

Opening Discussion:

Romans 13:1-2

Submission to Governing Authorities

¹ Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

The Believer's Freedom

²³ “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

²⁵ Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, ²⁶ for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”^[4]

²⁷ If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. ²⁹ I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? ³⁰ If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?

³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Week 30 - BEHAR (On the Mount)

Leviticus 25:1–27:34; Jeremiah 32:6–27; Romans 6:1–23

“The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, **the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord.**’” Leviticus 25:1–2

“We can not live an **abundant life** if we are not willing to live an **obedient life**.”

Last week, in the Reading “**Say**” (Emor), God called the Kohen (priests) to live lives that expressed a greater measure of holiness. It also described the essential festivals that God calls His feasts, which included the Sabbath.

This week, in the Reading “**On the Mount**” (Behar) God gives Moses the law of the **Shemittah** (literally, release but commonly translated Sabbatical Year).

This law is related to the pattern or rhythm of seven in Scripture. Here are a few instances:

- God created the universe in seven days;
- There are seven days in the week;
- God rested on the seventh day;
- The Temple menorah was seven-branched;
- There are **even moadim or appointed times (Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Day of Blowing Trumpets/New Year, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles)**; and
- The Israelites made seven circuits around Jericho before the walls fell.

Seven is the number that celebrates **the sacred purpose of infusing holiness into the whole of Creation.** (*Jewish Wisdom in the Numbers*)

Begin the Reading & Teaching:

Leviticus 25:1-27:34

The Sabbath Year

Leviticus 25:1

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying,

Mount Sinai: *And G-d spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying . . . Leviticus 25:1*

What has the sabbatical year to do with Mount Sinai? Were not all commandments given on Sinai? But the verse wishes to tell us: just as with the Sabbatical year both its general principle and its minute details were ordained on Mount Sinai, so, too, was it with all the Commandments--their general principle as well as their minute details were ordained on Mount Sinai.

(*Torat Kohanim; Rashi*)

Rabbi Akiva says: The general principle *and* the details were given at Sinai. They were then repeated in the Tent of Meeting, and enjoined a third time in the Plains of Moab (i.e., in Moses' narrative in the book of Deuteronomy).

(*Talmud, Shabbat 6a*)

Leviticus 25:2

²“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord.

sabbath: When you come into the land which I give you, the land shall rest a sabbath unto G-d (25:2)

Taken on its own, this verse seems to imply that "a sabbath unto G-d" is to be observed immediately upon entering the Land. But in practice, when the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel they first worked the land for six years, and only then observed the *seventh* year as the *shmittah* (sabbatical year)--as, indeed, the Torah clearly instructs in following verses.

We find a similar duality in regard to the weekly seven-day cycle. The weekly Shabbat has a twofold role: a) It is the day "from which all successive days are blessed"--the source of material and spiritual sustenance for the week to follow. b) It is the "culmination" of the week-- the day on which the week's labors efforts are harvested and sublimated, and their inner, spiritual significance is realized and brought to light. – **therefore God must be REST for this truth and reality to be true, as it was out of God, REST, that He Created the next seven days, including the seventh day, Shabbat/Rest.**

Therein lies an important lesson in how we are to approach the mundane involvements of life. True, we begin with the material, for in a world governed by cause and effect, the means inevitably precede the end. But what is first in actuality need not be first in mind. In mind and consciousness, **the end must precede the means, for without a clear vision of their purpose to guide them, the means may begin to see themselves as the end.**

The spiritual harvest of a Shabbat or *shmittah* can be only achieved *after* a "work-week" of dealing with the material world and developing its resources. But it must be preceded and predicated upon "a sabbath unto G-d" that occupies the fore of our consciousness and pervades our every deed.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Leviticus 25:1-6

³For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, ⁴but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. ⁶The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, ⁷and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.

