

# PHILOTORAH

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ שֶׁתְּשַׁלַּח מְהֵרָה רְפוּאָה שְׁלֵמָה מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם,  
רְפוּאָת הַנַּפְשׁ וְרְפוּאָת הַגּוּף לְפְצוּעֵי הַמְּלַחְמָה, וְלִנְפָגְעֵי מַעֲשֵׂי טְרוֹר וְאִנְטִישְׁמִיּוֹת  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁהֵם - עִם שְׂאֵר חוֹלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. אָמֵן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured;  
may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel; may He end these wars with  
total success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever we are.



## בהר-ב'חוקדתי

**YERUSHALAYIM** in/out **B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI**

כ"ב אייר ה'תשפ"ו • May 8-9, '26



**6:49 PM**

PLAG

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R' Tam

**8:37 PM**

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PhiloTorah (305bb) - 1 - all at once file

## Twentieth of Iyar

Thursday, May 7th (this year) is/was the 20th of Iyar.

Bnei Yisrael arrived at Sinai on the first of Sivan 2448 (in the 3rd month of the Exodus - Nissan, Iyar, Sivan - but only 6 weeks or so after leaving Egypt).

This was followed shortly thereafter by Matan Torah.

The people remained camped at Sinai for almost a year.

Thoroughly grounded in Torah, the People received their first marching orders with the lifting of the Cloud on the 20th of Iyar 2449.

The was to be the day that the next part of the original prophecy was to be put into motion - G-d's bring us into Eretz Yisrael. The original "Plan" was for the trip to take just a few short days, even shorter than the 11-day walk it would have been.

Due to multiple complainings and the Sin of the Spies, that quick trip turned into a 40-year journey.

The 20th of Iyar was to be the day that we would leave physical Har Sinai behind, but take the Torah and its teachings with us, to the Place

where HaShem wants us to live our lives by those teachings.

Perhaps we can say that the 20th of Iyar represents a fateful day to decide and act on our plans to make significant changes for the better in our Jewish lives. (Aliya is the major example of this, but not the only one.)

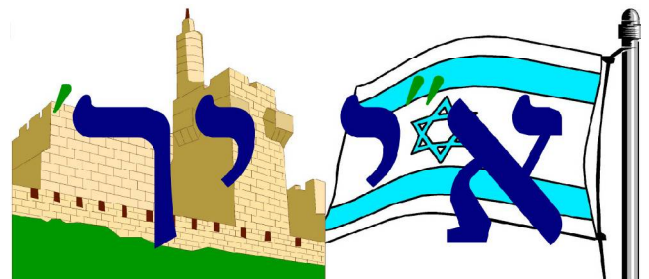
Although most of those reading these words will be doing so after 20 Iyar, the idea and message still apply.

## Yom Yerushalayim

28th of Iyar (this year, Thursday night - Friday, May 14-15) is the fifty-ninth anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, which took place on the 3rd day of the Six Day War (in June 1967).

The day celebrates the miracles and victory of the Six Day War performed and achieved by the partnership of HaKadosh Baruch Hu and the IDF (and the Jews in Israel and around the world whose T'filot and other activities contributed to the effort.)

More on Yom Yerushalayim IY"H next week. Note that this year, Yom Yerushalayim begins on May 14th, the secular date of the Declaration of the State of Israel, 78 years ago.



# B'HAR- B'CHUKOTAI

	B'har	B'chu	B&B
of 54 sedras in Torah	32nd	33rd	-
of 10 in Vayikra	9th	10th	-
lines	99	131	230
rank	50th	47th	-
Parshiyot	7	5	12
P'tuchot	1	3	4
S'tumot	6	2	8
P'sukim	57	78	135
rank (Torah/Vayikra)	50/10	46/7	-
Words	737	1013	1750
rank (Torah/Vayikra)	50/10	47/7	-
Letters	2817	3992	6809
rank (Torah/Vayikra)	50/10	47/7	-
<b>Mitzvot</b> (pos/prohib)	7+17	7+5	14+22

## MITZVOT

Although with "only" 24 mitzvot, B'har does not seem to be in the major league of mitzva sedras, the fact is that there are only 7 sedras with more mitzvot than B'har (46 sedras with fewer). Yet there are only 4 sedras smaller than B'har and 49 longer. Even B'chukotai's 12 puts it tied (with Va'etchanan) for 15th place.

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

## Kohen - First Aliya - 13+5 p'sukim - 25:1-18

[P> 25:1 (7)] One of the most famous sedra opens in the Torah: "And G-d spoke to Moshe AT HAR SINAI saying..."

The unusual nature of the pasuk is based on the rare additional words in the otherwise very familiar pasuk: And G-d spoke to Moshe saying (which occurs 69 times in the Torah - in Sh'mot, Vayikra, and Bamidbar; in last week's sedra, Emor, 11 times - the most of any sedra). The mitzvot that follow deal with Sh'mita, the Sabbatical year. A basic element of our belief is that the whole Torah was revealed by G-d to Moshe (and by him to us) at Sinai (and not just the Ten Commandments, as some people - Jews and non-Jews - think). Why then mention the location of this particular set of commands?

Note too, that the Torah identifies location of G-d's speaking to Moshe, five other times: Thrice B'MIDBAR SINAI and twice B'ARVOT MO'AV. But this time is unique, because all mitzvot were given at Sinai. So why mention the place?

One of the principles by which the

Talmud teaches us the Oral Torah is, When one issue is singled out for special treatment, the teaching not only applies to the one issue, but to the whole group from which it came. Here the teaching is this: Just as Sh'mita with its details was given at Sinai (it says so specifically right here), so too were all mitzvot given at Sinai with their details (and not just "chapter-headings"). This idea is an important feature of the Chain of Tradition, and is an essential component of EMUNAT CHACHAMIM, the trust, faith, and confidence we must have in each link of the chain.

More - we still can ask the question: Why was this particular set of mitzvot chosen by G-d to teach us the general rule? One commentator offers the following insight: The mitzva of Sh'mita teaches us (among other things) that G-d is concerned with the mundane things of this world. He cares about us and our earthly fields and trees. And He exists, not only in the lofty realm of the heavens, but His Essence fills the world. G-d's choice of lowly Har Sinai as the venue for giving us the Torah, was meant to teach us the same idea. How appropriate that the Torah tells us that it was at Sinai that G-d commanded us the laws of Sh'mita.

Putting Har Sinai with Sh'mita also reminds us of the supposed-to-be inseparable partnership of Torah and Eretz Yisrael. As if to say, even

though the Torah was given outside of Israel, we must never lose sight of the fact that G-d's Will and intention is that we should live a Torah life in the Land of Israel. Exile was and is, our fault. However long the Jewish People have been in exile, and however well we have learned to cope with that exile, we still - always have and always will - belong in Eretz Yisrael. What's Sh'mita doing juxtaposed to Har Sinai? That's what!

"When you come to the Land..." The Land is to be rested each seventh year. For six years one works the fields, and on the seventh there is to be a Shabbat to HaShem for the Land; neither land [326, L220 25:4] nor trees [327, L221 25:4] may be worked. Even that which grows on its own, may not be harvested (in a normal manner) from the land [328, L222 25:5] or trees [329, L223 25:5]. (The Torah uses the term "vineyard", but means to include all trees.) Sh'mita year is for all to benefit from the land, without the usual sharp distinction between land-owner and others; and for the animals. Sh'mita gives the land a chance to restore itself, and gives us a chance to put our relationship with the environment and with the other creatures who share the Earth with us, in perspective. It helps us get our priorities straight. Sh'mita reminds us of Who created the world and still rules it. And it gives us a wonderful opportunity to devote more time to Torah study.

# MITZVAnotes

Note that there are four prohibitions here in B'har pertaining to Sh'mita, and there is a positive command to rest the land in the seventh year, in Parshat Mishpatim. It is noteworthy, though not that unusual, that an area of Jewish Law is presented to us by the Torah in this way - with both positive mitzvot and prohibitions (and not necessarily from the same portion of text). Shabbat, Sh'mita, Yom Kippur, Yom Tov, kashrut (to an extent), et al, all are heavy with serious prohibitions. As such, we are duty-bound to "toe the mark" lest we violate G-d's Law. Our motivation would tend to be "Fear of Heaven". Strong motivations, but not as beautiful and powerful as the motivation of "Love of G-d" that is at play when one strives to scrupulously fulfill G-d's commands. One should not see Sh'mita merely as a series of "don't do this", don't do that". We should rejoice in the opportunity to serve G-d, demonstrate our faith and confidence in Him, be freer to study His Torah and perform mitzvot. Observing Sh'mita is not just avoiding the prohibitions. It is a positive statement of our belief in the Creator and Master of the World.

[P> 25:8 (17)] (When the majority of Jews are in Israel and the infrastructure of Torah life in Israel is intact,) the Sanhedrin is required to

count seven successive seven-year cycles - 49 years [330, A140 25:8]. On the Yom Kippur of the 50th year, the Shofar is to be sounded (as we do each year on Rosh HaShana, and as we do in symbolic fashion at the conclusion of Ne'ila each year) [331, A137 25:9]. This 50th year is to be proclaimed KODESH as Yovel - the Jubilee year [332, A136 25:10]. Farming the land is forbidden [333, L224 25:11] (as during Sh'mita), as are harvesting that which grows on its own [334, L225 25:11] and gathering the fruit of the trees in a normal manner [335, L226 25:11]. Yovel is holy; we "eat of the land". During Yovel one returns to his estate.

There is an important connection between the blowing of the Shofar on Yom Kippur of the Yovel year, and the annual Shofar-blowing on Rosh HaShana - the fact of the matter is that we learn about the blowing of Shofar on Rosh HaShana from that of Yovel. The word SHOFAR is not used in the Torah in the context of Rosh HaShana. Rosh HaShana is to be a T'RU'A DAY, but we would really have a difficult time knowing what to do on Rosh HaShana had it not been for the Oral Torah teaching us the parallels to Yom Kippur of Yovel. Comparing the texts of the two days, we find a Tishrei-Tishrei match and a T'RU'A-T'RU'A match. The Gemara teaches us that we answer the question as to how to make a T'RU'A in Tishrei (Rosh HaShana), by doing it the same way

as the other Tishrei T'ru'a is produced - with a Shofar. This method of learning Rosh HaShana from Yom Kippur of Yovel is known as a G'ZEIRA SHAVA (equivalent terminology). It is one of the methods by which the Written Word and the Oral Law are linked. G"Sh is part of the Tradition passed down through the generations.

