

Parashot Behar and Bechukotai

Leviticus 25:1-26:2
Jeremiah 32:6-27
Luke 4:16-21

and

Leviticus 26:3-27:34
Jeremiah 16:19-17:14
Matthew 22:1-14



The Torah Portion at a Glance

On the mountain of Sinai, YHWH communicates to Moses the laws of the sabbatical year. Every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast.

Seven sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year -- the jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners.

Behar also contains additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury.

YHWH promises that if the people of Israel will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell secure in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh "rebuke" warning of the exile, persecution and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him.

Nevertheless, "Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; nor will I ever abhor them, to destroy them and to break My covenant with them; for I am YHWH their Elohim."

The Parshah concludes with the rules on how to calculate the value of different types of pledges made to YHWH, and the mitzvah of tithing produce and livestock.

(adapted from chabad.org)

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Y'shua is the Messiah that walked in the midst of the sinners of the world. He stayed with sinners, talked to prostitutes, and befriended lepers. We do not worship a Savior is too high above us to recognize our concerns. Y'shua can relate to every facet of our lives because of a prophecy in this week's Torah portion. Vayikra / Leviticus chapters 26 verses 11 and 12 show us the promise the dwelling power of YHWH Y'shua. "Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your Elohim and you shall be my people." These promises are for the Messianic kingdom, for the time when Y'shua was on the earth, and today.

Our Torah portion also discusses the relevance of the yovel or “jubilee” times. Every 50 years, debts are forgiven and land is restored. YHWH is an Elohim of restoration. Yovel is proclaimed with a sounding of the shofar, much like the return of Y’shua will be heralded with a shofar blast. “You shall then sound a ram’s horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land,” Leviticus 25:9. Every 50 years is a time of freedom and consecration. It is like the time when Y’shua said, “The Spirit of the YHWH is upon me because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to the captives and the favorable year of YHWH,” Luke 4:18-19. These verses show us that the time of yovel is a reminder of how it was when Y’shua was with man – the blind could see, the dead lived, and what was lost was restored. Every year can be a type of yovel for those that understand that Y’shua “came to set the captives free.”

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Hola amigos! Bonjour madam! Shalom alechem!

Have you ever tried to learn a second language? Did you excel in your Spanish course in school or did you struggle through the new dialect?

Most people speak only their native tongue and find it extremely difficult to master the words of another people. New phrases, different dialects, funny word order, various gender endings, and tongue twisting pronunciations make learning another language quite hard.

Perhaps what is most challenging about becoming bilingual is the fact that to really be bilingual you can’t just learn how new words are spoken. To correctly speak French or Russian you must also learn about the culture of the people. Culture and language go hand in hand. You see, actions that are proper in Britain might insult a person in the Middle East. Phrases have different meanings all across the world. A Southern breakfast delicacy called “grits” is despised by Americans who live in the North. Worldwide, societies and traditions are very different. And little variations can create a great divide.

Learning the Bible is no different than learning a different language. A person cannot simply understand the message or methods of the Scriptures without first having some knowledge of the society to whom and by whom the Bible was written.

To the average Joe today, life is all about super fast computers, convenience stores, and risqué entertainment. The average Joe in 204 BCE had never even heard of an ATM nor even conceived of the technological advancements of our time. Life during Bible times was extremely diverse compared to life today. And just as problems arise between a person who only speaks English and a person who only speaks Spanish, troubles come up when a person tries to interpret 3,000 year old manuscripts with a modernized mindset.

In the double reading Torah portions for this week, we are once again reminded of how much in life has changed. The sidrah speaks of an agricultural rest for The Land, rules on having indentured servants, and the year of jubilee. Also discussed are ancestral and purchased fields, blessings for obedience, and how to redeem a household. Frankly, these issues are not the most pressing subjects facing people today. Yet they were important thousands of years ago and they are important in this century. Mankind has grown away from the agriculturally based life of long ago. But mankind has not grown away from its dependence upon Almighty Yahweh and His Word.

Friend, it just might be easier to learn another modern language than it is to grasp the culture and themes of the scriptures. Humankind is so separated from how life used to be that we have forgotten how life should be. To help solve this problem the Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) has written that we should, "In view of Yahweh's mercies, present yourself to Elohim as a sacrifice, living and set apart for Elohim. This will please Elohim: it is the acceptable temple worship for you. In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the patterns of the olam hazeh (this world). Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you will know what Elohim wants and will agree that what He wants is good, satisfying, and able to succeed," Romans 12:1-2

In this verse Rabbi Sha'ul exhorts the reader to not be pressed like cookie dough by a cookie cutter into the pattern of this evil world. Believers should instead be transformed from what they used to be to what they should be. This happens by making the mind and thoughts focused on the things of Torah.

Yahweh is merciful, Sha'ul writes, and in view of His wonderful mercies mankind should react through obedient surrender to the mind of Moshiach. "You have the mind of Moshiach," says 1 Corinthians 2:16. What was Y'shua's mind thinking on? Well, if Y'shua is the "word made flesh" then it is no doubt that his being was infact focused on the Torah and Torah itself. "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things," Philippians 4:8.

Having the thoughts of Messiah and on Messiah is not easy. Today the world has grown cold; life has grown away from the Light of Torah. Everywhere you look there are reminders of this fallen state. From billboards to magazines at a grocery store, the last thing this culture promotes is a Torah-based lifestyle.

