Kedushas Mechitzos apply to other walled cities? The Rav explained that the purpose of a wall that surrounds a city is to provide some extra degree of protection to the inhabitants of the city. For example, the Jews that lived in walled cities in the time of Purim celebrated Purim on a different day because the walls around their city provided them with extra security above and beyond those in unprotected cities (Ramban). The extra sense of security attributed to the wall that the Jew feels translates into a degree of Kedusha. For if the Jew is secure from constant fear of harm, he is able to serve HaShem with greater freedom and tranquility. What is the scope of this extra security? What happens if the wall around the city is destroyed? Does this now expose the people to added danger, and does the loss of security translate into a loss of Kedusha? By employing the Kiree and Kesiv on the word Lo, the Torah tells us that it does not. The sense of security that the Jew must feel cannot and must not be broken, just like the sanctification cannot be rescinded because Kidsha Leasid Lavo. The Rav mentioned that Jews feel apprehensive and insecure about the ability of Eretz Yisrael to defend itself against numerically superior armies and enemies with far greater influence around the world. Yet the Rav was always impressed by the sense of security that the religious Jew shows in the face of such adversity. The religious Jew feels that he lives in a walled city, Asher Lo (with a Vav) Choma, full of protective Kedusha, even though there is no physical wall to shield Eretz Yisrael, Asher Lo (with an Aleph) Choma. This mystical and spiritual wall protects the Jew from the surrounding hostile nations that wish to destroy him. The Kedushas Eretz Yisrael and Kedushas Am Yisrael share the common theme of Kidsha Leasid Lavo, both are sanctified and chosen by HaShem forever. This summary is copyright 1998 by Dr. Israel Rivkin and Josh Rapps, Edison, N.J.

Yated-usa@ttec.com Peninim Ahl Hatorah Parshas Behar-Bechukosai by Rabbi A Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland
 PARSHAS BECHUKOSAI ... "I will remember My covenant with Yaakov and also My covenant with Yitzchak and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember." (26:42) Rashi comments on the order in

which the Patriarchs are listed in this pasuk. The order implies that the merit of Yaakov is sufficient to bring redemption to his descendants. If his merit is found to be insufficient, we can turn to Yitzchak in whose merit our redemption will be effected. If this is still not enough, we rely upon Avraham Avinu's merit to bring about our redemption. We may question the reversed sequence of the Avos. Is not Yaakov considered to be the bchir ha'Avos, chosen of the Patriarchs? Why, then, is he listed first? In sequence, Yaakov should have been listed last as the one upon whose merit we should finally rely. A number of responses are given to this question. Horav Simcha ha'Kohen Rappaport, zl, explains that each Patriarch represents a merit to counteract a specific form of punishment. In the event Klal Yisrael is guilty of an offense which carries the punishment of fire, Hashem will remember Avraham Avinu, who courageously entered the fiery cauldron, demonstrating his conviction to the Almighty. If their transgression demands death by the sword as penalty, the merit of Yitzchak, who stretched out his neck prepared to be slaughtered as a sacrifice will stand by Klal Yisrael. Last, if Klal Yisrael's behavior warrants that they go into exile as penance for their sins, Yaakov Avinu, who was willing to go into exile to show his commitment to Hashem, will rescue them from oblivion. Since exile is the most moderate of the three punishments, Yaakov's merit is mentioned prior to that of Yitzchak and Avraham. Horav Reuven Ha'Levi, zl, M'Dvinsk uses a parable as an alternative approach to answer our question. A man was once walking in a forest. He heard the screams of another person, who was being beaten by a robber. His sense of rachamim, compassion, was aroused. He ran over and rescued the defenseless victim from the hands of his oppressor. Under normal circumstances, the rescuer's "work" would be over. He felt a sense of din, justice, however, which motivated him to punish the would be murderer for the beating he inflicted upon his victim. After he completed exacting punishment from the despot, he retrieved the stolen money and returned it to its rightful owner. This latter act was one of pure chesed, kindness, for the owner had apparently lost all hope of retrieving it. Our "hero" in this story performed three different acts of rescue. Similarly, Hashem make use of three middos, attributes, in dealing with His people's oppressors. First, His compassion for Klal Yisrael is aroused as He saves them from annihilation. Second, He takes punitive measures against those who deal harshly with His people. Third, as we saw during the exodus from Egypt, He returns to us that which we have lost in exile. These three middos are personified by traits of the three Patriarchs. Yaakov Avinu exemplified rachamim; hence, he is the first Patriarch mentioned in the sequence. Yitzchak, who was the epitome of din, is listed second in the order. Avraham, the amud ha'chesed, pillar of kindness, is the last to be mentioned.

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 VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) STUDENT SUMMARIES OF
 SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA PARASHAT
 BECHUKOTAI SICHOT OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN
 SHLIT"A "And I will bring Peace to the Land ..."
 Summarized by Dov Karoll

In the blessings at the beginning of this week's parasha (26:5-6), the Torah promises: "And your threshing will continue to the time of gathering grapes, and that will continue until the time of sowing, and will eat your bread in satiety, and dwell safely in the land. And I will bring peace to the land, and you will be able to sleep unafraid; I will remove all evil beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your land."

In the first verse, the Torah promises economic prosperity. For an agricultural society, this is expressed by large quantities of produce. The second verse expands this promise to speak of national peace. Rashi comments (26:6 s.v. Ve-natati): "We see from here [verse 6] that peace is as valuable as all the rest, as it says, 'The Maker of peace and Creator of everything.'" Rashi's claim can be understood in three ways. One possible understanding is that peace is quantitatively as valuable as those blessings which precede it. Prosperity has certain value for a person interested in leading a pleasant life, and peace has more value. There was

a group in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Benthamites, or Utilitarians) who followed the principle of "philosophic calculus." The goal of this ideology was to bring "the greatest amount of pleasure to the greatest amount of people." They would measure the ethical value of actions according to this scale - how much pleasure (or suffering) it brought to how many people. Within this ideology, to say that peace is as valuable as other goals would be an "objective" calculable statement. Peace simply has a higher point value - it brings the most satisfaction to the most people. A second possible understanding of how peace parallels other blessings assumes that peace in and of itself is not more significant than other blessings. If given a choice between peace and prosperity, perhaps prosperity would be preferable. However, prosperity without peace is insecure. The military investments, as well as the possibility that the prosperity will be ruined by war, limit the scope of peace-less prosperity. While peace alone would not be preferred to prosperity, the combination of peace and prosperity is preferred to the potential absence of both. Thus, peace is as valuable as prosperity inasmuch as it enhances the prosperity. The third possibility is that peace is qualitatively different from, and superior to, prosperity. In verse 5, the prosperity is described as an ideal state, but within the realm of normal human existence. It presents ideal physical success within the natural system. In verse 6, the concept of peace is described as a super-natural existence. Rashi (s.v. Ve-cherave) explains the last part of the verse ("the sword will not pass through your land") to mean that foreign armies will not even pass through Israel to fight elsewhere. In other words, there will be not even a hint of war in Israel. This explains how the promise of peace is greater than the concluding phrase of the preceding verse, "and you will dwell safely in the land." While the former verse refers to a secure, war-free existence, the latter verse promises a peaceful, harmonious one. The Ramban (26:6 s.v. Ve-hishbati) explains these blessings as being even farther removed from normal existence. He sees verse 6 as referring to the Messianic era. The words "and I will remove all evil beasts from land" refer to the famous verses in Yeshayahu (11:6-9): "And the wolf will dwell together with the lamb ... with a young child leading them; and the cow and bear will graze, as well as raise their children, together ..." Thus, according to the Ramban, the ramifications of peace are far more significant than those of prosperity. The peace which is described here is the apex of all human existence - a level far beyond any agricultural success. According to this third approach, peace outweighs all other blessings because it brings about an entirely different society. The significance of peace within Jewish existence is highlighted by many statements of Chazal, such as the final Mishna in Shas (Uktzin 3:12): "Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta says: God has no vessel containing blessing other than peace, as it says (Tehillim 29:11), 'God gives strength to His people; God blesses His people with peace.'" Rabbi Shimon teaches two different lessons in this statement. The first is that peace is the primary means to achieve blessing, comparable to the second possibility mentioned above. Other blessings descend into this world through peace. The second lesson is that peace creates the framework (the "vessel") for the delivery of God's blessings within this world. Peace creates the necessary backdrop for all other good that the Jewish people receive. It is important to appreciate the significance of this value. Very often, people tend to neglect the significant nature that shalom (peace) plays within Judaism, and it is important to keep this in mind. In light of the current state of affairs here in Israel, it is important to remember that ultimately peace is a very high ideal. There are many people within the religious camp who are opposed to the current peace process. There are a variety of different sources to this opposition, and these different approaches reflect varying degrees of loyalty to the above-stated principle. There are certain people who are opposed to the peace process because they feel that it is counterproductive. These people believe that territorial compromise will not bring to peace, but rather to the opposite, God forbid. This approach, opposing this process on strategic grounds, shows no disregard for the value of peace itself. Rather, it reflects a different understanding of the

