



Just Say No

By Avi Mandel, Editor, 12th Grade

In Parshas Vayikra, Perek 25, Pasuk 21, the Torah states: "I will ordain my blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three year period." According to the Midrash, one who does not work his fields during the Shemittah (seventh) year can be considered a strong warrior. God grants blessings of fruitfulness upon such a person. In just the sixth year alone, he will be able to produce enough food to last for three years. The question is obvious, why is this type of individual, who has plenty of food to rejoice with, considered to be a mighty warrior?

I would like to answer this question with a story. Shmuel desperately needed a new suit. He went to a suit store and tried on a few suits but wasn't particularly impressed with any of them and they were also too expensive. As Shmuel was on his way out of the store, a salesman stopped him and said, "Wait! I got something great for you." The salesman brought over a suit that he had already tried on. However, Shmuel decided to try it one more time. The salesman thought it looked great; whereas Shmuel originally thought not. All of a sudden the Shmuel started liking the suit. The salesman told him the price, \$500. This was way out of his budget. The salesman added, "It's a top-notch suit, made out of the finest materials." Shmuel left that store with a great smile and happy with his purchase...

Even though we know that salesmen are just trying to make a sale, almost everyone is still easily convinced by them. In the sixth year, when a person's field

(Continued on page 4)

Fixing the World

By Ari Saffra, 10th Grade

In Judaism, we have a mystical concept called Tikkun Olam, our responsibility to help repair the world. This also extends to personal fixing, all people have areas of weakness that need to be worked on. The Chachamim even go on and say furthermore that the reason people were put into the world in the first place was to fix these areas of weakness.

This parsha deals with the responsibilities given to the Jewish people. Hashem speaks to the Jewish people and tells them of the severity of the punishments they may receive if they don't follow in His path. The harsh punishments can be seen as a connection to the mission of the Jewish people. We are held to a higher standard since we have been chosen to listen to be Hashem's nation.

In the beginning of the Parsha, Hashem promises Bnei Yisroel that "if you walk in My laws and guard My commandments, you will be blessed with great peace and wealth." We see that there is equal potential for punishment and also blessing.

The question is what does it mean "If you walk in My laws." What are the expectations of the Jews?

(Continued on page 5)

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

Parshas Behar/Bechukotai Questions

1. In Parshas Behar, what number appears four times in one verse?
2. In Parshas Behar, which verse has six words in a row - all beginning with the same Hebrew letter?
3. In Parshas Behar, which law involves blowing a ram's horn (shofar)?
4. In Parshas Behar, which law involves a wall?
5. The name of which other parsha is contained within the name of Parshas Bechukotai?
6. In Parshas Bechukotai, which two metals appear in the same verse?
7. In Parshas Bechukotai, what object is mentioned in three consecutive verses?
8. In Parshas Bechukotai, which of the Ten Plagues meted out to the Egyptians is mentioned?
9. Aside from Moshe, which three other people are mentioned explicitly by name in Parshas Bechukotai?

Answers

1. The number seven appears four times in the verse: "Count for yourselves **seven** sets of Sabbaticals, **seven** years **seven** times, and it should be **seven** sets of Sabbaticals equaling 49 years" (Leviticus 25:8).
2. Leviticus 25:8 has six words in a row, all beginning with the letter Shin.
3. On Yom Kippur of the Jubilee year, we are commanded to blow a shofar (Leviticus 25:9).
4. For a home in a walled city, the original owner has a year to redeem it, after which the home becomes the perpetual property of the buyer (Leviticus 25:29).
5. Parshas Chukas, from the book of Numbers, is contained within the name of parshas Bechukotai.
6. Iron and copper appear in Leviticus 26:19 which discusses consequences of not following God's ways.
7. "Sword" appears in three consecutive verses that discuss the blessings which come as a consequence for fulfilling God's will (Leviticus 26:6-8).
8. The plague of pestilence (*dever*) appears in the words of rebuke (Leviticus 26:25).
9. The three patriarchs - Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov - are mentioned in a verse of comfort within the words of rebuke (Leviticus 26:42).