In business with others, one must deal ethically [336, A245 25:14] (the mitzva is actually the command to the courts to carefully carry out the rules of business conduct); it is forbidden to cheat in business [337, L250 25:14] (since land returns to its original owners at Yovel, real estate purchases are only for a specific period. Prices therefore, should reflect the number of years remaining until the next Yovel. This is the context of the mitzvot regarding proper business practices.)

## MITZVAnotes

Rambam describes certain situations in business in which one can technically get away with something, but he is considered not to have acted in "a proper Jewish manner". Perhaps the positive commandment (in addition to all the prohibitions) comes to teach us not to take advantage of the technical loopholes, but rather to conduct ourselves with the highest standards of business ethics.

There is more than one way of

explaining what a positive command adds to our observance of mitzvot, when the prohibition(s) are already on the books. This was one explanation.

**On another note...** Let's say that an art dealer passes off a good-quality fake as an original master. To be sure, the art dealer has violated the halacha against cheating. But whose law has he violated? Is this type of cheating a rabbinic prohibition inspired by the Torah's statements regarding cheating vis-a-vis the years remaining until Yovel. No. It's more. Oral Law teaches that Yovel is the particular context for a wide category of prohibition. In other words, in this case, we are not dealing with Torah-inspired rabbinic extension of Torah Law. We are dealing with Talmudic DEFINITION of Torah Law. There's an important difference.

Not only must one not take unfair advantage of his fellow in money-matters, he must be careful not to "oppress" or deceive others with words [338, L251 25:17]. This prohibition is very serious, as evidenced by the link the pasuk makes between it and the mitzva to revere (fear) HaShem.

Safeguard and obey the statutes and laws of the Torah and dwell in security on the Land. (This link between observance of Torah and continued peaceful, secure living in Israel, is an oft-repeated theme, one that must be kept in mind in modern Israel - and by Jews wherever they live in the world.)

## Levi - Second Aliya - 6+4 p'sukim - 25:19-28

The Land will yield its bounty and we will eat our fill and dwell in the Land in security. No one should question where food will come from (with two years in a row of Sh'mita restrictions). G-d promises to bless the land during the sixth year (two years before Yovel) so that the land will yield enough for three years; the planting of the year after Yovel will supply our needs thereafter.

The land must not be sold forever [339, L227 25:23] since it is to return to its original owners during Yovel [340, A138 25:24].

## MITZVAnotes

Rambam defines the prohibition against selling the land "forever" in the context that we find the prohibition. The basis here is that land returns to its original owners in Yovel. An owner isn't really an owner; he's a guardian of G-d's property until Yovel. So here's a person who ATTEMPTS to sell a piece of land forever. Intending that it should not revert to its original owners. Guess what? That cannot be done. The land goes back to its original owners regardless of a transaction to the contrary. The ISUR here is really the "attempted" selling of land in Eretz Yisrael forever. It cannot actually be done. Rambam.

Ramban takes the mitzva out of its context and explains the ban as forbidding the selling (or giving away...) of land in Eretz Yisrael to non-Jews, whom we can assume will not abide by the Yovel rule of reversion of ownership.

[S> 25:25 (4)] If a person were forced to sell off hereditary land because of poverty, he or a relative may redeem the land by paying a proportional amount (depending upon how many years remain until Yovel). If not redeemed before Yovel, the land reverts to its hereditary owners with Yovel.

Rashi says that we learn from these p'sukim that ordinarily, one should not sell a field in Eretz Yisrael, except for the extenuating reason of poverty.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya - 10 p'sukim - 25:29-38

[S> 25:29 (6)] If someone sells a house in a walled city (walled, from the time of Yehoshua, i.e. original conquest), he has up to one year to redeem it; if not, it remains the new owner's forever. Redemption during the year is by returning the full amount paid, i.e. no deduction for the time that the buyer lived there. (This is technically an exemption from the Torah's ban against interest.) Redemption of a house in a walled city is a mitzva [341, A139 25:29]. On the other hand, houses in non-walled cities have the

same rules as land - viz., redemption is possible until Yovel, at which time the house reverts to its original hereditary owners. Houses in Levite cities (even walled cities) are redeemable beyond the one-year limit, and do revert to the Levi at Yovel. The Levi has hereditary rights to those special (6+42) cities. It is forbidden to alter the areas around those cities by selling off parts of the land on a permanent basis [342, L228 25:34].

[S> 25:35 (4)] We are obligated to help our fellow who has fallen on hard times. We may not take interest for personal loans made to help him out [343, L235 25:37].

**This emphasizes G-d's desire, so to speak, for His People to care about each other. Remember what I did for you. Now you be nice to your fellows.**

"I Am G-d Who took you out of Egypt, to bring you to the Land, to be your G-d."

## **R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 8+11+3+4 p'sukim - 25:39-26:9**

*R'vi'i is always the bridge Aliya between two combined sedras*

[S> 25:39 (8)] If a Jew sells himself into servitude because of poverty (or any other reason), his master may not treat him contemptibly [344, L257 25:39]. He shall be treated like an employee, and stays only until Yovel.

(This is the maximum; under normal circumstances, the Jewish manservant goes free much sooner.) At Yovel, he and his family return to their hereditary land. We are servants of G-d (and should not be subservient to other people); no Jew shall be sold in the degrading way of the slave market [345, L258 25:42]. Do not subject him to hard, spirit-breaking labor [346, L259 25:43].

Jews (according to Torah law) may own non-Jewish slaves (but only if they intend to practice Judaism and become Jewish if and when they are freed), who become hereditary property. They are not released at Yovel, but remain permanent property of their owners [347, A235 25:44].

[S> 25:47 (11)] If a Jew becomes a slave to a non-Jew, we may not permit him to remain so [348, L260 25:53]. Redemption should be by his close relatives, or himself - if he obtains the means. Equitable calculation should be made for compensating his master. We must not let his master break his spirit. All this is because Israel is subservient to G-d, Who redeemed us from Egyptian slavery. We are to be committed to Him; we may not make false gods nor idols or sacred pillars; nor may we kneel on a "decorated stone" [349, L12 26:1].

"Keep My Shabbat and revere My sanctuary, I Am G-d." Shabbat here might refer to Sh'mita. If so, it makes a matched bookend with the beginning

of the sedra. If however, Shabbat means Shabbat, then the juxtaposition to idolatrous prohibitions also makes the point that desecration of the Shabbat is tantamount to idolatry.

[P> 26:3 (11)] If we keep the Torah and mitzvot, then HaShem will provide beneficent, timely rainfall and bountiful crops. The yield of the Land will be so great, that each agricultural season will blend into the next one. And we will have plenty to eat - on our own Land.

**The Gemara says that IM B'CHUKO-TAI TEILEICHU is more than just stating the facts: If this, then that; if not this, then something else. The Gemara says that G-d is asking us, pleading with us, to keep the mitzvot and immerse ourselves in Torah. If He asks, how can we not do what He wants - He created us, He put us into this world. There are a few places in the Torah where IM does not mean IF, but rather WHEN.**

The promises of prosperity from the opening p'sukim of the parsha are made for Jews who live in Eretz Yisrael. This, says Torat Kohanim, in analyzing the word B'ARTZ'CHEM.

Further reward for (or results from) following the Torah and keeping the mitzvot, will be peace and tranquility in the Land (of Israel). Both natural disasters (wild beasts) as well as human enemies (sword) will be kept at bay by HaShem. And when we do

encounter our enemies, G-d will grant us the ability to vanquish them mightily. If we keep to our side of the deal (so to speak), we will be blessed with fertility and G-d will keep His covenant with us.

## **Chamishi - 5th Aliya** **- 37 p'sukim - 26:10-46**

This Aliya begins with the last four p'sukim of the "good" part - the promises for our proper Torah behavior. G-d will be with us; He is the One Who took us out of Egypt, broke the yoke of our oppression, and led us out with heads held high.

[P> 26:14 (13)] But then we get to the TOCHACHA containing G-d's detailed admonition to the People, warning of the dire consequences that will result from disregard of Torah and mitzvot. Because it is so painful to hear these terrible words - especially realizing how often they have come true - the custom developed to read this portion in a low voice. We are ashamed that G-d needs to threaten us in so graphic a way. The minhag is to call the Rabbi, Gabbai, or the Baal K'riya himself for this portion, so that no one else will feel slighted by receiving this harsh Aliya. The TOCHACHA is always contained within one Aliya which begins and ends on "cheerier" notes.

A significant theme of the TOCHACHA is the connection between the keeping of the laws of Sh'mita and our hold on

the Land. We must always realize that our hold on Eretz Yisrael is not without any strings attached. We have a clear commitment and responsibility to keep the Torah and fulfill the mitzvot as individuals AND as a community. Sh'mita was commanded in B'har. In B'chukotai, we are presented with the dire consequences of the disregard of this important mitzva.

[S> 26:27 (20)] Continual reference is made of both physical and spiritual benefits from observance of mitzvot, and the opposite, for disregard of the mitzvot. This combination of promise of good and threat of bad, together with the body of mitzvot of the Torah, constitutes the covenant between G-d and the People of Israel at Sinai via Moshe.

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 15 p'sukim - 27:1-15

[P> 27:1 (8)] In pledging funds to the Mikdash, it is possible to offer the "value" of an individual [350, A114 27:2]. The Torah lists amounts for individuals depending on sex and age. In the event that the donor is poor, a kohen may reduce the amount.

[S> 27:9 (26)] If a person pledges an animal to the Mikdash which qualifies as a korban, he may not exchange or redeem that animal (even for one of greater value) [351, L106 27:10]. If he attempts to do so, then both the original animal and its substitute

(T'MURA) are consecrated to the Mikdash [352, A87 27:10].

That means that he has not really DONE anything wrong, since the exchange doesn't work. It is the ATTEMPT that is the sin. And it is punishable in Sanhedrin with Makot. Further unusual, since no act was performed.

An animal not fit for the Altar is to be evaluated by a kohen [353, A115 27:11], and can be redeemed by adding 1/5 of its valuation.