means to achieve peace. Once the given strategic assumptions are made, the opposition is perfectly understandable. For the people who take this stand, peace remains a significant, perhaps even ultimate, value. There are other people who oppose the current peace process for a more basic reason. They feel that while peace is a significant value, the need for the Jewish people to retain the land of Israel is an even higher value. According to this approach, the mitzva of conquering the land, and retaining it, precludes any compromise in obtaining peace. This approach makes certain assumptions regarding the setting of priorities within Judaism, assumptions which can be questioned. While this approach does not make peace the highest priority, it does not necessarily deny its significance either. There is a third, more problematic opposition to peace. This approach builds off of pro-peace statements made by certain political leaders, which indicate that peace is to be sought after for pragmatic, economic purposes. The people who take this approach, and I have heard more than one of them on the radio, claim that the Jewish people have no need, or desire, for peace in itself. They assume that peace has no value beyond that which these politicians give it, namely, economic value. They then proceed to question the validity of the arguments linking peace to prosperity, or claim that there are values greater than prosperity. These people are denying the significance which Judaism assigns to peace! Why do they limit the advantages of peace to those stated by politicians, when there is such a clear path set down by Judaism itself?! This approach is very dangerous, and is at odds with the true significance of peace. It is important to appreciate at least the theoretical significance of peace, even if not the practical application to our day. In summary, in order to achieve our goals as a nation, the Jewish people must aim toward peace as a central goal. This is true for all of the above-mentioned reasons - because peace is quantitatively the beblensing, it serves as the framework for further blessing, and is the qualitatively different mode of existence for which we ultimately yearn. (This sicha was originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Bechukkotai 5757.)

shabbat-zomet@virtual.co.il Shabbat-B'Shabbato - Parshat Behar No 700: 20 Iyar 5758 (16 May 1998) "IT IS A JUBILEE, LET IT BE HOLY FOR YOU" [Vayikra 25:12] Dedicated to Issue Number 700 of Shabbat-B'Shabbato by Rabbi Dr. Yitzchak Alfasi, the founding editor of Shabbat-B'Shabbato "What is the relationship between the Shemita year and Mount Sinai?" This is the famous question asked by the sages in Torat Kohanim. This question is still relevant in modern times. Note that the main theme of this week's Torah portion is kindness and charity. The only reason that the mitzva of Shemita is mentioned at all would seem to be because of its relationship to charity, as is written: "Let the sabbatical of the land be for you to eat, for you, your slave, your maid, your hired worker, and the resident who lives with you." [Vayikra 25:6]. The Yovel year, the Jubilee, is mentioned in order to avoid the possibility of fraud in selling land: "'Let each man not cheat his colleague" [25:14]. The portion continues in the same vein, with the phrase "If your brother becomes poor" repeated three times [25:25, 25:35, 25:39], leading up to the summary, "for Bnei Yisrael are slaves to me" [25:55]. These verses teach the equality of all mankind before the Almighty. At first glance, the end does not fit in with the general theme of the rest of the portion, in giving the command: "Observe my Shabbat" [Vayikra 26:2]. What is the relation of Shabbat to matters of kindness and charity, with details of how to care for poor people in many different circumstances? This is the inner meaning of the question by the Midrash: What is the relevance of Shemita, which includes a series of mitzvot between one man and another, to the events at Mount Sinai, which would seem to have an objective of strengthening the bonds between the people and the Creator? The answer given in the Midrash is, "Just as Shemita was proclaimed at Sinai, together with all of its general rules and details, so were all the mitzvot from Sinai." All of the mitzvot regulating human relationships are from the same source, Sinai. A movement is

worthless if it promotes social justice without any elements of holiness, as befits issues "between man and G-d." There have been all too many movements in history with ideals of social justice, whose actions were nothing more than murder and crime. It is Shabbat which unites the two concepts of faith and social values. Shabbat is not just a day of rest, but a day of sanctity: "You have given your nation a day of rest and holiness" [from the Shabbat prayers]. One aspect cannot exist without the other. For this reason, the Torah portion ends with the command, "Observe my Shabbat ... I am G-d." [Vayikra 26:2]. Seven hundred issues of Shabbat-B'Shabbato have brought the scent of the rebuilding of Eretz Yisrael into the synagogues. In these holy places, where man stands before G-d, the occupants do not forget "the working people." >From its inception until this very day, this weekly bulletin has presented to its readers a combination of Torah as it was given at Sinai together with concern for all sectors of the people, the nation, and the land. It is fitting and proper that the same type of combination should be felt in the celebrations in honor of the country's fiftieth anniversary, especially during the current period, between Yom Haatzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year" [Vayikra 25:10]. On the fiftieth year, it is not enough to have only secular celebrations. This week's Torah portion includes a promise that once we have started with "every man shall return to his family" [Vayikra 25:10] and continued on to "It is a Jubilee, let it be holy for you" [25:12], we will achieve the final stage, with G-d's help: "In this Jubilee year, every man will return to his heritage" [25:13]. Let us hope to quickly achieve an ultimate peace and a return to the bells of redemption which started to ring out in the year 5708, and let them be fully revealed with the arrival of the Yovel, the fiftieth year.

parsha-insights@torah.org Parsha-Insights: Parshas B'har-B'chukosai

This week we read the double parsha of B'har-B'chukosai. B'har begins with the laws pertaining to shmitah -- the seventh year serving as a sabbatical year. "Va'y'dabare Hashem el Moshe b'Har Sinai laimore... v'shavs ha'aretz Shabbos laHashem (And Hashem spoke to Moshe at Mount Sinai saying... the land shall rest as a Sabbatical to Hashem) [25:1-2]." Since all of the mitzvos were commanded at Sinai, why does the Torah specifically connect the mitzva of shmitah to Sinai? Rashi explains in the following manner. The details of many of the mitzvos were elaborated upon later at arvos Moav (the plains of Moav). (They comprise a substantial part of Sefer Devarim - Deuteronomy.) The mitzvah of shmitah is one of those which were not elaborated upon later at arvos Moav. Therefore, by this mitzva it is clear that all of its details were given at Sinai. Shmitah then reflects upon all of the mitzvos, even those which were mentioned at arvos Moav, showing that they too were given in their entirety at Sinai. At arvos Moav there was only a repetition of that which had already been taught at Sinai.

The Chasam Sofer explains why, of all of the mitzvos not repeated at arvos Moav, shmitah was chosen to show that all aspects of all mitzvos were taught at Sinai. There are certain mitzvos that are undeniably of Divine origin. If a person was trying to 'ghost-write' a Torah and pass it off as being from Hashem, he would not include any difficult guarantees that would be beyond his control to fulfill. This would ultimately destroy any credibility that might have been established. Imagine a person writing a Torah and putting in this verse: "And when you'll say: What will we eat on the seventh year? And I will command My blessing on the sixth year and it will give forth enough produce to sustain you for three years [25:20-21]." You will, will you!? Anyone want to try that themselves? How long would such a religion last? Smart money says less than seven years... Shmitah is clearly from Sinai -- of Divine origin. It then reflects upon all of the mitzvos contained in that same Torah, even those whose Divine origin is not self evident, that they were all given, in their entirety, at Sinai. Shmitah contains many lessons for us. In addition to the obvious bitachon (trust) that it builds in a person, the Olat Tamid writes that it also helps to establish a sense of achdus (unity) amongst Klal Yisroel. We all began as one neshama that was contained within Adom Harishon. In order to help us retain this unity we were given many mitzvos of helping one another. Shmitah is one of these mitzvos. We often have the attitude that what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours. If I've worked hard and become successful in life, then why should I share that with you? During shmitah, all of our fruits become hefker (ownerless). This drives home the point that what is mine really isn't mine! The world belongs to Hashem. He has blessed us with certain things in order to give us the opportunity to use them correctly. If these blessings make us haughty, then we are missing the point and we are certainly in danger of having these blessings transferred to a more responsible caretaker. We can be compared to a bank teller who, with millions passing through his hands daily, begins to have delusions that he's really quite wealthy. When this attitude leads him to 'mouth off' to his supervisors when they have the audacity to ask him to do something, he quickly finds himself looking for another job. We must appreciate our blessings and use them wisely, being that we never really know why we were given what we have...

