

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHAR - BECHUKOTAI · VOL. 19 NO. 30

Dear Ohrnet Reader

Please note that there is a discrepancy in the dates for the readings of *Parshiot* Behar and Bechukotai between Israel and the Diaspora this year. **In Israel:** Parshat Behar is read on Shabbat for the week ending May 12, while Parshat Bechukotai is read on the following Shabbat for the week ending May 19. **Outside of Israel:** Both Parshat Behar and Parshat Bechukotai are read this year together on Shabbat for the week ending on May 19. We present to our readers a special article in the current issue of Ohrnet on page eight titled "Parsha Permutations" that we hope will be of benefit in understanding this phenomenon.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Behar

HOLY CROP ROTATION!

"For six years you may sow your field" (25:3)

I still remember learning at school about crop rotation. One year the field would be planted with wheat, the next year with barley or some other crop, and the third it would be left to lie fallow. And then the cycle would begin again.

When reading this week's Torah portion, one could think that the mitzvah of Shemita the prohibition of working the fields in the seventh year, is some kind of holy crop rotation. The difference being that in the Torah it says you should work the field for six years and leave it for a seventh.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, there is evidence that working a field for six straight years and then leaving it for one year does nothing to improve its yield and may even have a negative effect. Second, the Torah prescribes dire punishments for the non-observance of Shemita. The seventy years of the Babylonian exile were a punishment for seventy non-observed Shemita years during the 430 years that

the Jewish People dwelled in the Land of Israel. We know that G-d's punishment is always measure for measure. If Shemita was a matter of crop husbandry, how is exile an appropriate punishment? What does exile have to do with the cessation of agriculture in the seventh year? Furthermore, from an agricultural point of view, seventy years without husbandry can have had no possible benefit for the land. Seventy years of weeds and neglect in no way contribute to the land's rejuvenation; so how is this punishment an appropriate restitution?

To answer these questions we must examine what causes a person to violate Shemita in the first place.

A great malaise of our own era is the compulsion to overwork. The workaholic defines himself by his job. When you meet someone socially, the question "What are you?" is usually answered by "I'm a doctor," or "I'm an accountant" or "I'm a rabbi."

There is a fundamental mistake here. What we do is not what we are.

continued on page nine

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Israel Forever, Love of the Land, TalmuDigest, What's the right thing to do?, The Human Side of the Story written by Rav Mendel Weinbach

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Behar

The Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This “Shabbat” for the Land is called “*Shemita*”. The year 5768 was 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. G-d 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 G-d’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 befall 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 a detailed description of *Erachin* – the process by which someone can make a vow to give to the *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal, or property.

ISRAEL Forever

Behar

THE BAR YOCHAI LEGACY

Lag B’Omer is a very special day in Eretz Yisrael and its most prominent feature is the massive celebration of the Yahrzeit of Rav Shimon bar Yochai. The central bonfire at the site of this Sage’s tomb in Meron and the smaller celebrations throughout the country are a tribute to the legacy of this holy saint which has a special significance these days in the modern State of Israel.

Bar Yochai personified the ideal of total immersion in Torah study and unhesitatingly declared that the commit-

ment of his son and himself to this ideal was what sustained the world. In today’s great national debate over the deferment granted to yeshiva students from military and national service, there is continuous talk about “sharing the burden of defending the nation.” As the nation identifies with the “Bar Yochai Legacy” on Lag B’Omer, it is hoped that there will finally be recognition that it is the undisturbed study of Torah in Israel which enables its fighting soldiers to successfully defend Israel forever.

Bechokotai

REMEMBERING THE LAND

“And I will remember the Land.” This promise of G-d which will be read at the conclusion of the Torah portion of this Shabbat is a great source of consolation for Jews throughout the Diaspora and for the ones already residing in Israel.