Just as we are to work for six days but rest on the seventh, the land is to be sown and harvested for six years. **In the seventh year, the land is to have its Shabbat year of rest — its Shemitah.**

“But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or **harvest the grapes of your untended vines**. **The land is to have a year of rest.**” Leviticus 25:4–5

Of course, this law involved **more than allowing the land to rest**. During the **Shemitah**, the Israelites were to make some agricultural and economic adjustments in order to rest and **take the time to learn about the Lord**.

It was not only a time of physical rest, *saving both the land and the people from exhaustion*, **it was a time of spiritual refreshment:**

“At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the **Festival of Tabernacles (Sukkot)**, when **all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place He will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing**. Assemble the people — men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns — **so they can listen and learn to fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law**. **Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the Lord your God** as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” Deuteronomy 31:10–13

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Leviticus 25:8-10

The Year of Jubilee

⁸“You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. ⁹Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰**And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you**, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.

The Year of Jubilee: the Redemption of the Land

“Count off seven Sabbath years — **seven times seven years** — so that the **seven Sabbath years** amount to a period of **forty-nine years** . . . Consecrate the **fiftieth year** and **proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants**.” Leviticus 25:8, 10

The seven-year **Shemitah** cycle accumulated in sets of seven (49 years) and culminated in **The Year of Jubilee (Yovel)**.

Every 50th year, both the land and the people rested.

This is a very special **appointed time** of **freedom** and **liberty** that is **sanctified, set apart, or holy (kadosh)** to the Lord.

It was **proclaimed throughout the land** with the **blowing of the shofar on the Day of Atonement**.

With the blast of the shofar, Hebrew slaves were freed and debts were forgiven.

And while the land was left uncultivated, as in the **Shemith** year, in **The Year of Jubilee** (Yovel), hereditary **property was returned to its original family, even if it had been sold because of misfortune, poverty, or to pay off a debt.**

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Although this type of land ownership may seem foreign and impractical, **the intent of this law is to convey the truth that the Lord is the real owner of Israel's real estate; therefore, it cannot be permanently sold.**

“**The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is Mine** and you reside in My land as foreigners and strangers. **Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.**” Leviticus 25:23–24

We might liken this concept of land ownership to a lease, with the Jewish People being God's tenants.

This **law** was for everyone, rich and poor alike. It was designed to protect the rights of each person and prevented land and wealth from being accumulated in the hands of a rich few, while the majority remained poor.

What's more, this law really brings home the fact that **no one — no leader or politician or individual — has the right to sell, divide or give away God's land for any reason.**

Not even for the purpose of a supposed peace deal with those determined to destroy the Jews in Israel. God will execute His judgment on all those who attempt to divide up His land. **Joel 3:2:**

“I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land.”

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(see i.e. The Hope of Jeremiah: the Hope of Israel on page 10 of this teaching)

Jesus' Teaching Validation of the Feast of Atonement & Future Revelation (just following his Temptation and during the Feast of Atonement):

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the *Lord's favor*, . . .” **Luke 4:16-19**

Jesus stops just short of the vengeance/wrath of the Lord, which he will fulfill in his Second Coming:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
² to proclaim the year of the *Lord's favor*, . . .
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;” **Isaiah 61:1-2**

* **Timeline of Jesus' Ordination (Baptism, (late-August); Temptation, 40 Days prior to the Feast of Atonement (late-September/early-October); Commissioning, in the Temple and Reading of Isaiah 61:1-2:** “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;* ² *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Jesus, our High Priest, Declares here the “Year of Jubilee” – the Biblical Cancellation of All Debts), and the day of vengeance of our God.*” Isaiah 61:1-2; Second Coming of Jesus, will fall on the same Feast, “Atonement” (late-September/early-October), where he will complete the reading of Isaiah 61:2, which he did not complete Reading in his First Coming, but will Declare in his Second Coming: “*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Jesus, our High Priest, Declares here, again, the “Year of Jubilee” – the Biblical Cancellation of All Debts), and the day of vengeance of our God (Jesus here Declares God's Wrath to be Poured Out on all the Nations that “do not Repent”).*”

Closing The Gate (ceremony of the Feast of Atonement)

