

WHY ARE THERE FIVE BOOKS IN THE TORAH?

by Shlomo Katz

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring
Edited by Shlomo Katz

Behar - Bechukosai

Volume XVI, No. 29

22Iyar 5762

May 4, 2002

Today's Learning:

Eduyot 8:5-6

Orach Chaim 634:1-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 45

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ma'aser Sheni 15

This week's parashah completes the book of Vayikra. R' Moshe ben Yosef Tirani z"l (the "Mabit"; 16th century) observes that Vayikra has more mitzvot than any other book: 241. Devarim is next, with 200. A mnemonic to remember this is "emmet" / "truth" whose gematria is 441 (=200+241). The other three books contain 172 mitzvot, which can be remembered by the mnemonic "eikev." [There does not appear to be any special meaning to this mnemonic.]

But why is the Torah divided into five separate books? Why was it not given in one book?

Mabit suggests that the five books of the Torah commemorate the five individuals who received parts of the Torah before it was formally given at Har Sinai. These were: Adam and Noach, who received the seven Noachide laws; Avraham, who received the mitzvah of milah; Yitzchak, the first person on whom circumcision was performed on the 8th day; and Yaakov, who was given the mitzvah not to eat the gid hanasheh.

Alternatively, the five books commemorate Amram and Yocheved and their children, Moshe, Aharon and Miriam, through whom the Torah was given.

Or, the five books parallel the five places where parts of the Torah were given: Egypt, Marah (in the desert), Har Sinai, the Ohel Moed / Tent of Meeting, and the Wilderness of Moav.

Some sources refer to the book of Bemidbar as three separate books, yielding a total of seven. This would parallel the five recipients of the Torah (see above) plus Moshe and Aharon, or the seven days of creation. (Bet Elokim, Sha'ar Hayesodot ch.32)

"If your brother becomes impoverished and sells part of his ancestral heritage... if he does not acquire sufficient means to repay him, then his sale shall remain in possession of its purchaser until the Yovel / Jubilee Year; in the Yovel, it shall leave and return to his ancestral heritage." (25:25, 28)

"If a man shall sell a residence house in a walled city, its redemption can take place until the end of the year of its sale; its period of redemption shall be a year." (25:29)

Why can an ancestral field that was sold be redeemed at any time (starting two years after the sale), and if it is not redeemed, it returns to its ancestral owner at the Yovel, while a residence in a walled city can be redeemed during the first year after the sale? Ramban z"l (1194-1270) explains: A person who is forced to sell his home is likely to be ashamed. Therefore, said the Torah, let him redeem it quickly if he is able. However, once he has been gone from his house for a year, his attachment to that house is over.

In the case of an ancestral field, in contrast, the law of redemption is not based on the seller's feelings. Rather, it is based on the fact that his ancestral field is his family's source of sustenance. Thus it is fitting that the ancestral field should be redeemable at any time and should return at the Yovel.

It is amazing! writes R' Simcha Zissel Broide z"l (the "Chevron Rosh Yeshiva"; died 2000). The Yovel is one of the foundations of our faith, intended to teach us to place our faith in G-d. [The importance of the Yovel is highlighted by the fact that our parashah notes that it was taught at Har Sinai.] In addition, Kabbalists teach that the cycle of Shemittah and Yovel years alludes to all the years of world history, which will culminate in a period of rest (like a Yovel) for all existence. Yet, in the midst of teaching this important law, the Torah takes time out, so-to-speak, to concern itself with the feelings of a man who must sell his house. (Sahm Derech)

"If your brother becomes impoverished, and his hand falters in your proximity, you shall strengthen him - proselyte or resident - so that he may live `imach' / with you." (25:35)

R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (Hungary and Eretz Yisrael; died 1922) explains the intent of this verse as follows: Don't be like certain stingy people who think that they fulfill their obligation of charity by

giving the needy a small amount. Rather, a person must support the poor at the same standard of living that he supports his own family. This is what is meant by: "so that he may live with you."

Some people say to the poor [either directly or through their attitude]: "What's wrong with being poor? Doesn't the Mishnah teach, 'Such is the way of the Torah - eat bread dipped in salt and drink a small measure of water'?" R' Schlesinger asks rhetorically: Do the people who say this live such a life themselves? One who takes such an attitude toward the poor violates the command of our verse as well as the mitzvah of "You shall love your fellow as yourself."

R' Schlesinger adds: There is another lesson in the word "imach" / "with you." The Midrash says: "More than the master of the house does for the poor man, the poor man does for the master of the house." This alludes to the promise of wealth for one who practices the mitzvah of giving charity with an open hand. One must remember also the verse (Mishlei 22: 2), "The rich man and the poor man meet; Hashem is the Maker of them all." Lest one choose to ignore the mitzvah of giving charity, remember that the same Creator who made the rich man rich can make him poor and give his wealth to the poor man. (Torat Yechiel)

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l (leading American halachic authority of the 20th century; died 1986) was asked: Must one give to charity to enable the poor to buy something that the giver himself needs? [For example, if one rents, rather than owns, a home, must he give charity to help a poor bride and groom buy a home for themselves?] R' Feinstein responded that our verse answers this question: "Strengthen him . . . so that he may live with you." You are not obligated to strengthen him so that he can live better than you.

