

Parashiyot Behar B'hukkotai

Leviticus 25:1-27:34

May 21, 2020



SUMMARY

Moshe teaches laws that relate to the land of Israel. One is *sh'meetah*, the law of the 7th year. Just like the seventh day of the week is Shabbat for **us**, every seventh year **the land** gets a whole year of Shabbat rest and temporarily returns to its wild state.

For six years, the people may plant and harvest, but in the seventh year there is no planting or harvesting. In the seventh year, all private fields and vineyards become public for the year and any person or animal can eat from anyone's land. Everyone returns to the way of gatherers, rather than farmers. When there was still slavery, slaves were set free every 50 years.

Every 50 years is the Jubilee year - called *Yovel* in Hebrew. The people count 7 times 7 years - a total of 49 years - and then mark the beginning of the 50th year with a blast of the shofar on *Yom Kippur*. The Torah's words about this year are written on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia: "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants Thereof." In the *Yovel* year, people who had to sell their family land in the past could return to their land. This is because all the earth really belongs to G-d. People are just passing through.

From Our Commentators:

Rabbi Hezekiya "Chizkuni" ben Manoah of France (c.1220 - c.1260 CE). (Lev. 25:2)

שבת לה' סימן שהקרקע שלי שהיא שובתת לשמי

'שבת לה', "a Sabbath for A-donai;" this is a sign (to you) that the land is mine (G'd's), it is a sabbath in My name / for My sake.

FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Why do you think that G'd tells the Israelites that the Promised Land will need to rest from farming every 7 years?
- 2) The *Torah* doesn't usually make a point of telling us where the Israelites received a rule, so why might it make a point of mentioning that we receive this rule--about giving the Promised Land a rest every 7 years--at Mt. Sinai.
- 3) If the Torah was ok with enslaving people, why do you think there was a rule that all enslaved people and their families had to be set free every 50 years?