Just prior to nightfall a hushed congregation prepares to observe the last service of Yom Kippur called **Ne'ilah**, which means, “**closing the gate**” (A person could not have atonement and forgiveness without entering the temple courts before the gate was closed.). The cantor calls, “*Hear, O Israel, the Lord (Yahuwah/Jehovah) is our God, the Lord (Yahuwah/Jehovah) is one.*” Immediately following this comes the threefold repetition of the words, “*Blessed be the name (Yahushua/Joshua/Jesus) of Him whose glorious kingdom endures forever.*” The attendant worshipers anciently uttered these words when the high priest pronounced the name of God (Yahuwah/Jehovah) in the Temple. Then, beginning in a whisper and progressively increasing in volume of his voice, the cantor declares seven times, “The Lord (Yahuwah/Jehovah) is God.” When the last notes of the chant have died away, a long blast, Tekiah Gedola is sounded on the shofar and the Day of Atonement comes to an end. This **last trump** proclaims the **year of Jubilee*** every fiftieth year.

* **Year of Jubilee:** Now, using Ezra’s decree as the starting point (457 B.C.), if we count forward 483 years we will arrive at **27 A.D.** (There is only one year between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D.) According to the translator of Josephus, the Jewish new year that began in the fall of 27 A.D. marked the beginning of the last Jubilee Year that the Jews enjoyed in the land before their worldwide dispersal by the Romans in 70 A.D. This is most likely the year that **Jesus began His public ministry**. This is hinted at in **Luke 4** where it says that when Jesus launched His ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth, He did so by reading a passage from Isaiah 61 about the way in which the Messiah would fulfill the spiritual essence of the Jubilee. After finishing the reading, Jesus proclaimed, **“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” Luke 4:21.**

(<https://christinprophecy.org/articles/daniels-70-weeks-of-years/>)

Putting the next Jubilee Year around 2027 to 2030, starting around 2021-2022 or 2022-2023, of the last seven years prior to the fulfillment of the Last Jubilee of the Messiah’s Return.

Leviticus 25:11-21

¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.

¹³ **“In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property.** ¹⁴ And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another. ¹⁵ You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. ¹⁶ If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. ¹⁷ **You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God.**

¹⁸ **“Therefore you shall do my statutes and keep my rules and perform them,** and then you will dwell in the land securely. ¹⁹ The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and dwell in it securely. ²⁰ And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?’ ²¹ I will command my **blessing** on you in the sixth year, so that it will produce a crop sufficient **for three years.**

the sixth year: *And if you shall say: What shall we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our produce! But I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years . . . (25:20-21)*

The question "What shall we eat in the seventh year?" is even more pressing in light of the fact that, the land having been depleted by five years of planting, the sixth year's yield is naturally *less* than average. Yet G-d promises that it will provide not only for a full year's sustenance, but also for the seventh year **and beyond.**

And if you shall say: What shall we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our produce!

But I will command my **blessing** upon you in **the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. You shall sow on the eighth year and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in, you shall eat of the old store.**

Blessing: barak - to kneel, bless (i.e. *and he made his camels kneel*)

A primitive root; to kneel; by implication to bless God (as an act of adoration) -- bless abundantly, bless, bless greatly, bless indeed, bless kneel (down), bless still, thank.

i.e. Genesis 24:

Isaac and Rebekah

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ And **he made the camels kneel down** outside the city **by the well** (where all blessing came – living water – i.e. Patriarch's wives/future brides all found at a well, Mary conceives at a well, eternal salvation received by the woman at the well and Jesus . . . Jesus is our living water . . . **John 7:37-39**) . . .

John 7:37-39

Jesus Promises Living Water

³⁷ On the last day, the climax of the **festival** (the Feast of Tabernacles . . . possibly the **Eight Day** (the climax of the festival), the day of “The Great Day of Salvation”, the day when Mary dedicated Jesus in the temple after 40 days of purification, Jesus our “Great Salvation”), Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” ³⁹ (When he said **“living water,”** *he was speaking of the Spirit*, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

. . . of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water. ¹² And he said, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, **please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.** ¹³ Behold, **I am standing by the spring of water,** and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please let down your jar that I may drink,’ and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.”

