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COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

This week's edition is sponsored
Leiluy Nishmat Yedidya Ben
Chorshit Z'L. Tihyeh Nishmato
Betsurat Hachaim

BEHAR

19th IYAR 5776

Shabbat begins: 20:48

Shabbat ends: 22:06



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Humble With Power

As business boomed for tailors in a busy street in London, four tailors decided to open up one after each other. The first was George's Tailor Shop. The sign read: The best tailor in the area! The second was Edward's Tailor Shop. The sign read: The best tailor in London! The third was Johnson's Tailor Shop. The sign read: The best tailor in the United Kingdom! The fourth shop was opened by Yitzchak Cohen. He pondered and pondered as to what he would put on his sign, until he decided just to be honest and wrote: "Cohen's - best tailors on the block!"

Sometimes modesty pays off.

In a world where the fight for survival and success is ever increasing, one might be forgiven for renouncing one of the most highly acclaimed characteristics – that of being modest.

How can one enter the 21st Century and succeed, if they are modest? Surely we

need to show the world what we are made of and how amazing we are?

The Torah seems to take a different view. Appearing at the beginning of our Parasha are the laws concerning the Shemita year in which the land is left fallow. We are commanded to observe the Shemita after having worked the land for six years. G-d promises His Blessing will rest upon the people that observe this Mitzvah: "Then I will command My blessing for you" (25:21). What was the essence of this blessing and why did G-d need to affirm this specifically with regards to Shemita?


**DREAM
BIG
AND
STAY
HUMBLE**

In the Torah modesty is viewed with such esteem that when the greatest person to ever live - Moshe Rabenu is praised, he is claimed to be the most humble of all men and "a servant of G-d".

The Great Sage Hillel Hazaken was born in Babylon and, according to the Iggeret of Rav Sherira Gaon (a comprehensive history of the composition of the Talmud from the 10th century), Hillel descended from the Tribe of Benjamin on his father's side, and from the family of David on his mother's side. One of the most important leaders of the Jewish people he was associated with the development of the Mishna – oral law.

The Gemara (Sukkot 28b) relates that Hillel HaZaken had eighty students – thirty who were described as deserving of divine revelation like Moshe Rabenu, thirty who merited the cessation of heavenly orbits as did Yehoshua bin Nun, and twenty intermediate students. The greatest of his students was Yonatan ben Uzziel; the youngest of them was Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai.

In what fields was the "youngest of the students" expert?

It was said of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai that his studies included the written Torah, Mishnah, Gemara, Halakhot, and Aggadot; the subtle points of the Torah and the minutiae of the Scribes; the inferences from minor to major and analogies; astronomy and geometry (the simple meaning of the word in Greek is - land measurements, but it was commonly used to mean engineering or mathematics in general); the language of the ministering angels; the language of the demons, the whisper of the palms, washer's proverbs and fox fables, and matters great and small.



Living with Mitzvos

1. What is the theme connecting Parshas Behar?
2. Which mitzvos mentioned in Parshas Behar apply to us very much nowadays?
3. How does the idea of Shemitta and Yovel fit into the theme of Sefer Vayikra?
4. Why does Parshas Behar end off mentioning about not doing Avoda Zora and Chillul Shabbos – how does this fit in with the parsha?
5. How are we meant to understand the mitzvah of Shemitta?
6. Which acts does the Torah specify are forbidden in the seventh year?

Answers On Page 3

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The report on Yonatan ben Uzziel was that when he would sit and study Torah, a bird that flew above his head would immediately burn up.

On deeper reflection of this Gemara our Sages are perplexed.

If the fire burnt above the head of Yonatan Ben Uzziel who was the *student* of Hillel Hazaken, then we would have expected much greater things to be occurring above the head of his teacher and Master - Hillel Hazaken. Why is there no mention about what happened above *his* head?

The answer is that in the case of Hillel Hazaken there was also a fire. Yet, he was so holy, so modest; his whole essence was to keep that fire and all around on a low key, quietly inside. It was not about the pump and publicity of being a tsaddik. On the contrary it was all about modesty, realising ones potential but not gloating or wanting even a secondary effect being shown to the outside world of his real greatness.

The Midrash Sifri (Devarim 357), points out that the periods of Hillel's life are made parallel to those in the life of Moshe. Both

lived 120 years, and at the age of forty Hillel went to the Land of Israel; forty years he spent in study; and the last third of his life he was the spiritual head of the Jewish people. There was a similar split of years regarding Moshe's life.

Both were known for their modesty and both became successful leaders and bearers of the Torah.

In Shemita we were given a mitzvah that enables us to focus on modesty for an entire year!

The farmer was the master of his fields for six years. His fields were off-limits to the public, and through his hard work he sowed, reaped, collected and stored up his harvest and his fruits.

