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YORAM RAANAN

THE SABBATICAL YEAR:

A Display of
G-d's Mastership

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Behar-Bechukosai

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Holy Seventh Year as a Semblance of the Sabbath

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The Infinite Ramifications Of The Sabbatical Years

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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

Perceiving G-d in His True Light

Torah: "If you will follow My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them."

Midrash citing a verse from 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.'

"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 (regarding the destruction of the Temple), 'G-d You have become like an enemy and swallowed up Israel...You have turned into their enemy and fought against them.'"

G-d is the True and Just Judge. There is no iniquity in His Justice. If a judge renders a judgment that is perceived to be "cruel" it implies that the punishment that was meted out was excessive. If there is no iniquity in G-d's Justice, how can it be considered that He acted cruelly in judgment?

If one does not understand the necessity and benefit of the removal of a gangrenous limb from a patient whose life is in jeopardy and observes the surgeon removing it from the patient's body, he would think that the doctor was truly cruel. It is only because of the ignorance of the observer that he does not appreciate the necessity of the removal of the diseased limb. He does not understand that the patient's health could

only be restored by such an operation. G-d metes out exacting punishment that is necessary to rehabilitate the spirituality of the transgressor. However, if one not understand or appreciate the principle of Divine retribution, he will perceive it as cruelty.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: "One should run to do even a (seemingly) ordinary mitzvah, because one does not understand the extent of the reward of a mitzvah." Since one does not have the capacity to fathom and comprehend the innate value of a mitzvah, one may perceive something of infinite value as "minor" or "insignificant". Similarly, if one is not qualified to evaluate the worth of a precious stone, he will see a large stone, although it may be flawed on many levels, as being more valuable than the small stone which is perfect.

Rambam in The Laws of Repentance: If the majority of one's deeds are positive, he is classified as "devoutly righteous (tzaddik)." However, if the majority of one's actions are negative he is classified as "evil (rasha)." This is not based on a quantitative analysis but rather it is a qualitative one. The only one who can make such an evaluation, is the All-Knowing G-d. Thus, there is no mitzvah that can be determined to be "ordinary" because G-d is the only One Who understands the true worth of a mitzvah.

Conversely, one may perceive that his transgression is of a "minor" nature because he does not appreciate or understand the level of destructiveness that results from even the most minor infraction. If one does not have the capacity to perceive the true negativity of one's sins, and the necessity for spiritual rehabilitation, then the punishment that is meted out by G-d, will be perceived as "cruel." G-d is behaving like an "enemy." This is not true. It is only due to man's limitation that he is not be able to perceive and understand the lethality of one's transgression.

If the Jew sees G-d's Justice as being "cruel" it is a desecration of His Name, because the conclusion will be that there is no equity in His Justice. When the Prophet Yirmiyahu saw the destruction of the Temple and the painful exile that ensued, he expressed himself saying that G-d was seen like "an enemy that swallowed up Israel..." The Prophet used the term "like" because he fully understood the innate value of the suffering that was needed to bring about spiritual rehabilitation. However, the one who does not understand its value, will see G-d as the true enemy and His behavior to His children as "cruel."

Intensification, a Consequence of Change

Midrash: "'If you follow in My Statutes I will provide you rains in their time; however if you do not follow My Statutes, the heavens shall be iron.' It is because of you that the heavens withheld their dew and the earth withheld its yield. Even the nations of the world shall be smitten because of the sins of the Jewish people.

"Reb Yehoshua Ben Levy: 'If the nations of the world would understand that they are being smitten as a result of the sins of the Jewish people, they would appoint two sentries to guard and ensure that every Jew should observe the Torah and not transgress. Not only do they not do this, the nations of the world deny the Jew the ability to perform the mitzvos. Because of this the world is smitten.'... As the Torah states, 'G-d said, 'through your progeny the nations of the earth shall be blessed...'"

Gemara in Tractate Succah: There is something similar regarding the destruction of the Temple. On the festival of Succos seventy oxen were brought to be sacrificed in the Temple. Each of the oxen corresponded to one of the seventy root nations of the world. On the festival of Shemini Atzeres (the eighth day) a single ox was brought that corresponded to the Jewish people.