After Jews who have been subjected to all the travails of exile repent their sins, they will be worthy of being returned to the land promised to their forefathers and

there live in peace and prosperity. It is interesting to note the point made by one of the commentaries which reflects on the troubles Israeli citizens have with hostile Arab neighbors. He notes that once Jews have proven their spiritual right to the land, the holiness of the land will not tolerate the presence of other nations in it, for then G-d will fulfill His promise to make the Land of Israel the home of only the People of Israel forever.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Behar

1. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of *Shemita* were taught on *Har Sinai*?
2. If one possesses *Shemita* food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
3. The Torah commands, “You shall sanctify the fiftieth year.” How is this done?
4. Which two “returns” are announced by the shofar during *Yovel*?
5. From where does the *Yovel* year get its name?
6. What prohibitions are derived from the verse “*v’lo sonu ish es amiso* — a person shall not afflict his fellow”?
7. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of *Shemita*?
8. If *Shemita* is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
9. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
10. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?
11. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
12. What does the word “days” mean in this week’s *Parsha*?
13. What is considered a walled city?
14. What is the definition of a “*ger toshav*”?
15. To what is one who leaves *Eretz Yisrael* compared?
16. Why does Rashi mention the plague of the firstborn in this week’s *Parsha*?
17. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Jewish indentured servant.
18. Who supports the family of the Jewish indentured servant during his years of servitude?
19. If a Jew is sold as a servant to a non-Jew, does he go free after six years?
20. Where is it permitted to prostrate oneself on a stone floor?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Behar’s Questions!

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

1. 25:1 - To teach us that just as *Shemita* was taught in detail on *Har Sinai*, so too, all the *mitzvot* were taught in detail on *Har Sinai*.
2. 25:7 - Remove it from his property and declare it ownerless.
3. 25:10 - At the beginning of the year the Beis Din declares, “This year is *kadosh* (sanctified).”
4. 25:10 - The return of the land to its original owner, and the “return” (freedom) of the slave from slavery.
5. 25:10 - From the sounding of the shofar. A ram’s horn is called a *Yovel*.
6. 25:17 - One may not intentionally hurt people’s feelings, nor give bad advice while secretly intending to reap benefit.
7. 25:18 - Exile.
8. 25:21,22 - From Nissan of the sixth year until Sukkot of the ninth year.
9. 25:24 - After two years following the sale, until *Yovel*. At the beginning of *Yovel* it returns to the family automatically.
10. 25:25 - Only if one becomes impoverished.
11. 25:29 - Only within the first year after the sale. Afterwards, even in *Yovel*, it does not return.
12. 25:29 - The days of an entire year.
13. 25:29 - A city that has been surrounded by a wall since the time of Yehoshua.
14. 25:35 - A non-Jew who lives in *Eretz Yisrael* and accepts upon himself not to worship idols.
15. 25:38 - To one who worships idols.
16. 25:38 - The prohibition against taking interest is accompanied by the phrase “I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of Egypt.” Rashi explains that just as G-d discerned in Egypt between those who were firstborn and those who were not, so too will G-d discern and punish those who lend with interest, pretending they are acting on behalf of others.
17. 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.
18. 25:41 - His master.
19. 25:54 - No. If he is not redeemed with money, he must wait until the *yovel* to go free.
20. 26:1 - In the *Mikdash*.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Bechukotai

1. To what do the words “*bechukosai telechu*” (walk in My statutes) refer?
2. When is rain “in its season”?
3. What is the blessing of “*v’achaltem lachmechem l’sova*” (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
4. What is meant by the verse “and a sword will not pass through your land”?
5. Mathematically, if five Jewish soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Jewish soldiers be able to defeat?
6. How much is ‘*revava*’?
7. Which “progression” of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
8. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
9. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
10. How many years did the Jewish People sin in Israel up till the time the northern tribes were exiled?
11. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written with an extra “*vav*”. From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
12. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies”?
13. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
14. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 “*Toros*” (plural) and not “*Torah*” (singular)?
15. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beit Hamikdash* and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
16. If a person says, “The leg of this animal shall be an *olah* offering”, the animal is sold and sacrificed as an *olah* offering. What is the status of the money received for the animal?
17. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beit Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *Yovel* what happens to the field?
18. Where must “*Ma’aser Sheini*” be eaten?
19. When a person redeems “*Ma’aser Sheini*” what happens to the food? What happens to the redemption money?
20. How does a person tithe his animals?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Bechukotai’s Questions!