A person can also offer the value of a house [354, A116 27:14], in which case a kohen (expert in matters of real estate) determines its value, and the house is redeemable by adding 1/5.

If a person dedicates the value of his property to the Mikdash, it is to be evaluated by a kohen based on quality and number of years to the next Yovel [355, A117 27:16]. It then becomes redeemable by adding a fifth. If a person did not redeem the land, then Yovel does not release it to him, but rather to the Mikdash, as consecrated property. The same applies if the officials at the Mikdash sold the property before redemption. At Yovel, it reverts to the Mikdash.

If the property in question is not hereditary, but rather purchased, then the rules differ. The land is evaluated in the same way, but at Yovel it reverts to its original owners, and not to the Mikdash.

A firstling (if it is male) is automatically sanctified to the Altar; one may not consecrate it as another korban [356, L107 27:26], because it is already Kodesh. This rule of not switching one sanctity for another, applies to other categories of korban as well.

A non-kosher animal given to the Mikdash is sold off.

If something itself is consecrated to the Mikdash (rather than its value), it cannot be redeemed; it remains holy.

Consecrated property goes to the kohanim [357, 358, 359; A145, L110, L111 27:29].

A person under a death penalty has the status of CHEREM (non-redeemable items). The land's tithe (here referring to Maaser Sheni), is sacred; it is (either to be eaten in Jerusalem or) to be redeemed.

The tithe of the animals (cows, goats, sheep) are to be separated by counting every tenth one regardless of the quality of the animal [360, A78 27:32]. These animals are sacred and to be brought as a korban and eaten only in Jerusalem and under conditions of ritual purity. Maaser B'heima may not be redeemed [361, L109 27:33] (in contrast to Maaser Sheni of produce). Violation of this rule results in both animals being considered holy.

**The mitzva of Maaser B'heima applies in our time! However, Chazal have forbid doing the mitzva because we**

**do not have a Mikdash to bring the animal as a korban. This presents complications which resulted in the rabbinical ban on performing this mitzva.**

**"These are the mitzvot... at Sinai."** This final pasuk of the sedra (and book of Vayikra), closes the section that was opened by the first pasuk of B'har, the usual partner sedra to B'chukotai.



**CHAZAK, CHAZAK, V'NITCHAZEIK** after Sh'vi'i (or Acharon).

- Even though there is halachic debate about standing specifically for the reading of the Aseret HaDibrot, there seems to be no objection to standing for the conclusion of each of the five Chumashim.
- Some say the person with the CHAZAK Aliya should not say CHAZAK, CHAZAK, V'NITCHAZEIK - It might be an interruption before his concluding b'racha, or, he might be the one who is the recipient of CHAZAK, CHAZAK, V'NITCHAZEIK.

Chatzi Kaddish, then the final three p'sukim are repeated for the Maftir.

**Haftara - 17 p'sukim - Yirmiyahu 16:19-17:14**

The words of the prophet contain warnings and admonitions which echo the TOCHACHA contained in the

sedra. But, the haftara - like the sedra - begins and ends on a good note. The last pasuk is like a prayer to be spared and/or healed from the ills mentioned in the sedra.

## Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara  
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

*Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

## R'FA'EINI HASHEM V'ERAFEI

**B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI - 17 p'sukim  
- Yirmiyahu 16:19-17:14**

Perhaps the most well-known phrase found in this week's haftara is its closing pasuk: "Heal me, Hashem, and I will be healed." Many are familiar with the verse from the bracha in our weekly Amida, where we beseech G-d with this same appeal, albeit in plural form (R'FAEINU). What is not commonly known, however, is that, although it closes the haftara's message, the prophet's plea is not the end of his appeal, but, actually, the opening of his personal request. Which presents us with an opening to fully understand this week's haftara.

This Shabbat, after having read Parashat B'chukotai and its harsh TOCHACHA - G-d's admonition were Israel to fail to observe His mitzvot -

we are not surprised to find that Chazal chose a comforting nevu'a from Sefer Yirmiyahu (16-17) which opens with the encouraging words HASHEM UZI UMA'UZI UM'NUSI - "G-d is my Strength, my Stronghold and my Refuge." And yet, after reading the first three verses of the haftara, we begin the 17th perek with a litany of offenses and failings committed in Judea over many generations.

Just as the greater part of Parashat B'chukotai is focused upon the (future) sins of Israel and the frightening sentences, so too, our haftara surprises us concentrating the bulk of its fifteen p'sukim on Judea's sins and their consequences. We rightfully wonder, therefore, why must Yirmiyahu interrupt his opening nevu'a, one filled with optimism and promise for Israel (17:1-4), with the frightening recital of the nation's sins and the subsequent punishments that would befall them?

Perhaps, we would do better were we to reexamine the message that Yirmiyahu was sending to the people to be able to understand the nevu'a and its choice for the haftara of this parasha.

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein begins his explanation by pointing out that the closing words of the haftarah, R'FA'EINI HASHEM V'ERAFEI, was the very beginning of the prophet's

plea to G-d. In it, Yirmiyahu prays that Hashem send him healing and salvation from the torment through which the people put Him, for bringing repeated censure and disparagement from G-d as His "messenger". The message of this haftara, Rav Lichtenstein argues, is not one of comfort, per se, but one of BITACHON, confidence! WHY?

Rav Moshe Lichtenstein beautifully explains that the TOCHACHA which the Torah presents to Israel in our parasha, never mentions the nation's reaction to any of the warnings, the threats and the impending horrors that it prophesies. It is Yirmiyahu who, in this haftara, does just that.

How could they ever survive such punishment?

How could they live through the horrors that Moshe Rabbeinu predicted would arrive?

How can there be any future for the "Chosen Nation"?

To these unspoken questions, Yirmiyahu responds simply: BARUCH HAGEVER ASHER YIVTACH BASHEM - "How fortunate the one who trusts in G-d and had Hashem as his reliance."

Yirmiyahu presents a clear choice to the worried population: "Either trust in G-d or lose all hope!" It is precisely for this reason that the navi echoes

the warnings of the Torah in his nevu'a. Not in order to sink the nation into deep depression but, rather, to convince them of the reality and respond with HOPE, not Despair.

It is for that reason, I believe, that perhaps Chazal chose to include the seemingly "misplaced" closing plea of Yirmiyahu, to become a cry of hope in Hashem's salvation as a message to all of us.

True, we do not know why; we do not know how; we do not know when... but we DO know THAT. We know THAT Hashem's words come to be - and we also know THAT we have HOPE in G-d. It is that message that echoes throughout the generations: we have faith in G-d and, therefore, we have hope -

OD LO AV'DA TIKVATEINU ✨



*The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests*

## EMOR

<> an Unexplained and a riddle

The Unexplained is the flag of the Philippines. The country code for that country is 63, the number of mitzvot in Parshat Emor.

Who is embedded in what?

Looks like the riddle is asking for two answers - who and what. In fact, the riddle is asking 'who'; the what is the word MA, MEM-HEI. The who is NO'ACH. The word MINCHA occurs several times in Emor. It is spelled with NUN-CHET embedded in MEM-HEI.

## B'HAR - B'CHUKOTAI



Har Sinai, with a pair of Luchot at the top. Negation circle over someone planting a sapling. Question mark between them - for the famous question MA INYAN SHMITA EITZEL HAR SINAI? <> calculator for counting seven years of each Sh'mita cycle and seven Sh'mita cycles to Yovel <> Also, to calculate fair price of land,

depending upon how many years remain until Yovel <> Shofar is blown on Yom Kippur of Yovel. Our blowing Shofar as YK ends, is partly to commemorate the Shofar-blowing of the YK of Yovel <> Liberty Bell is inscribed with the partial pasuk from B'har: AND PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE LAND TO ALL ITS INHABITANTS <> NOT FOR SALE sign is for prohibition which includes giving any part of Israel away to anyone else <> a fellow lending money at the Torah-approved interest rate for personal loans between Jew and Jew - 0% <> If you follow G-d's laws... then we will receive our rain in the proper time... <> and 5 will repel 100 (of our enemies) and 100 will push away 10,000... <> And we will have peace (dove with olive branch) <> Silhouette family is for ARACHIN with the baby's amount unclear because we can't tell if it's a boy or girl <> Price tag stands for ONA'A because mark up is more than a sixth. It's more complicated than this, but the Torah does restrict the amount of profit one can make on what he sells to others <> Steel pen (EIT BARZEL) and point (TZIPOREN) is in the haftara # Maaser B'heima, 10th sheep under the rod. Maaser B'heima applies even in our times, but we are forbidden to do the mitzva, by rabbinic ruling, because we don't currently have the option of bringing it to the mizbei'ach <> O DODO O BEN

**DODO.** Literally, either his uncle or his cousin <> The UZI is for the word in the opening pasuk of the haftara, HASHEM UZI UMA'UZI... <> Shabbat candles stand for the reminder to keep Shabbat in the final pasuk of Parshat B'har <> half a yo-yo, that's YO and the wedding veil together make YOVEIL. <> ANATOT Monopoly-style deed is for Yirmiyahu's purchase of land - haftara <> former US Sec'y of State? The word KERI (contrariness) occurs seven times in all of Tanach - all in Parshat B'chukotai! He is definitely well named <> the sparrow is for the word D'ROR, which in B'har means 'liberty' <> and two riddles

לע"נ

הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

## The Chronological Imagination

### B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

I want, in this study, to look at one of Judaism's most distinctive and least understood characteristics - the chronological imagination.

Sometimes a modern discovery so changes our ways of looking at things that it allows us to revisit ancient truths that have become deeply obscured and see them with pristine

clarity as if for the first time. That is surely the case with quantum physics. What it allows us to do is to understand afresh a biblical way of thinking about truth that is profoundly different from the way we have been accustomed to think in the West. I call the Greek approach the logical imagination, and the Jewish approach, the chronological imagination.

Niels Bohr famously said about quantum mechanics that if it hasn't profoundly shocked you, you haven't understood it yet. Without entering the details of this tangled territory, the most profoundly shocking thing about the subatomic reality it exposed is that it does not fit our standard logical categories. Is light a wave or a particle? Do subatomic particles have position or momentum? Is Schrodinger's cat alive or dead?

