

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI · 26 IYAR 5761 · MAY 19, 2000 · VOL. 8 NO. 29

PARSHA INSIGHTS

WHAT THE H...!

Once in a while you read a newspaper article that makes your blood run cold.

The chairman of one of the largest Jewish organizations in the world while addressing the young leadership of a large American city was asked for his views on intermarriage.

He responded by describing a wedding that he had been to the previous week. A Jewish clergyman had co-officiated with a Catholic priest. It was, he said, "one of the most beautiful weddings I ever attended." He emphasized how important it was that the non-Jewish bride be accepted by the community. Intermarriage is inevitable, he said, so "What the h..., we might as well accept them in the community."

What the h.... This was the message broadcast to those future leaders of the Jewish People.

What the h.... Judaism is trivial. Judaism is unimportant. What the h....

But that's not what made my blood run cold...

In a fundamental essay, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, known as the *Meshech Chochma*, writes that wherever the Jews find themselves in exile, be it Babylon, North Africa, Spain, Germany, or Eastern Europe (and we might extrapolate to the United States of America), they try and re-establish the greatness of the Jewish life that they left behind when forced into exile. The Jews

are an industrious people and they build fine institutions and rise to high levels of Jewish scholarship. They cannot, however, hope to equal the spiritual achievements of their forbears.

Human nature being what it is, they desire to excel in some area and thus turn to the cultural milieu of the host nation in which they find themselves. Quickly they rise to the pinnacle of commerce and the arts. Naturally this familiarity

The Jews are an industrious people and they build fine institutions and rise to high levels of Jewish scholarship.

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It is with great sorrow that we mourn the tragic murder of
Yaakov (Kobi) Mandell הי"ד

On behalf of the entire Ohr Somayach family we extend our condolences
to our beloved alumnus, colleague and friend
Rabbi and Mrs. Seth Mandell and their entire family.

"May Hashem console you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem"

BEHAR

The Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This "Shabbat" for the land is called "shemita." (This year, 5761, is a shemita year in Israel.) After every seventh *shemita*, the fiftieth year, *yovel* (jubilee) is announced with the sound of the *shofar* on Yom Kippur. This was also a year for the land to lie fallow. Hashem promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the *shemita* and *yovel* years. During *yovel*, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to the first year after the sale. The

Levites' cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of one another by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment.

BECHUKOTAI

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow Hashem's commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer Vayikra*, the Book of Leviticus, concludes with the details of *erachin* — the process by which someone vows to give the *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal or property.

HAFTARAH

TRUST

There was a wealthy trader who lived in Spain. During the Inquisition he was forced to leave his native Cordoba and flee to Morocco with his wife and two daughters. They

arrived penniless after a nightmare journey. Shortly after their arrival, his wife sickened and died. Then one of his daughters died. Then the other.

"Hashem!" He cried. "You have taken everything from me. You have taken my home. You have taken my livelihood. You have taken my wife. You have taken my beautiful children. But there is one thing you can never take from me: My faith in You."

YIRMIYAHU 16.19 - 17.14

When a person puts his faith in Hashem, even when it is difficult, he receives help from Heaven. He will find that he comes to a complete trust in Hashem. As the verse states in this week's *haftara*: "Blessed is the man who places his trust in Hashem, and Hashem will become his trust." If a person trusts Hashem — Hashem will become his trust.

• Shir Maon in *Mayana Shel Torah*

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I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

"And five of you will pursue a hundred [enemy soldiers]." (26:8)

This refers to our weakest soldiers; when we do the will of Hashem, our weakest soldier will be able to defeat twenty enemies. Our strongest soldier will be able to defeat a thousand or more.

• Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh, based on *Torat Kohanim*

לע"נ
 הרה"ח ר' דוד בן ר' אהרן הי"ד
 ומרת לאה בת ר' שמואל הי"ד
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

THREE WEDDING CUSTOMS

Three interesting customs seen at traditional Jewish weddings are based on a problem raised by Tosefot in our *gemara* and the resolution provided by Rabbeinu Tam.

