

# פרשת בהר-בחקתי

## **Molly Goldstein- Class of 2021**

### **Parshat Behar**

#### **Summary**

In Parshat Behar we get the laws of the shmitah year. Every seven years farmers must stop working their land for a year. The produce can be taken by any man or any animal. In the 50th year of that cycle, called Yovel, work stops, servants are set free, and all ancestral lands that have been sold revert back to their owners. Food will be plentiful in 6th year's harvest in order to have extra for the seventh year. The parsha also contains the laws of fair business practices, where you shouldn't lie or cheat out your business partner.

#### **Dvar Torah- My Jewish Learning**

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/we-are-all-gods-creatures/>

RABBI JAMES JACOBSON-MAISELS: Rabbi James Jacobson-Maisels teaches Jewish thought and mysticism at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Jacobsen-Maisels discusses the ideas of rest and return to natural state regarding the shmitah and yovel years. During these years, everything that humans own is returned to their natural state. The land is unworked, slaves are set free, and property is returned to the original owner. The release of authority presides in every aspect of human life: the personal (Shabbat), the natural (shmitah), and the social (freeing of slaves), in order to remind us who is the real Creator and owner of the world, HaShem. He is the true giver of property, wealth, success, sustenance, and life. Remembering this sentiment is important, because it gives us gratitude to Him and to the life we live.

## **Aaron Ayach: Class of 2020**

### **Parshat Behar**

#### **Summary:**

- Shmita Year: every 7 years farmers must stop working the land for a year and allow anyone to come in and take produce.
- Yovel Year: occurs every 50 year and all work stops, lands are returned to original owners, and servants are freed.
- Business practice: also contains the rules with fair business laws for example what happens when your brother becomes rich or when you want to buy land or how you shouldn't cheat your partner out of business and how there shouldn't be any underhand dealings.

### Parasha Pictures:



Unfortunately, I could not find anyone to give credit to this cool depiction. This image is one of the more straightforward images I found to explain the things going on in Parashat Behar. This parsha talks a lot about the laws of farming specifically shmita years and Yovel years. Now obviously this picture depicts that aspect of the parsha with the clear image of a hand throwing seeds in order to plant. Now I could say that the purple color is normally associated with wisdom, dignity, or devotion - all aspects we want in a great business partner which is coincidentally covered in this parsha - I could say that but it could be a stretch.



Now I couldn't finish my final parsha project without including a piece of work from the esteemed Israeli painter, Yoraam Raanan. WOW, this is a fantastic image, just pure genius. It really symbolizes the hierarchy in society with proletariat clearly symbolized with the color blue and the bourgeoisie is obviously the gold specs in this artwork - but that connection is

light work. Now we know that in shmitah farmers work the land for 6 years and on the 7th year they open it for anyone to take. This land conversion is symbolically represented by the apparent waterfall in the back because what is a waterfall? It is the merging of water from a more active level to a pool where many people can benefit from. Additionally, unrelated but one could truly see the start of the universe with this image, if I could point your attention towards the very top we see a light red hue which then becomes the controlled chaos we see in the rest of the picture, that red hue is symbolic of the 6 days in which Hashem created the universe. This is the goal of Yoram Raanan he strives to show you not what is on the picture but what the picture symbolizes what is beyond the paint and what it really means

## Daniel Gross: Class of 2020

Summary:

- In Behar, we are given the Halakhot of Shmita and Yovel, shmita being the obligation to rest the land every seven years
- You are allowed to own a slave, albeit with restrictions, and every fifty years it will be “yovel” and the slaves will be freed (also on yovel land is returned to its owner)
- In Parshat Bechikotal, we are given the reward for following Hashem’s commandments- rain, and plentiful blessings
- The parsha then turns sour, warning of the curses awarded to those who do not follow the rules stipulated
- The parsha ends with the law of eiruchin, a very complicated and confusing rule which roughly deals with the laws of using objects to make pledges.

Parsha Playlist

1. משיח חדש מתחילה by Danny Robas  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISgOtt9n04M>

The classic song, used in over 90% of montage videos done by bnei akiva and ncsy (along with shnei meshugaim), this song is especially relevant with regards to parshat Behar. The parsha seems to exude new beginnings, as the laws of shmita and yovel allow for the land and slaves respectively to be freed. At the end of each cycle comes rest and recuperation, after which the land, and the nation, is reborn like a phoenix from the ashes of the routine. Further, the specific link I chose is of a live, acoustic performance, a new way to experience the classic tune.