¹⁵ **Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah,** who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, *came out with her water jar on her shoulder.* ¹⁶ **The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known** (a virgin). She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. ¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water to drink from your jar.” ¹⁸ She said, “Drink, my lord.” And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, **“I will draw water for your camels also, until they have**

finished drinking."²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels.²¹ The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not.

²² When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels,²³ and said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"²⁴ She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."²⁵ She added, "We have plenty of both straw and fodder, and room to spend the night."²⁶ **The man bowed his head and worshiped the Lord**²⁷ and said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the Lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen."²⁸ Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things . . .³⁷ My master made me swear, saying, "You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell,³⁸ but you shall go to my father's house and to my clan and take a wife for my son."³⁹ I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'⁴⁰ But he said to me, "**The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and prosper your way.** You shall take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's house."⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my clan. And if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath."

The Seven-year shmittah cycle corresponds to the Seven Millennia of History

If the **first five millennia** of history could not provide for the universal Sabbath, what can be expected of us, we of the "sixth year," exhausted and depleted of spirit?

"So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience." Hebrews 4:9-11

Our sages tell us **that the seven-year shmittah cycle corresponds to the seven millennia of history.** For six thousand years, man labors in the fields of the material world in preparation for **the seventh millennium--a millennium that is "wholly sabbath and tranquillity, for life everlasting," the era of Moshiach (the messiah).**

Leviticus 25:22-43

²² When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating some of the old crop; you shall eat the old until the ninth year, when its crop arrives.

Redemption of Property

²³ "The land shall not be sold in **perpetuity (forever)**, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.²⁴ And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.

²⁵ "If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold.²⁶ If a man has no one to redeem it and then himself becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it,²⁷ let him calculate the years since he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and then return to his property.²⁸ But if he does not have sufficient means to recover it, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of the buyer **until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property.**

²⁹ "If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, he may redeem it within a year of its sale. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption.³⁰ If it is not redeemed within a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee.³¹ But the houses of the villages that have no wall around them shall be classified with the fields of the land. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee.³² As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites may redeem at any time the houses in the cities they possess.³³ And if one of the Levites exercises his right of redemption, then the house that was sold in a city they possess shall be released in the jubilee. For the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel.³⁴ But the fields of pastureland belonging to their cities may not be sold, for that is their possession forever.

Kindness for Poor Brothers

³⁵ "If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you.³⁶ Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you.³⁷ You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.³⁸ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

³⁹ "If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave:⁴⁰ he shall be with you as a hired worker and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee.⁴¹ Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers.⁴² For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; **they shall not be sold as slaves.**⁴³ You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God.

My servants: For they are My servants, whom I took out of the land of Egypt; they cannot be sold into slavery (25:42)

At the time of the Exodus, G-d made freedom the inherent and eternal state of the Jew. **From that point on, no power or force on earth can subvert our intrinsic freedom.**

(Maharal)

Leviticus 25:44-26:4

⁴⁴ As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you.⁴⁵ You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your

land, and they may be your property. ⁴⁶ You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves of them, but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another ruthlessly.

Redeeming a Poor Man

⁴⁷ "If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger's clan, ⁴⁸ then after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him, ⁴⁹ or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him, or a close relative from his clan may redeem him. Or if he grows rich he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰ He shall calculate with his buyer from the year when he sold himself to him until the year of jubilee, and the price of his sale shall vary with the number of years. The time he was with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired worker. ⁵¹ If there are still many years left, he shall pay proportionately for his redemption some of his sale price. ⁵² If there remain but a few years until the year of jubilee, he shall calculate and pay for his redemption in proportion to his years of service. ⁵³ **He shall treat him as a worker hired year by year.** He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight. ⁵⁴ And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of jubilee. ⁵⁵ For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Blessings for Obedience

26 "You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God. ² You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. ³ "If you walk in my statutes ("engraved") and observe my commandments and do them, ⁴ then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

Reward

"If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and do them; I will give your **rain** in due season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit."