ALIYAH SUMMARY

First Aliyah: G-d commands Moses regarding the Shmitah and Yovel years. Every seventh year is a Shmitah year, when it is forbidden to work the land. After seven sets of seven years a Yovel year is proclaimed. During Yovel years all the laws of the Shmitah year apply, and, in addition to the Shmitah laws, all slaves are set free and all lands revert to their original owners. We are commanded to conduct business ethically. Since all land reverts to their original owners during the Yovel year, the amount of years remaining until the next Yovel year must be taken into account whenever a real-estate sale is conducted, and the price should be set accordingly. The end of this aliyah enjoins us not to verbally harass or intentionally mislead our fellows.

Second Aliyah: This section addresses an obvious concern: "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not sow our grain?!" G-d reassures us that He will bless the sixth year's harvest, and it will produce enough to provide for three years! The Torah then gives the rationale for the prohibition against selling land for perpetuity (instead, land can only be "leased" until the Yovel year) — "Because the Land belongs to Me; you are strangers and residents with Me." 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).

Third Aliyah: The laws mentioned above apply to fields and homes in un-walled cities. Homes in walled cities, on the other hand, may only be redeemed up to one year after the sale; otherwise they become the permanent property of the buyer. Another exception to these rules is the property allotted to the Levites, which are always redeemable. We are commanded to assist our brethren by coming to their aid before they become financially ruined and dependent on the help of others. We are also forbidden from charging interest on a loan to a fellow Jew.

Fourth Aliyah: We are commanded to treat Jewish slaves respectfully, never subjecting them to demeaning labor. The Torah prescribes the redemption process for a Jew sold into slavery to a non-Jewish master. Either the slave himself or one of his relatives refunds to the master the amount of money for the years remaining until the Yovel — when the slave will go free even if he were not to be "redeemed." Brief mention is made of the prohibition against idolatry, and the requirement that we observe the Shabbat and revere the Holy Sanctuary. We are promised incredible blessing if we diligently study Torah and observe the mitzvot. The blessings include plentiful food, timely rain, security, peace in the land, the elimination of wild animals from the land, and incredible military success.

Fifth Aliyah: And more blessings: An overabundance of crops and G-d's presence will be revealed in our midst. This section then describes the severe, terrifying punishments which will be the Jews' lot if they reject G-d's mitzvot. The punishments include disease, famine, enemy occupation of the land, exile, and desolation of the land. The non-observance of the Sabbatical year is singled out as the reason for the desolation of the land. The aliyah concludes with G-d's promise never to utterly forsake us even when we are exiled in the lands of our enemies.

Sixth Aliyah: This section discusses various endowments pledged to the Temple coffers. A person can pledge the worth of an individual, in which case the Torah prescribes how much the person must pay — depending on the gender and age of the individual who is being "assessed." An animal which is pledged to the Temple must be offered on the altar if it is fit for sacrifice — otherwise it must be "redeemed" for its value. If the owner chooses to redeem it, he must add one fifth of its value to the redemption price. The same rule applies to a house which is pledged to the Temple.

Seventh Aliyah: This section discusses the endowment of land to the temple. If it is land which was part of the family lot (given to his ancestors when Israel was divided amongst the Tribes), and the owner chooses not to redeem it, it may be redeemed by any other individual. In this event, the land becomes the property of the priests during the next Yovel year. Land which was purchased and then consecrated by the buyer can also be redeemed, but it reverts to its original owner when the Yovel arrives. All firstborn livestock are sacrificed in the Temple. A person also has the option of dedicating and consecrating any of his belongings specifically for the use of the priests. The "Second Tithe," which must be consumed by its owners in Jerusalem, is briefly mentioned. Also discussed is the animal tithe — every tenth animal is offered as a sacrifice, and the meat consumed by its owners. With this we conclude the Sefer Vayikra.

“Why kill two birds with one stone
when you can schect and eat them?”
- David Nisanov, DRS GO President



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Ari Keller

Sitting On The Same Bench As A Sefer

The Gemarah in Menachos says that when Rav Huna wanted to sit on a bed which had a Sefer Torah on it, he took the Sefer Torah off the bed and put it on a jug, because he holds that it is Asur to sit on a bed which has a Sefer Torah on it. However, the Gemarah in Moed Katan teaches us that R'Yochanan holds that it is Mutar to sit on a bed that has a Sefer Torah on it.