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

1. 26:3 - Laboring in Torah learning.
2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g., Shabbos 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 on their way to a different country.
5. 26:8 - Two thousand.
6. 26:8 - Ten thousand.
7. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing *mitzvot*, rejecting those who observe *mitzvot*, hating Sages, preventing others from observing *mitzvot*, denying that G-d gave the *mitzvos*, denying the existence of G-d. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
8. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
9. 26:35 - 70 years. Because the Jewish People violated 70 *Shemita* and *Yovel* years.
10. 26:35 - 390 years.
11. 26:42 - In five places in the Torah Yaakov’s name is written with an extra “*vav*” and in five places the name Eliyahu is missing a “*vav*.” Yaakov took these *vavs* as a pledge that Eliyahu will one day come and announce the redemption of Yaakov’s children.
12. 26:41 - G-d Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies’ land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, G-d will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
13. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak’s ashes (who was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before G-d.
14. 26:46 - To teach that both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah were given to Moshe on *Har Sinai*.
15. 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.
16. 27:9 - The money is ‘*chullin*,’ meaning it does not have ‘holy’ status, except for the value of the animal’s leg which does have ‘holy’ status.
17. 27:16 - It becomes the property of the *kohanim* who are on rotation at the beginning of *Yovel*.
18. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.
19. 27:31 - The food becomes permissible to him outside of Jerusalem. The redemption money must be brought to Jerusalem and used to purchase food to be eaten there.
20. 27:32 - He passes them through a door individually and every tenth animal he marks with a rod smeared with red dye.

- The sacrificial bird that flew the coop
- The determination of which bird for which sacrifice
- The bird sacrifices which got mixed up
- Where the *kohanim* and Levites guarded in the *Beis Hamikdash*
- Limits on use of priestly garments
- Bathroom behavior and some health hazards
- Awaking the guards who fell asleep
- How *kohanim* began the day of service
- Arranging the ashes on the altar
- The golden charity vine
- The wood used for burning the sacrifices

FOR WHOM THE BELLS RING

“When it is alive it (the ram) makes one sound and when it is dead it makes seven.” This observation of Rabbi Yehoshua calls attention to the use made in the *Beit Hamikdash* of the various parts of a slaughtered ram. While the seven he mentions refers to the musical instruments fashioned from body parts, another opinion mentions an eighth - the wool of this animal which was dyed turquoise (*techelet*) and formed into pomegranate-shaped tassels. These were placed on the hem of the *me'il*

(robe) worn by the *kohen gadol* interspersed with bells made of gold.

But what sort of sound do woolen pomegranates make?

Tosefot explains that these woolen pomegranates were sufficiently hard so that when the *kohen gadol* walked they would cause the bells to ring. The reason for this was that it is undignified to enter the Sanctuary without first announcing the *kohen's* arrival.

Ramban cites a *midrash* that the need for the sound of the bells was on Yom Kippur when the *kohen gadol* entered the Holy of Holies.

• *Kinim 25a*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“The reason why wood from trees producing grapes and olives was not used for fire on the altar was to safeguard living in Eretz Yisrael.”

• *Rabbi Acha bar Yaakov - Tamid 29b*

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

THE PLOT THAT FAILED

It was one of the matchmaker's rare successes and he rejoiced at the thought that both families were pleased with the *shiduch* he had initiated and that he would soon be collecting his *shadchanut* fee. But before the conclusion was reached, he received a call from a friend from abroad who was coming to Israel with his daughter in search of a *shiduch* for her. The sum he offered the *shadchan* if he succeeded was far beyond anything he had ever received in his career, and temptation overcame him.

He was convinced that the boy whose engagement was soon to be celebrated would be ideal for his friend's daughter. In order to make him available, he rushed off to his father and maliciously lied to him that the girl's father was spreading terrible stories about him. He then did the same with the girl's father and thus succeeded in breaking up the almost certain match.

This unscrupulous fellow was not so successful when he tried pairing the boy with his friend's daughter. But the story did have a happy ending thanks to the initiative taken by the girl's father. After his initial anger at his prospective *mechutan*, he began to have doubts about the accuracy of the *shadchan's* report that he had maligned him. He went to see him and asked why he had spoken against him, and was surprised to hear that the same lie had been told to him. They then embraced each other and the original *shiduch* finally came to fruition.

When the malicious *shadchan* had the gall to ask for his fee, since he was the initiator of the match, the local rabbi told him that he would have him publicly ostracized for such behavior and that he had no claim to a fee since he demonstrated that he did not want the original *shiduch* to succeed.