Our Temporary Reward: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one **sows**, that will he also **reap**," Galatians 6:7

Our Eternal Reward: "Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:19

In other words, punishment for wrongdoing is no more G-ds "revenge" than falling to the ground is Divine retribution for jumping out the window. Just as the Creator established certain laws of cause and effect that define the natural behavior of the physical universe, so, too, did He establish a spiritual-moral "nature," by which doing good results in a good and fulfilling life and doing evil results in negative and strife-filled experiences.

A third approach sees the suffering associated with sin as the by-product of G-d's rehabilitation of the iniquitous soul. The analogy is the removal of an infective splinter from a person's body: the pain that is experienced is not a "punishment" as such for the person's carelessness, but an inevitable part of the healing process itself. The fact that a foreign body has become imbedded in living flesh and has caused its decay makes its removal a painful experience. By the same token, when something alien to the soul's bond with G-d has become imbedded within it, the extraction of this alien body, and the healing of the bond, is experienced as painful to both body and soul.

Bechukotai: If you walk in My statutes (Leviticus 26:3)

The word *chok* ("statute" or "decree"), which gives the Parshah of *Bechukotai* its name, literally means "**engraved**".

When something is written, the substance of the letters that express it--the ink--remains a separate entity from the substance upon which they have been set--the parchment. On the other hand, letters engraved in stone are forged in it: the words are stone and the stone is words.

By the same token, there is an aspect of Torah that is "inked" on our soul: we understand it, our emotions are roused by it; it becomes our "lifestyle" or even our "personality"; but it remains something additional to ourselves. But there is a dimension of Torah that is *chok*, engraved in our being. There is a dimension of Torah which expresses a bond with G-d that is of the very essence of the Jewish soul.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

Since we know that the reward for the *commandments* (mitzvot), and the good which we shall merit if we keep the way of G-d written in the Torah, is solely in the life of the World To Come . . . Nevertheless, those good things are not the ultimate reward of the mitzvot, nor are those evils the ultimate punishment for transgressing them.

The explanation of the matter is thus: G-d gave us this Torah; it is a tree of life, and whoever observes all that is written in it and knows it with a complete knowledge merits thereby the life of the World To Come . . . Yet G-d also promised us in the Torah that if we observe it with joy . . . He will remove from us all things that may prevent us from fulfilling it, such as illness, war, hunger, and the like, and He will bestow upon us all blessings that bolster our hand to observe the Torah such as abundant food, peace, and much gold and silver, *in order that* we should not need to preoccupy ourselves all our days with our material needs but be free to learn the wisdom and observe the commandments by which we shall merit the life of the World To come...

(Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 9:1)

. . . concept of the "**reward**" for mitzvot in this world has a parallel in Torah law. The law states that farm workers must be allowed to eat of the food they are working with; even an animal may not be "muzzled as it threshes." This is not payment for their work--their wages they receive later, after their work is done--but a special provision that says that they must be allowed to eat from the produce they are working with.

By the same token, we are employed by G-d to develop and elevate His world through the performing of *commandments* (mitzvot). **The actual reward for our work will come later, in the World To Come, after our task is completed;** but G-d is also "obligated" to allow us to enjoy the material blessings of this world, which is the object of our toil.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

“We can not live an **abundant life** if we are not willing to live an **obedient life**.”

John 10:9-11

⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Matthew 6:33

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Psalm 1

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners,

nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

² but his delight is in the law of the Lord,

and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree

planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season,

and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

Leviticus 26:5-13

⁵ Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely. ⁶ I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. ⁷ You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸ Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹ I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you. ¹⁰ You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. ¹¹ I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people. ¹³ I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk **erect** (or upright).

upright: I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you walk upright (26:13)

An animal walks with its face to the earth, for earthiness and materiality is all that it knows. Man walks upright, for man was born to gaze upon and aspire to the Heavens.