The answer to each of these questions reminds us of the story about the rabbi who listens to a husband's account of an unhappy marriage and says, "You're right." He then listens to the wife's conflicting account and says, "You're right." His disciple, who has been present at both meetings, says to the rabbi, "But they can't both be right", to which the rabbi replies, "You're also right."

There are phenomena, from subatomic particles to domestic disputes, to

which the standard rules of Aristotelian logic do not apply. Chief of these is the principle of contradiction that states that a proposition and its negation cannot both be true. Two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. Bohr's complementarity theory, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, and other counterintuitive ideas, challenge this head-on. Light is both a wave and a particle. Schrödinger's cat is both dead and alive. There are phenomena that bear contradictory characteristics until we, the observer, enter the scene, at which point the contradiction is resolved retroactively.

Bohr tells the story of how he came to his theory. It happened after his young son was caught stealing sweets from a local store. Niels experienced mixed emotions towards his son and was conflicted as to the best way to approach him in light of this event. First he found himself thinking about this as a judge would. His son was guilty of a crime and justice must be done. But he also felt parental emotions of love and compassion. He realised that he could not hold both thoughts equally in his mind at the same time, and this led to his research on complementarity theory. As a fair judge of the situation, he had to think impartially. As a father he could not help but have compassion for his son, who had

made a mistake. One way of thinking leads to justice, the other to mercy, but these are conflicting perspectives and involve different kinds of relationships.

The same is true about the well-known drawing that can be seen as a duck or a rabbit, but not both at the same time. The multi-dimensionality of reality may simply be too complex for us to grasp it all at one time. But what we cannot think simultaneously we can often think sequentially. That is what I mean by the chronological imagination.

We owe our concepts of logic to the ancient Greeks. The Greeks thought of knowledge as a special kind of seeing. We still, in Western languages, preserve this visual metaphor. We speak of foresight and insight, of people of vision, and of 'making an observation'. When we understand something we say, "I see." For Plato, knowledge was deep insight into a world beyond the senses, where you see not the physical embodiments but the true form of things. The guiding metaphor for Greek epistemology, buried deep in the culture, was the image of Zeus, chief of the gods, looking down on the affairs of human beings from his lofty perch on Mount Olympus.

The worldview of the Torah is quite different. True knowledge is acquired less through seeing (God is not visible,

and throughout the Hebrew Bible appearances deceive) than through listening. The keyword is SH'MA, meaning, "listen, hear, understand, respond." Knowledge, da'at, is not detached observation but intimate personal engagement: "And Adam knew his wife and she conceived." God in the Torah is not a detached observer of the affairs of humankind, but an active participant. In Judaism, words are not just pictures of reality, the "forms" of things. They affect relationships. Words can injure and inspire. Words can bless or curse. Words can create new moral facts, such as when we make a promise. Words shape the reality they describe. This is more like Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, in which the observer affects the reality he observes, than like Greek-inspired theories of knowledge in which a sentence can be true or false but not both.

The psychotherapist Viktor Frankl pointed out that what can be a contradiction in two-dimensional space need not be when we add a third dimension. So a square cannot be a circle, and a circle cannot be a square. But they can both be shadows cast by a single object, a canister, lit first from the side, then from above. Add the third dimension and the contradiction disappears. Nor is this a mere mathematical curiosity. As Niels Bohr, one of the masters of

quantum physics put it, "The opposite of a trivial true is a falsehood, but the opposite of a profound true may well be another profound truth."

This is absolutely fundamental to Judaism. There is more than one valid way of looking at the universe. Minimally, there is the point of view of God and there is the point of view of humankind, and they are radically distinct. The only time in the whole of Tanach in which a human being is invited to see the world from the vantage point of God occurs in the last four chapters of the book of Iyov, when Iyov finally understands that the universe is not anthropocentric. Not everything exists for the benefit of humankind. God is at the centre, not us.

No less significantly, though the Torah has a single Author, it does not speak in a single voice. I have argued throughout these studies that there are at least three discernible voices - a wisdom voice, a priestly voice, and a prophetic voice - corresponding to the three modes in which God discloses Himself: through Creation, Revelation, and Redemption. Each captures something of reality but none, on its own, portrays it all. That is why the Torah is such a complex interplay of different genres and tones of voice. The book of Bamidbar, for example, is structured as a fugue

between law and narrative. There is no other book in the whole of literature that is quite like it. Throughout Bamidbar we see the interplay between prophetic and priestly sensibilities, and we begin to understand how law - the "ought-ness" of things - grows out of, and in turn influences, history, the "is- or was-ness" of things.

How then do you represent the three-dimensional nature of reality with its conflicting perspectives and multifaceted truths? One way in which the Torah does it is through what I call the dialogical imagination. We are shown a situation from two radically opposed viewpoints at the same time.

Two powerful examples occur in B'reishit 21 and 27. In B'reishit 21, first we see Sara and her joy as at last she holds her long-awaited son. Then we see the pathos of Hagar and Yishmael, dismissed from the household and on the brink of death under the heartless desert sky. In B'reishit 27, first we see Rivka arrange for her beloved son Yaakov to be blessed, then we see Yitzchak and Eisav, bound together in shock and dismay, as they realise what has happened.

These narratives subvert any simplistic tendency to moralise, to divide reality into black and white. They force us to see the world from more than one point of view. The only way

of bridging these perspectives is through conversation. Hence the idea of truth as dialogue. In B'reishit, when speech breaks down, violence - the attempt to impose my version of the truth on you by force - is often waiting in the wings.

The other way is through the chronological imagination. Conflicting propositions may both be valid - the opposite of a profound truth may be another profound truth - but not at the same time. A classic example of this is the interpretation by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in *The Lonely Man of Faith* of the two Creation accounts in B'reishit 1, and in chapters 2-3. In the first, man is created in the image of God and given dominion over all other life forms. In the second, man is formed from the dust of the earth, and told to "serve and conserve" the garden. In the first, man and woman are created simultaneously, side-by-side. In the second, woman is created in the wake of the loneliness of man, and they exist face-to-face.

Rabbi Soloveitchik argued that the first account describes the 'majestic' man, whereas the second depicts the "covenantal" man, and we are both. The result, he explained, was that to be human is to be conflicted, torn between the different facets of our being. In fact, though, the Torah resolves this contradiction in the

simplest and most elegant way: through time.

'Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day to the Lord your God.'

For six days we are majestic; on the seventh we are covenantal.

The chronological imagination - what Bohr meant when he said he could see his son through the eyes of a judge and a parent, but not both at the same time - was one of the great gifts of Torat Kohanim. The kohen guards the border between sacred and secular, eternity and mortality, the physical and the spiritual, the infinite and finite. He knows these are two different orders of reality and is all too conscious of the danger that awaits and the blurring of the boundary. At one level of reality, all that exists is God. At another, all that exists is human beings and their devices and desires. The separation between heaven and earth is what makes the universe and human life possible. But their connection is what makes human life meaningful.

The kohen resolves the contradiction between sacred and secular by seeing both as true and valid, but we can only experience them at different times. The times and places at which we focus on our human, mortal condition are chol, secular. Those in which we focus on God, the infinite

Eternal, we call kodesh. They are integrated in the form of a precisely calibrated rhythm of time: six units (days, months, years) of chol, followed by a seventh that is holy. with the occasional addition of a fiftieth (day, year) after a sequence of seven sevens.

Biblical texts using the kohanic voice are conspicuous for their mathematical precision. So, as Umberto Cassuto pointed out, the creation account is not only divided into seven days. It also contains the word "good" seven times, "God" thirty-five times, and "earth" twenty-one times. The first verse contains seven words, the second fourteen, and the description of the seventh day, thirty-five. The whole passage is 469 (7x67) words. Likewise Vayikra 23, 25, and 26 are all structured around the repeated words "seven" and "Shabbat". Mathematical precision is essential to the kohanic understanding of reality, just as we now know it is to the universe, almost unimaginably finely-tuned for the emergence of conscious life. Had any of the mathematical constants that govern the shape of the universe been even slightly different, the chemical elements necessary for life would simply not have formed.

But the precision of the kohen is different from that of the scientist. The division of time in the kohanic

calendar is a way of living out sequentially different and conflicting truths. We have already seen one in our study of Succot. Judaism embraces both the universal and the particular, the universality of our humanity, given religious force in the Noahide covenant, and the particularity of our people's relationship with God, epitomised in the covenant at Mount Sinai. The Jewish calendar gives weight to both. There is the cycle of the three pilgrimage festivals; Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot, representing the particularity of Jewish history - the Exodus, the Giving of the Torah, and the years of wandering the desert. And there is the cycle of festivals of the seventh month, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and again Succot, representing the universals of the human condition: Creation, Divine sovereignty, justice, judgment, life, death, rain, and the renewal of nature.

One of the most beautiful consequences of the chronological imagination - seen clearly in our parsha of B'har - is its ability to reconcile the real with the ideal. History is full of ideal worlds. We call them utopias, a word that means "no place" because no utopia has ever happened. Torat Kohanim has a different, indeed unique, approach to ideal worlds. We live them, periodically, in the here-and-now of real time. On Shabbat we engage in a full dress

rehearsal for the Messianic Age when no one will exercise power, political or economic, over anyone else. Something similar is true of the two great institutions in the parsha: Sh'mita and the Jubilee year, the seventh and fiftieth years. By cancelling debts, releasing slaves, leaving the produce of the land to be enjoyed by everyone equally, and restoring ancestral property to its original owners, we inhabit a world in which the inequities of the market economy have been redressed and, for a year, sometimes two, we suspend the world of competition and live in a world of co-operation and the fellowship of equals.

There is no other system quite like this, and it gives truth - not the truth we think or discover, but the truths we live and to which we owe loyalty - a three-dimensional character it does not have in the either/or world of Aristotelian logic. That is the power of dialogical and chronological thought, and it comes from the depth reality acquires when we add to the two-dimensional nature of humanity the third dimension that is God.

