

BeHAR / BECHUKOTAI - LEVITICUS

- *On the Mountain* - - *In My Statutes* -

Dan Stolebarger - Holy Ground Explorations
Chapters 25-27

INTRODUCTION



PARASHAT BeHAR & BECHUKOTAI

INTRO

Matthew Poole gave an interesting additional reason for the sabbath year. He suggested that one of the reasons for the Sabbath year was to put everyone in Israel in the same place as the poor of the land, who had to simply trust that God would provide in unlikely circumstances. This would give them compassion for the poor, who had to live that way *every* year.

Israel's failure to keep this command determined the length of their captivity. Leviticus 26:34 said that if Israel was not obedient, God will make sure the land gets its sabbaths by removing the people to the land of an enemy. This was fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity of Israel (2 Chronicles 36:20-21).

Today, some observant Jewish people find a way around the sabbath year law. On the seventh year, they "sell" their land to a Gentile, work it, and then "buy" it back from the Gentile when the Sabbath year is over. The Gentile makes a little money, and the Jewish person could say, "It wasn't my land on the Sabbath year, so it was all right if I worked it." Others observe this by only cultivating six-sevenths of their land at any one time, and over seven years the entire land has a year of rest.

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And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, ² “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the Lord. ³ Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

Our Torah portion begins with the commandment that an Israelite farmer must let his land remain fallow every seventh year. This is called the “Shemittah.’ For six years, HE would be permitted to plant and harvest fields and vineyards, but during the seventh year no planting or harvesting was permitted, and all the inhabitants of the land could freely glean whatever the farmland produced naturally. Like the “double portion” of manna that fell on the sixth day of the week, God promised to give farmers a “double portion” of the harvest on the sixth year.

The law of shemittah is meant to attest that God is the Creator who truly “owns” all things.

“In the intertestamental period Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar remitted Israel’s taxes during sabbatical years.” (Rooker)

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¹⁰ And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. ¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather *the grapes* of your untended vine. ¹² For it *is* the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field.

²⁰ 'And if you say, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?" ²¹ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years.

Surrendering our control and ownership of personal property and renouncing whatever outstanding debts are owed us takes considerable (faith). What do you think you "own" in this life, and how do you balance the sense of ownership with the idea of surrender?

DAN - God REQUIRES that we live by FAITH ... but oh, how often is my FAITH dependent on my storehouses being full! Selah!!!

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²³ 'The land shall not be sold permanently, **for the land is Mine**; for you *are* strangers and sojourners with Me. ²⁴ And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land.

DAN - The Scriptures teach specifically that the Land of Israel belongs to the LORD and He has given it to His chosen! Something to keep in mind as the world does its best to tell Israel what's there's and what's not!

³⁵ 'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.

³⁶ Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you.

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³ 'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them,
⁴ then I will

¹⁴ 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments,
¹⁵ and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, *but* break My covenant,
¹⁶ I also will do this to you:

⁴⁰ '*But* if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me,
⁴¹ and *that* I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies;
if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—
⁴² then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember;
I will remember the land.

- Synopsis - Our Torah portion begins with the promise that **if** the Israelites would walk in the LORD's statutes and commandments and perform them, then they would enjoy material blessings and dwell securely in the promised land. Moreover the LORD Himself would make His dwelling with them and would walk among them as their God. The people of Israel would then truly be - a treasured people among all the nations of the earth.
- On the other hand, if the people disobeyed God and disregarded His commandments, then they would be considered covenant-breakers, and they would experience all manner of distress and tribulation in their lives.
- The section of curses is twice as long as the section on blessings. This speaks to human nature, which is more motivated by the fear of threats than by the promises of blessing.
- "From this place the Jews take great comfort, and assure themselves of deliverance out of their present servitude and misery. And from this, and such other places, St. Paul concludes that the Israelitish nation, though then rejected and ruined, should be gathered again and restored." (Poole)

- In Jewish tradition, a Yeshiva student will study Torah 12 hours a day, pray 2 hours a day, take care of bodily needs 2 hours a day, and sleep the remaining 8 hours. If he continues on this schedule, he will eventually become *Gadol B'Torah*. The sages state: "All sins derive from the sin of *insignificance*: when a person ceases to be sensitive to the great importance which God attaches to his life and deeds. 'I don't really matter' is not humility - it is the ultimate arrogance. It really means: 'I can do what I want.' The most terrible of punishments is for God to indulge the sinner this vanity and to say: 'All right, have it your way; what happens to you is of no significance...'"

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²⁸ 'Nevertheless no devoted *offering* that a man may devote to the Lord of all that he has, *both* man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted *offering* is most holy to the Lord.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. ² And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." **ACTS 5**

COUNTING THE OMER



COUNTING THE OMER

As the holiday of Shavuot became associated with the giving of the Torah, and not only with a celebration of agricultural bounty, the omer period began to symbolize the thematic link between Passover and Shavuot.

While Passover celebrates the initial liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, Shavuot marks the culmination of the process of liberation, when the Jews became an autonomous community with their own laws and standards. **Counting up to Shavuot reminds us of this process of moving from a slave mentality to a more liberated one.**

COUNTING THE OMER

With the mitzvah of counting the 49 days, known as Sefirat Ha'Omer, the Torah invites us on a journey into the human psyche, into the soul. There are seven basic emotions that make up the spectrum of human experience. At the root of all forms of enslavement, is a distortion of these emotions. Each of the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot is dedicated to examining and refining one of them.

The seven emotional attributes are:

Chesed — Loving-kindness (W1-7)

Gevurah — Justice and discipline (W8-14)

Tiferet — Harmony, compassion (W15-21)

Netzach — Endurance (W22-28)

Hod — Humility (W29-35)

Yesod — Bonding (W36-42)

Malchut — Sovereignty, leadership (W43-49)

BONDING - TEAM

“Bonding is the foundation of life and the emotional spine of the human psyche. Every person needs bonding to flourish and grow – bonding between mother and child, between husband and wife, between brothers and sisters, and between close friends.

Bonding is affirmation; it gives one the sense of belonging; an affirmation that I matter; I am significant created in the image and likeness of God.” We are the handiwork of God. He has fashioned and molded us. Therefore, by divine creation we are important.

But not just “I matter” (not pride/arrogance), but that God and others are “significant and important” to me. “It establishes trust — trust in your own self and trust in others. It instills confidence. Without bonding and nurturing we cannot realize our potential and be what we were destined to be.” Everything that God had made is of worth to him. If we were worthless, we would not have been created or exist.