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THE SABBATICAL YEAR:

A Display of
G-d's Mastership

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Behar-Bechukosai

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

If Paid For Why Were So Many Sabbatical Years Unobserved?

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The Miraculous Blessing of the Show Bread

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The Laws of the Land as Signposts

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Retain and Maintain and So Actualize

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Activating Unlimited Bounty

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1. Gemara: R' Yishmael: One must be financially responsible for himself & study Torah when not attending to chores.
2. R' Shimon Bar Yochai disagrees: When is there study time if a person is preoccupied with his financial needs?
3. Committed fully to Torah study, his finances will be attended by others.
4. 2nd paragraph of Shma: Heed my Mitzvos with all your hearts & souls; you won't bring in your own harvest.
5. R' Shimon Bar Yochai: This speaks about a person who is not doing the will of G-d.
6. Midrash: Part 1 of Shma: You should love G-d with all your heart, soul, and all your possessions.
7. Midrash: Part 1 is a person willing to forgo all the comforts of life for sake of Torah.
8. Part 2: One commits to Torah and Mitzvos but is not willing to forego the comforts of life.
9. For one who selflessly serves G-d at a cost of one's material comfort, G-d will provide all his material needs without distraction.
10. If one toils in Torah at a level of being fully invested it activates a bounty that is unlimited.

The Boomerang Effect of the Evil Eye

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1. Proverbs: The overzealous for wealth has an evil eye; a loss will befall him.
2. Midrash: Avraham purchased the Tomb of Machpelah from Ephron for an astronomical sum.
3. Ephron had an overwhelming sense of envy seeing the coins weighed.
4. G-d said: Because of your envy and evil eye you will be diminished.
5. Ephron's name is written in diminished form when he envied Avraham.
6. Does this matter to Ephron, a non-believer?
7. The family of Cheis who facilitated the purchase of the Tomb Of Machpeilah is mentioned 10 times.
8. Midrash: One who facilitates the acquisition of a Torah Sage equals fulfilling the 10 Commandments (The letter Ches is mentioned 10 times).
9. To facilitate the purchase of Avraham our Patriarch is participating in the process of meeting the objective of creation the evolvement of the Jewish People and the Torah.
10. The numerical value of Ephron in the deleted form is Ayin Rah.
11. Because Ephron had the evil eye he is not accredited with an action: the 10 Commandments.

A Conduit of Blessing to the World

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1. All the world's blessings are due to the merit of the Jew who observes Torah & Mitzvos.
2. G-d told Avraham that the nations will be blessed through his progeny.
3. The world is denied material when the Jews fail spiritually.
4. Midrash: The nation should appoint two sentries for every Jew to assure he is observing Torah & Mitzvos.
5. They assure and secure the observance of the Jew, and nullify them with their decrees.
6. Yaakov and Esav battled in the womb of their mother over the physical and spiritual worlds.
7. They agreed the physical would be Esav's and the spiritual- Yaakov's.
8. Yaakov, in the home of Lavan, amassed great wealth.
9. Though material, it was only a means to facilitate the spiritual.
10. The world is for the sake of Torah and for the Jewish People to observe it.
11. The underpinning of all physical existence and blessings is the spirituality of the Torah.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Behar-Bechukosai



THE SABBATICAL YEAR:

A Display of G-d's Mastership

Meriting G-d's Blessing

Torah: During the Sabbatical year, all agricultural activities must cease and all produce of the Land of Israel is considered ownerless. Despite the degree of toil and capital investment that the owner of the field, vineyard, or orchard may have invested, he is not permitted to demonstrate any degree of ownership regarding the produce of the Sabbatical year. All are permitted to enter his property and partake of the produce of the Sabbatical year.

Midrash in Vayikra citing a verse from Psalms: "Bless G-d, His angels mighty in strength (*geborei koach*) that do His bidding to obey the voice of His word." *Reb Yitzchak Nafcha* says that '*geborei koach*' refers to those who observe the Sabbatical year (*Shmita*). Why are they classified as mighty in strength? The one who remains silent as he sees his field being treated as though it were ownerless, with its fences being breached and the fruits of his toil being eaten, is one

of enormous strength. One requires great fortitude and inner strength to suppress one's inclination to prevent others from taking the produce that he perceives as his own. Why are they called '*geborei koach*?' As it states, 'Who is the strong one? The one who subdues and subordinates his inclination.'