2. Whipping Post by Allman Brothers Band  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUvxRjYqjEQ>

This song perfectly demonstrates both sides of parshat bechukotai in just a chorus and a verse. In the first verse “i’ve been lied to” and (paraphrased) “i’ve been made a fool” represent Hashem, with respect to his relationship with the nation. They promised to follow his commands and yet they did not, so he must exact retribution through curses. The chorus, then, is the nation “tied to the whipping post” thoroughly cursed for their misdeeds. And to top it all off, the time signature of the riff is 11/12, just a tiny bit incomplete, like the parsha itself which for some reason ends all of vayikra on possibly the least understandable halakha there is.

### **Jeremy Morgan : Class of 2021**

#### **Summary of Parshat Bechukotai**

- Hashem commands the people of the Am Yisrael that to keep his commandments
- He promises that if they do this, they will then enjoy much material wealth and prosperity, along with security to dwell in their homeland
- He also hits them with a very harsh rebuke, warning them that if they abandon their covenant with him, they might face things such as exile, persecution, and other evils that may come their way at the hands of G-D
- He does though, reassure them, that even when they find themselves laying in the land of their enemies, Hashem will never cast them away or destroy them, “for I am the L-rd their G-d.”
- The conclusion of the Parsha elaborates on different rules of calculations, values and different types of pledges that can be made to Hashem, as well as the mitzvah of Maaser, tithing, of produce and livestock

#### **Parsha Playlist:**

**Song #1:** Never Gonna Give You Up, Rick Astley

Text: Vayikra 26, Pasuk 36

וְאַפְתַּחַת בָּהִיוֹתֶם בָּאָרֶץ אֲיַבֵּיהֶם לֹא-מְאֹסְפִים וְלֹא-גָעֲלָתִים לְכַלְתֵּם לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתֵי אֲתֶם כִּי אַנְיִהְוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Yet, even then, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or spurn them so as to destroy them, annulling My covenant with them: for I the LORD am their God.

“Never gonna give you up, Never gonna let you down, Never gonna run around and desert you.” Except for the 40 years in which He technically does ‘desert’ them, this is essentially what Hashem tells the Jewish people in Parshat Bechukotai. After commanding them to follow his laws, keep their pact with him, and then going into detail about the horrible things that they’ll bring upon themselves if they don’t, Hashem reassures that people that no matter how grim things may look, he is always there for them, to protect, save, and lead. Even when it may seem as though they’re

being left down for the count, high and dry in the land of an enemy, Hashem tells them not to worry, as He will be there as their G-D, regardless of how egregious the sin or offense. Although Rick Astley sang it quite nicely back in the '80s, it sounds a lot nicer coming from the creator of the world.

**Song #2: Before He Cheats, Carrie Underwood**

Text: VaYikra 26, Pasuk 14/15

וְאִם־בְּחִקְרֻתִי תִּמְאֹסֵו וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁפָטִי תִּגְעַל נִפְשְׁכֶם לְבִלְתִּי עֲשֹׂת אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתִי לְהַפְרָכֶם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי:

if you reject My laws and spurn My rules, so that you do not observe all My commandments and you break My covenant,

אַפְ-אַנְיָ אָעַשָּׂה־זֹאת לְכֶם וְהַפְקִדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהַלָּא אֶת־הַשְׁחִיפָת וְאֶת־הַקְדֵּחַת מְכֹלֹת עֵינִים וְמִדְבַּת גַּפֵּשׁ וְזַרְעָם לְרִיקָּזָרָעָם וְאֶכְלָה אַיִלָּיכֶם:

I in turn will do this to you: I will wreak misery upon you—consumption and fever, which cause the eyes to pine and the body to languish; you shall sow your seed to no purpose, for your enemies shall eat it.