(Rabbi DovBer of Mezerich)

Leviticus 26:14-28

Punishment for Disobedience

¹⁴ “But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments, ¹⁵ if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, ¹⁶ then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷ I will set my face against you, and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. ¹⁸ And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, ¹⁹ and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰ And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

²¹ “Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins. ²² And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.

²³ “And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me, ²⁴ then I also will walk contrary to you, and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁵ And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. ²⁶ When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

²⁷ “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, ²⁸ then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.

My face: If you will not hearken to Me, and walk casually with Me; I, too, will act casually with you... (26:28)

All sins derive from the sin of insignificance: when a person ceases to be sensitive to the paramount importance which G-d 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 G-d to indulge the sinner this vanity. For G-d to say: "All right, have it your way; what happens to you is of no significance"; for G-d to act toward him as if He really does not care what happens to him.

(The Chassidic Masters)

Leviticus 26:29-46

²⁹ You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰ And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. ³¹ And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. ³² And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. ³³ And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.

³⁴ "Then the land shall enjoy^[a] its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. ³⁵ As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it. ³⁶ And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues. ³⁷ They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues. And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. ³⁸ And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. ³⁹ And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity, and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.

⁴⁰ "But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me,⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and **break my covenant** with them, for I am the Lord their God. ⁴⁵ But I will for their sake *remember the covenant* with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord."

⁴⁶ These are the statutes and rules and laws that the Lord made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.

covenant: Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away (26:44)

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of G-d, in that to every place to which they were exiled the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) went with them. They were exiled to Egypt and the *Shechinah* was with them, as it says, "Did I reveal myself unto the house of your father when they were in Egypt" (I Samuel 2:27). They were exiled to Babylon, and the *Shechinah* was with them, as it says, "For your sake I was sent to Babylon" (Isaiah 43:14). And when they will be redeemed in the future, the *Shechinah* will be with them, as it says, "Then the L-rd your G-d will return with your captivity" (Deuteronomy 30:3)

(Talmud, Megillah 29a)

Leviticus 27

Laws About Vows

²⁷ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, If anyone makes a special vow to the Lord involving the valuation of persons, ³ then the valuation of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels^[a] of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴ If the person is a female, the valuation shall be thirty shekels. ⁵ If the person is from five years old up to twenty years old, the valuation shall be for a male twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁶ If the person is from a month old up to five years old, the valuation shall be for a male five shekels of silver, and for a female the valuation shall be three shekels of silver. ⁷ And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the valuation for a male shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁸ And if someone is too poor to pay the valuation, then he shall be made to stand before the priest, and the priest shall value him; the priest shall value him according to what the vower can afford.

⁹ "If the vow^[b] is an animal that may be offered as an offering to the Lord, all of it that he gives to the Lord is holy. ¹⁰ He shall not exchange it or make a substitute for it, good for bad, or bad for good; and if he does in fact substitute one animal for another, then both it and the substitute shall be holy. ¹¹ And if it is any unclean animal that may not be offered as an offering to the Lord, then he shall stand the animal before the priest, ¹² and the priest shall value it as either good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall be. ¹³ But if he wishes to redeem it, he shall add a fifth to the valuation.

¹⁴ "When a man dedicates his house as a holy gift to the Lord, the priest shall value it as either good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. ¹⁵ And if the donor wishes to redeem his house, he shall add a fifth to the valuation price, and it shall be his.

¹⁶ "If a man dedicates to the Lord part of the land that is his possession, then the valuation shall be in proportion to its seed. A homer^[c] of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver. ¹⁷ If he dedicates his field from the year of jubilee, the valuation shall stand, ¹⁸ but if he

dedicates his field after the jubilee, then the priest shall calculate the price according to the years that remain until the year of jubilee, and a deduction shall be made from the valuation.¹⁹ And if he who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, then he shall add a fifth to its valuation price, and it shall remain his.²⁰ But if he does not wish to redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore.²¹ But the field, when it is released in the jubilee, shall be a holy gift to the Lord, like a field that has been devoted. The priest shall be in possession of it.²² If he dedicates to the Lord a field that he has bought, which is not a part of his possession,²³ then the priest shall calculate the amount of the valuation for it up to the year of jubilee, and the man shall give the valuation on that day as a holy gift to the Lord.²⁴ In the year of jubilee the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, to whom the land belongs as a possession.²⁵ Every valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs^[d] shall make a shekel.