A man performed *kiddushin* (made a woman his wife) by giving her some expensive garments which he said were worth fifty *zuzim*. In the end it turned out that the garments were actually worth that sum but no one had made an assessment of their value before the woman accepted them and consented to the marriage. The Sage Rabbah held that such a *kiddushin* is valid; Rabbi Yosef contended that, since no assessment had been made, the woman was not really certain that she was receiving the promised value and therefore did not really give her consent to marriage.

After a long series of proofs offered for each of these views, the *gemara* concludes with a ruling that an assessment of such garments is not necessary. Tosefot asks why the *gemara* did not simply state that we rule like Rabbah, who rules out the need for assessment, just as it does in the very same sentence in regard to ruling like the sages Rabbi Elazar and Rava, mentioning their names rather than their subject. Rabbeinu Tam, one of the leading Tosefists, deduces from this deviation that the *gemara* rules like Rabbah only in cases such as expensive garments, because their value is more or less generally known and it is unlikely that the woman would have assumed she was not receiving the value promised. If the object given to her, however, is a gem, whose value can vary greatly, then there must be an assessment made before the woman accepts *kiddushin* because she is likely to assume a value much greater than what the gem is worth and she does not consent to a lesser value.

Tosefot concludes that this is the reason for the custom that the ring given for *kiddushin* not contain a gem; it is so that there will be no danger of the woman speculating about its undetermined value.

Two more customs related to this are mentioned by Rema (*Shulchan Aruch Even Haezer 31:2*). One is that the bride wears a veil over her face so that she will not stare at the ring offered her and speculate about its value. Another is that the rabbi in charge of the wedding ceremony (the

mesader kiddushin) shows the ring to the two witnesses and loudly asks them if they can see that it is worth a *pruta*, the minimal value necessary for effecting *kiddushin*. This is intended to convey to the bride that she is prepared to consent to *kiddushin* even if it is only worth that much and thus eliminate the danger of speculation which might raise problems in regard to her consent.

• *Kiddushin 9a*

ONLY FOR EXPERTS

Whoever is not expert in the laws of divorce and marriage, said Rabbi Yehuda in the name of the Sage Shmuel, should not be involved in them.

Why, asks Maharsha, does this sage mention divorce before marriage when the chronological order of these two is the reverse?

One answer is based on Rambam's explanation for Mesechta Kiddushin following Mesechta Gittin in the order of the Talmud. Since the Torah uses the expression "she will go out from his home and become the wife of another" (*Devarim 24:2*), this pattern of placing divorce before marriage was followed in regard to the order of the Talmudic tractates.

Maharsha, however, offers another answer with serious practical implications. The laws of *kiddushin* are rather well known and the ramifications of a single woman being made permissible to a man are relatively not so serious. This is why it is customary to authorize rabbis who are familiar with the laws of *kiddushin* to perform marriage ceremonies. When it comes to the laws of *gittin*, however, there are so many intricate laws involved in the writing and delivery of a valid divorce document. The ramifications of ignorance here are also far more serious because the result may be to permit the remarriage of a woman who is still legally married. For these reasons, only rabbis who are expert in the laws of *gittin* are empowered to deal with divorce matters.

In order to stress the greater caution required in regard to divorce, the aforementioned statement placed the laws of *gittin* before the laws of *kiddushin*.

• *Kiddushin 13a*

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PARSHA Q&A?

Behar

1. If one possesses *shemita* food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
2. From where does the *yovel* year get its name?
3. What prohibitions are derived from the verse “*v’lo tonu ish et amito* — a person shall not afflict his fellow”?
4. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
5. What does the word “days” mean in this week’s Parsha?
6. What is considered a walled city?
7. To what is one who leaves *Eretz Yisrael* compared?
8. Why does Rashi mention the plague of the firstborn in this week’s Parsha?
9. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Jewish indentured servant.
10. Where is it permitted to prostrate oneself on a stone floor?