### **Around the Shabbat Table:**

- (1) Why is dialectical thinking (holding two different truths in your head or heart at the same time) so difficult?**
- (2) Which truths do you live, and owe loyalty to?**

(3) **How does taking off one day each week change how you view success and worth?**

## **Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH**

### **Message from the Haftara**

*Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander  
President and Rosh HalYeshiva  
Ohr Torah Stone Institutions*

## **Being Worthy of the Gift**

### **B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI**

Each year, in the days leading up to Yom Yerushalayim, we witness something remarkable. Thousands of young people make their way to Jerusalem for a Shabbat of daglanut, gathering and dancing with Israeli flags as they enter the Old City to celebrate its return to Jewish sovereignty. It is one of the most stirring expressions of our time: young Jews, united in their love of Jerusalem, ascending to the city that has stood at the center of Jewish prayer and longing for millennia.

The haftara for B'har-B'chukotai, from the book of Yirmiyahu, speaks to this moment in an oblique but powerful way. The prophet turns his gaze toward Jerusalem as the seat of the Divine Presence on earth: "Like the throne of glory, elevated from the

beginning, so is the place of our Temple" (Yirmiyahu 17:12). It is a verse of extraordinary dignity and love.

Yet alongside this vision, Yirmiyahu's message also delivers a sober warning. The land and the city so precious to us are not ours by inherent right. They are contingent on our own behavior and moral worthiness. "You will forfeit, by your own fault, the heritage which I have given you" (v. 4), the prophet warns, adding that if the covenant is broken, it leads to exile. Israel and Jerusalem have been entrusted to us, but we must act with moral responsibility in order to remain worthy of them.

This juxtaposition of praise and warning is not merely a literary structure. It is a challenge to every generation, including our own. On Yom Yerushalayim, we celebrate, as we should. The return of Jerusalem to the Jewish people since 1967 is a modern miracle, one that continues to move anyone who takes seriously the sweep of Jewish history and the depth of Jewish prayer. But the question Yirmiyahu places before us is: are we acting as worthy stewards of this gift?

It is a question that becomes more difficult in moments when joy feels compromised. We don't need to look further than this week's news for examples of individuals outwardly identifying with religious Judaism


who act in ways that distort its moral core. For example, an unprovoked attack on a nun walking down the street, or past instances of Yom Yerushalayim celebrants marching to the Western Wall in the Old City, harassing Arab shopkeepers and residents, causing fear among children and families who live there. These moments dare not be dismissed or ignored. They sit uncomfortably alongside the joy we feel, and they demand moral clarity.

Yirmiyahu understood that a nation's ability to remain in its land is not a matter of geopolitical strength alone. "God searches out the heart and examines inner thoughts", he proclaims, "so as to treat each person according to ...the fruits of his actions" (v. 10). In other words: it is not about the flags we carry, the songs we sing, the passion with which we ascend to the Old City. It is about the "fruit" of our actions - the way we behave, how we treat the people around us. That is the measure by which we are judged.

In fact, the mourning practices that overlay S'firat HaOmer, which we are still observing as we read this haftara, were instituted in response to the tragic loss of Rabbi Akiva's students, whose greatness in Torah was overshadowed by a failure in mutual respect. Their story is a reminder that even the most elevated

spiritual aspirations can be undone by immoral conduct. If this period of disrespectful behavior two millennia ago still casts a shadow over our calendar, it is because the lesson has yet to be fully absorbed.

Jerusalem is a gift of incomprehensible magnitude. The sight of young people flooding its ancient streets - flags raised high, voices raised in song - stirs joy in our hearts. But Yirmiyahu calls us to something deeper than celebration alone. He demands a responsibility that makes the celebration meaningful.

As we conclude the book of Vayikra and its vision of a people living in harmony with God's Torah, as "a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation" (Sh'mot 19:6), and as we prepare to mark Yom Yerushalayim, let us truly absorb the haftara's dual message: the greatness of Jerusalem, and the weight of what it demands from those who enter it. That calling is renewed every time we pass through the gates of the city we love. 



**PhiloTorah D'var Torah**

## **MA INYAN SH'MITA...**

Rashi's famous question on the opening pasuk in Parshat B'har -

What has the matter of Sh'mita to do with Mount Sinai that the Torah felt compelled to expressly state where it was commanded? Were not all commandments given on Sinai?

Rashi's answer is presented and explained in the Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - see there.

But I have a sharp question on the question. What's the connection between Har Sinai and Sh'mita? That is what you're asking? How can you even ask that?!

Har Sinai represents the Torah. And Sh'mita represents Eretz Yisrael. That's the connection.

The Torah was purposely given outside of Eretz Yisrael, so that we will understand that it must be observed wherever we are in the world. But linking Sh'mita with Har Sinai reminds us that THE Place where Torah was always meant to be observed and lived, is Eretz Yisrael. There are numerous p'sukim in the Torah that drive that point home. My

personal favorite is in Parshat Eikev, D'varim 8:1 - Every commandment that I command you this day you shall keep to do, that you may live and multiply, and come and possess the land that HaShem swore to your forefathers. There are many other p'sukim that express the same idea and teach us what is R'TZON HASHEM, G-d's desire (for us).

This particular pasuk from Eikev is what - in Summer of 1969, on the afternoon of Shabbat Nachamu, led me to resolve that Israel was to be my future - no doubt about it. It took me 12 more years to realize that plan, but that Shabbat afternoon 57 years ago was a defining moment in my life and my response to MA INYAN SH'MITA EITZEL HAR SINAI.

People argue whether living in Israel is a mitzva in our time, or not. People debate if Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is a Mitzva Chiyuvit (obligatory) or a Mitzva Kiyumit (a mitzva if you do it but no sin if you don't). But it is patently obvious that Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is what G-d wants of His Chosen People. It is R'TZON HASHEM.  
**PTDT**

**On the lighter side... In Israel, MA INYAN SH'MITA EITZEL HAR SINAI is slang for "What does one thing have to do with the other?" Same as "What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?" - as used in American-English. Looked up on the internet**

(and Chat-GPT) what expressions are used in other countries and languages.

In French: “What does that have to do with sauerkraut?”

In Italian: “What does it have to do with cabbage?”

In Polish: “What does a gingerbread have to do with a windmill?”

In British-English: “What’s that got to do with the price of fish?”

Most interesting is something on the Wikipedia entry for What does that have to do with...?

A related expression in Hebrew can be found in a commentary on the Biblical commandment of... Sh'mita. Leviticus 25:1 specifically states that God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai; while this was a common location for God to speak to Moses, the text's explicit reference to it is very rare. Accordingly, Rashi's commentary begins with the question "What does Shmita have to do with Mount Sinai?" MA INYAN SH'MITA... In modern Jewish discourse, this phrase is taken to question the connection between any two seemingly disparate points, as in the comparable English phrase.

Amazing, no?

מְרִית

אטלפן  
microULPAN

MARIT is a spatula.

A frying spatula is also known as a MACHAT TIGUN - מַחַת טִיגוֹן

A spatula used for flipping burgers or the like is also called a HOFCHAN - הוֹפְכָן



## Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

## The Sinai Factor

When someone points out a non-sequitor to a speaker, they tend to ask: What's that got to do with the price of tea in China? Besides informing that speaker that they've lost the thread of their presentation, we're also declaring that tea is indeed dear in China. That final point is important and we'll return to it later, but first let's discuss our famous Jewish declaration that the speaker has lost their way:

What has SH'MITA (the Sabbatical Year) got to do with Har Sinai? (Midrash Sifra, B'har 1:1 and Rashi, Vayikra 25:1).

The Midrash is screaming: But weren't all the Mitzvot given on Har Sinai? Well, yes and no. But that's not the point. The Midrash and, later, Rashi are demanding to know the connection between the Mitzvot of Sh'mita and Revelation at Sinai, which we will be commemorating in a couple of weeks.

There are a plethora of responses to this query. Rashi, himself, gives the famous explanation that, indeed, all the Mitzvot were transmitted at Sinai with all their general rules and minute details.

There is a school of thought (led by the Ibn Ezra) that our material is a case of 'There isn't always chronological order in the Torah.' We are bringing this material which was taught before all the other material in Vayikra here, because: Until now Vayikra has discussed the sanctity of the Mishkan and the KEDUSHA that people must draw from it. From here on, it will discuss the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael (Da'at Mikra).

The S'forno, on the other hand, explains that the Torah mentions Har Sinai here because this Mitzva was mentioned before (Sh'mot 23:11), but only the barest of outlines was given. So, now that we are returning to this Mitzva for the purpose of filling in all the details, we mention that all the rules and regulations of this precept were given at Sinai.

So, if that's true, why wait? Why did the Torah wait until the end of the next book of the Torah to finish describing these Mitzvot about the sanctity of agriculture in Eretz Yisrael?

Well, the S'forno explains, because we are all assuming that the Jews would very soon be entering the Land, and we had to know these laws of how to farm in the Holy Land. We are being taught the details of the laws of Sh'mita and Yovel as the Jews were preparing to depart from the shadow of Har Sinai, theoretically just a few weeks away from entering the Land. It's so sad to contemplate what could have been.

But the Chassidic Masters of the nineteenth century saw profound symbolic ideas embedded deep in these agricultural laws. Let's take a look at two of these imaginative thinkers.

The Meor V'Shemesh (Rav Kalonimus Kalman HaLevi Epstein, 1751-1823) states that to understand these laws we must go back to the week of Creation. 'Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds." And it was so.' (B'reishit 1:11)

The vegetation brought forth all the produce the world would need on

their own. But then humanity sinned. Our sin had ramifications for the entire world, including the vegetation. From now on, the earth would only produce the crops required to sustain humanity by the 'sweat of our brow'.

At Mt Sinai, the Jewish people reached a spiritual level which equaled Adam's before the Sin. We had removed the evil ramifications of that Sin. The plants would produce without our labor, again. But, alas, like in the Garden, it didn't last. Sin returned. We would have to work, but not during SH'MITA! Eretz Yisrael would produce sufficiently to support the nation without our labor. A hint to how our world should be, and will be when Mashiach arrives.


This is a truly beautiful idea and a great expectation! Yitzchak Avinu briefly experienced this phenomenon when his crops produced ME'AH SHE'ARIM ('one hundred fold', B'reishit 26:12). We expectantly await that time when we will be able to survive solely on the bounty provided by the plants themselves, as planned by our beloved Creator.

Another extraordinary idea about the profound significance of Sh'mita is presented by the S'fat Emet. The second Gerer Rebbe suggested that 'Sh'mita is like Shabbat, in that it is equivalent to all the other Mitzvot together. All the other Mitzvot

depend upon it.' Cool!