Gemara: All the blessing and bounty that comes to the nations of the world is due to the oxen that are sacrificed in the Temple on their behalf. If the nations of the world appreciated and understood that the Temple was the source of their blessing, they would have surrounded it with legions of soldiers to protect it. However, they did not do this, but rather they did the contrary. They destroyed the Holy Temple. Thus, they are the cause of their own lack of blessing.

If the Jew does not perform mitzvos it is due to his evil inclination that he chooses not to do so. However, why would the nations of the world be concerned if the Jew would perform the mitzvos or not? Why would they wish to prevent the Jewish people from addressing their spiritual obligation? Even if the nations of the world do not appreciate the degree to which they benefit from the mitzvah performance of the Jew, why should they interfere with the Jewish people who are the least numerous of nations of the world?

Gemara in Tractate Sotah: Miriam, the sister of Moshe and Aaron was born during the most difficult time of the bondage in Egypt. It was a time when they had embittered the lives of the Jewish people with hard bondage. Consequently, she was named by her parents "Miriam" that is derived from the word "Maarim (bitter)" to connote the bitterness of that time.

Maharal of Prague: "Why did the bondage intensify at the time of Miriam's birth?" He explains that Miriam was integral to the redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. Had it not been for the merit of Miriam, the Jewish people would not have survived the forty-year trek in the desert because it was only in her merit that the Jewish people were provided with the wellspring that had accompanied them. When Miriam was born, she was the first sign of the pending redemption. Because of this positive force coming into being, there came about a corresponding negative force that opposed redemption. Thus, at the moment of her birth the bondage was intensified.

Torah: After Moshe returned to Egypt as the Redeemer, rather than the bondage lessening, it intensified. Thus, the situation of the Jewish people became more painful. Pharaoh withdrew the straw subsidy from which the Jewish people had used to make bricks and demanded from them the same quota of production.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: We find in existence whenever there is going to be an extreme change there are forces in existence that resist that change, causing the moment before the change to intensify. He cites the Gemara in tractate Bava Basera that explains that the darkest part of the nighttime period is towards morning. It is because the transition of night to day is taking place.

Gemara: The end of winter is the coldest part of winter and the hottest part of the summer is the end of summer. Since the change of season is coming about, it causes a resistance and thus intensification before the change. Thus, the bondage in Egypt intensified after Moshe returned as the Redeemer because the redemption was imminent.

If the Jewish people conform to the dictates of the Torah and fulfill them, they will bring existence to perfection and thus G-d will reveal His Glory to the World through the coming of Moshiach. The transition from a mundane and physical world to a spiritual one, will cause a resistance. The world will be spiritualized. If that were to happen, the nations of the world because

of their actions and beliefs would be prosecuted and destroyed by G-d. There would be no place for them in the spiritual realm.

Thus, whenever the Jewish people advance spiritually, it is not only their own evil inclination that attempts to undermine their spiritual growth, the nations of the world also contribute to the obstruction of the Jewish people's advancement. It is because as part of creation, whenever significant change is about to take place, there is an intensification that comes about to oppose that change. Although the nations of the world are the beneficiaries of the spiritual achievement of the Jewish people; nevertheless, because their ultimate prosecution and destruction will be hastened, they attempt to impede and destroy the spirituality of the Jew.

The Sabbatical Cycle, the Negation of One's Self

Torah: On the seventh year of the Sabbatical Cycle (Shmita), all agricultural activities must cease. All the produce of the Sabbatical year is considered to be ownerless. Regardless of the level of toil and investment that the owner of the property may have expended, he is not permitted to exercise or display any degree of ownership regarding the produce of that year. All people are permitted to enter into his property and partake of his produce during the Sabbatical year. They are not obligated to acknowledge to any degree the owner of the field. There is no indebtedness between the beneficiaries of the produce and the owner of the field.

If all the produce of the Sabbatical year is considered ownerless and the owner is not permitted to engage in any agricultural activities, how is one able to sustain himself until the yield of the eighth year? The Torah itself addresses this issue. As it states, "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 it will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period..." The Torah thus guarantees the Jewish people in advance financial security so that they should not be concerned about their future. After the destruction of the First Temple, the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon for seventy years.