R' Feinstein finds support for his position in the following famous dispute recorded in the Gemara: If two people are traveling in the desert and only one has water, and even that one has only enough water for one person, Rabbi Akiva says that he should not share his water and die with his traveling companion. Rather, he should keep the water for himself even if his companion will die. Why? Rabbi Akiva says, "So that he may live with you" - your life comes first. [If he shares the water, his friend will not live with him, as he himself will not live.] The sage Ben Petorah disagrees and says, "Share the water."

At first glance, writes R' Feinstein, it seems that Rambam does not codify either the opinion of Rabbi Akiva or that of Ben Petorah in his halachic code. Why not? R' Feinstein answers that this dispute is in fact alluded to in Rambam's ruling that "One must give charity to the extent that he can afford." This implies that one need not give more than he can afford and that one need not give something that he does not have enough of for himself. (In other words, Rambam rules in accordance with Rabbi Akiva's view.)

R' Feinstein adds: It may be that even Ben Petorah agrees with the principle that one need not give something that he does not have enough of for himself. Rather, Ben Petorah disagrees with Rabbi Akiva on the question of whether one is permitted to sacrifice his life for a mitzvah in a situation

where halachah does not obligate him to do so. (Rabbi Akiva would hold that one may not do so, while Ben Petorah may hold that one is permitted to do so.) (Igrot Moshe: Yoreh Deah I, No. 145)

"I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham will I remember, and I will remember the Land." (26:42)

Our Sages teach that the punishments listed in our parashah refer to the period between the First and Second Temples. Thus, this verse, which appears near the end of the punishments must refer to the period around the building of the Second Bet Hamikdash.

Why, asks R' Sa'adiah Gaon z"l (Babylon; died 942), are the Patriarchs mentioned in reverse chronological order? He offers the following explanation: In this verse, Moshe Rabbeinu is hinting to us how long the Second Temple would stand. (According to the Talmud, it stood for 420 years.) Specifically, the number of years of the Second Bet Hamikdash was the same as the number of years that Hashem's Covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov lasted. How so?

Yaakov lived 147 years, all of which were after Hashem's Covenant with Avraham (i.e., the Brit Bain Ha'betarim). All of Yitzchak's 180 years also were after Hashem's Covenant with Avraham. As for Avraham himself, he lived 93 years after the Brit Bain Ha'betarim. In all, Hashem's Covenant with the Patriarch's including years that their lives overlapped, was 420 years. And, it is only the fact that the Patriarchs are listed backwards in the verse that suggests to us that the verse is alluding to something that only existed at the end of Avraham's life.

[Ed. note: R' Sa'adiah Gaon does explain his calculation of the 93 years that Avraham lived after the Covenant. Unfortunately, reports R' Yosef Kapach z"l (died 2000), the scholar who printed the commentary from manuscript, one line of the manuscript in the middle of the calculation is unintelligible. Without that line, one can only arrive at the number 91, not 93. Note also that other commentaries place the Brit Bain Ha'betarim 100 or 105 years before Avraham's death.] (Sefer Daniel Im Targum U'Peirush R' Sa'adiah Gaon, p. 15)

R' Avraham David Wahrman z"l

R' Avraham David was born in Nadvorna, Galicia (today, in the Ukraine) on 6 Adar 5531 / 1771. His first teacher was his father, R' Asher Anshel, who was known as "Wahrman" / "Man of Truth" because of his personal character. In addition to Torah, R' Asher Anshel taught his son arithmetic, German and Polish. Young Avraham David was a dedicated student, and, already at the age of six, he was seen reviewing his Torah lessons while waiting at the table for meals to begin. He also studied under his uncle R' Yehoshua Charif.

At age ten, the future R' Avraham David became engaged to the daughter of R' Zvi Hirsch Kara of Buczacz, and he moved to that town to study under his future father-in-law. After his marriage, R'

Avraham David became known throughout Buczacz not only for his expertise in most branches of Torah knowledge, but also for his acts of kindness, which he performed in a low-key and humble manner.

Beginning in 1791, R' Avraham David served as rabbi of Yazlowitz for 24 years. In that small town, he was able to study almost undisturbed for 14 consecutive hours every day. During this period, R' Avraham David began studying kabbalah, and he also broadened his knowledge of secular studies as an aid to studying Torah and in order to respond to heretics. It was also during these years that he became attracted to R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and the young chassidic movement. R' Avraham David would later say that he suffered inner turmoil because the ways of chassidut, which he believed were very valuable for serving Hashem, were at odds with the ways of traditional Torah scholarship in which he was raised and educated.

In 1814, R' Zvi Hirsch Kara died, and R' Avraham David was offered the rabbinate of Buczacz in his place. R' Avraham David accepted, but he had to slip out of Yazlowitz under the cover of darkness because of his popularity there. It is as the rabbi of Buczacz that R' Avraham David is best known, and it was there that he spent the remainder of his days until his passing on the second day of Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan 5601 / 1840.

R' Avraham David was a prolific author. His best known works are Da'at Kedoshim on parts of Shulchan Aruch Yorah Deah, and Eishel Avraham on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim. The latter work is printed in the back of standard editions of the Shulchan Aruch. (Note that there are two works by that name printed in the back of the Shulchan Aruch.) R' Avraham David also authored commentaries on the Torah and the Pesach Haggadah, and other works. (Source: Encyclopedia Le'chachmei Galicia p. 944)

Copyright © 2002 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