Bechukotai

1. To what do the words “*bechukotai telechu*” refer?
2. When is rain “in its season”?
3. What is meant by “you shall eat your bread to satisfaction”?
4. What is meant by “and a sword will not pass through your land?”
5. Which progression of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
6. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
7. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies?”
8. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
9. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a person to the *Beit Hamikdash* and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
10. Where must “*ma’aser sheini*” be eaten?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

Behar

1. 25:7 - Remove it from his property and declare it ownerless.
2. 25:10 - From the sounding of the *shofar*. A ram’s horn is called a *yovel*.
3. 25:17 - One may not intentionally hurt people’s feelings, nor give bad advice while secretly intending to reap benefit.
4. 25:29 - Only within the first year after the sale.
5. 25:29 - The days of an entire year.
6. 25:29 - A city surrounded by a wall since the time of Yehoshua.
7. 25:38 - To one who worships idols.
8. 25:38 - The prohibition against taking interest is accompanied by the phrase, “I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Egypt.” Rashi explains that just as Hashem discerned in Egypt between those who were firstborn and those who were not, so too will Hashem discern and punish those who lend with interest, pretending they are acting on behalf of others.
9. 25:39-43 - a) Do not make him perform humiliating tasks; b) Do not sell him publicly; c) Do not make him perform unnecessary jobs.
10. 26:1 - In the *Mikdash*.

Bechukotai

1. 26:3 - Laboring in the study of Torah.

2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g., Shabbat nights).
3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land even on their way to a different country.
5. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvot*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvot*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvot*, denying that Hashem gave the *mitzvot*, denying the existence of Hashem. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
6. 26:32 - No enemy-nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
7. 26:41 - Hashem Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies’ land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, Hashem will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
8. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak’s ashes (Yitzchak was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before Hashem.
9. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person’s ability to pay.
10. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.

This week, "Ask the Rabbi" presents an essay by Rabbi Berel Wein

NEW PARTNER WANTED

Rabbi Haim Sabato of the yeshiva in Ma'aleh Adumim is an author of note and recognition. In fact, he is the recipient of a prestigious award from his Israeli literary judges for his beautifully written book, *Emet Mi'erez Titzmah*. In that book, he relates a story about two partners in the Jewish community in Aleppo, Syria, a century ago. It seems that one of them had started a business of dealing in antiques and other discarded items. After a few years in business, it became abundantly clear to him that he would never be able to make a go of the business on his own. The business required capital investment and cash, and he did not have the money to make a success of it.

He thereupon decided to take in a partner to help him in the business. He took on a trusted and dear friend and they worked diligently together to help the business expand so that they would be able to feed their families from the profits of the endeavor.

But, alas, the new partner also did not have money or capital means and the business soon tottered on the brink of bankruptcy. So the two partners decided that their only salvation was to bring into the business a third partner, one who had money to invest in the business and provide it with sufficient capitalization to allow it to grow and prosper. One of the partners was delegated to search for such a new partner, while the other remained to continue running the business.

Before embarking on the search for the partner who would save the business, the man repaired to the synagogue to ask for Divine aid in finding this new partner. In the midst of his prayers, he was struck by a startling thought. He said to the Lord: "Why should I search for another partner, when you, O G-d, are the perfect partner for us? You will be our third partner, and Your share of the profits will be distributed for the support of the worthy Torah scholars and institutions of Aleppo."

Delighted with his deal, he rushed back to his partner to tell him the great news.

"By your facial expression I see that you found us a new partner," his partner said. "But tell me, is this partner reliable?" "He is most reliable and has never failed anyone as of yet," was the excited answer. "Does he have money for our business?" asked the suspicious partner. "Money! He has unlimited funds and can finance any endeavor," came the response. "Who is he?" asked the partner. "I cannot describe the new partner to you, nor can I give you his name. His only request is that the one-third share of the profits that is rightfully due him be distributed to the Torah scholars and institutions of Aleppo," was his answer.

The partner mulled the matter over and then agreed to the new partner, unknown though he was. Naturally, the business took a great good turn of fortune and the two partners became wealthy and kept their end of the bargain, always supporting the scholars and institutions of Torah in Aleppo.

