

WHAT MAKES THE LAND HOLY

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Behar

What Makes the Land Holy

Behar-Bechukotai
Volume 21, No. 29
24 Iyar 5767
May 12, 2007

Sponsored by
Kenny and Lilly Schor
on the yahrzeit of her father
Yisrael Yosef ben Chaim Hakohen a"h

David and Micheline Peller
on the yahrzeit of father Baruch Hercberg a"h

Mrs. Helen Spector
on the yahrzeit of her mother
Rose S. Greene (Ruchel bat Shmuel Moshe a"h)

Mr. and Mrs. Menachem Simcha Katz and family
on the shloshim of her father Ze'ev ben R' Yosef

Today's Learning:
Kiddushin 3:8-9
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 9
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Pesachim 34

Much of this week's two parashot deals directly or indirectly with the mitzvot of shemittah, the agricultural sabbatical year, and yovel, the jubilee (50th) year, when the land must also be left fallow. Our Sages explain that the purpose of refraining from agricultural activities in these years is to remind us that the land belongs to Hashem and it is He who provides our sustenance.

If so, asks R' Moshe Zuriel shlita (former mashgiach ruchani of Yeshivat Sha'alvim), why do these mitzvot apply only in Eretz Yisrael? Hashem is, after all, Master of the entire globe!

The answer is that, although Hashem created the entire world, it is only with Eretz Yisrael that He maintains a direct, day-to-day relationship ("hashgachah pratit"). This is taught in the verses (Devarim 11:10-12), "For the Land to which you come, to possess it -- it is not like the land of Egypt that you left, where you would plant your seed and water it on foot like a vegetable garden. But the Land to which you cross over to possess it is a Land of hills and valleys; from the rain of heaven shall you drink water. A Land that Hashem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end." In other lands, e.g., Egypt, one can rely on the natural water supply (e.g., the Nile). Eretz Yisrael, however, is very much dependent on rain, which is, in turn, dependent upon the will of Hashem.

In a related vein: The Zohar observes that Moshe Rabbeinu refers to Hashem (when speaking to Bnei Yisrael) as "Your G-d." Why does he not say, "Our G-d"? The Zohar explains that one who lives outside of Eretz Yisrael is, in a sense, G-dless. Therefore, since Moshe was not destined to enter the Land, he could not say "Our G-d."

Given the special relationship between Eretz Yisrael and Hashem, we can readily understand why the mitzvot of shemittah and yovel, which highlight the dependence of the earth on G-d's kindness, would apply only in the Holy Land. (Otzrot Ha'Torah)

From the Parashah . . .

"You shall sanctify the year of the fiftieth year . . . and each of you shall return to his ancestral heritage . . ." (Vayikra 25:10)

Why is the word "year" mentioned twice? R' Yechezkel Shraga Lifschutz-Halberstam z"l (the Stropkover Rebbe) explains:

During the 49 days of the Omer, we are supposed to be preparing ourselves to receive the Torah on Shavuot, the 50th day. But what if Shavuot comes and we realize that we have not prepared at all? It is written in certain works that one should not become depressed, for, on Shavuot itself, one can make-up all of the spiritual gains that he should have accomplished during the Omer.

The same thing, says the Stropkover Rebbe, is true of the Yovel / Jubilee year, which has additional holiness compared to other years. The repetition of the word "year" in our verse teaches that one can attain in one year everything that he should have achieved in the preceding 49 years. This is similar to that which Rambam writes: "Even the repentance of one who does not repent until he is on his death bed is accepted." [Ed. note: Rambam does write, however, that such a repentance is not as meaningful as a repentance that occurs in one's youth, when one's drives are stronger.]

Why is it that one can repent in his old age after a lifetime of sinning? Why is it that one can accomplish in a short time (in the 50th year or on Shavuot) what one should have spent a long time accomplishing? Our verse tells us the answer: Such a person is merely returning to his ancestral heritage. In reality, no Jew ever lets go of that heritage completely, whether he realizes it or not.

(Divrei Yechezkel Shraga Vol. III)

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

Rashi writes that "If you will follow My decrees" refers to toiling in Torah study. If so, writes R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (Hungary and Yerushalayim; died 1922), we can understand why this verse follows immediately after the verse, "My Sabbaths you shall observe." Specifically, the Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu states that the primary time for Torah study is on Shabbat, when one is free from working. (Torat Yechiel)

"Then they will confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers, for the treachery with which they betrayed Me . . . I, too, will behave toward them with casualness and I will bring them into the land of their enemies." (26:40-41)

Why, if Bnei Yisrael confess their sins, will Hashem behave toward them with casualness and bring them to the land of their enemies? R' Moshe Freidiger z"l (communal leader in Pest, Hungary) explains:

Teshuvah means confessing one's sins and not making excuses. Here, Bnei Yisrael will confess, but they will justify their actions by saying that their forefathers acted the same way. Such "teshuvah" will be rejected. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

From the Haftarah . . .