- The lotteries for service in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Preparing the sacrificial animal for slaughter and its parts for offering on the altar
- Alexander of Macedon and the Sages of the South
- The prayer service of the *kohanim* serving in the *Beit Hamikdash*
- Who gained the right to offering of incense
- The prostrating of the *kohen gadol*
- The songs of the levites
- The gates and offices of the *Beit Hamikdash*
- The dimensions the of Temple Mount and *Beit Hamikdash*
- The dimensions of the altar and its ramp
- Other dimensions of the *Beit Hamikdash*

CLEANING THE ALTAR

So much blood of sacrifices was sprayed on the altar in the *Beit Hamikdash* that it was necessary to periodically clean it by putting on a new coat of plaster. One view was that this was done twice a year, before Pesach and before Succot when large crowds of *olei ragalim* pilgrims came to offer the holiday sacrifices. Because of the accumulated blood, the Sage Rebbie (Rabbi Yehuda Hanassi) contended that the cleaning was done every week on Erev

Shabbat. Care was taken, however, that the plaster was not handled with a metal instrument lest it touch the stones of the altar itself. This caution was similar to the one exercised in regard to excavating solid stones for the construction of the altar which would not require smoothing with a metal instrument.

The reason given for this caution was that metal was used for weapons that curtailed human life, while the altar was used for sacrifices that lengthened life, so it was not proper for the curtailer to be raised above the lengthener.

• *Midot 36a*

WHAT THE Sages SAY

“It is not proper for the curtailer of life (metal used for weapons) to be raised above the lengthener of life.”

• *The Sage Rebbie - Midot 36a*

WHAT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

“WE CAN'T AFFORD IT”

Question: Some of my son's friends at school are already talking about the summer camps they will be attending. Our family cannot afford to send our son to camp and we will have to make alternative plans for his vacation. What is the right thing to do in order to relieve my son's sense of being deprived?

Answer: The best thing you can do for your child's development, a wise observer of human nature once pointed out, is to respond to his exorbitant requests with the words “We can't afford it”.

Envy of others is a tragic element of human society. “Keeping up with the Joneses” and looking with greedy eyes at “the grass which seems greener on the other side of the fence” are the sources of so much unhappiness and discord.

It is therefore important that at an early age youngsters are taught to be content with what they have and not be envious of what luxuries their friends can afford.

Parents who easily give in to the pleas of their children for toys, games, clothes and vacations that their friends from more prosperous families are enjoying are spoiling them in more ways than one. Not only are they signaling to their child that they can get whatever they wish if they complain enough, but they are also training them for living their future lives in an irresponsible way of spending more than they can afford.

If you wish to really soften the blow for your “deprived” child, use your imagination to make his vacation period a more meaningful one than a few weeks in a summer camp.

TAKE IT WITH A GRAIN OF SALT

From: Sandra

Dear Rabbi,
My grandfather, may he rest in peace, would always put salt on the bread in the prayer of hamotzi. Why do we do this? Is it on all types of bread or just challah?

Dear Sandra,

There are several reasons for dipping bread in salt after saying the blessing on the bread.

One is that people sometimes put salt on their food to give it flavor. This is a matter of taste, not Jewish law. So, if you are going to dip your food in salt throughout the meal, you should dip the first piece of bread in salt. This is a way of honoring the blessing, by making sure that the piece of bread you eat after saying the blessing is tasty. This follows the Torah idea that physical pleasure can be used as a vehicle in the service of G-d.

A second reason is to recall the idea that man eats through the sweat of his brow. Meaning, as result of our shortcomings, we must toil for our sustenance, yet G-d, in his mercy, fulfills our needs, and we must be grateful for that when partaking of His blessing.

Another reason is that when we had the Temple and brought offerings on the altar, salt accompanied every offering. The significance of salt is that it completes other foods and enhances their taste. Also, it preserves things which

would otherwise spoil. For these two reasons, the Torah tells us to salt our offerings: To offer a completed offering, and to symbolize that our offerings help preserve our relationship with G-d.

We no longer have the altar to atone for us. However, the Talmud teaches that nowadays our table is our "altar", implying that the bread itself, as well as the food we eat with it, is viewed as an offering, since the energy we derive from it should be used to fuel our service of G-d. Also, when we share our food with the needy, our table is like an altar of offering and this atones for us. Since our table is like the altar in these ways, we try to keep salt on the table all the time.

Interestingly, our sources teach that Lot's wife turned into salt because she was stingy towards the needy. Lot himself was a generous person, always inviting guests. His wife resented guests and discouraged them. One trick of hers was not to provide salt, a small thing which makes a big difference to guests. Therefore, she was punished by means of salt, measure for measure. We, however, put salt on the table to show our willingness to share with others the bounty G-d bestowed upon us.