There clearly seems to be a Machlokes on this issue, so how do we Paskin on this subject? Tosfos in Menachos says that we Paskin like R'Yochanan that it's Mutar to sit on a bed with a Sefer Torah because we normally Paskin like R'Yochanan against Rav Huna. The Rambam, however, Paskins like Rav Huna that it is Asur to sit on a bed which a Sefer Torah is on. The Beis Yosef says that the Rambam holds the Halacha is like Rav Huna, because in matters of Kavod Sefer Torah we are always going to lean towards being more strict. The Gra says that the Rambam is strict over here, because the Rambam is often more strict like the Yerushalmi against the Bavli, and the Yerushalmi in Brachos implies that it is Asur to sit on the same bed as a Sefer Torah. Lastly, the Shulchan Aruch says that it is Asur to sit on the same bed as a Sefer Torah.

Now that we know that it is Asur to sit on the same bed as a Sefer Torah, how high does the Torah have to be off the bench in order to be allowed to sit on it? Tosfos in Moed Katan says that even if the Torah is elevated it's a problem according to Rav Huna, because he specifically found another place for the Torah as opposed to just elevating it. However, the Yerushalmi in Meseches Brachos says that if you elevate the Torah it is Mutar, because a Machlokes is brought down there about how much it has to be elevated. One opinion says that it has to be a Tefach up, but a second opinion says that any amount of elevation is ok. The Rayvid paskins like the first opinion in the Yerushalmi. The Beis Yosef says that usually we need at least 3 Tefachim for something to be considered its own Rishus; therefore, no matter how much you elevate the Torah, it is still Asur to sit on the same bed as it. Lastly, the Shach says that having the Torah elevated to 3 or 10 Tefachim is a Midas Chasidus, but Li'halacha, all you need is 1 Tefach.

Would these Halachos apply to Sefarim other than a Sefer Torah? The Rash would say yes, because regular Sefarim have the same Dinim as Sifrei Torah. The Piskey T'Shuva goes even further to say that even if a Sefer is printed and not written on a Klaf, it has the same Din as a Torah. The Beis Yosef, however, says that you don't have to be Machmir by other Sefarim, but it is good to be strict and elevate other Sefarim at least a Kol Shehu (any little amount). He does add that if you're in a situation, for example a tight Beis Medrash, you are allowed to free up room by sitting on the same bench as other Sefarim.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Jared
Mark*

Suffering ends with freedom. With exile, comes redemption. Finally, as we see in this week's Parsha, curses end with blessings. That is the way the world was created; Hashem gave us the gift of healing and recovery. When something goes wrong it can almost always be fixed with time. In this week's Parsha, this is clearly exemplified as the Torah states many curses and negative things that may happen to Bnei Yisrael if we don't follow the mitzvos. Although as we said earlier, it ends with reassurance. Just as the curses end, Hashem reminds us of His promise to our forefathers that he will bring the final redemption.

The pasuk uses an interesting spelling of "Yaakov" by adding an extra letter vuv. To understand this, Rashi beautifully points out that there are five places when Eliyahu Hanavi's name is written without a vuv and five times when Yaakov Avinu's name has an extra vuv. So, in a sense, we can say Yaakov stole the vuv from Eliyahu. Why would he need to do this?

The Midrash says that Yaakov took the letter as collateral in order to ensure that Eliyahu would come and announce the final redemption in the future. So now we can see once more another assurance of good things to come right after mentioning the bad. But what is so special about the letter vuv? Why didn't he take any other letter from Eliyahu?

Rabbi Yoni Levin, in his sefer "Sweeter Than Honey," brings down a Zohar on a pasuk in Yehoshua that states that the letter vuv is the letter of truth. So, Yaakov Avinu took this letter of truth from Eliyahu to make sure he comes and announces the redemption even if Bnei Yisrael doesn't deserve it yet. Yaakov was scared that Eliyahu would wait until we reached the almost unattainable level of pure truth before he would bring the redemption. Yaakov, therefore, took the letter from Eliyahu to make sure he didn't hold us to that strict level of emes and to make sure that he treated us with compassion and mercy instead.