That is Sabato's story, though he tells it much more beautifully than I have been able to.

The state of Israel has always had a partner, the Jewish people in the Diaspora. There was a long period of time when the State was convinced that it could make it on its own. The Diaspora Jew was negated and felt to be unnecessary. The future was to be Israeli and no longer Jewish. However, it soon became apparent that the State of Israel was in need of a partner. It was undercapitalized in people, wealth and arms to defend itself. So it took in a partner after all, the Jewish people of the Diaspora. The new partner supplied millions of immigrants to the Land of Israel as well as substantial capital and financing.

The state grew and prospered, but it was, nevertheless, always tottering on the verge of bankruptcy and war anyway. It tried to solve all of its problems by itself. It allowed many of its citizens to neglect and denigrate Jewish tradition, it aped the worst of the Western world and corrupted its time-hallowed values of decency in speech, dress and social behavior. It abandoned its founding idealism and deluded itself into wishful thinking and sloganeering, while its enemies continued to press for its isolation and eventual destruction.

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

with the host culture breeds a climate of freedom which inevitably leads to assimilation and intermarriage.

The community is threatened by inexorably increasing intermarriage.

At this point, the Divine Wisdom may decree that the only way to preserve the Jews as a people is to force them into another exile where they will have no choice but to be thrown back on their original identity, forced to once again re-build the infrastructure of a Jewish life.

“But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them, to annul My

covenant with them — for I am Hashem, their G-d.” (26:44)

G-d tells the Jewish People that the reason He has rejected and been revolted by us to the extent that He has exiled us from one country to another in the lands of our enemies is not because He wants to destroy us or annul His covenant with us. On the contrary. He is our G-d. He is always our G-d.

Sometimes, however, exile and oppression are the only way to prevent us vanishing as a nation.

When we say “What the hell” — aren’t we inviting the “hell” of exile on ourselves?

Isn’t that enough to make anyone’s blood run cold?

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And thus it found itself in great danger after 53 years of existence.

The State of Israel requires a new partner to be added to the enterprise. A partner who brings with him idealism, a sense of sacrifice, a knowledge of Jewish history and tradition, a respect for the Torah and the scholars of Israel, an appreciation of the magnificence of the enterprise that could be the State of Israel. Such a partner should be allowed to

enter our schools and textbooks, our marketplaces and homes. Such a partner will bring us spirit, confidence, vision and strength.

I am certain that such a partnership will be most beneficial to all concerned.

Rabbi Berel Wein is a world renowned author and lecturer, whose works include “Herald of Destiny,” “Triumph of Survival,” and others. He currently lectures in Yeshivat Ohr Somayach.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS “QUESTION”)

Parshat Bechukotai starts with ten verses describing blessings that result from Torah study and observance. Then, more than thirty verses describe the curses brought about by laxity in Torah study and observance. Why do there seem to be more curses than blessings? Doesn’t this contradict the principle that G-d always rewards in greater measure than He punishes?

Answer:

The blessings are written in general terms; each one is really an entire category and includes many blessings. Each curse, on the other hand, is spelled out in detail (in order to inspire fear and alarm). In reality, though, there are more blessings than curses.

• *Ibn Ezra*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

BEHAR

<i>Ramban</i>	
25:3	First Six Years
25:9	Two Kinds of “Shofar”
25:10	The Word “Yovel”
25:20	Three Year Blessing
25:23	Ban on Perpetual Sale
25:36	Two Kinds of Usury
26:1	Commitment in Hostile Environment

Sefer Hachinuch

330	Counting until Yovel
331	Call of the Shofar
337	Unfair Profit
342	National Land
343	Usury

Sforno

25:4	“A Shabbat to Hashem”
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BECHUKOTAI

<i>Ramban</i>	
26:6	Taming of Wild Animals
26:11	Theology of Medicine
26:12	Promise for the Future
26:16	Analysis of Jewish History
<i>Sefer Hachinuch</i>	
350	Dedicating One’s Value
352	Switching Korbanot
360	Animal Tithes