Yet when the Seventh year arrived, he was told to put everything down. The land he was so attached to had to be left fallow for a year. No longer was he the master of his possessions, and his fields were open to everyone. During the Shemita year, the farmer could not feel proud of his personal efforts and during that time he would conduct himself with modesty and humility,

yielding before everyone, for each and every person was as much the master of his fields as he was, if not more.

It is at this stage that the Torah reaffirms that this person will be blessed. G-d will command His special blessing towards him. When a cup is full, there is no place to pour any more liquid. Yet when the cup is emptying, it has plenty of space to receive. During this Shemita year the person works on his modesty ensuring he has created the space to capture G-d's blessing. He is then rewarded with success.

In a society that prides itself on challenges and survival of the fittest, one would never have expected the survival of a nation who in their entirety let their land be open and unworked on every seventh year. We would have never expected the leaders of the Jewish people to have such modesty and humble character traits. The Torah teaches us that it is because of their character that they were the best on the block!

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI

MENACHEM JUNIK

PARASHA INSIGHTS

Whilst looking at all the Mitzvot in the Torah, the observance of Shemita is one of the most difficult ones to observe. To have your field remain fallow throughout the entire year demands a strong level of Emuna – faith – as it takes away the livelihood of the individual throughout the

year of Shemita.

Last week in Parshat Kedoshim, the Torah tells us that one must leave the corners of the field and the produce that is forgotten for the poor people to come and collect. This is followed by the Mitzvah in this week's Parsha, Parshat Behar, not to work in ones field every seventh year. Why is it that Hashem encourages and demands such great sacrifice from the farmer?

When we look further into the Parsha, Hashem promises to provide the Jewish people with overwhelming abundance to compensate for the loss of labour of the entire year. The Torah asks 'If you will ask what we will eat in the seventh year?'

Hashem promises us that in the sixth year of harvest there will be sufficient produce for three years; the sixth, seventh and even the eighth year.

In Lekutei Sichos, the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the six years of Shemita reflect the six thousand years of the world's existence. The seventh year represents the days of Moshiach. Just as we are commanded by Hashem to work for six days and rest on the day of Shabbos, the same could be said of the six thousand years of the world's existence. Furthermore, the six days of work are a preparation for Shabbos, which prepare the world for the ultimate Shabbos, the seventh millennium, the coming of Moshiach.

One may ask at the end of the sixth year period, 'What will we eat during the seventh year?' How can our generation, which is so far removed from the holiness and spirituality of the Beit Hamikdash, possibly bring about the final redemption, the seventh year, the ultimate Shabbos? Especially as the spirituality of our generation is much less in comparison to those of previous generations. How can we do this?

The Parshah continues with Hashem telling us, don't despair! 'I will place my blessing to you in the sixth year.' Hashem has empowered our generation with strength, courage and ability despite our spiritual low

level. In some way the Mesirat Nefesh – self-sacrifice of our generation to keep the spark of Yiddishkeit shining bright is more difficult then ever before, yet we know Hashem doesn't ask of us more then we can handle. Therefore, He gives us the strength in the sixth year.

The message of the Mitzvah of Shemita can be absorbed in our six days of the week, utilising every moment to elevate and to uplift the physical and material world with the holiness of Torah and Mitzvos. And then when we finally reach the seventh year, the year of Shemita, it allows us to focus on the fact that even with our success in the previous six years, ultimately everything depends on the will and the Bracha of Hashem and we put our trust and faith not in man but in Hashem.

Every seven years, we remove ourselves from certain physical aspects of this world and we draw strength through the knowledge that Hashem will provide and infuse the world with all of His Brachos.

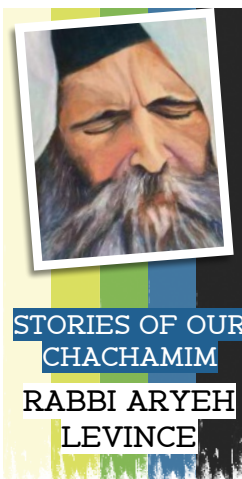
May we merit that in this year of Hakhel, the promise and blessing of the Shmita year will be fulfilled with the coming of Moshiach, who will usher in a time when all of Israel will once again be reunited. A time when we will merit to build the third Beit Hamikdash. A time during which all of humanity and the world will finally experience true peace and harmony.

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STORIES OF OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ARYEH LEVINE

During the British Mandate, Rabbi Aryeh Levine became known as “the father of prisoners.” Every Shabbat, regardless of the weather – despite the sharav (sand storm) or winter storms – the Rav would visit prisons and meet with prisoners of the underground movement and those condemned to death, encouraging them and later writing to them. He did this for nearly a quarter century. We are especially familiar with his frequent visits to the “Russian Compound,” the central prison in Jerusalem, where he organized communal prayers for Shabbat. Rav Aryeh’s personality fascinated everyone. Prisoners of the underground movement, both religious and non-religious, gathered

around him. Even common criminals gathered around him, some to pray and some to hear his uplifting words.