Torah: One need not be concerned that he did not engage in cultivating the field during the Sabbatical year. As it states, "You shall perform My Decrees, and observe My Ordinances and perform...The land will give its fruit and you will eat your fill..."

Rashi citing *Chazal*: "There will be blessing in one's innards." Meaning, although one may eat a miniscule amount of food, he will be satiated.

Mishna in Tractate *Yomah*: During the reign of *Shimon HaTzaddik*, the High Priest, a special blessing existed within the showbread. If a *Kohen* would eat as little as

a crumb of the showbread that was the size of a bean, he would be satiated. Similarly, during the Sabbatical year, there will be a special blessing that would allow the produce of the Sabbatical year to sate and nourish the individual even in a small amount.

Torah: "If you will say: What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops! I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and I will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period."

Sforno: "If the Jewish people will not have faith in G-d and will question the fact that they will be satiated with a miniscule amount of food, then G-d will command His blessing to come upon the physical to provide a yield that will be the equivalent of three years." If the Jewish people will be lacking in faith then they will not merit the blessing that the less will be the equivalent of the more. Rather, they will consume what is normally needed to nourish a person.

One who lives his life with faith and trust in G-d is classified as a spiritual being who is not bound by the physical. Thus, the volume of his portion is not relevant. Something of spiritual value is not quantified by volume. However, if one does not have sufficient trust in G-d and is subject to his own understanding of security, G-d will provide for him as a physical being, which is a crop that is the equivalent of a three-year yield.

Chazal: Because the Jewish people had violated seventy Sabbatical years, they were exiled to Babylon for a period of seventy years. Had the Jewish people had faith in G-d and not experienced material insecurity, they would not have violated the Sabbatical years. If less is the equivalent of more, there was no reason to transgress the dictate of the Sabbatical year.

The Jew, a Victim of His Failings

Midrash citing *Hoshea*: "'G-d detested them (the Jewish people) because they did not heed His Word. They will thus be forced to wander among the nations.' G-d had said, 'Initially I said that you should be established in your land where you will dwell in tranquility.' As it states, 'You shall be planted on your land...' When will you have this tranquility? 'If You shall perform My Decrees, and observe My Ordinances and perform...The land will give its fruit and you will eat your fill...' You did not do this.

Rather, you did the unconscionable. You built altars for idolatry. Since you did things that were unconscionable, I brought upon you measure for measure things that were not written in My *Torah*. I brought illnesses and plagues upon you which are not written.'

"Prophet *Yishayahu*: 'They left G-d and betrayed the Holy One of Israel...G-d said, 'You abandoned Me...I am the G-d of Mercy but as a result of your sins you caused Me to act as if I were cruel. You have overturned My Attribute of Mercy into cruelty.' As it states in *Eicha*, 'G-d You have become like an enemy and swallowed up Israel...You have turned into their enemy and fought against them.'"

Torah: *Yitzchak* our Patriarch prayed for *Rivka* his wife to conceive because she was barren.

Gemara in Tractate *Succah*: Regarding *Yitzchak's* supplication, the term that is used by the *Torah* is "vayetar" which tells us that *vayetar* is a powerful expression of prayer. "It is similar to the pitchfork, which is referred to as the 'atar' that is the tool that overturns what is below to what is above. So too, *Yitzchak's* supplication of G-d overturned the attribute of cruelty of G-d to the attribute of Mercy.

The difficulty with the statement of the *Gemara* is that there is no attribute of G-d that is known as "the attribute of cruelty." If one believes that the punishment that is being meted out by G-d is excessive to his liability, then he will perceive G-d as being "cruel." In contrast, if one understands and believes that G-d is Just and metes out punishment in the most exacting manner, then he will not perceive G-d as being cruel, regardless of the degree of punishment. Rather, the punishment will be seen as fitting the liability.

Even when G-d metes out the harshest punishment, it is through His Attribute of Justice, which is exacting. However, because man does have the ability to evaluate the seriousness of a transgression, he perceives G-d's retribution as cruel and not just. Thus, the misconception leads one to believe that there is an "attribute of cruelty" which is incorrect and false. As result of this misconception, G-d's Name is desecrated because He is perceived in a negative light that has no relevance to Him.