Rabbi Abraham Twerski tells the story of a person who approached the Baal Shem Tov. He was a wealthy man and hadn't come to ask for anything -- he just wanted to meet the renowned Tzaddik. The Baal Shem Tov asked him to listen very carefully to a story that he wanted to tell him. "There were once two young boys, Chaim and Boruch, who lived very close to one another, attended the same school, and became extremely close friends. The two were inseparable as they and their friendship progressed through the teenage years into early adulthood. "When they married, each

moved to their wife's hometown and for the first time that they could remember, they were separated. They pledged to remain friends for eternity and they kept in close contact through letters. As time passed and their families and responsibilities grew, the communication gradually slowed down until it ultimately had stopped completely. "Each went into business and did well. However, life is often a cycle, and Boruch who had been at the top of his business fell to the very bottom. He eventually became penniless. Thinking that perhaps, his friend Chaim would help him, he borrowed travel money and went to Chaim's town. When Chaim saw his old friend, he embraced him and the two spoke for hours. When Boruch got up the courage and told Chaim about his sorry state of affairs, Chaim didn't waste a moment. He summoned his accountant and had him tally all of his assets. He immediately wrote a check, giving half of all of his worth to his friend Boruch. Boruch, with tears of joy and thanks, returned home. "With money to invest, Boruch rebuilt his business and once again became wealthy. However, as Boruch's wheel of fortune ascended, Chaim's descended. Chaim quickly became impoverished. Remembering his good friend that he had helped so generously, Chaim traveled to see Boruch. Boruch, however, showed a very different attitude. "Chaim, there is a very clear pattern here. We can't both be prosperous. Either you succeed while I suffer or I succeed while you suffer. If I help you, I'll lose everything. Even if I'd be willing to do that for you, I have a responsibility to my wife and children. I'm very sorry but I can't help you." Chaim returned home empty handed and broken hearted. "Years passed and both Chaim and Boruch left this world. When they came before the heavenly court, Chaim was allowed entry to Gan Eden (paradise) for the kindness he had shown to Boruch. Boruch, for turning his back on his friend, was being placed in a different 'department'. Chaim then proclaimed: "How can I enjoy Gan Eden when my friend Boruch is suffering? True, he might have failed his test, but I refuse to enter Gan Eden without my friend Boruch!" At this point the Baal Shem Tov told the man to listen very carefully and to look him in the eye. "There was a heavenly uproar. Allowing Boruch into Gan Eden was impossible, yet Chaim refused to enter without him. The court decided on the following solution. Both souls would be sent back to this world. Boruch would be rich and Chaim's would be a pauper. If this time Boruch would help Chaim, then the sin would be rectified and Boruch would be allowed to ultimately join Chaim in Gan Eden. The person bearing Chaim's soul became a pauper who survived on alms. He'd keep just pennies for himself and gave the rest to support his wife and small children. The person bearing Boruch's soul became extremely wealthy. "One day, the weary pauper made his way to the wealthy man's town. Tired, hungry and depressed, he felt he hadn't the strength to continue. Perhaps someone would give him more than a few pennies and he'd be able to take care of his family. Winter was approaching and his children needed shoes and warm clothing. If only he could speak to a wealthy man in person, perhaps he would give generously and allow him to meet his family's needs. "The beggar knocked on a wealthy man's door and was met by the butler who gave him a few pennies. "Please, let me speak to your master for just a few moments", he begged. The butler explained that his master was far too busy to meet with him. The beggar began to cry, "please, ask him to have mercy and grant me just a few moments". "At this point, the wealthy man heard the commotion and asked the butler what the problem was. He explained that a stubborn beggar wouldn't accept the alms he had given him and was demanding to meet with the master personally. The wealthy man became furious. "The audacity! If he refuses to leave, throw him out!" The butler, heeding his master, literally threw the pauper down the stairs. Exhausted, famished and humiliated, the beggar breathed his last breath and his soul returned to the heavens. As the Baal Shem Tov finished his story, the wealthy man became to cry. "That is what happened to me just last week! How was I to know? How was I to know!" The Baal Shem Tov continued. "You had the opportunity to correct your sin. Had you met with him and listened, perhaps his words would have pierced your heart. You would have repaid that debt of long ago... Now, you still can redeem yourself. Leave only enough for the necessities of life for you and your family. The rest of your wealth must be given to the beggar's widow and orphans."

Shmitah. Achdus (unity). We must appreciate our blessings and use them wisely, being that we never really know why we were given what we have... Chazak, chazak v'nischazek. Good Shabbos, Yisroel Ciner

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halak@virtual.co.il HALAKHA - 22: Birkat Ha-gomel "Birkat Ha-gomel" by Rav Yair Kahn Translated and adapted by Rav Eliezer Kwass

Birkat ha-gomel, a blessing of thanks, is recited, according to the gemara in Berakhot 54b, by four people: "One who has completed a sea voyage; one who has traveled through the desert; one who has been sick and healed; and one who was imprisoned and freed." Understanding a number of disputes that arise surrounding this topic leads to a fuller understanding of the nature of this berakha.

8 DISPUTES 1. HA-GOMEL: OBLIGATORY? Though the gemara states "Four MUST give thanks," Acharonim argue about whether this blessing is a "chova" (requirement) or a "reshut" (usually translated as optional). The Magen Avraham (OC 219:1) asks why, in his time, women were not accustomed to make this blessing, and answers, "Perhaps because these blessings are a 'reshut.'" The Peri Megadim (OC 219:1) argues that these blessings are obligatory.

2. TYPE OF DANGER "FOUR must give thanks." Rishonim argue about whether in just these four cases (sickness, prison, sea voyage, desert travel) one must give thanks, or whether anyone who survives any dangerous situation must recite the blessing. The Rivash (337) holds that anyone who survives danger should recite birkat ha-gomel, whereas the Avudraham quotes an opinion that only these four people should recite ha-gomel.

3. LEVEL OF DANGER There is an argument about what level of danger obligates making birkat ha-gomel. The Ri Migash says that not only one whose imprisonment was related to corporal punishment, but even one imprisoned for monetary matters makes the berakha when he is released from prison. Though it is possible that the Ri Migash saw any imprisonment as a danger to life, it is likely that he holds that the blessing applies even when there is a lower level of danger. Even the Arukh (entry "Arba") writes that it includes, "One who was sick and became healthy, even if it was a headache or a throat ache." Even if there was no mortal danger involved there is still an obligation of birkat ha-gomel. According to the Ra'avad (quoted in the Ramban's "Torat

