

# LAWS OF THE LAND

by Shlomo Katz

## Parshas Bechukosai

### Laws of the Land

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Today's Learning:

Zevachim 8:10-11

O.C. 141:3-5

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nazir 65

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Ketubot 8

A large part of this week's parashah is devoted to describing the rewards for observing the mitzvot and the punishments for not doing so. In particular, our Sages teach, our parashah foretells that Bnei Yisrael will be exiled from Eretz Yisrael as a consequence of transgressing the laws of shemittah.

R' Yoel Sirkes z"l (1561-1640; Poland; author of the important halachic work Bayit Chadash) writes that there are at least six benefits to living in Eretz Yisrael rather than in the Diaspora. All of these, he writes further, are alluded to in Megillat Ruth.

(1) Man's soul is connected to its source "under the wings of the Shechinah" via Eretz Yisrael. One who is outside of Eretz Yisrael is, so- to-speak, stretching the cord that binds his soul to Heaven. This is alluded to in the words of Boaz to Ruth (Ruth 2:12), *"May your payment be full from Hashem, the G-d of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge."*

(2) One who is in Eretz Yisrael never goes to sleep without his sins having already been forgiven. [Note: This does not apply to certain more serious sins.] This is alluded to in Ruth's words (1:16), *"Where you sleep, I will sleep."*

(3) One who is outside of Eretz Yisrael is not considered part of the "Am" / "nation" of G-d. The reason for this is that G-d has delegated dominion over the entire world, except Eretz Yisrael, to angels. This is alluded to in the same verse: *"Your nation is my nation."*

(4) For the same reason, one who is outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered, in some sense, to be G-dless. This is alluded to in the words, *"Your G-d is my G-d."*

(5) The soul of a person who is buried outside of Eretz Yisrael will suffer pain as it "travels" through the impure atmosphere of the Diaspora on its way to Heaven. This is alluded to in Ruth's words (1:17), *"As you die, so I shall die."*

(6) Being buried in Eretz Yisrael provides additional atonement; thus, those who are buried in the Diaspora will suffer a certain pain at the time of techiyat ha'meitim / the resurrection of the dead. This is alluded to in Ruth's words: *"There I shall be buried."*

In addition, R' Sirkes concludes, Ruth suspected that there are other benefits to living in Eretz Yisrael with which she was not familiar. These are alluded to in her words in the same verse, *"Thus may Hashem do to me, and so may He do more."* (Meishiv Nefesh)

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*"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments . . ."* (Vayikra 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)

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*"I will provide peace in the land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you."* (Vayikra 26:6)

Rashi z"l comments: "Perhaps you will say, 'There is food and there is drink [as promised in the prior verses], but if there is no peace, then all this is nothing!' The Torah therefore states after all these promises: 'I will provide peace in the land.' Hence we may learn that peace counterbalances everything. In a similar sense it states (Yishayah 45:7), *'Who makes peace and creates all!'*"

R' Zalman Sorotzkin z"l (1881-1966; Lithuania and Israel) elaborates: Even though peace is the most important gift, it is mentioned only after the other gifts (food, etc.) because a poor person who lacks food or clothing does not appreciate peace. To the contrary, he reasons that a war might spur the economy and improve his lot. Similarly, "peace" is mentioned only at the end of the Birkat Kohanim / Priestly Blessing.

R' Sorotzkin also writes: The previous verse ended with, "You will dwell securely in your land." What is added by the promise in our verse, "I will provide peace in the land"? He explains:

Peace is different from security. We read (Yishayah 32:17), *"The deed of tzedakah shall be peace, and the work of tzedakah, quiet and security forever."* Based on this verse, the Gemara (Bava Batra 9a) teaches that the reward of charity collectors is greater than the reward of those who give charity.

The commentary Pilpula Charifta explains that this is learned from the fact that the first phrase in the verse, which refers to collectors, promises the greater reward of peace, while the second part of the verse, which refers to givers, promises only the lesser reward of quiet and security. [The correlation of the two parts of the verse to the two groups is based on a wordplay that would be lost in translation.]

Why is peace a greater reward than security? Because security results from being stronger than one's enemy; nevertheless, one must remain alert to potential attacks. Peace, however, brings not only a cessation of hostilities, but also peace of mind. (Oznayim La'Torah)

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## Pirkei Avot

Rabbi Shimon says: "There are three crowns - the crown of Torah, the crown of kehunah / the priesthood, and the crown of rulership. However, the crown of a good name is above all of them." (Chapter 4)

The Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 7:11) states that the members of a court that judges monetary matters should have seven characteristics: wisdom, humility, fear of G-d, hatred of money, love of truth, love of other people, and masters of a good name.

The Vilna Gaon writes in his commentary there: "Masters of a good name- anshei chayil / men of strength."

What does this mean? R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains:

One does not earn a truly good name merely by performing isolated "good" acts. Rather, a master of a good name is a person who is recognized as having internalized and mastered the traits of goodness and yosher (loosely translated "honesty," but best understood by the Yiddish term "erlichkeit"). Such a person has made these traits his essence.

It follows that becoming the master of a good name requires tremendous and consistent inner strength. Such a person is a true "man (or woman) of strength." (Be'er Eliyahu)

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## Shemittah

This week we resume our discussion of the laws of shemittah, focusing on the mitzvah of "biur." Literally, biur means "destruction" (as in "biur chametz"); here, however, a better translation is "elimination." (The exact nature of this obligation will be discussed next week.)

The law of biur derives from the verses (in last week's parashah - 25:6- 7), *"The Sabbatical produce of the land shall be yours to eat . . . and for your animal and the beast that is in your land."* From here our

Sages derive that the produce of the shemittah may only be kept in one's home so long as it is still available to the "beast that is in your land," i.e., in the wild. Thereafter, it is subject to biur.

The halachot below are from Sefer Ha'shemittah (ch. 9) by R' Yechiel Michel Tikochinski z"l. The reason we have chosen to discuss these laws at this time is that a small number of produce items (among them, broccoli) became subject to the laws of biur during the past week. Most items will not become subject to biur until this coming summer or as late as next Chanukah.

The fruits of shevi'it / the seventh year may be eaten so long as each species is found in the fields. When each species is no longer found in the field -- in most cases, in the eighth year -- then one must eliminate the produce of that species from his house.

For example, if one has dried figs from the shemittah year in his home, he may eat them only as long as fresh figs remain on the trees. If one has raisins or wine of the shemittah, he may consume it as long as grapes remain on the vines.

If one has a mixture of species that were pickled together, he should separate them and eliminate each one at the proper time. The fact that they may have absorbed taste from each other is of no consequence [unlike the concern that exists regarding mixtures of meat and milk or kosher and non-kosher foods].

House flowers are subject to biur if they are species that lose their petals in the wild.

If one exchanged shemittah produce for money at any point during the year, the money is subject to biur at the time when the species for which it was exchanged would be subject to biur.

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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.

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