Torah: Regarding the death of *Nadav* and *Avihu*, the sons of *Aaron*, "I (G-d) will be sanctified through those

who are closest to Me...” When the sons of Aaron were taken by G-d with a heavenly fire that came upon them for inappropriately bringing the incense offering, it was a sanctification of His Name because all had understood that this was G-d’s Justice being applied to those who were closest to Him. Thus, it resulted in a sanctification of His Name because it was clear that G-d is not more lenient with those who are close to Him.

Historically the Jewish people have been victimized and exiled by the nations of the world. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, the Jewish people continuously suffer as a result of their displacement. One must understand that it is not as a result of the “cruelty” of G-d that causes the predicament of the Jew to be difficult.

Torah: “If you will not listen to Me and will not perform all of these commandments; if you consider My Statutes loathsome and if your being rejects My ordinances ...so that you annul My covenant – then I will do the same to you...” The consequence of the misbehavior of the Jewish people is clearly outlined by the *Torah* before they were exiled.

Mishna in *Ethics of our Fathers*: One should pursue even a simple *mitzvah* because there is a concept “The performance of a *mitzvah* will bring about the opportunity to perform another *mitzvah* (*mitzvah goreres mitzvah*).” It is only because one does not have the capacity to evaluate the innate value of a *mitzvah* that one perceives a *mitzvah* as inconsequential.

Based on this limited understanding, the *Tana* of the *Mishna* is encouraging the person to nevertheless pursue even the simple *mitzvah* because it will bring him to the performance of a greater *mitzvah*. The same is true regarding a transgression. Although there is no such thing as an “innocuous sin,” any transgression is lethal to one’s spirituality.

Again, because of one’s lack of appreciation of the innateness of a sin, the *Mishna* must discourage one’s violating, even something that is seen as inconsequential. The discouragement to this individual is that it will bring one to transgress areas of obligation that one understands to be severe. This is based on the principle, “One sin brings about another sin (*aveira goreres aveira*).” If one would serve G-d with the intent of only doing His Will, one would not differentiate or evaluate what is more substantial and what is less because everything is of equal importance as the Will of G-d.

The Power of Speech & Its Diminishment

Torah: “If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them; then I will provide for your rains in their time...”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “If you will follow My Statutes...” is referring to one’s toiling in the study of *Torah*. In addition, one must toil with the intent of performing the *mitzvos*. As the *Gemara* in Tractate *Kiddushin* states, “Great is the study of *Torah* because it brings to actualization (of *mitzvos*).” If one toils sufficiently in *Torah* and performs *mitzvos* as a result of his study, he will be deserving of extraordinary blessing.

Gemara: “I (G-d) have created the evil inclination, and the *Torah* as its antidote.” It seems from the *Gemara* that if one engages in *Torah* study, he will incapacitate his inclination. Yet we see that there are those who engage in *Torah* study and continue to be susceptible to the influences of the evil inclination. In addition, the *Gemara* in Tractate *Sotah* tells us that a *mitzvah* affords protection to the individual only when he is performing the *mitzvah*; however, the *Torah* that he studied will protect him against evil even when he is not engaged in its study. Why in these instances is the *Torah* not an antidote to the evil inclination or a protection from evil?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The *Gemara* in Tractate *Pesachim* cites verses that describe that there are two types of kindness. One form of kindness ascends up until heaven and the other form of kindness transcends heaven. What is the kindness that ascends only up until heaven? It is the *Torah* that one studies not for its own sake (*shelo l’shma*). What is an example of ‘not for its own sake?’ If one engages in *Torah* study for his own honor or any ulterior motive. What type of kindness transcends heaven? It is the study of *Torah* for its own sake (*l’shma*).

The *Torah* that is studied not for its own sake does not have the capacity to act as an antidote against the evil inclination and thus the individual is not protected from its influence. However, the *Torah* that is studied for its own sake will provide a level of clarity that will incapacitate the evil inclination and protect the individual. If one is able to study *Torah* for its own sake, for G-d’s Glory, why does one not do so?

It is because one is only motivated by his own self-interest. If one is focused on his own needs and desires rather than fulfilling G-d's Will, he is following the lead of the evil inclination. However, if the *Torah* that one's studies is unrelated to his own benefit, then he has transcended his own physicality and will incapacitate the evil inclination. The *Torah* study that is intermingled with the influences of the evil inclination will not act as the antidote.

