



Snapshot Torah

GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 31

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BEHAR/ B'HUKOTAI

27th Iyar 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 25, Verses 1 - 18

- ✚ Hashem commands Moshe regarding the Shmittah (Sabbatical) and Jubilee years. Every seventh year is a Sabbatical year, when it is forbidden to work the land (this only applies to the Land of Israel)
- ✚ After seven sets of seven years has passed then a Yovel (Jubilee) year is proclaimed. During which all the laws relating to the Shmittah year would still apply.
- ✚ In addition all slaves must be set free and all possessions land reverts back to their original owners.
- ✚ Hashem instructs us that we should conduct all our business transactions ethically and should not verbally harass or intentionally mislead anyone.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 25, verses 19 - 28

- ✚ Hashem reassures us that if Bnai keep the laws of Shmittah and Yovel he will bless the sixth year's harvest, and it will produce enough crops to sustain the people for three years.
- ✚ The Aliya continues with a rationale behind the prohibition against selling land for perpetuity and why it can only be leased out until the Yovel year.
- ✚ The seller of land, or his relative on his behalf, has the option of "redeeming" the land from the purchaser, provided that two years have passed from the date of purchase.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 25, verses 29 - 38

- ✚ The law mentioned above only applies to fields and properties situated in an un-walled city. Property in walled cities, can only be redeemed up to one year after the sale; otherwise they become the permanent property of the buyer.
- ✚ Another exception to the rules is relating to the land allotted to the Levi'im, which will always be redeemable.
- ✚ We are taught to assist our poorer brethren before they become financially ruined and become dependent on the help of others. The prohibition of charging interest on a loan to a fellow Jew is also re-iterated.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 25, verse 39 - Chapter 26, verse 9

- ✚ All Jewish slaves must be treated respectfully, never subjected to perform demeaning labour.
- ✚ The redemption process for a Jew sold into slavery to a non-Jewish master is prescribed here. The master must be reimbursed for the years remaining until the Yovel year when the slave would have been relinquished anyway despite the fact he / she had not been redeemed.
- ✚ A reminder of the prohibition against idolatry is mentioned once again, and the requirement that we observe the Shabbat and revere Hashem's Holy Sanctuaries (Synagogues and study halls).
- ✚ Hashem promises us incredible blessings if we diligently study Torah and observe all the mitzvot properly. These blessings include plentiful food, rain in the right season, Military success and peace in the land of Israel.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 26, verses 10 - 46

- ✚ This Aliyah describes in detail the flip-side if we don't adhere to or reject Hashem's commandments.
- ✚ Some of the punishments meted out, includes disease, famine, enemy occupation and golus (exile).
- ✚ Despite all this Hashem promises to never utterly forsake us completely and will ultimately forgive our past transgressions and allow us back into the land of Israel.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 27, verses 1 - 15 and

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 27, verses 16 - 34

- ✚ If someone vows to bring the value of a person as a gift to the Mishkan, then he must follow a formula that takes into consideration the person's gender and age. If an animal, house or field is pledged they are evaluated by the Kohen and the monetary value is redeemed and paid to the Kohen.
- ✚ A person who wishes to redeem his Ma'aser (Tithe) may do so by adding a fifth of the value to the Ma'aser total.
- ✚ Evaluating Ma'aser from cattle or sheep is achieved by herding them all into a pen and taking every 10th animal aside as Ma'aser.

Haftorah – Yermeyahu (Jeremiah) Chapter 16, verse 19 – Chapter 17, verse 14

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The Prophet Yermeyahu rebukes the people of Israel for their idolatrous ways and for not having faith in Hashem.
- ✚ Yermeyahu conveys Hashem's words of wrath towards those who do not put their trust in Him, by foretelling exile as their punishment and of Hashem blessing the ones who do.
- ✚ Yermeyahu emphasizes his point by comparing Man to a Tree. "If we put our faith in people, we will be like a tree craving for water in the desert. Not knowing if they are going to find enough to survive. However, if we place our trust in Hashem. We will be like a tree near a river. Never fearing where its water will come from, even during a drought."

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ The Haftorah discusses the punishments that await those who disregard Hashem's laws, and the blessings that are for those who follow the Creator's wishes. This follows the theme of this week's Torah reading which details at length the blessings and curses..

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

Parsha Behar deals primarily with the Mitzvor of keeping Shmittah and Yovel, yet intertwined are a number of other laws relating to Shabbat, slavery and idol worship. What's the connection?

The ideology behind the Shmittah year, the cycle of every seven years that the land of Israel must rest is very similar to the concept of keeping Shabbat. Just as Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, so should we.

Shabbat is the time we can truly appreciate the world we live in and more importantly acknowledge that Hashem created the world and continues to sustain it, week in – week out. The Shmittah year is no different. It gives us the opportunity to realise that in truth, we possess nothing. The whole world belongs to Hashem since he was the one who created it. We are all in effect nothing but 'Hashem's employee's' who have been given permission to dwell on Hashem's property and eat from his produce. As the Torah quotes 'The whole world belongs to me. I am Hashem'

After the completion of seven Shmittah cycles, the Yovel year comes into force. Not only is any agricultural work permitted in the land of Israel but the land is restored back to its original owner; re-emphasising the point once again that although property and land can be bought and sold, no one except Hashem really owns it at all.

The Jewish slaves are also released during the Yovel year. This teaches that nobody has the right to own another man because every one of us are in Hashem's eyes his servants and should be treated fairly and equally.

So where does performing idolatry fit into all this? Anyone who rebels against the idea of having one sovereign deity who rules over the whole world and is led to believe just like Greek and Roman mythology that there was a pantheon of Gods presiding over each individual element, of the world's existence; the sun, moon, and sea for example, are greatly mistaken. As if like me you have read any of their mythology you would see that these so called gods don't have time to love and care for us dear mortals as Hashem does because they are always arguing or at war with each other.

All the mitzvot and commandments in this week's two Parshas and the consequences if we don't adhere to them, all revolve around the same concept. Hashem's insistence that we the Jewish people recognise the fact that the whole world and its inhabitants belong solely to Hashem and that we are all privileged and thankful for everything which has been given to us, albeit on loan from Hashem's great store-house of riches.