I believe we can suggest that another reason he stole specifically the letter vuv at this moment, in particular, is to teach us this very valuable lesson: Right after all the curses in what looks to be the worst of times, Yaakov is telling us "vuv," "and." We should always remember that there is always an "and" that through bad comes good. Especially in the dark times we are experiencing nowadays, we have to always remember vuv, that Hashem will always follow up with the good. With Yaakov Avinu's help, hopefully Eliyahu can come and proclaim the final redemption bemsicha beyameinu.

(Avi Mandel- Continued from page 1)

produces three times the normal amount, evil thoughts come knocking on his door that say, "You have an amazing field. In just one year it grew three times the normal amount. If you keep this up, maybe next year you'll till the field and then it will produce three times the amount as well! You'll be wealthy! Why stop working and planting your field now for a whole year? That's just foolish."

Deep down, the man knows that it was only because of the Torah's promise that his field produced this abnormal amount, but the evil inclination sounds so convincing. Someone that can overcome such a challenge is a mighty and great warrior! Most human beings are very easily convinced and affected by surroundings such as peer pressure. We are constantly changing our minds. A truly strong individual is one who sticks to his gut; he does what he knows deep down to be the truth, and doesn't buy into the views or beliefs of others. He doesn't get negatively persuaded by others! Just say no!

Mordechai Ostreicher

11th Grade

A Separate Peace

The pasuk in Bechukosai says, “If You Will Walk In My Statues, and heed My commandments.”

In this Parsha, the Torah gives its promise of blessing and peace to those who follow in the path of the Torah. Rashi is bothered by the seeming redundancy of walking in statues and heeding commands. He explains that “Walk in My statues” refers to difficult Torah study, and “heed My commandments” refers to keeping the mitzvos.

And then there is peace. Hashem promises that if we adhere to the directives, “I will bring peace to the land.” In the same pasuk, the Torah also tells us that “a sword will not pass through your land.” If there is peace, then obviously a sword will not pass through. What is the meaning of this seeming redundancy? Once again, Rashi explains that the “Sword passing through” is referring to a sword that is not directed against our people; rather, it is a sword that is passing through on the way to another country. Thus the two types of peace.

The Torah tells us a secret for peace in our community. If we work very hard in our Torah studies, there will be peace in the land. The Torah is telling us that if we immerse ourselves in Torah, then all the secular objects that are the focal point of most fights are meaningless.

We think of peace as a concept that occurs between nations. However, we often forget that what we need is peace within our own community. “A Separate Peace.”

(Ari Saffra- Continued from page 1)

Rashi understands that it means that everywhere we go, we should be learning Torah, and by learning Torah we are following Hashem’s path. However, the Sfas Emes says this is more than just learning Torah. Walking in Hashem’s ways means to connect with Hashem and then bring down Hashem’s presence to earth.

This can connect with what we said earlier about Tikkun Olam. The way to fix the world is to bring down Hashem and do His will on earth. This is especially important since as modern orthodox Jews we understand that whatever we may do in life, whether a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, etc., we have to bring down Hashem into the job and the workplace. No matter what we do, we always want to bring our Judaism and beliefs with us, and never forget that we are Hashem’s servants and are meant to do His will.

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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOSEF SCHAFLER

Rabbi Hillel of Paritch was one of the many great scholars of his day to join the Chabad Chassidic movement. For many years, he was a devoted disciple and follower of the second and third rebbes of Chabad, Rabbi Dov Ber and Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch.

As a young man, Rabbi Hillel heard of the founder of Chabad chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and sought to meet with him. But the opportunity seemed to forever elude the young prodigy: no sooner did he arrive in a town that Rabbi Schneur Zalman was visiting, that he was informed that the Rebbe had just left. Finally, he managed to locate Rabbi Schneur Zalman's lodgings before the Rebbe was due to arrive. In order to ensure that he would not, once again, somehow miss his opportunity, Rabbi Hillel crept into Rabbi Schneur Zalman's appointed room and hid under the bed, determined, at last, to make the acquaintance of the great Rebbe.

In anticipation of his encounter with Rabbi Schneur Zalman, Rabbi Hillel had "armed" himself with some of his achievements in Talmudic study. At that time, the young scholar was studying the tractate Eruchin, the section of the Talmud which deals with the laws of how to appraise the value of one's pledges to charity. Rabbi Hillel had an insightful question on the subject which he had diligently rehearsed in order to discuss it with the Rebbe.