²⁶ “But a firstborn of animals, which as a firstborn belongs to the Lord, no man may dedicate; whether ox or sheep, it is the Lord's.²⁷ And if it is an unclean animal, then he shall buy it back at the valuation, and add a fifth to it; or, if it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at the valuation.

²⁸ “But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the Lord, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord.²⁹ No one devoted, who is to be devoted for destruction^[e] from mankind, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.

³⁰ “Every tith of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.³¹ If a man wishes to redeem some of his tith, he shall add a fifth to it.³² And every tith of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord.³³ One shall not differentiate between good or bad, neither shall he make a substitute for it; and if he does substitute for it, then both it and the substitute shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.”

³⁴ These are the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

The Hope of Jeremiah: the Hope of Israel

“Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.”

Jeremiah 32:15

The Prophetic portion, *reading*, echoes the theme found in the Torah portion of the purchase and redemption of land.

This portion opens with a rather bizarre situation.

King Zedekiah has imprisoned Jeremiah in Jerusalem because **he had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish People.**

Jerusalem is under siege by the Babylonians who will soon overtake the Land. Nevertheless, the Lord tells Jeremiah that his uncle will ask him to **purchase his field**, and God instructs Jeremiah to accept the offer.

“Buy my field in Anatot, since you have the right of redemption to purchase it.”

Jeremiah 32:7

This seems like an absurd thing to ask of Jeremiah! **What? Buy a field that will soon be Babylonian property?** Ridiculous, especially for a man rotting in jail.

But this is no ordinary purchase. It is a prophetic act.

Despite Jeremiah's accurate predictions of Jerusalem's destruction, he retains the ability to see hope in the face of desolation.

Even though he knows that the city is about to be destroyed and the rest of the land conquered, **in obedience to the Lord, Jeremiah redeems the land.**

In doing so, he affirms his **faith in the Eternal who promised the redemption of Israel** — that houses and fields would once again be bought in the land. Jeremiah 32:15

Although it is unlikely that Jeremiah will ever live on that land during his lifetime, *this prophetic act displays his refusal to give in to hopelessness.*

He trusts in God's mercy. **One day, God will bring His people back home** to the Land and to Himself.

“Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm.

Nothing is too hard for you.” Jeremiah 32:17

The exiled people of Israel did rebuild Jerusalem and again inhabited Israel, as God promised. However, after AD 70 they were scattered by the Romans, *though a remnant has always remained in the Land.*

Yet, God promised that a *second time*, **He would return His people to His land — not from Babylon but from the four corners of the earth to never be dispersed again:**

“I will bring my people Israel back from exile. ‘They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. **I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them.**” Amos 9:14–15

Our generation is witnessing the fulfillment of the hope of many prophets — the miraculous restoration of the nation of Israel and the regathering of its people from the four corners of the earth.

We have yet to see the fulfillment of the promise that the Jewish People will turn back to God and be re-united in the Land under the sovereign rule of the Messiah, sitting on the eternal throne of His father, David.

Just like in **the Year of Jubilee**, when debts were forgiven and the Hebrew slaves set free, the day is soon coming when all of Israel will recognize that Jesus is the Messiah who forgives us and releases (**shemitah**) us from slavery to sin.

“We know that our old self was put to death on the execution-stake with Him, so that the entire body of our sinful propensities might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin . . . so now offer your various parts as **slaves to righteousness, which leads to being made holy, set apart for God.**” Romans 6:6, 19

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Next Week:

Week 33 - BAMIDBAR (In the Wilderness)

Numbers 1:1–4:20; Hosea 1:10– 2:20 [2:1–2:22]; Romans 15:1–7