Ha-adam," "On Medicine" - p. 49), however, "The same is true for the blessing of the sick [i.e., the birkat ha-gomel]; it is only made over an internal wound that involves danger to life." [The Ramban himself does not accept this.] 4. TEXT There is a dispute about the text of the blessing. A. Our text of the Talmud reads, "What should he say? ... He who does good acts of kindness (Barukh gomel chasidim tovim)." B. The Rif's text reads, "Blessed is He who does acts of kindness to the guilty ones, who has done only good for me (Barukh gomel la-chayavim tovot she-gemalani kol tuv)." This is also the version accepted by the Rambam (Hilkhos Berakhot 10:8). C. Some have "Who has done only good for US (she-gemalNU)." 5. "SHEM U-MALKHUT"? There is even an argument about whether the name of God and a declaration of His royalty ("shem u-malkhut") are essential parts of the blessing. The Ra'avad (in the Torat Ha-adam, Medicine, p. 49 and in his glosses on the Rif 44a) writes that, "All of these blessings ... are optional and not obligatory. ... The proof is that there is no need to mention God's name and His royalty." The Tosafot (Berakhot 54b s.v. Patartan) argue that the name of God and His royalty are essential to the blessing. 6. HOW MANY PEOPLE PRESENT? There is an argument between the Amoraim quoted by the gemara about how many should be present when birkat ha-gomel is made: "Abaye says that one must thank before ten ... Mar Zutra says: Two of them must be sages ..." Each of them quotes verses to support their opinion. "Rav Ashi countered [that based on these verses]: Perhaps all of them must be sages ... Perhaps there must be ten of the general population plus two sages ..." The gemara concludes with the expression "Kashia!" (this is difficult), indicating that there is substance to Rav Ashi's objections. There is a dispute between the Rishonim about how to rule based on the gemara. R. Yehuda Ha-chasid rules that twelve (ten people and two sages) are needed, whereas the Rambam rules that ten people, two of them sages, suffice. 7. TEN PEOPLE ESSENTIAL? Rishonim argue about how crucial it is to have ten people (or twelve, depending on the aforementioned argument) present when the blessing is made. Rabbeinu Yona holds that the blessing cannot be made without ten, while the Ritva holds that the presence of ten people is ideal but not essential. What is the basis of the need for ten for the blessing according to Rabbeinu Yona, who holds that they are an essential requirement? If the ten must be men and the speaker is counted, there simply seems to be a need for a minyan, similar to the marriage blessings, which must be recited in the presence of a minyan (see Ketubot 7b and the Arukh Ha-shulchan Even Ha-ezer 62:13). The need for twelve, though, is puzzling. So is the Maharnach's approach, that there must be ten present besides the speaker. The Magen Avraham is also certainly not working with the concept of a minyan, for he says that a woman can make the blessing before nine women and one man. 8. HEARING BUT NOT SAYING IT One last problematic gemara (also Berakhot 54b) and a dispute among the Rishonim who comment on it: "Rav Yehuda was sick and recovered. ... They said to him, 'Blessed be the Merciful One who gave you back to us.' ... He said to them, 'You have absolved us from giving thanks' ... But he did not give thanks [personally]?" There is no need, for he answered 'amen.' This gemara is difficult, because based on the principle, "hearing a pronouncement is like saying it ('shome'a ke-oneh)," there should not have been a need for him to answer amen. In fact, the Re'ah says that he really fulfilled his obligation without the amen. The Ritva explains that amen was essential because the one who exclaimed "Bless God for returning you," did not intend for him to fulfill his requirement of birkat ha-gomel. This is also problematic, for even if the obligated person answers amen, the one speaking must intend for him to fulfill his obligation (see OC 213:3) [though the Ritva might argue against this.] The Rosh (quoted by the Tur) answers differently: "Since they were not obligated in this blessing, he was required to answer amen." The Rosh seems to argue with the Rambam (Hilkhos Berakhot 1:11) who says that in order for "shome'a ke-oneh" to take effect, both the speaker and the listener must be obligated in the mitzva. THE NATURE OF BIRKAT HA-GOMEL In order to understand the conceptual basis of these eight disputes, arguments we must look into the nature of birkat ha-gomel. Our starting point is the argument between Talmidei Rabbeinu Yona and the Ritva (7 above) about the need for ten. Rabbeinu Yona's approach, that ten are essential, needs explaining, especially if it is not a requirement for a minyan (according to the Maharnach [ten plus him] and the Magen Avraham [9 women and a man] quoted above). Why should a blessing require the presence of ten people? Rabbeinu Yona might hold that birkat ha-gomel is not only a blessing, but a requirement to GIVE THANKS (hoda'a), in line with like the gemara's formulation, "Four must give thanks." Giving thanks must be performed as a public pronouncement, before a congregation of people. The Maharnach's approach, that there must be ten people besides him, makes sense according to this understanding of the mitzva. The Ritva may say that thanks can also be offered in private, but that the presence of ten enhances it. He might also say that birkat ha-gomel is, by nature, an ordinary blessing, but that when ten are present there is an added dimension of public thanks. This issue, the nature of birkat ha-gomel, might also be at the heart of the Rambam and R. Yehuda Ha-chasid's argument (6 above) about whether there must be ten or twelve people present for the blessing. The Rambam might say that it is a blessing that requires just a minyan. R. Yehuda Ha-chasid might say that, based on the verses the gemara quotes, birkat ha-gomel is a pronouncement of thanks that requires ten plus an extra two sages. The Ra'avad (5 above), who holds that birkat ha-gomel does not require the name of God or a mention of His royalty, might also say that its nature is that of a pronouncement of thanks and not a blessing. The Tosafot and Rambam say that, like any other blessing, these are required. The Peri Megadim (OC 219:1) seemed to understand that there are two elements to birkat ha-gomel, for he says that if one is in doubt about whether he said birkat ha-gomel he should say it without mentioning God's Name and His royalty, "For [at least] thanks (hoda'a) are required." Some of the other issues that came up in the Rishonim might also be related to how much birkat ha-gomel is a standard blessing and how much it is a pronouncement of thanks.: TEXT OF THE BLESSING (4 above): The text the Rif quotes, "Who does all good things for ME," adds a personal touch that is in line with a pronouncement of thanks, whereas the other text, "Who does good things for the undeserving," is more objective, a standard form for a blessing. TYPE OF DANGER (2 above): A blessing, with its formal aspect, is likely to be limited to four specific situations, whereas a pronouncement of thanks, with its spontaneous aspect, might apply to all types of salvations. LEVEL OF DANGER (3 above): The blessing, with its formal side, might apply to the four instances, no matter how dangerous the situation was. Anyone who got out of prison or was healed from a sickness must make the blessing. But the requirement for a pronouncement of thanks might

involve having been in a certain intense danger. The Ra'avad and the Rambam seem to be consistent in their approaches. According to the Ra'avad one makes birkat ha-gomel on all types of salvations, but only when the danger was intense. The Rambam limits the blessing to the four cases quoted by the Talmud, but holds that it should be said no matter how intense the danger. The Meiri quotes an opinion that holds that though there is no obligation to make birkat ha-gomel over other salvations outside the four categories mentioned by the gemara, it is still permissible to do so. There is no obligation - because of the formal requirements of a blessing; however, if one wants to make birkat ha-gomel over some other salvation it is permissible. Because there is an extra element to birkat ha-gomel, that of a declaration of thanks, one can (when he wants to) make it even where not formally required. THE THANGSGIVING OFFERING A parallel distinction is made with regard to the korban toda - the thanksgiving sacrifice. Rashi on (Menachot 79b) and the Tosafot Rid (on Rosh Hashana 5b) distinguish between an obligatory and an optional thanksgiving sacrifice. The toda sacrifice is only obligatory if one experienced one of the four salvations listed in the gemara in Berakhot, based on Tehillim 107. There seem to be two tracks of the toda sacrifice, parallel to the two tracks of birkat ha-gomel we have related to: Aa) a formal sacrificial obligation for the four salvations; and B)b) an option to donate a thanksgiving offering, even though one is not obligated, to if one experienced some other type of salvation. This second track is not a sacrificial obligation but rather the ability to express thanks through a sacrifice. This parallel is supported by the Rosh's assertion (Berakhot 9:3) that birkat ha-gomel was instituted in place of the korban toda. OBLIGATION/OPTION If birkat ha-gomel is part of the system of blessings, it is most likely obligatory, like other blessings. If, however, it is an expression of thanks, we are open to the option that one is not obligated to give thanks, but fulfills a mitzva when he chooses to say ha-gomel. The Ra'avad is once again consistent, proving that it is not an obligation from the gemara about R. Yehuda's sickness we quoted above. Since the blessing said by the visitors in the anecdote we recited said without mentioning God's Name or royalty, it is clearly not an obligatory blessing. The Rambam rejects the Ra'avad's proof: perhaps birkat ha-gomel is an obligation only for the person who went through the experience himself; an outsider is permitted to give thanks for his friend's salvation, but not through a blessing mentioning God's Name and royalty. SHULCHAN ARUKH The Shulchan Arukh (OC 219:3) writes: "If he made the blessing [birkat ha-gomel] with less than ten [present], some say that he fulfills his obligation, and some say that he does not. It is proper [if less than ten were present] to repeat it before ten but without mention of God's Name and His royalty." In 219:9 he writes "These four [sickness, prison, desert, sea] are not exclusive. ... and some say that one should [make birkat ha-gomel] only for these four. It is best to make the blessing [for other dangers] without mention of God's Name and His royalty." The Mishna Berura explains these halakhot based on the principle, "In the laws of berakhot, one is lenient in situations of doubt." Because of a dispute between the authorities, there is doubt about whether one is obligated to make the berakha when ten people are not present, or for a salvation that is not one of the four special cases; hence, in these cases, one does not mention God's name and His royalty in the berakha. In effect, he says a non-berakha. We offered an alternate explanation, namely, that one is able to fulfill a pronouncement of thanks without the essential elements of a formal berakha. Without ten people and outside the four special cases of salvation mentioned in Tehillim 107, one is not required to make a berakha but does make a pronouncement of thanks. HEARING THE BERAKHA R. Akiva Eiger explains: "Here (birkat ha-gomel), the principle that 'hearing is like saying' does not apply, because he (the one who was healed) must say a different text, 'who did good things for ME.' However, through answering amen he thereby also praises and gives thanks, and fulfills his obligation." According to R. Akiva Eiger, the amen does not relate the berakha to the person, but is the pronouncement of thanks itself. Such an explanation is only possible if all that is required is a pronouncement of thanks and not a formal berakha. Based on this, the Ritva's assertion - that in the gemara's anecdote Rav Yehuda was able to fulfill his obligation by answering amen even though the guests did not intend for him to - is understandable. The amen itself was his pronouncement. The Rosh's answer - that he had to answer amen even though they were not obligated in ha-gomel - also seems to be based on the same approach. It was not "hearing is like saying" that allowed him to fulfill his obligation, but the amen itself. THE RA'AVAN: TWO TRACKS When formulating the law of birkat ha-gomel, the Ra'avan adds a word: "Four are obligated to BLESS and give thanks." According to the Ra'avan there are two obligations, to make a blessing and to give thanks. When he mentions the need for ten he also adds a word: "He must GIVE THANKS before ten." It seems that one fulfills his obligation of a blessing when there are less than ten, but giving thanks requires a public pronouncement. The Ra'avan also mentions the anecdote about Rav Yehuda and says, "If others visit him and say, 'Blessed is He who saved you before us,' and he answered 'amen,' he fulfills giving thanks." It seems that through his amen he fulfills the requirement of giving thanks, but not that of making a blessing. His friends are not obligated in a blessing, and he can, through his amen, only fulfill the obligation of giving thanks. (Daf Keshet #85, vol. 1, pp. 345-348.) YHE'S WEB SITE: HTTP://WWW.VIRTUAL.CO.IL/EDUCATION/YHE Copyright (c) 1998 Yeshivat Har Etzion.