Chofetz Chaim in the introduction to *The Laws of Evil Speech*: Based on the *Zohar*, if one's mouth has been putrefied and spiritually contaminated as a result of evil speech (*lashon hara*), then every articulation that emanates from his mouth such as prayer or *Torah* study will be contaminated and thus diminished. Since one's supplications and *Torah* study are severely diminished, the value of such articulation will be minimal. It is only the prayer and *Torah* study that emanates from a pure mouth that will produce an affect that will subdue the evil inclination and bring blessing. Then, even if one's *Torah* study and prayers were not purely for their own sake, they would be able to protect one from the influences of the evil inclination.

Pursuing the Unreachable

Midrash citing a verse from Proverbs: "The one who is overwhelmed with the desire for wealth has an evil eye. He does not know that diminishment will come upon him." This verse is referring to many individuals. An example of one who was overwhelmed with the desire for wealth to his detriment was *Cain*. G-d said to *Cain*, 'Your desire for wealth was so great that you wanted to possess the world. However, the result of your drive brought deficiency upon you.' What was the consequence of his drive for wealth? He became a wanderer (he wandered from place to place until the end of his life). Thus, he had no permanence in existence.

"Another example of one who was overwhelmed by his desire for wealth was *Ephron* the Hittite. (He was the one who had sold the cave of *Machpelah* to *Avraham* our Patriarch to be the burial location for *Sarah*, his wife.) After *Avraham* had asked him the purchase price of the *Machpelah*, *Ephron* responded, 'My lord, heed me! Land worth four hundred shekels; between me and you what is it?' (Although he was asking *Avraham*

for an enormous sum, he attempted to make it seem trivial between the two of them.) *Avraham* began to weigh out an unprecedented amount of silver before him... When *Ephron* saw the enormous pile of silver he became overwhelmed. G-d said to him, 'Because you were so taken by the enormous amount of silver in the end you will have deficiency.' What was the deficiency?

"*Reb Yehudah bar Levy Bar Shalom*: Until *Ephron* had taken the silver from *Avraham*, his name was written in the *Torah* it was in its full form (spelling). However, after he had taken the payment that *Avraham* had given, his name is written in a deficient form, with the letter 'vav' deleted." *Ephron* had the opportunity to facilitate the purchase of a *tzaddik*, which gave him a share in eternity; however, because of his overwhelming greed for wealth he forfeited his portion in the ultimate eternity, which is the *Torah* itself. His name is recorded in a diminished form.

Midrash: "Another example of one who has an evil eye is the one who lends money with interest. This is because he is eager to become wealthy. As a result of his lending with interest a curse will come upon all of his possessions."

Chofetz Chaim in *Ahavas Chesed*: The one who lends money with interest is similar to one who has a small whole in the sack where he keeps his money. He is unaware that as he walks the money continues to fall out. Within a short period of time all of his money is lost. Not only does one not gain from the interest that was charged, he will lose all of his assets.

Midrash: "The one who violates the Sabbatical year because he is overwhelmed with the desire for wealth will lose all of his wealth. G-d says, 'I swear on your life that you will lose in this matter.'"

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: If a person engages in a commercial context with the produce of the Sabbatical Year, which is not permitted, he will face many dire consequences that will evolve over a period of time. If he does not recognize and appreciate the cause of his problem and continues to engage in the forbidden sale of the produce, his financial state will continue to deteriorate and he will need to sell his personal effects and daughter into slavery. Ultimately, if he does not repent and continues this forbidden behavior he will be forced to sell himself as a slave, even to a gentile idolater.

Ten Commandments: “Do not covet your fellow’s house...your fellow’s wife...nor anything that belongs to your fellow.” How is it possible for one who envies another to control that envy?

Ibn Ezra explains this with an allegory. A commoner is not envious of a prince when he chooses the princess for his bride. Regardless of the beauty and qualities of the princess, there is no envy because he understands that his ability to marry a princess is not available to a commoner. She is thus not within his context of choice.