Rabbi Aryeh Levine also regularly visited hospitals for lepers in order to encourage the sick, and he was particularly sensitive to the needs of the poor. Besides his great concern for their sustenance and needs, he paid great attention to their honor and complained that people were being disrespectful to them.

Special Sensitivity

His grandson, Rabbi David Levine, recounts the following story: “When I was a small boy, I was always playing pranks, as children often do. One day my friend and I saw a flag hanging from the wall of a house, and we bet each other who could climb up and get it. I climbed up and reached the flag, and then took it and came down. The lady of the house saw what was happening, and she called to me from her window: ‘Little boy, I know who you are.’ I then fled and hid the flag. The next day I arrived at cheder, and my grandfather called me into his office, which was a small room located beneath the stairs. Here, in the building of the Etz Chaim Talmud Torah, I could not imagine what he wanted from me. Rabbi Aryeh took a Tanach, leafed through it, and arrived at Sefer Shemot. He then said to me, ‘Read it!’

I read: ‘You shall not afflict the widow or the orphan’ [Shemot 22:21].

“Rabbi Aryeh again said to me, ‘Read it, only louder!’ I repeated the verse. ‘Read it a third time!’ my grandfather said. During all that time, I didn’t know where my grandfather was going with this, or what he wanted from me. He then began to moan, ‘The Torah explicitly commands us not to cause pain to a widow! It’s a prohibition like not eating pork! That woman, whose flag you stole, was a widow! How could you dare cause her pain?’ I sat there, all sheepish, thinking: He didn’t criticize me for having transgressed, ‘You shall not steal.’ Instead he was concentrating on a single issue – the pain that I had caused to this widow and the gravity of the evil I had done. ‘What can I do?’ I asked my grandfather. ‘This is bad. I’ll go and return the flag,’ I added. ‘No, no...that’s not enough,’ he replied. ‘You have to go to her home and ask her for forgiveness, otherwise things will be bad for both of us.’ I said, ‘Good, tonight after school, I’ll go see her and ask for her forgiveness.’ ‘At night?’ my grandfather retorted. ‘No! Go there right away!’ Naturally, I didn’t have any choice, and so I went straight to the home of the widow and asked her for forgiveness. Ever since that day, my grandfather’s call still resonates in my ears: ‘How dare you cause a widow pain?’ The sensitivity that he had for isolated cases – which he inculcated in us – is still in my blood.”

Living with Mitzvos

1. Rashi (Behar, 26:1) explains the theme of the parsha. Firstly the Torah warns us to keep the shemitta. However, if a person is worried about his loss of income and transgresses sheviyis then he will end up losing money and needing to sell his house. If he fails to repent then he will need to sell his family field. If he remains obstinate, he will need to sell his house. His persistence will lead him to borrow with interest and if this does not change him then he will end up needing to sell himself as a servant to a Jew. Failure to repent will end in him being sold to a non-Jew.
2. The Mitzvos of Parshas Behar that apply to us nowadays are those of Shemitta. Other mitzvos on a more daily basis are judging on business deals (25:14) and over or under charging, *ona'ah* (25:14). Hurting someone with words (25:17) or hurting them financially, *ribbis* (25:37). *Ribbis* affects five people: the lender; borrower; guarantor; witnesses and some add the *sofer* who wrote down the contract! (Gemora Bava Metzia 75b).
3. R' Shimshon Refoel Hirsch explains the theme of Sefer Vayikra that deals with all aspects of kedusha. Until Parshas Emor with the festivals, it deals with kedusha of mokoim, space. With the parsha of the festivals it discusses the kedusha of zman, time. The festivals are holier than weekday. Now comes Parshas Behar where it discusses shemitta that has both elements – kedusha in place, namely the land of Eretz Yisroel, and kedusha in time, namely every seventh year.
4. Parshas Behar ends off with a warning about Avoda Zora and Chillul Shabbos (26:1-2) since it follows on from the Jew sold as a servant to a non-Jew. We are worried that he will convince himself that he can act like his master and transgress these severe sins. Therefore these pesukim come to reinforce these prohibitions (Rashi, 26:1).
5. The reason for Shemitta is like Shabbos – cessation from creative work. It is testifying that there is a G-d who is directing everything. Understanding that it is not our physical exertion that brings success. To demonstrate this, the farmer makes hefker all his produce and fields. All loans are cancelled. This testifies that a person believes that all comes from Hashem. (See Sefer Hachinuch Mitzva 84)
6. Although all forms of working or assisting growth on land are forbidden in the Shemitta year, only four forms are explicitly mentioned in the Torah and are counted as four of the 613 Mitzvos and are punishable with malkois min HaTorah. They are (25:4-5): sowing; pruning; harvesting and gathering grapes. (There are another two mitzvos of the shemitta not mentioned here. They are to make whatever grows hefker and at the end of the year to cancel all money that is owed to you.)

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