weekly-halacha@torah.org Parshas Behar-Bechukosai - Matters of Interest By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

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 halachah. A lenient ruling by Harav M. Feinstein(1) holds that a corporation may pay ribbis for deposits, loans, or credits which it receives, even if the corporation is totally owned by Jews. The reason for the leniency is that a "borrower" is halachically 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 are no Jewish "borrowers" and ribbis may be paid by the bank or the corporation. This ruling of Harav Feinstein 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 Harav Feinstein'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 when borrowing money from Jews(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).

HETER ISKA We have previously mentioned the concept of heter iska. While it would be almost impossible to explain the logic behind this very complicated transaction, suffice it to say that heter iska is a tool - debated, revised, and perfected over many centuries - with which a lender may lend money to a borrower and be halachically permitted to collect interest on the loan. It is a legal document which transforms the loan [or part of it] into an investment, with a remote chance of loss of principal to the lender. Since ribbis is only forbidden when a fully guaranteed loan takes place, this tool allows the lender to earn "profits" from his "investment" as opposed to "interest" from a "loan", and it is therefore permitted. Heter iska transactions are very common today and, when done under the auspices of an expert in these matters, are used in many business dealings in a permissible manner. We must, however, point out an important reminder. According to the opinion of most poskim, including the foremost poskim of our generation(8), a heter iska is valid only if the money is being borrowed to invest in a business or in a property, or if the money being borrowed will free other money to be used for a business transaction. A person who borrows money to pay for his daughter's wedding, for instance, or for any other ongoing expenses, and does not have any profit-generating holdings or assets, may not use a heter iska to borrow money(9). Many people are not aware of this limitation and are constantly borrowing money, or over-drafting their bank accounts from Jewish-owned banks, relying on a heter iska which is unacceptable according to most views. Certainly, one who is scrupulous and is generally not lax when it comes to other mitzvos of the Torah, should be aware that this transaction is not valid according to the majority opinion, and that it may be Biblically prohibited(10). When this situation arises, an expert rav should be consulted, since there are methods that can be utilized in order to make this transaction valid according to most poskim(11).

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(12). 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(13). 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(14). [Note that many 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(15). 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(16).

FOOTNOTES: 1 Igrs Moshe Y.D. 2:63. 2 See the various views in Har Tzvi Y.D. 126; Harav Y.E. Henkin in Eidus I'Yisrael, pg. 170; Minchas Yitzchak 1:3:4:1 6-17; Chelkas Yaakov 3:190; Minchas Shelomo 28; Bris Yehudah 7, note 66. 3 One must investigate the validity of the heter iska before dealing with a Jewish-owned bank. See Kol ha-Torah # 40 for a 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 Yehudah 38 note 10. 5 Igrs Moshe Y.D. 2:63. 6 Bris Yehudah 40 note 21 7 Harav M. Feinstein and Harav Y. Roth (quoted in Mishnas Ribbis 2, note 7). 8 Igrs Moshe Y.D. 2:62; Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav S. Wosner (quoted in Kitzur Dinei Ribbis, Kuntres Acharon 13:3); Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in Toras Ribbis 16, note 85). 9 Stocks, certificate of deposits, pension plans, or other saving accounts which generate a profit, are considered like a business; Toras Ribbis 16:15. The amount of money lent must be no greater than the amount of money which is generating the profit; Harav S.Z. Auerbach, ibid. 10 Note that there are lenient views, based on the ruling of the Sho'el u'Meishiv (1:3-160); see Darkei Teshuvah 177:41; Chelkas Yaakov 3:199; Bris Yehudah 38, note 18. 11 See Kol ha-Torah, # 43, pg. 250-259 for a lengthy explanation of this issue. 12 Y.D. 160:17. 13 Bris Yehudah 17, note 6; Mishnas Ribbis 6, note 5. See also L'horos Nosson 6:76. 14 The Laws of Interest, pg. 35. 15 Minchas Yitzchak 9:88. 16 Mishnah Berurah 450:2 based on Rama Y.D. 162:1. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun, ibid.

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daf-insights@shemayisrael.com Insights to the Daf: Eruvin 11-13 INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Jerusalem Rosh Kollel: Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld daf@shemayisrael.co.il

Eruvin 11b 1) HALACHAH: WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE A "TZURAS HA'PESACH" OPINIONS: The Gemara lists several requirements that are necessary to meet in order to build a valid Tzurah ha'Pesach to permit carrying in a Mavoy: (1) Rav Chisda rules that the board or cord that serves as the top of the Tzurah ha'Pesach must be resting on the *top* of the two sideposts. If it is resting on (or wrapped around) the sides of the posts, it is not a valid Tzurah ha'Pesach. (2) Rav

Chisda also rules that the Tzurah ha'Pesach must be strong enough to support a door* (even though one does not actually have to affix a door), but the door can be made of a light material, such as straw. (3) Reish Lakish in the name of Rabbi Yanai rules that a Tzurah ha'Pesach must have a recognizable place in which to *insert a door-hinge* (i.e. a small hole in the ground near one sidepost of the Tzurah ha'Pesach). (4) Rav Nachman adds that there is a *leniency* in the laws of Tzurah ha'Pesach. The two sideposts *do not have to reach* the board on top (although they must be directly below it), they may even be several Amos away from it. (The concept of "Gud Asik" makes it as if they reach the top board.) Rav Sheshes argues and requires the board to be actually resting on the sideposts. However, the students of Rav Ashi told Rav Acha the son of Rav Avya that Rav Ashi did not teach any requirements for the Tzurah ha'Pesach. What does this mean? ... HALACHAH: THE SHULCHAN ARUCH (OC 362:11) rules that it is necessary to fulfill conditions (1) and (2) in order to have a valid Tzurah ha'Pesach (this is like the Rif, Rambam, and Rivash mentioned above, (b)). He also rules in accordance with Rav Nachman that it is not necessary for the sideposts to reach the top board.

2) THE TOP OF THE "TZURAS HA'PESACH" QUESTION: Rav Nachman says that the sideposts of the Tzurah ha'Pesach do not have to actually touch the top of the Tzurah ha'Pesach. Even if the top is supported by some other means, even if it is several Amos away from the top of the sideposts, as long as it is directly over the sideposts it is sufficient. REBBI AKIVA EIGER citing TESHUVOS HA'RE'EM (Rabeinu Eliyahu Mizrahi) explains that the reason is because we apply the concept of "Gud Asik" ("the wall goes up") and it is considered as if the sideposts reach the board or cord on top, forming a complete Tzurah ha'Pesach. (The MISHNAH BERURAH in OC 362:62 also cites the words of Rabbi Akiva Eiger.) If the sideposts do not have to actually touch the top of the Tzurah ha'Pesach because of "Gud Asik," why -- according to Rav Ashi earlier (9a) -- does the Korah that lies across the Mavoy have to actually touch the top of the walls of the Mavoy (or be at least within three Tefachim of the walls)? The Korah should be able to be far above the walls of the Mavoy, and "Gud Asik" will make it as if it is resting on them! ANSWER: TOSFOS (9a, DH she'Eini) explains that we do not apply many of the theoretical concepts of structural extension to a Korah on a Mavoy. The reason is because the enactment of Korah enables carrying in the Mavoy by serving as a Heker, a recognizable indication that the Mavoy ends at that point. (Even according to the opinion that Korah Mishum Mechitzah, it is *also* a Heker, and not just a Mechitzah.) If it is not resting directly on the walls of the Mavoy, people do not notice it and it does not serve its purpose. A Tzurah ha'Pesach, on the other hand, does not work by serving as a Heker, but rather it forms a Mechitzah, a partition, which does not have to be readily apparent to an onlooker. (RESHASH)