What believers need is a culture shock. We need a culture change. We need a return to the culture and life of the Torah. "Here is what Yahweh says: 'stand at the crossroads and look; ask about the ancient paths, which one is the good way? Take it and you will find rest for your souls,'" Yermi'yahu (Jeremiah) 6:16. The latest spiritual "how to" books and methods will not produce lasting differences. What does alter the life and eternal life of a person is a return to the "ancient paths." Revisiting the Torah and a Hebraic mind set on things above produces rest, fulfillment, and shalom. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things," Colossians 3:2.

Do you agree that if you were to try to speak Portuguese without knowing about the Portuguese people that you would soon become frustrated? Aren't language and culture connected? Then stop trying to figure out the Bible without knowing about Biblical culture. This week's Torah portion as well as most of the Bible doesn't make much sense without a Hebraic mindset. Here are a few ideas to help you know more about YOUR culture and heritage:

- 1) Question what you have been taught. Do this even if you think what you know is absolutely correct. Question, seek, ask and "study to show yourself approved." Find real answers in the Bible and reject any teaching contrary to the word.
- 2) Accept the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation as instructions for living. Don't forsake any part of the Scriptures as being "done away with." Dividing the Bible only divides the truth.
- 3) Learn about church history. There are reasons to why the church does what it does. When you look up issues in Encyclopedias and web sites you will be amazed. Research into the holidays of Christmas, Halloween and Easter will reveal their evil practices and pagan roots. A small examination into church teachings on the rapture, the trinity, or replacement theology will expose more falsehoods. Be careful!
- 4) Learn about Judaism. The Jewish people have kept the Torah of Yahweh for thousands of years. They have hashed out the difficult verses and debated the "smallest" of issues. Learning how

to be a Jew will teach you how to be a believer in Messiah. But, be on guard as you do this. Judaism as a whole does not accept Y'shua as Messiah. Also, there are some sects of Judaism that are full of unbiblical, pagan, and New Age beliefs.

5) Be open to the truth about life, the faith, and historical facts. Don't be misled or deceived.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are "Behar" and "Bechukotai." What do these mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 32:6-27 and 16:19-17:14. How does these relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 4:16-21 and Matthew 22:1-14. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of shemita were taught on Mt Sinai?
6. If one possesses shemita food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
7. The Torah commands, "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year." How is this done?
8. Which two "returns" are announced by the shofar during yovel/jubilee?
9. From where does the yovel /jubilee year get its name?
10. What prohibitions are derived from the verse "v'lo tonu ish et amito -- a person shall not afflict his fellow"?
11. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of shemita?
12. If shemita is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
13. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
14. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?
15. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
16. What does the word "days" mean in this week's Parasha?
17. What is considered a walled city?
18. To what is one who leaves Eretz Yisrael / the Land of Israel compared?
19. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Hebrew indentured servant.
20. Who supports the family of the Hebrew indentured servant during his years of servitude?
21. If an Israelite is sold as a servant to a non-Hebrew, does he go free after six years?
22. To what do the words "*bechukotai telechu*" (walk in My statutes) refer?
23. When is rain "in its season"?
24. What is the blessing of "*v'achaltem lachmechem l'sova*" (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
25. What is meant by the verse "and a sword will not pass through your land"?
26. Mathematically, if five Hebrew soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Israeli soldiers be able to defeat?
27. Which "progression" of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
28. What is one benefit which the Hebrew People derive from the Land of Israel's state of ruin?
29. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
30. How many years did the Hebrew People sin in Israel up till the time the northern tribes were exiled?
31. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written in Hebrew with an extra "vav." From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
32. What positive element is implied by the words "and I will bring them into the land of their enemies?"

33. In verse 26:42, why is the word "remember" not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak / Isaac?
34. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 "*Torot*" (plural) and not "Torah" (singular)?
35. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the *Beit Hamikdash / Temple* and doesn't have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
36. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the *Beit Hamikdash* and fails to redeem it before *yovel/jubilee* what happens to the field?
37. How does a person tithe his animals?
38. After we came into the Land, we would live off of it by farming. When were we to refrain from doing that, and what were we commanded not to do?
39. Every 7th year. We were to neither sow the field nor prune the vineyard. What about produce that grew by itself? Were we allowed to gather it? Why not?
40. After each 49 years passed, we were to proclaim a what? When and how were we to do it?
41. What were we commanded to do during that jubilee year?
42. What did YHWH say our reward would be if we observed the jubilee year properly?
43. If we were not allowed to sow or harvest during the Sabbath year, how were we to survive?
44. If a person was forced to sell his property because of poverty, did he have to wait until the jubilee year to redeem it? If no, how was it done?
45. If a person were forced to sell his property, it would always be redeemed during the jubilee year with one exception. What was that?
46. In the case where a person sold his house in a walled city, could he ever redeem it?
47. Were the Levites allowed to sell their houses and the fields of the open land?
48. What is the special law about charging interest on a loan to a brother?
49. In this Parasha [26:3-4], YHWH says "*If you will follow My statutes and observe My laws and you will do them; then I have given your rains in their time and the land will give its produce, and the tree of the field will give its fruit.*" How does this relate to being a "hearer and doer" of the Torah, as taught in the books of Romans and "James?"
50. How does the energy we invest in being such a "hearer and doer" of Torah compare to work in the physical realm in terms of how we define the "reward" or "success" of each?
51. How is the seventh year like the Sabbath day?
52. How do we know which is the seventh sabbatical year?
53. Describe and explain the yovel jubilee year. How is this counting similar to the counting to Shavuot?
54. How do the blessings of the Torah offer us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven on earth?
55. How does the Messiah break the yoke of bondage today?
56. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

The Open Bible is a teaching series written by Daniel Rendelman of Emet Ministries. Find more teachings, audio messages, videos, and music at www.emetministries.com.

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