

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	-
Mitzvot (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.