Eruvin 13b 2) 150 REASONS TO BE "METAHER" A "SHERETZ" AGADAH: THE VILNA GAON gives a novel explanation for this Gemara. When the Talmid said that he was able to be Metaher a Sheretz with 150 "Ta'amim," he did not mean that he had 150 reasons or ways to be Metaher a Sheretz. Rather, he meant that he had only *one* way, and that was the Kal v'Chomer that Ravina expressed. What, then, did he mean when he said that he had 150 "Ta'amim" to be Metaher a Sheretz? The verse (Shemos 27:18) describes the dimensions of the Chatzer of the Mishkan as being "a length of one hundred Amah, and a width of fifty by fifty." The names of the cantillation marks (*Ta'amei* ha'Mikra) on those words ("Me'ah ba'Amah v'Rochav Chamishim ba'Chamishim") are Kadma v'Azla, Munach Revi'a. The Talmid meant that by understanding the "Ta'amim" (cantillation notes) on the words describing the dimensions of 100 x 50 of the Chatzer, one can find an allusion to the source of the Kal v'Chomer. How is this? We learn (Sanhedrin 59b) that originally the snake had legs and feet with which it walked ("Kadma v'Azla" -- "it went ahead and walked"). When the snake sinned, Hashem took away its legs and made it lie crouched, close to the ground ("Munach Revi'a"), from where it would bite man and bring Tum'as Mes into the world. It is from the snake, that spreads Tum'ah but is Tahor, that a Kal v'Chomer may be learned to be Metaher a Sheretz!

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http://www.jpost.co.il/Columns/Article-2.html Thursday, May 14, 1998
SHABBAT SHALOM: God's country By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN (May 13) "I am the Lord your God who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan to be your God." (Lev. 25:38) One of the most thought-provoking statements in the Babylonian Talmud says that only if one lives in the Land of Israel does one have a God, while living outside the country is like not having a God (Ketubot 110b). The proof-text the Sages turn to is the verse in this week's portion of Behar, cited above. Rashi, in his commentary, quotes Ketubot, but with a slight difference in emphasis "...Whoever lives in the Land of Israel, I am to him God; whoever goes out of Israel is as one who serves idols." According to this reading, the exile is equated with idolatry (not merely with not having God), and the real infraction is incurred not merely by living in the Diaspora but rather by leaving the Land of Israel once one has been there. The rabbinic teaching remains problematic. How are we to understand the concept that to have or not to have a God depends on the stamp in your passport? Do people outside Israel automatically deny God? And if that's not the case, how do we explain the apparent connection between God and the land so emphasized by our Sages? The Pnei Yehoshua suggests that the Land of Israel is qualitatively different from any other land in the world, in that what happens to the Israelites within it is a direct result of divine intervention. Elsewhere the major influence comes from God's "messengers," such as the natural forces of sun, wind, rain, rivers and the stars of the zodiac. The Sochaczower Rebbe, R. Abraham Bornstein (1839-1910), accepts this notion, and uses it to criticize residents of Israel who accept financial help from Jews in the Diaspora. He writes: "...If a person lives in the Land of Israel but his livelihood depends on the Diaspora, he is not a servant of God but a servant of His servant - the angel who governs the land from which his income is coming. Such a situation does not fulfill the obligation to inhabit the land, and this person may just as well stay in the Diaspora. This is the reason many Torah scholars and leaders chose not to emigrate to the Land of Israel..." I would argue, however, that the unique relationship between God and the Land of Israel must be connected to the major laws of this week's Torah portion - the sabbatical and jubilee years. Only then will we be able to understand the biblical reference to God's unique presence in the Land of Canaan. The Kli Yakar

(R. Shlomo Efraim of Luntschitz, 1550-1619) initially explains the necessity of our leaving the land of Israel fallow in the seventh (sabbatical) year for the sake of replenishing the soil and strengthening it for further plantings. However, he is forced to reject this "agricultural" reason because, if that were indeed the logic behind the biblical command, the punishment for not keeping the sabbatical year should have been a crop failure during the eighth year due to an unnatural depletion of the soil, instead of the punishment of exile. Furthermore, if the reason why we don't work the land during the seventh year is in order to enrich the land's intrinsic resources, then the Torah should not have described the sabbatical year as a Sabbath unto God, but rather as "a Sabbath unto the land." The Kli Yakar then goes on to provide a reason close to the idea proffered by the Avnei Nezer, but he links it to the laws of the sabbatical and jubilee years. The intelligent individual could imagine that after allowing the land to lie fallow during the sabbatical year - and in the event of the jubilee, the land would lie fallow for two whole years - the Israelites would not have enough to eat the following year. The fact that they did, demonstrated to them - as well as to the rest of the world - that Israel and her people were directly guided by the divine, and not by the usual laws of climate and agriculture. R. Yitzhak Arama (Pahad Yitzhak, 1420-1494) gives a further interpretation, seeing in the sabbatical-jubilee cycle an allegory to ultimate redemption. Six years of work and one year of rest are intended to invoke the messianic era that will begin at the end of the sixth millennium, when the world as we know it will also come to a halt; then the "thousand years of Sabbath," or the messianic millennium, will begin. Thus the sabbatical and jubilee periods remind us of God's promise of world redemption. The only problem with this interpretation is that it seems to ignore the fact that if we need to be reminded of the existence of a seventh millennium, we don't have to turn to the laws of the sabbatical year. We see the concept of redemption in terms of the laws of the Sabbath itself: six days of labor and the seventh day of physical rest and spiritual creativity. The Sabbath is a model for and foretaste of the messianic period, and the Sabbath applies all over the world.

All of these interpretations are certainly cogent, but I would like to suggest another view. The biblical phrase, "a Sabbath unto God" for the sabbatical year summarizes exactly how our land is different from all other lands: Jews in all lands are commanded to keep the Sabbath, but there is only one place in the world where even the land must keep the Sabbath (six years of work and one of rest) - here in Israel! The significance of the land keeping the Sabbath means that in the very essence of Israel's soil lies an expression of the divine will. God thereby becomes intimately involved, as it were, in the very soil of the Land of Israel. I would also add that every other country in the world distinguishes the religious from the civic. Only in Israel can Jews lead a life not of synthesis but of monothesis, not as a Jew at home and a cultural gentleman in the marketplace, but as a whole and seamless child of God and descendant of Abraham. This is the grandest dream of Israel - and the vision which allows for all the residents of our nation to live in constant proximity with God. Shabbat Shalom

Yated-usa@ttcc.com May 20, 1998 Text of Speech by Vice President Albe rt Gore, Jr., at the Agudah Dinner My Dear Friends, I too have a heavy heart this evening. I bring you heartfelt condolences on the passing of Moshe ben Basya Bluma who has been such a remarkable force for the understanding and respect and growth of Orthodox Jewry over the last fifty years. I offer tonight my prayers for his family. I spoke on the telephone with Mrs. Sherer earlier and with one of his sons. I expressed to the family condolences on behalf of the entire nation. I offer my prayers tonight as well for Agudath Israel and for America as well. Rabbi Sherer's contributions to spreading religious freedom and understanding have been truly indispensable in defending and expanding those same rights for all Americans in all faiths. Many of you who are younger may not fully realize what a giant has passed from our midst. When Rabbi Sherer was still only twenty years old studying at Rabbinical College in Baltimore, one day a week he would come down to Washington to talk to people in Congress, talk to people in the White House and elsewhere in the executive branch. This was at a time when such visits were not commonplace as they are today. He was a pioneer in promoting understanding. He came to dispel stereotypes. He came to share knowledge and, humbly, wisdom. He came to spread understanding. And he came to demand freedom. There was no organization or community behind him, backing him, guiding him, or encouraging him. Of course that is not necessary for a true leader. He took it upon himself to step forward and express the concerns of the Jewish community in the highest halls of government. His is a truly remarkable story. And again in the context of these times it is not always easy to fully appreciate and understand exactly what he did in those times. Because in the beginning it was not easy. I remember hearing stories about his efforts to gain access to the White House more than a half century ago. In those days he was not always warmly welcome. But he was not deterred. I don't know a time ever in his life when he was deterred. And in his later years as has been mentioned he was invited to the White House to meet with President Clinton and President Weizman and was offered two choices of kosher meals. He said, "That's how far we have come." I say, that is how far Rabbi Sherer himself has brought us. I have heard that he would, sometimes, sadly muse that if only back then there had been this access to the halls of government how many lives might have been saved that were lost in the Holocaust. By his movement and his actions, Rabbi Sherer lived out the commitment, never again. By explaining the Orthodox community to America, Rabbi Sherer awakened members of Congress and members of the administration, members of the Supreme Court, and citizens of this Republic to how much the interests of America and Orthodox Jewry coincide. Yes, indeed, our entire nation has suffered a great loss. But there is not a single person in this vast hall this evening who knew Rabbi Sherer who would have any doubt whatsoever about his wishes that you carry on. And that we carry on this evening. He would want us to address the concerns that need to be addressed. And among his many concerns, Rabbi Sherer was deeply committed to the security of Israel. So let me say to you tonight, as I wish I could again say personally tonight to Rabbi Sherer, the United States has an absolute, uncompromising commitment to Israel's security. It will never be shaken, it will never be broken. And let me express the absolute conviction that Israel alone must decide the steps necessary to ensure that security. Whatever Israel decides cannot, will not, will never not ever, alter our fundamental commitment to Israel's security.