The Rebbe goes on to explain that when the Torah informs us that this command is 'when you come to the Land that God has given you', it means that we must elevate all of our efforts in the Land to God. Just like on Shabbat, when we refrain from our weekday labors, it is for the greater glory of God, so, too during the Sh'mita year. As the Rebbe explains: We nullify our wants and desires to God's Will!

The primary purpose of both Shabbat and Sh'mita is to testify, declare and demonstrate that God, with infinite largesse, continually sustains Creation!

What is the connection of Sh'mita to Har Sinai? Nothing less than our constant connection to our Creator. The more we invest in the laws of Eretz Yisrael, the more God will provide for us. The connection of Sh'mita to Har Sinai is the symbiosis between us and our Creator! Therefore it is indeed at least as important as tea is to the Chinese, and then some! 

# Rav Kook Torah



by Rabbi Chanan Morrison -  
[www.ravkooktorah.com](http://www.ravkooktorah.com)

## Prophetic Letters

Summary: he shapes these five letters take on at the end of words express the letter's essence and ultimate purpose.

### The “Double Letters”

Of the twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, five are known as “double letters”, since they take on a different form when they appear at the end of a word.

The five letters are: MEM, NUN, TZADI, PEI, KAF. When placed together as one word, they spell M-N-Tz-P-Ch.

According to Talmudic tradition (Shabbat 104a), the dual forms of these letters goes back to the prophets. The abbreviation M-N-Tz-P-Ch can be read as MIN TZOPHIM, “from the prophets”.

### From the Prophets

This claim – that the special forms of these letters originated with the prophets – requires clarification. The Torah of Moshe is complete and whole in itself. Even a prophet may not add to it or invent a new mitzvah. The Torah explicitly declares, These are the decrees, laws and codes that

God set between Himself and Israel at Mount Sinai, through the hand of Moshe (Vayikra 26:46).

The phrase “These are the decrees” indicates that only the decrees that Moshe set down in the Torah are in fact between God and Israel. How could the prophets alter the Torah by introducing new shapes of letters?

The Talmud explains that the prophets did not actually introduce anything new. There always existed two ways to write these five letters. Over time, however, it was forgotten which shape belongs at the end of the word, and which belongs at the beginning and middle. The prophets did not devise the two forms; they merely recovered the lost knowledge of which letterform belongs at the end of the word.

### Why Two Forms?

Still, we need to understand: why do these letters have dual forms? What is the significance of their relative position in a word? And why was it the prophets, not the sages or the grammarians, who restored this knowledge?

Letters are more than just elements of speech. They are the building blocks of Creation. The Sages taught, “The universe was created with ten utterances” (Avot 5:1). Each letter in the alphabet represents a fundamental force in the world.

Rav Kook explained that the final forms – the shapes that these letters assume at the end of words – are the holiest. The final forms most accurately portray the inner essence of each letter, fully expressing its ultimate purpose. To better understand this statement, we must examine the morphological differences between the two forms of these letters.

In four of the letters – NUN, TZADI, PEI, CHAF – the regular form is smaller and more cramped. The “leg” of the letter is constrained and bent upwards. The form appearing at the end of the word, on the other hand, allows the “leg” to stretch and extend itself fully. It is the final form that truly expresses the full content and power of these letters.

MEM follows a different pattern. The regular MEM has a small opening at the bottom. It is known as the MEM P'TUCHA, the open MEM, exposed and accessible. It is open and revealed to all.

The final MEM is closed off on all sides. This is the MEM S'TUMA, the Sealed MEM. Or perhaps – the Esoteric MEM. This form of MEM is more sublime than the regular Open MEM. Thus, the holiest written object, the stone tablets engraved with the Ten Commandments, contained only Sealed MEMs, with the

center part of the MEM held in place miraculously. The final MEM is closed off and concealed. It guards its inner secret, which due to its profound holiness may not be revealed to all.

Why does the more elevated form appear at the end of the word? A hidden light appears at the ultimate vision of every noble matter. The hidden light of the M-N-Tz-P-Ch letters belongs to the end. The beginning and middle appearances of these letters are open and revealed. Their light steadily increases, until it brings us to the final, sublime conclusion.

The prophets are called TZOFIM, visionaries, as they were blessed with prophetic vision. Their greatness was that they could perceive the final outcome while still living in a flawed present. Understandably, it was these TZOFIM who recognized that the more elevated letterforms belong at the end.

*Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 221-223.*

*Adapted from Rosh Millin, pp. 35-36;*

*Ein Ayah vol. IV, pp. 247-249*

# **The Daily Portion** **- Sivan Rahav Meir**

## **When Trump reminds us of Shabbat**

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

President Trump has declared a “National Sabbath”, to be honored a week from this coming Shabbat. To mark 250 years of American independence, he called on the American people to adopt a day for rest, family, and gratitude to God, out of appreciation for the contribution of Jewish tradition to the United States.

First of all, this is amazing. It sounds almost prophetic. The leader of the world’s greatest superpower is calling on its citizens to honor Shabbat – the ancient Jewish “startup”. The man who leads the most powerful nation on Earth understands that there is Someone above more powerful. The man who seems to have no limit to the power he can wield is calling on all of us to stop for one day and cease exercising power.

But in my view, this isn’t just “Trump declared”. God already declared it long ago. It is the world that is now discovering Shabbat – and in doing so, reminding us Jews, in particular of who we are.

Millions of Jews immigrated to the

United States, assimilated, and were nearly lost forever to the Jewish people. Many of them also kept Shabbat with great self-sacrifice, even though the American job market did not recognize the Jewish day of rest. And now, a non-Jewish leader speaks with unique admiration about this treasure of ours. “Six days you shall labor” – that, Americans know well. But now comes a reminder of the seventh day. A reminder for all of us to be proud of our immense heritage – of Shabbat and everything else we have to share with the world from the outside. Simply to be aware of all the gifts we’ve received, and of our divine mission – to illuminate the entire world.

The national Sabbath that Trump declared is next week. Trump himself is not obligated in the mitzva of Shabbat – but we are. So there’s no need to wait until then, and no need for a presidential declaration. Shabbat arrives every week, and we should think and plan about how to elevate it: what to prepare, whom to invite, how to enter it joyfully and calmly. From the White House – to our house.

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by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

## Swallows and Freedom

"Proclaim liberty in the land to all its inhabitants" (Vayikra 25:10).

These words from the sidra are part of American history. They figure on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia.

They are noble words. But if one looks at them in detail, they raise a number of questions.

The P'nei Yehoshua asks why the Torah says YOSH'VEHA, "its inhabitants" and not AVADEHA, "its servants".

The answer is that it is not only servants who need freedom - everyone does. Even if you have freedom, you have to learn how to value your freedom.

If you do not appreciate freedom, or peace, or health, or family, or any other blessing you may have, it is as if you have lost them.

Many commentators focus on the word used for freedom in this verse, D'ROR.

Rashi quotes Rabbi Yehuda who links

it with DIRA, a dwelling. "Why the expression D'ROR? To show that freedom is when you may choose where to dwell without others compelling you".

According to the dictionaries the root of the word is DARAR, to stream or flow abundantly; hence D'ROR is the free run that comes with freedom.

D'ROR also means a swallow (see Psalm 84:4). The Talmud explains (Shabbat 106b) that the swallow is a bird that does not yield to capture or taming and "it lives in a house as in the field".

## Not So Bad; Not So Good

The Reader lowers his voice for the TOCHACHA. No-one should get the idea that he enjoys enunciating the threats of punishment that come from disobedience.

Even though the congregation realise that they are not his words but God's, there is still the risk that someone will say, "I noticed that at a particular point he looked straight at me and raised his voice. He was obviously telling everyone that that particular verse was written with me in mind!"

The fact is that we do sometimes quote a nasty passage from somewhere and apply it to someone we want to criticise. It is not a nice habit, but it happens.

There actually is an antidote to this attitude hinted at in the TOCHACHA. There are blessings as well as curses.

The lesson is that no-one is entirely bad. Nor for that matter are they entirely good. They are not as bad as you think they are. Nor are they as good as they themselves think they are.

This applies to ourselves - not only to others. How are you or I to judge ourselves? We are not as bad as we fear or as good as we imagine.

This may also be a good way to judge events and situations, to say things are both better, and worse, than they appear to be. -OZ

## Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

# Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

### B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

*If you follow my statutes and keep and act according to my laws... then I will grant peace in the land... and no one will make you afraid (26:3-6).*

B'har and B'chukotai address the people at the community level. Their content and implications convey G-d's covenant and macro-economic socially-calibrated model for Am Yisrael in the Land, which together

present the following principles:

(a) All property belongs to G-d. Am Yisrael's presence in Eretz Yisrael is in the capacity of His honoured tenants (25:23).

(b) With the exception of the tribe of Levi, all coming into the Land become eligible to take the portion of land that would be their ancestral heritage. As long as they follow His Statutes and act according to His laws, G-d actively guarantees their safety and their prosperity, granting the full enjoyment and the full benefits of the Land (26:3-13).

(c) If they do not, as the Ramchal explains, He withdraws that special protection. That leaves Am Yisrael open to the inevitable fate of all the small nations that appear and vanish in the comings and goings of powerful empires and countries. The TOCHACHA graphically portrays the horrors that inevitably follow. They include eviction from the Land, exiled into the 'lands of their enemies' (26:41).

(d) On the whole, the economy should work on market principles. Buying and selling is the order of the day, with goods and services allocated by demand and supply. The Torah does not seem to be concerned that some will become richer and others will become poorer because of the economic forces inherent in the

market. It accepts the implication that market practices promote overall growth in economic well-being, enlarging the proverbial cake even through invariably some will end up with larger pieces of cake than others. It does not regard the more fortunate as moral delinquents. However, the Torah does emphatically regulate markets by fairness. There are strict prohibitions of fraudulent overcharging above the market price (25:14). The Halacha regards such sales as voidable.

(e) Urban and rural property may be bought and sold, but only temporarily, with the lease terminating in the Yovel year. Then the land returns to the owner of the ancestral heritage. That implies consideration of the needs of the poor, bearing in mind why the land was sold in the first place. A person is typically personally attached to his ancestral home and farmland will only sell them if facing dire poverty with no way out. Such poverty, the Torah ensures, should be only be temporary. He should have the peace of mind that eventually the property will go back to him, and he may speed up the process in the meantime if he comes up with the money to buy it back before it legally returns to him in the Yovel year (25:24-28).