The custom of dipping bread in salt applies to all bread at all times, not just challah on Shabbat. It is done right after the blessing and just before eating. When one person recites the blessing for others and then distributes separate pieces for each, he dips each piece in the salt before passing it out. Most people dip the bread in the salt three times. This is related to the idea that the numerical equivalent for bread is 78, which is three times the numerical value of G-d's name, 26.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THE FIRST LAND

Eretz Yisrael was the first land to be created by G-d. *Bereishet*, the first word of the Torah describing the beginning of the world, is explained in the *midrash* as meaning that for the sake of *reishet* — a



title for the Jewish People — was the entire world created. It then follows that the land, which was to be the home of the nation for whom the world was created, should be the first to be created.

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Parsha Permutations

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

This time of year is an interesting one. For the next few weeks the Jewish world will not be aligned. No, I am not referring to constellations, but rather to the weekly *parsha*. Recently, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael read Parshat Shmini, but for those in Chutz La'aretz, Parshat Shmini was left on the “on deck circle”.

The reason for this uncommon phenomenon is that this year [5772/ 2012] the eighth day of Pesach, observed only outside Eretz Yisrael, falls on Shabbat. On this Shabbat/Yom Tov the communities of the Diaspora read a Yom Tov reading, whereas in Eretz Yisrael communities read Parshat Shemini, the next *parsha* in the cycle. This odd alignment, with Eretz Yisrael being a week ahead of the rest of the world, continues for over a month, until, in this instance 27 Iyar (May 19th), when in Chutz La'aretz the reading of Behar and Bechukotai is combined, while on that selfsame week, the communities of Eretz Yisrael read only Bechukotai, which gives the rest of the world a chance to catch up. This causes all sorts of halachic issues for travelers to and from Israel during this time period – which *parsha* should they be reading? If/how can they catch up? Some shuls in Eretz Yisrael offer a solution by hosting weekly “catch-up *minyanim*”, featuring the Torah reading of the previous week’s Israeli *parsha*, which is the *Chutznik*’s current one.

The explanation of this uncanny occurrence is as follows: It is well-known that the Torah is divided into 54 *parshiyot*, ensuring there are enough *parshiyot* for every Shabbat of the yearly cycle, which begins and ends on Simchat Torah. Since most (non-leap) years require less than 54 *parshiyot*, we combine certain *parshiyot*. This means that two consecutive *parshiyot* are read on one *Shabbat* as if they are one long *parsha*, to make sure that we complete the Torah reading for the year on Simchat Torah.

There are seven potential occurrences when we read “double *parshiyot*”. These seven are:

Vayakhel/Pekudei, the last two *parshiyot* of *Sefer Shemot*.

Tazria/Metzora, in *Sefer Vayikra*.

Acharei Mot/Kedoshim, in *Sefer Vayikra*.

Behar/Bechukotai, in *Sefer Vayikra*.

Chukat/Balak, in *Sefer Bamidbar*.

Matot/Masei, the last two *parshiyot* of *Sefer Bamidbar*.

Netzavim/Vayelech, towards the end of *Sefer Devarim*.

However, there are several possible instances in which certain *parshiyot* are combined in Chutz La'aretz, yet are

read on separate weeks in Eretz Yisrael. One such time is for the next few weeks or so, as described above, making it one of the only times where Jews living in Eretz Yisrael end up reading a different *parsha* on *Shabbat* than the Jews living in Chutz La'aretz.

Similarly, when *Shavuot* falls out on a Friday in Chutz La'aretz, where it is a two-day *Yom Tov*, the Torah reading would be that of the holiday, whereas in Eretz Yisrael, where the holiday is observed for only one day, the reading would be that of the next weekly portion, which usually would be *Nasso*.

When this happens, the people living in Eretz Yisrael stay one *parsha* ahead, meaning they are reading Beha'alotcha, while in the Diaspora *Nasso* is read. This remarkable dichotomy is kept up until the next potential “double *parsha*” which is Chukat/Balak. In Chutz La'aretz it is read as a double *parsha*, whereas in Eretz Yisrael only Balak is read.

What is less known is that this causes an even rarer phenomenon: the potential combination of *parshiot* *Nasso* and Beha'alotcha – creating the longest *parsha* by far, and potentially leading to the world record for the longest *aliyah*. This “extreme double *parsha*” is not for everyone, and actually can only be applicable to “*Chutznikim*” or Two-day *Yom Tov* keepers who happen to be in Israel for *Shavuot* (most commonly *yeshiva* and seminary students). Since they are only temporarily in Eretz Yisrael, they must (according to the majority halachic consensus) keep the second day of *Shavuot* in Israel as well, including reading only the special *Yom Tov* Torah reading. Therefore, although the vast majority of people in Israel read Parshat *Nasso* on this *Shabbat*, this group has yet to have done so, since it is still *Yom Tov* for them! To further complicate matters, throughout Israel, on the next *Shabbat*, only Beha'alotcha is read!