In addition, let me assure you that our policy has not changed. The parties themselves must decide the status of the West Bank and Gaza and the US will not prejudice that decision. So too, to any who do not wish Israel well within the range of my voice: if you believe that any disagreements on this our that, would or even could ever lead to a weakening of the bonds between the United

States and Israel, much less lead to a tearing of those bonds, think again. Those bonds will always be firm, always unshakable, always strong, always secure. And indeed I know very well that the security of Israel is not an abstract issue for you. It is a personal issue much more than a policy issue. Not only have you visited Israel often, you continue to do so. Your brothers and sisters, your sons and daughters study in Israel, live in Israel. And those family members, along with others in Israel, should never have to fear taking a bus, or walking the street or shopping in an open market, should never have to fear about the lurking threat of terrorist attacks. The people of Israel have the right to feel safe on their own streets and in their own homes. And we will stand behind Israel. Forever. The security of Israel is one area where President Clinton and I have always agreed with Rabbi Sherer and let me go on to say that there are so many others. We were deeply honored to work with Rabbi Sherer and Agudath Israel on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. We believe that government must never do anything to interfere with worship, but government should do everything it can to remove barriers to worship. We issued an executive order to preserve religious freedom in the federal workplace. In part, so Sabbath observers would face no conflict with their long work hours. Our Equal Opportunity Employment Commission filed a class action lawsuit against a store that required employees to work on Saturdays and Sundays in violation of their respective religious beliefs. And I assure you we will continue our efforts to support religious freedom in the private workplace. We argued before the Supreme Court that remedial education for disadvantaged students should be able to be offered in religious schools as well as public schools and the court agreed with our arguments. We also argued before the Supreme Court that there should be no constitutional right to hasten a human being's death through assisted suicide. And the court agreed. We responded when you raised concerns about United States Department of Agriculture regulations that would make it impossible to certify meat and poultry as kosher. And we responded when you sought to provide kosher MRE's, that is: Meals Ready to Eat, to US troops in the field. You stand as leaders in guiding the government of the United States toward better, more understanding representation of those with deep religious convictions. These steps and many others inspired and encouraged by Rabbi Moshe Sherer represent significant victories for religious freedom and religious expression. But as a former divinity student with great respect for the study of Scripture, I have been especially moved by Rabbi Sherer's leadership and the growth of Daf Yomi, the page-a-day Talmud study that has undoubtedly increased devotion to Talmud worldwide. This has deepened appreciation of the faith and tradition that bind you together as Jews. Culture and tradition are sacred elements of your faith. They live and perpetuate themselves by common experience and common meaning. When you can gather thousands of people worldwide to devote their attention to the same sacred text on the same day and continue for seven-and-a-half-years to the completion of the Talmud you have given the greatest gift possible to the followers of the faith. You have made it vibrant and relevant and meaningful in their daily lives. On September 28th, 1997, 70,000 people gathered in places like Madison Square Garden and Nassau Coliseum and all across the country to read the final page of Talmud and complete the Tenth Cycle. I have heard that at the conclusion of the final page there was spontaneous dancing and singing. But Rabbi Sherer said this is more than a celebration. It is a powerful demonstration that the spirit of Israel is eternal. And symbolic of that eternity, and after the seven-and-a-half-year completion of the Talmud, with barely a pause another Rabbi stood and began reading once again, in unison with thousands all over the world, the first page of Talmud. Daf Yomi is symbolic of one of your great contributions to society. And this contribution I believe counts for more even than your acts of goodness and kindness and social services, youth activities, and education programs because it includes and encompasses all of that. Your great contribution is to demonstrate to the Orthodox community, to the wider Jewish community and to the non-Jewish American public that it is possible to be committed to your traditional religious ideals and still be actively involved in American society. I'm told that fifty-five years ago when Rabbi Sherer was in Rabbinical school and the world was in the fourth cycle of Daf Yomi most Jews who came to America thought that they might not be able to keep the Sabbath anymore. They thought, I'm told, that to live in America they would have to compromise and that the new country would not be hospitable to the deep-felt expression of their religious faith in ways that did not easily harmonize with the common patterns of weekly life. Well, thankfully, under the leadership and spiritual guidance of Rabbi Sherer, you proved them wrong. You have proved that you can be active citizens in every single dimension of American life and still keep and practice the deepest elements of your faith. You have proved that you can still read Talmud every day, you can still observe kosher dietary laws, you can still keep the Shabbat, you can still observe and pass on the traditions practiced by your ancestors thousands of years ago. You can still provide your children a solid Jewish education so that they can be loyal adherents of their religion and pass it on to their children. I believe that lesson, the truth of which you demonstrate in your lives every single day, is an enduring and encouraging lesson for all of the United States of America and for the world. Ultimately, if all Americans can do what you do in balancing their spiritual lives and their secular lives, if we can affirm our deepest spiritual beliefs and still remain active and productive and fruitful in the secular world, then we will move toward that more perfect union envisioned by our founding fathers. For upholding your highest ethical values in the face of accelerating change in the world, and for using those ethical standards to bring about positive change, I thank you and the United States of America thanks you. In gratitude and respect then for your great leader, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, and for you and for his success in strengthening Agudath Israel and its noble and sacred cause, let me close tonight by saying as you will say this coming week as you finish the third book of Moses, Sefer Vayikra, Chazak, Chazak, Venischazek!

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Harriet, Ron & Atara Sheinson in honor of the forthcoming marriage of Baruch to Ora, daughter of Shlomo & Shoshana Shinnar

The Sabrin family in honor of Bella Sabrin's birthday

Do We Need Doctors?

In summarizing the blessings which appear in Parashat Bechukotai, Ramban (13th century; a physician by trade) writes as follows: "When Bnei Yisrael are at peace [with G-d], their lives will not proceed according to the laws of nature at all, whether as relates to their bodies or their Land, whether to the individual or to the nation as a whole. Rather, Hashem will bless their bread and their

water and will remove all illness from them such that they will not need doctors or medicine. Thus it is written (Shmot 15:26), 'I am Hashem who heals you.' . . . One who consults prophets does not consult doctors, for how can there be room for doctors in G-d's house when He has promised (Shmot 23:25) to bless your bread and water and remove illness from amongst you!"

Another prominent physician, Rambam/Maimonides (12th century) appears to disagree. The mishnah (Pesachim 4:9) describes that King Chizkiyahu hid away "The Book of Cures." In his commentary on this mishnah, Rambam writes: It was explained to me that King Shlomo wrote this book, and when a person was sick, he would follow the instructions in this book and be cured. When Chizkiyahu saw that people no longer relied on G-d, he hid this book away. Now listen, and I will tell you why this is wrong - how could they attribute such foolishness to Chizkiyahu? Following their confused logic, if a person is hungry and he eats bread, is that a failure to rely on G-d? Fools! Just like I acknowledge and thank G-d when He gives me food, so I thank Him when He provides me with medicine. [As for Chizkiyahu's hiding the Book of Cures, Rambam explains that it contained cures which were inherently sinful.]