(e) There Torah specifies an exception to the leasehold rule: the sale of

property in a walled city. The seller has a year to buy it back. If that does not happen, it belongs to the buyer, for ever (25:29-30). For this, the Ramban offers a nuanced explanation. Losing one's home is extremely painful when it happens, but in contrast to ancestral farmlands which are sources of livelihood, the painful effect should wear off in time. He can always buy a new and better place if his fortunes improve. At the same time, the Torah also bears in mind the state of mind of the purchaser. As time passes beyond the first year, the buyer feels the house (and the local urban community within the walled city) as being part of him...

(f) It is better to prevent poverty than to rescue from poverty. The Torah strongly promotes supporting the financially vulnerable by 'strengthening them': offering them money to establish themselves on a more secure and productive footing in the form of a non-exploitative loan to be paid back (25:35-36, see Rashi). Not as a gift: give the person the dignity of being a borrower rather than a taker. Implied is that we help the less fortunate to help themselves in a framework of responsibility, not mendicancy. As Rambam declares, the highest level of tz'daka is to help people to help themselves.

(g) Elsewhere, the Torah redistributes

wealth to those in the service of the whole community and for the upkeep of institutions, for example as t'rumot and as ma'aserot. It also includes helping the poor by allowing them to help themselves to the left-overs from the harvest (23:22) that invariably occur in a way that the rich won't miss and the poor will be grateful.

(h) For six years those in farming community enjoy their produce, and profit from selling their surpluses. (Remember that farming was typically small-scale subsistence to feed the family, with the extra for sale in the market, as in many developing countries today.) The seventh year is sh'mita. G-d declares that all the produce belongs to everyone - young folk, old folk, rich folk, poor folk (25:2-6). The whole agricultural cycle resets and the soil naturally replenishes its nutrients.

(h) The Torah reluctantly accepts slavery as the only opening available to the utterly destitute of Am Yisrael. It goes along with it, yet it implies its uneasiness by regulating the way the slave must be treated respectfully (25:39-43). It emphasizes that such enslavement is only a temporary phase and that it should ultimately lead to a better future for him as a free person in the community. Indeed, elsewhere we are told that the owner must give the slave a

handsome severance pay to enable him to start off again in the free world (D'varim 15:14).

(i) The Torah also recognizes that a member of Am Yisrael may be so destitute that he sells himself as a slave to someone on the fringe or outside the community. In such a case every effort must be made to redeem him, but not at the expense of the outsider's welfare. He must be fairly and duly compensated (25:47-54).

In short, the Torah speaks for AM KADOSH B'ERETZ YISRAEL as a society that maximizes opportunities for personal and communal prosperity while at the same time balances the needs and prospects of the less fortunate and less established (e.g. the ger toshav). It does not per se advocate communism and the demonizing of the wealthy, however much these might appeal to the inexperienced, the penniless, and the self-seeking power grabber in the mask of social justice for all.

That is a simplified picture of the society that G-d wishes from Am Segula and Am Kadosh. It sets the social, economic, and business compass for our people. (It also contains many elements that have progressively served as a light to the nations.) G-d gives His personal guarantee that it works.

"If you follow My statutes and keep

and act according to My laws... then I will grant peace in the land... and no one will make you afraid". Keeping My statutes and acting according to my laws includes running society in ways compatible with the principles discussed.

Sadly, the choices our people made meant that things did not always work that way. Despite Yeshayahu, Yirmiyahu, and Amos railing about the exploitation of the less fortunate people and classes, the people did not listen. As forecast in the tochacha, famine and exile followed. And the land rested - involuntarily.

These principles frame our challenge. May the time come when we may fully use them as the compass for full improvement and progress, spiritually and physically. 🌿📖

## **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at  
Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe  
*Graciously shared with PhiloTorah*

### **B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI**

"And G-d spoke to Moshe at Mt. Sinai saying: Speak to the children of Israel and say unto them, when you come into the Land which I give to you, let the Land rest a Shabbat to G-d." (Vayikra 25:1-2)

Rashi addresses this pasuk and asks, "What does the laws of the Sabbat-

ical year have to do with Mt. Sinai?" Rashi's response that just as the laws of the Sabbatical year spoken at Mt. Sinai...

The obvious question arises. Why this particular piece of legislation chosen to teach us that all the Torah laws originated at Sinai?

Every seventh year we let the land lie fallow. Plowing, planting and harvesting all prohibited. They set sanctity aside for the fruits that grow. Another kind of Shabbat that we meet every seven days is perhaps different but has many similar features. Both deeply affect the economy and both teach us that the world has a Divine Creator. The world was not the result of some spontaneous creation by accident. G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. We use this divine lesson to withdraw ourselves once a week from Creation. The weekly Shabbat gives man his spiritual freedom. We realize that we are masters of - and not the slave to - our surroundings.

Similarly, the Sabbatical year corrects our perspective of the world. It is a year of rest as for as agriculture is concerned.

The produce is ownerless, debts cancelled, and we are free and equal. Just as the freedom of the individual is an important ideal in the Torah, so

is the freedom of the land from man's absolute ownership. The lesson is that whatever we have, it is temporary. It can be subject to recall anytime. G-d says to man, "For you are strangers and alien residents with Me." Man is a resident guest in G-d's world. We own no wealth or possessions; they are all gifts from G-d. Now, perhaps, we can understand the significance of the laws of the Sabbatical year. When we recognize that everything belongs to its Creator, and that all people are His children, that each of us is only temporary sojourner in the land, then we earn the right to be citizens in the Kingdom of G-d, and then we are ready to accept all His rules given to us at Sinai.

It is here, at the mention of Sh'mita that we can really appreciate all the details of the laws given to Moshe at Mt. Sinai and see beyond the transcendental experience. The Sabbatical year is so crucial in conceiving what we received at Sinai that at the end of Parshat B'chukotai, the Torah warns us that exile and desolation in the Land of Israel is Divine compensation for all the Sabbatical years unobserved.

The events that surround us for the past year, only stresses to us how fragile and temporary life is on this world and how important for us to take advantage of the time we have here. 🛠️

## The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI 5785

### Brotherhood and the Sin of Taking Interest

While mentioned elsewhere in the Torah, our Parsha also discusses the injunction of lending money with interest (25:36-37). The five Biblical references account for the five separate negative commandments which are violated when interest is charged. This piling-up of prohibitions is indicative of the severity of this proscription, making it one of the more stringent injunctions in the Torah. The lender, the borrower, the guarantor, the witnesses, and even the scribe are all culpable when engaging in an interest-bearing loan. Added to these technical violations, Chazal warn that anyone who charges interest on a loan endangers his entire financial assets. Even more, he is denying the Exodus from Egypt and even the existence of God.

What though is so terribly wrong with taking interest on a loan? If someone chooses to rent an object from another, he is obviously expected to pay for the rental. They are using someone else's property and should be rightfully charged accordingly. If so, what then is the ethical issue with "renting" out your money. If you are

essentially allowing someone the use of your money, why not charge for it?

The answer is that, in point of fact, there is no ethical issue with lending on interest. In truth, one is perfectly permitted to charge interest to a non-Jew. The reason charging and/or accepting interest is forbidden for a Jew is for an entirely different reason. If a fellow Jew has fallen on hard times and needs money to help restore his economic well-being (and hence his sense of dignity), lending such a person money without interest is the highest fulfillment (according to Rambam) of the mitzva of tz'daka. It is then the ethics of charity that forbid making a profit on the money you lend to such a Jew in need.

Rav Soloveitchik framed the prohibition a bit more candidly. "True, there is nothing ethically wrong with charging interest. But if your father or brother were to come to you for a loan, would you collect interest from them? Certainly not! This is the way the Torah wants us to consider the needs of every Jew." It is no coincidence that in the verses dealing with ribit (interest), the Torah employs the word, ACHICHA, your brother. (Vayikra 25:35-36) "If your brother becomes destitute, when your fellow Jew becomes impoverished, he is to be viewed as ACHICHA, your brother, your blood relative. Taking interest does not constitute a civil wrong, but

rather a deficiency of high moral conduct." For this reason, we can understand why the laws of ribit are found, not in the codes of Choshen Mishpat, as one might expect since charging interest is clearly a monetary issue, but rather in the Yoreh Dei'a section of the Shulchan Aruch. This fact demonstrates that these laws are not categorized as mitzvot "between man and man" exclusively, but also - even primarily - as mitzvot "between man and Gd".

Surely, there are many ways to give chizuk to another. But when you relate to that person as ACHICHA, your brother, you are complimenting him/her in a way that goes quite beyond seeing him as just a friendly acquaintance. To be a brother speaks to "a higher level of coexistence, of inter relatedness and companionship. Brothers are united by existential bonds - one destiny, one memory. The precepts of tz'daka and g'milut chasadim are nurtured by the doctrine of the sympathetic, brotherly, open existence."

With this understanding of the broader underpinnings of the prohibition of charging interest, we can better appreciate the Torah's exquisite sensitivity to the needs of another Jew in difficult circumstances. In our context, a person who experiences economic trauma needs encouragement and hope. To simply

give him a handout may sometimes be necessary, but, by far, the greater mitzva is to lend him the money, interest free. Why? Because in doing so, you are expressing your confidence in that person's ability to rebound. By restoring that person's self-dignity, you are performing one of the Torah's most precious mitzvot! After all, he is family; he is your brother!

## ACHEINU KOL BEIT YISRAEL

Yom Yerushalayim generally falls out around our Parsha. On the 28th of Iyar 5727, the Jewish world underwent an almost revelatory experience when, after two millennia, our holiest of cities was reunited, with the Temple quarter under Jewish sovereignty. Among the many powerful lessons Yerushalayim teaches us is the very same message of nation-brotherhood that underlies the proscription of ribit. In T'hilim 122, Yerushalayim is the city that has the power to bring all Jews together, SHECHUB'RA LAH YACHDAV - The Mishna (Avot 5:7) tells us that never did any Jew not find free lodging in this city. Why? Because when family comes to visit, of course they can stay with you free of charge. The penultimate verse of the Psalm says it quite beautifully. "For the sake of my brothers and my friends, I will say, 'Peace be with you" (ad loc. 8). To echo and add to the words of Radak

(ad loc.), King David is addressing his suffering, wandering brethren, and, as brother to brother, pledges never to forget them and pray incessantly for their peace and welfare. He reminds them that Yerushalayim, the center of Jewish life, eagerly welcomes their return.