Therefore, to resolve this issue, some “*Chutznikim*” make a special *minyan* the next week with the “new double *parsha*” - *Nasso* and Beha'alotcha - containing a whopping 312 *pesukim*! (The closest is the longest regular double *parsha* – *Mattot/Masei* with 244 *pesukim*.) Others make a special reading on that day itself, *Shabbat/2nd Day Shavuot*, at *Mincha*, where the entire Parshat *Nasso* is read, plus the regular reading of the first portion of Beha'alotcha – making a world record *aliyah* of 180 *pesukim*, all for one lucky *kohen*!

An interesting time of year, indeed.

Behar - Holy Crop Rotation! *continued from page one*

In our society we have confused what we do with who we are. The underlying belief revealed here is that the more I work the more I become myself. Violation of the laws of Shemita comes from a belief that the more I work, the more money will I make, and the more I make, the more I am the master of my own world.

When a person is sent into exile, all the familiar comforting symbols of his success are taken away from him.

He realizes that what he does is not who he is. Both his survival and his identity are G-d given gifts. The insecurity of exile brings a person face to face with his total dependence on G-d.

It is from the perspective of exile that a person can rebuild his worldview so that he can see that what he does is not who he is.

Bechukotai**JOE'S HOROSCOPE**

"If you will follow My decrees..." (26:3)

Joe Cohen is 42 and a half years old. Joe is an extravagantly generous person. He makes the mitzvah of charity his special province. He neither neglects nor rejects any worthy cause. His house and his heart are open to all.

If you were a stargazer and could look into Joe's horoscope, you would see that Joe was not destined for a long life. Joe's *Mazal* is anything but *Tov*. In his *mazal*, in his horoscope, it says that Joe will die at the age of 43 from a heart attack. However, seeing as our own individual horoscopes are not published in the papers, neither Joe nor anyone else has any idea about Joe's imminent demise. Joe's 43rd birthday passes with the usual birthday gifts, meaning large anonymous financial gifts that Joe gives to charity. Joe's 44th birthday passes in much the same way, so does his 45th, his 46th, his 47th. In fact, not until his 90th birthday does Joe take his leave of this earthly stage and is brought to the World of Truth.

Simon Shmuzer loves to talk. Unfortunately the vast majority of what emanates from Simon's mouth is putting down other people behind their backs. Simon has developed subtle, and not-so-subtle, character assassination into a fine art. A look at Simon's celestial horoscope would show that Simon is supposed to live to the ripe old age of 89. However, when he turns 47, suddenly Simon develops a malignant disease of the larynx and passes away quite suddenly.

What happened to Joe's and Simon's horoscopes? Should they look for new astrologers?

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion the Torah gives a detailed picture of the bounty that awaits us if we keep the Torah: *"Rains in their time the land will give its produce the tree its fruit; You will lie down and none*

with frighten you; I will cause wild beasts to leave the Land, and a sword will not cross your Land; You will eat very old grain (which will remain fresh and improve with age) so that you will have to move it to make way for the new harvest."

If you look at all these promises, they all refer to this world. There is not one mention about the reward that we will get for keeping the Torah when we get to the World of Truth.

Why not?

The Torah doesn't deal with the rewards and punishments of the Next World because it's obvious that the proper place to receive the reward for our performance of spiritual tasks is in a world of spirituality. The next world is a totally spiritual world designed and constructed with the sole purpose of rewarding or punishing us. The Torah doesn't need to stress the fact that we are recompensed there. Where else would we expect to receive the results of our spiritual actions if not in a world of spirituality?

The surprise is that we are rewarded and punished for spiritual things here in this physical world too. Now that's something we would never have known had the Torah not told us.

However, we don't see that we are rewarded and punished here in this world for our actions. It all looks perfectly natural. It all looks like the Way of the World.

No one saw anything miraculous about Simon's demise, or Joe's longevity. After all, many people die young and more when they are old. And yet both Joe and Simon experienced miracles. We would never know about those miracles had the Torah not spelled them out in this week Torah portion.

• Source: Ramban

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