"Hashem -- my Strength, my Stronghold and my Refuge in the day of travail -- to You nations will come from the ends of the earth, and say, 'Our ancestors inherited only falsehood, futility that has no purpose. Can a man make a god for himself? They are not gods!'"

"Therefore, behold I inform them upon this occasion, I shall let them know of My hand and My strength; and they shall know that My Name is Hashem." (Yirmiyah 16:19-21)

R' Moshe David Valle z"l (1697-1777; Italian kabbalist) writes: It is already known that every person is like a blind man until Hashem enlightens his eyes. How else could a man think that he could make a god for himself?! The truth is the opposite, as it should be; G-d makes man, not the other way around. Certainly man is not a god! How then can he make a god? One cannot give another that

which the giver does not possess himself. Since men have no Divine powers, they cannot impart such power to their handiwork. This is the meaning of, "Can a man make a god for himself? They are not gods!"

However, Hashem allowed the nations to live through history under the false impression that they could create gods. Only at the time of the final tikkun will He enlighten their eyes to the identity of the one true Hashem. This is the meaning of, "Behold I inform them upon this occasion . . ." "This occasion" refers to the time of the ultimate tikkun. At that time, He will enable the nations to see the truth that they have failed to recognize until now. "I shall let them know of My hand and My strength." It is a great thing that they will learn at that time, i.e., "they shall know that My Name is Hashem" - the One and Only, the Master of all things that exist, the Ruler over all Creation.

[Unfortunately, many of Bnei Yisrael share the same erroneous beliefs as the nations. In the continuation of the haftarah,] Hashem informs the prophet that it would be futile for him to pray that his nation see the light, for this is possible only through the suffering of exile. (Marpeh Lashon)

"Blessed is the gever / man who trusts in Hashem, then Hashem will be his security." (Yirmiyah 17:7)

R' Chanoch Zundel ben Yosef z"l (19th century; author of popular commentaries on midrashim) writes: The term used for man - "gever" - refers to a person in the prime of his strength (gevurah). True bitachon is placing one's trust in Hashem even when one thinks he can succeed on his own. If one does this, "Hashem will be his security" in old age as well. (Etz Yosef Al Ha'siddur)

Diaries

This week, we present an excerpt from Eleh Masei, subtitled "A Journal of the Journey of the Rabbis, Members of the Committee to Raise the Crown of Judaism in Our Holy Land, Who Toured All the Settlements of Shomron [Samaria] and Galil [Galilee] in the Winter of 5674 [1914]." This journal was written by R' Yonatan Binyamin Halevi Horowitz, and recounts the travels together of R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, R' Ben-Zion Yadler, R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap, and R' Moshe Kliers.

From Thursday to Sunday, 20-23 Marcheshvan 5674 / 1914, the delegation visited Zichron Yaakov. The issues they addressed there and their level of success are summarized in the following letter addressed to the rabbis by the town council:

Sunday, 23 Marcheshvan 5674, Zichron Yaakov . . .

Honored rabbis! We are honored to present to you the minutes of our meeting tonight. Together with these, we are honored to tell you of our decisions vis-a-vis your requests and demands.

(1) Regarding arrangements for the separation of terumah and ma'aser, we have named a commission consisting of Mr. Yitzchak Goldstein and Mr. T. Krupik. Mr. Pinchas Sokolovitch will be responsible for executing their instructions.

(2) Regarding introducing religious instruction into the schools, we have decided that we agree in principle with this just request. However, arranging the details and setting the budget, and also your request that boys and girls be separated in class, we are turning over to a school board that will be formed soon and which will deal with the matter.

(3) In response to your comments regarding Shabbat observance, the council is honored to tell you that it has already dealt with this, and also in the future it will take steps to strengthen this important area.

(4) Regarding the bimah i.e., placing it in the center of the shul and placing wedding canopies outdoors and not in the shul, we have decided to call a community meeting and to encourage the adoption of your suggestions.

Copyright © 2007 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and **Torah.org**.

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 **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. Did you know that the low cost of sponsorship - only \$18 - has not changed in seventeen years? Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.