When one understands that every person’s situation is unique to himself because every aspect of one’s life is tailored by G-d, he will realize that what his fellow possesses is not available to him. Consequently, there will be no envy. If one in fact has designs on his fellow’s possessions, it is only because he does not believe in this precept. Even if he does have this belief, he has not fully internalized it. G-d provides one with everything that one needs to address and succeed in his objective in life.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: “Who is the wealthy one? It is the one who is joyous with his portion.” One who understands and appreciates that everything that one has, is endowed by G-d and thus is sufficient for him, he will not be envious. Rather, this individual will be joyous with his portion because he believes that G-d has provided him with everything he could possibly need. In contrast, the one who is not satisfied and envious believes that he deserves far more than what he has because he does not believe that G-d is the one who endows everyone with material blessing. Rather, this individual believes that there is nothing that is not within his reach and grasp.

The Ultimate Beneficiary **(portion of Emor)**

Torah: Regarding the festival of Succos, “You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the citron...”

Midrash: “The verse in Proverbs states, ‘Listen My son! Take My *mitzvos*. My *mitzvos* should be hidden within you.’ What is the meaning of ‘Take (for yourself) My *mitzvos*?’ I (G-d) have commanded you in many instances to take for yourselves a number of *mitzvos*. All these *mitzvos* were given to bring merit upon you. As it states, ‘Take for yourself a Red Heifer...’ Do you think that it is for My sake? Rather it is to purify you...

“It states, ‘Take for Me Terumah (a portion)...’ This too is for your benefit. It is so that I (the Omnipotent Being and Creator) should dwell in your midst. As it states, ‘Make for Me a Sanctuary so that I may dwell amongst you.’ It states, ‘Take for yourselves pure pressed olive oil to kindle the light...’ Do I need your light? Rather it is to protect your soul. We see that the kindled light is compared to the soul. As it states, ‘The flame of G-d is the soul of man...’” How is the kindling of the menorah a protection for the soul of the Jew?

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Basra*: The light of the *Menorah* represents the oral law, which is the elucidation of written law. All the spiritual assistance that is provided to the Jew to comprehend the oral law is manifest through the light of the menorah. Thus, the soul of the Jew is protected by engaging in *Torah* study.

Gemara in a number of locations: “I (G-d) created the evil inclination. I created *Torah* as its antidote.” The evil inclination of man is a natural part of his being; however, G-d gave the Jewish people the *Torah* to enable them to incapacitate that inclination. As King Solomon writes in Proverbs, “*Neir mitzvah v’Torah ohr* – the *mitzvah* is the fuel and the *Torah* is the light/illuminator.” Through the study of *Torah*, one gains clarity and is able to internalize truth and is thus not influenced by his evil inclination. Therefore, when G-d commanded the Jewish people to “take pure pressed olive oil...” it was to benefit their soul.

Midrash: “And now I have commanded you to take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the citron, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree and brook willows. For what do I need this? It is only to bring merit upon you. Why did G-d specifically choose these four species? One of the species is a fruit, the citron (*esrog*), which represents the devoutly righteous.

“The four species represent the four segments of the Jewish people: those who possess *Torah* and *mitzvos*, those with *Torah* and are lacking in *mitzvos*, those who possess *mitzvos* and do not have *Torah*, and those who are devoid of *mitzvos* and *Torah*. G-d says, ‘You shall make yourselves into one bond so that there should not be any impurity among any of My children. If you do as I instruct you, I will be elevated through you.’” We see that if the Jewish people are

unified, they will elevate G-d, which is the objective of Creation. As it states, "For My Glory, I Created it..." If the Jew fulfills the purpose of existence through his own choices, then he will merit the ultimate good, which is to cleave to G-d. Thus, the Jew is the beneficiary of elevating G-d.

There is a *Torah* principle: "The minority is subsumed by the majority." As a consequence of the law of subsuming, within a *halachic* context the minority no longer exists. The *Torah* tells us that by binding the four species, which symbolize the four segments of Jews, the totality of the group is seen as holy. Since every Jew has relevance to holiness, despite the fact that there are those who are devoid of *Torah* and *mitzvos*, by unifying them with the rest of the Jewish people, G-d does not see the impurity among His children.

When the Jewish people do the Will of G-d it brings satisfaction to Him (*nachas ruach*). As it states regarding offerings, "(It brought about) a pleasant scent for G-d..." How is this so? It is not because G-d feels satisfied that the Jew performed His Will, but rather, by fulfilling His Will the Jew will be the beneficiary of the ultimate Good. Therefore, whenever the *Torah* states, "Take for Me..." it is not for the sake of G-d but rather for the sake of the Jew who is the beneficiary of doing His Will.



Yad Avraham Institute