For, indeed, isn't that what family is all about! 🙌



## B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

**GM** One of the MITZVOT LO TAASEI - the prohibitions - taught to us in the context of Yovel, but with applications to a much broader area of Torah and moral behavior, is the ISUR of ONAAT D'VARIM, the prohibition of making a fellow uncomfortable or embarrassed by your words to him. Vayikra 25:17 -

וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת־עֲמִיתוֹ וְיָרֵאתָ  
בְּאֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

*And you shall not wrong, one man his fellow Jew, and you shall fear your God, for I am HaShem, your God.*

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 2683. Its NISTAR gimatriya is 1948. One of the

p'sukim in Tanach whose regular gimatriya is 1948 is Mishlei 3:17 -

דְּרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי-יְנֻעַם וְכָל-יְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם:

*Its (the Torah's) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.*

I see embedded in the prohibition of ONAAT D'VARIM is our view and understanding that the Torah wants us to be gentle and kind in our treatment of others - especially those who are extra sensitive because of their situations.

*USFUNEI T'MUNEI CHOL is the title of my book of Gimatriya Matches - IY"H and BE"H. The title translates to Hidden in the Sand. That's how I feel about my Gimatriya searches. Like walking along the beach with a metal detector. Beep-beep-beep. Lean down and find something. Usually, nothing of note. But sometimes you find something special.*

## RED ALERT!

B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

*by Rabbi Eddie Davis (RED)  
of the Young Israel of Hollywood -  
Ft. Lauderdale (Florida)*

## DIVREI TORAH

- We are told that when we enter Eretz Yisrael, we should keep Sh'mita. At the end of the 19th century, at the time of the beginning of the Zionist movement in Ashkenazic Europe, a rabbinical dispute arose about whether we should observe the Sh'mita years or not. Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever and Rabbi Mordechai Eliasberg were among those who leniently felt that we were exempt, while the Netziv was among those who were strict. It was all based on the writings of the Rambam. In Hilchot Sh'mitin v'Yovlot, the Rambam stated that Sh'mita is observed in the presence of the Beit HaMikdash as well as not in the presence of the Beit HaMikdash. Those who held leniently based themselves on a Rambam at the end of the laws of Kings where Rambam wrote that the Mashiach will re-establish the Kingdom of David and rebuild the Beit HaMikdash... and restore the laws of Sh'mita and Yoveil. Maybe the first Rambam was stating that when Bnei Yisrael entered the Promised Land, they observed Sh'mita even prior to the

building of the Beit HaMikdash. But it was destroyed, and we should wait until the Mashiach comes. (Bottom line: Most common opinion is that today we observe Sh'mita, but by Rabbinic decree, not as Torah Law.)

- The Jubilee year was heralded with the blowing of the Shofar on Yom Kippur of that year. Rashi distinguished the law of Shofar on Yom Kippur with the law of Shofar blowing on Rosh HaShana which is prohibited when Rosh HaShana lands on Shabbat. (The Ramban disagrees, but the Talmud, Rosh HaShana 29, clearly states that the blowing of Shofar on Rosh HaShana/Shabbat is prohibited!) Blowing Shofar is not considered one of the prohibited works of Shabbat. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai had instituted a law after the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash that blowing the Shofar on Rosh HaShana/Shabbat would be allowed ONLY in the presence of a religious Beit Din. (One year, I received a phone call from an Israeli cantor from a Reform Temple. He complained to me that the Reform keep only one day of Rosh HaShana. And since Rosh HaShana fell out on Shabbat that year, then there would be no Shofar blowing on Rosh HaShana in his Reform Temple. He wanted to pray with us on the second day of Rosh HaShana, and be able to hear the Shofar being blown. At first, I was inclined to permit his attendance, but

then it became clear that he wanted to be the Chazzan in our Shul for the second day. I asked whether he wanted to bring his guitar. He said: yes, if I would permit it. End of story.)

- The resounding announcement on the Yoveil was the verse: “And you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all inhabitants thereof...” (25:10). We all recognize this verse as it is the sacred statement, inscribed on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. (The Liberty Bell was originally cast in 1752 in London and shipped to Philadelphia. No one knows when it became cracked, but it was rung on July 8, 1776, to celebrate the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence.) In the Talmud (Rosh HaShana 9b), Rabbi Yehuda asked what does the word D'ROR (freedom) mean? He answered: “Freedom describes a state of being wherein a man can dwell wherever he chooses to dwell, and wherein a man can do business in every locality.” In our long history, we have learned that we cannot take these freedoms for granted. We were denied these freedoms for many years in our exile.

- The institution of law inherent in the concept of Yoveil (Jubilee) underscores the basis of these freedoms. Several laws helped us to reach and preserve these freedoms. The cancellation of all debts. Every seven years, debts were to be cancelled. In

essence all loans were, by definition, short term. Long term loans were seen as detrimental to the case of freedom. The cancellation of slavery. Slavery existed, but all slaves had to be granted their freedom. This allowed each person to start all over again. (There is no concept of declaring bankruptcy in Jewish law.) This would assist each person to crawl out from the economic hole in which he was mired. Additionally, each person “shall return to his original ancestral land”. This further enabled the economy to righten itself. These were grand and lofty concepts which were in theory to help society correct its course. Too bad they were not embraced fully in any society.

- There is a discussion among classical Poskim whether there is Ona’a, deception, in the selling of land. Ramban, in Chumash, claims that there definitely is deception in land deals. Consider the following two cases. Reuven wants to buy Shimon’s land because Reuven knows the geological reports that reveal that there are oil deposits on Shimon’s property. But Reuven does not reveal the data to Shimon and makes a low bid to Shimon. This is deception and prohibited by Torah law. Case two: Disney wanted to buy a lot of land in the Orlando area to eventually build Disney World. Disney knows that if word got out as to what

the plan was, land prices would immediately become highly inflated. Disney therefore created several dummy corporations to buy up the lands they desired. This is not deception; this is being wise and crafty. And this is what happened.

- In the beginning of B’chukotai, the section of Divine Blessings is too short. Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman (early 20th century, Germany) wrote that there were five kinds of blessings here: a) the blessing of the fruitfulness of the earth of Eretz Yisrael. The Ramban states that healthy rainfall enabled the inhabitants to experience abundant food, clean air, and fresh water, assuring good health. This will guarantee business success so that each person could support himself. b) The blessing of peace. This means no war, no crime, no insecurity. c) Victory over your enemies. You will be able to destroy them, eradicate them from the world. d) A flourishing economy, resulting in multiplying numbers. We will all reach older age. Economic growth that will support all. e) We will experience Hashem’s Presence. All these blessings will be assured, given to a nation that can observe all of the Torah’s laws and in this way be blessed with a life of stability in Eretz Yisrael. This short section of blessings says it all.

- “You shall perform My decrees and

observe My ordinances, and perform them; then you shall dwell securely on the Land” (25:18). This statement is directed to all Jews living in Eretz Yisrael, and especially to the Jews who are in roles of leadership. When everyone will observe Sh'mita, only then will Hashem bless the land in the 6th year, and it will produce enough grain and fruits and vegetables for several years. Based on a verse in the Tochacha/Admonition (26:35), Rashi states that during the First Temple, the people ignored 70 Sh'mita years (and Yoveil) and were divinely punished with 70 years of the Babylonian exile. How could that be? In the days of the First Temple, there were several righteous kings who definitely observed the laws of Sh'mita. They did observe Sh'mita, but they did not force the nation to do likewise. Because they did not exercise leadership during those years, they were all punished with the Exile.

## Questions by RED

### From the text

1. How often was the Sh'mita year? (25:4)
2. On what day of the year was the Shofar blown to herald the Jubilee (Yoveil)? (25:9)
3. If five of you will pursue a hundred, how many will a hundred of you pursue? (26:8)
4. In the Tochacha, the Admonition, one number is repeated constantly, as in when you perform this number of sins, there will be the same number of punishments. What number is it?
5. If I pledge to donate the value of a 74 year old man, how many shekels am I donating? (27:6)

### From Rashi

6. How many Levitical cities were given to the Leviyim? (25:32)
7. When the Torah tells us not to charge interest from a loan to a fellow Jew, the Torah adds the phrase “you shall fear your God...” Why? (25:36)
8. “I will provide your rains in their time...” (26:4). When is the proper time for rain?
9. What is the biggest blessing of them all? (27:6)

10. If someone refuses to learn Torah, what is the obvious result of his not learning? (26:14)

### From the Rabbis

11. What is the punishment for not obeying the laws of Sh'mita and Yoveil? (Avot 5:9)

12. What is the only law that a Jewish slave (owned by another Jew) is exempt from?

13. "My Sanctuary shall you revere..." (26:2) After the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, how did the Sages apply this law? (S'forno)

### Midrash

14. Whose responsibility was it to count annually the years leading toward the Jubilee, Yoveil?

### Haftara - Yirmiyahu

15. What is the final conclusion of this "doom and gloom" Haftara?

### Relationships

- a) Moshe - Eliezer
- b) Yissachar - Zevulun
- c) No'ach - Yefet
- d) No'a - Milka
- e) Moshe - Elazar

## ANSWERS

1. Every seven years.
2. On Yom Kippur.
3. Ten thousand!
4. Seven.
5. 15 shekels.
6. Forty-eight.
7. To remind us not to be devious in your desire to charge interest, as in giving money to a non-Jew and have him charge the Jewish borrower interest.
8. It will rain at a time when people are not walking in the neighborhood (on Friday night).
9. Peace.
10. He will not perform the Mitzvot.
11. Exile.
12. His master may mate his slave to a non-Jewish slave woman.
13. You shall revere all synagogues and study halls.
14. The Sanhedrin.
15. Hashem will not forsake Israel.

### Relationships

- a) Father & Son
- b) Brothers
- c) Father & Son
- d) Sisters
- e) Uncle & Nephew