Do Rambam and Ramban disagree regarding the propriety of consulting doctors? R' Eliyahu Dessler z"l (20th century) explains that they do not. Ideally, a person would recognize that everything that happens is from Hashem. When a person became ill, he ideally would consult a prophet to determine the _spiritual_ root of his illness. Having done this, he would know what Hashem wants from him and how to cure himself. If a person were on a spiritual level where he should consult a prophet and he instead consults a doctor, this would indeed be a sin. Even Rambam/Maimonides would agree to this, for Rambam writes that medicine is as necessary as food, yet we know that Moshe Rabbeinu attained a level where he could go 40 days without food. However, we live in a world where Hashem hides Himself. In such a world, one must certainly pray to G-d for his health, but he must also cure himself through natural means. (Michtav Eliyahu III p.170)

R' Chaim Elazar Shapira z"l (the "Munkatcher Rebbe"; died 1937) writes: The gemara derives from a verse in the Torah that: "Doctors have reshut/permission to cure." It follows that if they have permission to heal, then we have permission to be cured. However, any time Chazal refer to something as a "reshut," that thing is optional. Therefore, there have been tzaddikim throughout history who have refused to consult with doctors. Moreover, whenever one performs an action which Chazal classified as optional, it can be counted as a mitzvah or as a sin, depending on the doer's intentions. Thus, if one sees his physician as G-d's messenger, one performs a mitzvah. If one places his trust in doctors and ignores G-d, one sins. (Divrei Torah IV No. 94)

R' David ben Shmuel Halevi z"l (the "Taz"; 17th century) writes: The Shulchan Aruch states that the Torah gave doctors reshut/permission to cure, and it is a mitzvah to do so. Which is it, reshut or mitzvah? He answers: The Torah gave doctors permission to cure, because the Torah knew that a time would come when we would not be worthy of prophets. Now that that time has come, it is a mitzvah to consult doctors. (Turei Zahav, Yoreh Deah 136:1)

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ravfrand@torah.org "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Behar-Bechukosai -

The Shofar of the Jubilee Year: Positive Peer Pressure In this week's parsha we learn of the mitzvah of Shmitah and Yovel - the Biblical command that every seventh year the land in Eretz Yisroel [Israel] must lie fallow and after every seven Shmitah cycles the Jubilee year begins in which all servants go free. To signify this, the Torah commands (Vayikra 25:9) "You shall sound the Shofar throughout the land", a mitzvah performed on Yom Kippur of the Yovel year -- the point in time at which time all slaves went free. The Sefer HaChinuch in this week's parsha analyzes the significance of the Shofar. He points out that the matter of sending away one's servants is very difficult for a slave-owner to carry out. Slave owners sustained a very substantial financial loss. In general, owning slaves was a financial bonanza. Just imagine -- for anyone who has a business -- what it would be like not to have to pay workers. There was no salary, no social security taxes, no pension, no Blue Cross, nothing. It was almost like having free labor (other than cost of food and basic care). Now, all of a sudden, they must wave good-bye to the slaves. Slave owners incurred major financial losses. The Chinuch says that in order to give the people the strength and the encouragement to fulfill this very difficult command, the Torah requires the sounding of the Shofar throughout Eretz Yisroel, to give everyone the sense that they are not alone in making this sacrifice: It is a phenomenon that transpired throughout the land. When the Shofar sounded throughout Eretz Yisroel, the slave owner recognized "I'm not the only one taking a financial killing; everyone is taking a financial bath. Everybody has to send out their slaves today." The Chinuch emphasizes that nothing strengthens the spirit of mankind like universal public action. The fact that "everybody is doing it" is the greatest source of encouragement. That, according to the Chinuch, is why the Shofar was blown. If everyone else has to do it, it is easier for me to do it as well. This is a tremendous insight. Nonetheless, we still might ask, "So what if everybody is doing it -- I will still to take a beating!" Why does this help? All we have to do to answer this question is to read the newspaper or listen to the radio. The whole country is bombarded with the slogan "Just Say No to Drugs". Thank G-d that in our society, for the most part, we are insulated from this, but it is a plague that is smiting the entire country (makas medinah)! It is destroying all of society. There is not a kid in all of America that does not know that drugs are bad for him. So are they all idiots? They know it is going to hook them, they know it is going to kill them, and yet they all start? The answer is "Everybody is doing it". Peer pressure, social pressure is such that it can make a person do something that he does not want to do. One can know something is bad for him, but as the Chinuch says, there is no greater encouragement to human activity than the fact that everyone is doing it. That is why even though I know I have to send away my slave and it will cost me a fortune, I am strengthened by the fact that I know everyone is doing it as well. That is human nature. We are tremendously influenced by our peer and social pressure... to the extent that we will do something that is inherently bad for us, but we will be able to do it because everyone else is doing it. The lesson to be learned from this is the importance of community. A person needs to understand that not only is one's spouse and immediate family a tremendous influence, but the type of community that one chooses to live in is as

well. If everyone does something in one way, a person will feel obliged to conform -- for good or for bad. A person will act better than he would usually act, because of community standards, and on the other hand a person will act worse than he would otherwise act, because "listen, this is what everyone is doing". We do not outgrow this. When we were teenagers there was peer pressure, but even as adults we have peer pressure, social pressure. Therefore it is imperative, no matter how old a person is, that he find a community that wants the right things out of life. He must put himself in such a community and put his children in such a community. Children will not be able to withstand the forces of peer pressure. They are human beings and whatever their peers do, they will do. One should not fool himself. We are all influenced, especially children and teenagers who are so dependent on what their friends say. This is what the Torah is reminding us through the blowing of the Shofar throughout the Land.

The Martyrdom of Giving Up One's Money The Beis Av, Rav Schlesinger, picks up at this point on the words of the Sefer HaChinuch. He says the words of the Chinuch are correct, but they don't solve the whole problem. The Talmud relates [Rosh HaShannah 34b] that the Yom Kippur blowing on Yovel actually consisted of the exact same sequence of sounds with the exact same prayer ritual as performed ten days earlier on Rosh HaShannah [every year]. If the whole purpose -- the Beis Av argues -- of Shofar blowing on Yovel was to remind each slave owner that "everyone was doing it", there would be no need for the specific blowing of Malchiyus - Zichronos - Shofaros. There would be no need for exactly Tekiah- Teruah-Tekiah. There would be no need for the whole ritual of Rosh HaShannah all over again. Why did the Yovel ritual replicate Rosh HaShannah all over again? Rav Schlesinger offers the following answer: One of the main factors of Shofar blowing on Rosh HaShannah is that we should remember Akeidas Yitzchak. When we hear the ram's horn on the New Year, we remind ourselves of the dedication and self-sacrifice of our Patriarchs and we decide mentally that we are also ready to sacrifice for G-d's sake. We accept the Yoke of Heaven and we say to ourselves that even though it will require martyrdom, we are ready to do it. This is what we think about when we hear the Shofar blowing on Rosh HaShannah and remember the Akeidas Yitzchak. On Yovel, we are also asked for Mesiras Nefesh ["giving the soul"]. On Yovel we also have to think about the Binding of Yitzchak. We also have to think about willingness to sacrifice. But what type of sacrifice? The sacrifice of "With all your heart and with all your soul" (bechol levavcha u'vchol nafshecha), was on Rosh HaShannah. The sacrifice of Yovel - Yom Kippur is "With all your wealth" (bechol me'odecha). Let's not kid ourselves - we love our money. We are attached to it. It is difficult to give away our money. When the Torah tells us to give away our slaves, it is telling us that we have to make a mesiras nefesh of money. This requires almost as much mesiras nefesh as giving away one's life. Therefore it becomes necessary to once again conjure up in our minds the image of the Binding of Yitzchak. We have to picture what it means to be a Jew. What it means to be a Jew is not only to serve G-d with our very lives, but even with our money. The Gemara in Sanhedrin [74a] tells us there are certain people for whom parting with their money is a greater sacrifice than parting with their lives. Who is this odd ball who loves his money more than his life? We ask ourselves incredulously, "Do such people really exist?" The answer is absolutely yes. This is why people work 14, 16, 18 hours a day. Why do people have coronaries as a result of their businesses? I know of a man who, during the race riots that occurred in Baltimore 30 years ago, went down to his liquor store in West Baltimore with his shot gun to fend off the rioters. We say, "Gee, he's crazy!" But in truth he is just a little crazier than many of us. We also give our sweat and our tears and our energy and the best years of our life to financial gain. The Gemara of "there is a person whose money is more dear to him..." is not the "one in a million" case. Therefore, the Torah asks us for a mesiras nefesh to send away our slaves on the year of Yovel and asks us to "kiss our money good-bye". This is exceedingly difficult for a human being. We have to go through Rosh HaShannah all over again. We have to hear Kingship! We have to hear Remembrances! We have to hear Shofar Sounds! We have to remember the Binding of Yitzchak. Because we are asked to give up something that is extremely precious to us... that is our wealth (bechol me'odecha, "with all your wealth" in the Shema), which is nothing less than mesiras nefesh. Rav Pam, shlit"a, once said that the trial of the generation which preceded us and lived through the Holocaust was the trial of "with all your hearts and with all your souls". They had to pay the price of being a Jew with their own lives. Our trial, the nissayon [test] of Jews in America in the 1990s is "with all your wealth". Give your money. Give your money to Yeshivas, give your money to the Mikveh, give your money to settle the Russian Jews, give your money. It is hard; it is mesiras nefesh; but that is what we must do. It is the trial of our generation.

Sources and Personalities Sefer HaChinuch -- Book of Education, a catalog of the 613 commandments, organized in the order of the weekly Torah portions. Published by Rav Aharon HaLevi of Barcelona in 13th century Spain Rav Elyakim Schlesinger -- Author of Sefer Bais Av, Rosh Yeshiva in London. Rav Avrohom Pam -- Contemporary Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Torah Vodaath, New York.

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