'I dug my key into the side, Of his pretty little souped-up four-wheel drive, Carved my name into his leather seats. I took a Louisville slugger to both headlights, I slashed a hole in all four tires, Maybe next time he'll think before he cheats.' Granted, doing significant damage to one's vehicle and unleashing an all-out divine rage onto a nation is quite different, but the underlying sentiment in Carrie Underwood's warning to one who breaks his covenant with her and leaves her for another woman is a similar sentiment expressed by Hashem to the Jewish people in Parshat Bechukotai. Obviously, neither Carrie nor Hashem intend to mistreat their significant other, in Hashem's case 'others', but with the relationship comes rules and promises, ones that mustn't be broken. To make sure that those rules aren't broken, very detailed consequences are laid out, making it more than crystal clear what will happen to the offender. Whether it be a thrashing of a truck, or thrashing or an entire nation, one message is clear: Don't mess with Hashem (or Carrie Underwood).

## **Ezra Miller: Class of 2023**

- Hashem said that if we keep his mitzvot, He will give us an overabundance of crops, there will not be any wild animals in the land, and we will be successful militarily
- If we do not keep His mitzvot, however, horrid tragedies will fall upon us, for example, we will not be able to dwell in our Holy land and there will be disease
- It then talks about pledging the value of different things, for example, someone can pledge the value of himself or someone else to the BH'M and the Torah outlines different values for different attributes/characteristics/physical traits of said persons

- Land that was declared holy by the owner can be redeemed, however, it returns to the original owner when Yovel arrives
- Lastly, it talked about the laws concerning Maaser Sheni and what to do if you cannot bring it to Yerushalayim. Also, it talked about Maaser Behema and the laws concerning that

Dvar Torah- Towards the middle of Bechukotai, it says:

**זְכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־יַצְחָק וְאֶת־אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֶבְרָהָם אֶזְכֵר וְהָאָרֶץ אֶזְכֵר:**

Initially when I read this passuk, I did not really think much of it. But upon further examination, I wondered: why are the names of the forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, in reverse order? I found my answer in a Rashi on this passuk. It essentially states that when we are in a time of צַרְעָה, or distress, Hashem looks to the merit of Yaakov to save us. If that is not enough, then He looks to the Merit of Yitzchak. If even that does not suffice, then he looks to the merit of Avraham.

One potential limitation I found in this answer was that Hashem could have just looked to Avraham's merit in the first place. Hashem did not need to go through all of the other forefathers. I looked for a new answer. I found an answer I better connected to in a Tosefta that basically claims that the way it is said was actually a way to point out that all of our forefathers are equal.

Rebbe Shlomo Yitzchaki, or Rashi, was a medieval commentator who lived from the middle of 11th to the beginning of the 12th century. He grew up in Troyes, but later studied in Worms and eventually settled in Mainz. He had three daughters. To this day, his works are well regarded and studied by Christian and Jewish scholars alike.

### Ilay K. : Class of 2021

- The parsha is opening with the option of following God's law or violating it. It's separate between the punishment and the blessings. The blessings includes: peace beating the enemy, God's grace, blessing the land of Israel, the rain will come on time. Punishment: sickness, defeat, Drought, bad animals, exile.
- The reaction of בְּנֵי after those two ways is panicked, they are afraid. Then God tell them that because he is so merciful he will forgive them if they will make a תשובה, and the reason for that is

וזכרתי להם ברית הראשונים "because god had a ברית with our fathers". "אשר הוציאתי אותם מארץ מצרים לעני הגויים להיות להם לאלהים אני ה".

- In the second part of the parsha it's talking about the laws of נדירים, and donations for the משכן. A person can donate a little amount of money, land area from his land. It explains how you calculate the donation to the משכן in case someone wants to donate something.
- Parashat bechukotay is also the last parsha of sefer vaykra, in the end we are saying חזק ותחזק, it means that we should get stronger by our love to the Torah and to get stronger from the learning meaning.

## Original dvar Torah

My dvar Torah is about the first phrase in the parsha: "אם בחוקותי תלכו" this phrase is maybe one of the most important phrases in the Torah. It has so much meaning and it represents the pure meaning of the free will. The question: is a free will really exist, keeping busy our Rabbi for thousands of years. People saying that we don't really have a free will and everything is because god wants. we just open the parsha and boom, what a great way to start the parsha. The value of free will is essential in the Jewish world. We need to understand that everything that we doing has effect on others and us, and we the only one that should take the responsible for our action. Just like the parsha said we have few ways to go, we are choosing one, but we also taking responsible for our action, therefore סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה, we made a sin, it's ok but don't go down from now go up and make תשובה. The value of free will is important we should understand it and take it to the positive side.