From his hiding place, Rabbi Hillel heard the Rebbe enter the room. But before he could make a move, he heard Rabbi Schneur Zalman exclaim: "If a young man has a question regarding Eruchin, he had best first evaluate himself."

The prodigy under the bed fainted on the spot. When he came to, Rabbi Schneur Zalman was gone... Based on this story, the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l asks: How are we to apply this story to our lives?

The tractate of Eruchin discusses the laws presented in Chapter 27 of Vayikra: if a person pledges to give to charity, but instead of citing a sum he says "I promise to give the value of this individual," we are to follow a fixed rate table set by the Torah, in which each age and gender group is assigned a certain "value".

But why employ a flat rate which lumps together so many diverse individuals? Should not an accomplished scholar be considered more valuable than a simple laborer? The Torah states that we all stand equally before G-d, "from your heads, the leaders of your tribes, your elders... to your woodchoppers and water carriers." But can a person truly view his fellow as his equal when he is so obviously superior to him in talent and achievement?

This is the gist of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's remark: If you have a question regarding Eruchin, if you find it difficult to relate to the Torah's evaluation of human worth, you had best take a long hard look at yourself. An honest appraisal of your own character and behavior will show how much you can learn from every man, how much there is for you to emulate in those who are supposedly 'inferior' to yourself.



There are several Mitzvot in the Torah that deal with counting; two of which are mentioned in Parashat Emor and in Parashat Behar. In Emor, we read about Sefirat Ha-Omer, and in Behar, we read about counting towards the fiftieth year, Yovel. However, there is a significant difference between the languages of the two types of counting in their respective pesukim. By the Omer, it says it in the plural "Usefartem Lachem". By Yovel, it says it in the singular, "Vesafarta Lecha". The different language teaches us who is responsible for the specific counting. By the Omer, everybody is required to count as it says in Menachot, "Sefira LiKol Echad V'echad", "There should be a counting by each and every person". Therefore, since all Jews have to count the Omer, it is plural. However, by the counting of Yovel, only the Sanhedrin is required to count. It is an obligation on the Jewish people as a whole to count, but only performed by the Sanhedrin, making it singular.

Rabbi Sacks z"l explains an important idea towards leadership that can be learnt from this distinction. "As individuals, we count the days, but as leaders we must count the years." Meaning, as individuals, our counting each day of Omer shows that we only worry about the days to come. We are somewhat shortsighted. However, as leaders, who need to count toward the Yovel, the emphasis is on the years, on thinking more long-term-about the future. In Masechet Tamid, Ben Zoma asked, "Eize'hu Chacham?, Who is wise?", and answered: "Haroa'eh es Hanolad, One who foresees the consequences". If leaders are wise, they think about the long term effect of their decisions.

Although as individuals we tend to focus on everyday worries, which are also important and why we have a mitzvah of Sefirat HaOmer, our broader leadership cannot lose focus on the future, which is why Yovel, an obligation on the Bais Din, is counted in years.

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All Together

Hillel Schein

10th Grade

In Parshat Bechukotai, we come across a common concept that the Jews are responsible for one another, and what happens to one Jew will consequently affect all of them. This makes sense when we are all in one society, as a good economy will positively affect everyone, just a recession will negatively affect its inhabitants. But how does this concept stand after Galut when the Jews are scattered throughout the world sharing almost no relationship? How do we affect each other through our actions?

We can see a possible answer in this week's Parsha, when Hashem says that even in the worst of times, the Jewish people will never be destroyed, nor will He reject them. This shows that the covenant will remain intact regardless of the circumstances of the Jewish people. This is the same covenant that links the Jews to one another with mutual responsibility.

Four hundred years ago, during the scientific revolution, people realized that the government's power is rather in the hands of the people. Without the people's agreement, the government has no control. This is a similar idea to the one discussed, that people are responsible for each other as a whole. However, there is one difference.

The Gemara in Shabbos says, "Whoever can forbid his household [to commit a sin] but does not, is seized for [the sins of] his household." Jews are not only responsible for one another if they are capable of protecting them. Rather, no matter where the Jewish people are, scattered or not, the covenant that our ancestors made with Hashem at Har Sinai will stand strongly and definitely as we guard our family against sins. This is not a physical bond, but a spiritual one.

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