Chazal: The reason the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon for a period of seventy years was because they had violated and not observed seventy Sabbatical

cycles. Since they had lorded over the Land for seventy years, for which they had no right, G-d displaced them from the Land for seventy years. Why did the Jewish people violate the seventy Sabbatical cycles if their financial security was provided to them in advance of the Sabbatical cycle?

Torah in Vayikra: "He (G-d) called to Moshe..."

Midrash 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 Nabcha says that 'geborei koach' refers to those who observe the Sabbatical year (Shmita). Why are they identified as geborei koach (those who are 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 his fruits being eaten (by anyone who wishes to do so), is one of enormous strength. This is because it requires unusual fortitude and inner strength to suppress one's inclination to demonstrate his proprietorship and allow others to partake in the fruits of his labor. Why are they referred to as 'geborei koach' (people mighty in strength)? As it states, 'Who is the strong one? The one who subdues and subordinates his inclination.'" If G-d compensates the owner of the field in advance, why should he have any difficulty observing the Sabbatical year properly?

Man, by nature, is driven by ego. He thus sees himself as the master of his own accomplishments. When the produce of one's labor is taken from him without any acknowledgement of his efforts and against his will, he will feel that his essence was compromised. He no longer has any value, because his entire sense of self is identified with his ability to claim his accomplishment. Therefore, the one who remains silent and allows the dictate of G-d to be implemented, without any personal recognition, is truly mighty in strength. This individual is able to subordinate and negate himself for the sake of G-d's Will.

Gemara in Tractate Bava Metzia: "A person prefers his own kav (small dry measure) more than nine portions (kavin) of his fellow." Although he is able to have multiple times (quantitatively) more than that which he created, one prefers to have less because it is an expression of his own toil and efforts. One prefers something that is due to his own initiative than that which was brought about by another. This was the cause of the Jewish people violating seventy

Sabbatical cycles. Although they were compensated in advance, during the sixth year, it was difficult for them to relinquish their proprietorship rights and see the fruits of their toil being taken from them.

Torah: One is not allowed to sell a portion of the Land of Israel for a period longer than forty-nine years. In the fiftieth year, which is Yovel (Jubilee Year), the land must return to its original owners. Why is this so? The verse states, "Because the Land is Mine (belongs to G-d)." G-d is the true owner of the Land and the Jewish people are merely tenant farmers that have been given permission to live upon the Land and benefit from its produce. In order for one to observe the law of Shmitta properly, one must fully internalize the fact that regardless of one's toil and efforts, he is not the true owner. In order to be able to appreciate this, one must be humble.

Gemara in Tractate Megillah: The only way one can acquire Torah is through toil. If one toils in Torah study, G-d will provide him with Divine Assistance and the truth will be revealed to him. As the Gemara states, "One who says 'I have toiled (in Torah) and have come upon it' – should be believed. One who says, 'I have not toiled and I did come upon it' – is not to be believed..." Why is toiling a prerequisite for the acquisition of the truth of Torah?

We see in a material context that because of one's effort and toil the end result becomes something dear to that individual. This is true even to the point that one would prefer his own small measure rather than nine portions of someone else's. G-d will only entrust the truth of Torah to the one who has toiled in it, because he is the only one who will truly revere and esteem it.

The Ultimate Perspective of the Jew

Torah: "If you will follow (walk in) My Statutes and observe My Commandments and perform them..." Why does the Torah not state, "If you will do My Statutes....?" What is the meaning of "If you will follow (walk in) My Statutes?"

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh citing a verse from Proverbs: "King Solomon writes, 'In all of your endeavors you should know G-d...'"

Rambam in The Laws of Deos (Personal Development): 'One's mindset should be to maintain the health of his body in order to serve G-d. One's eating should be

with the intent to be able to serve G-d. One's sleep should be with the intent to be able to serve G-d, One's procreation should be for the sake of G-d...Thus if one dedicates every aspect of his physical endeavors to be for the sake of G-d it they will be elevated to the status of a 'mitzvah.' Everything that one engages in, should be for the sake of G-d. This is the meaning of the verse 'If you will follow (walk in) My Statutes ...'" How does one establish this sense of perspective?

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: "Your Torah (study) should be primary and your livelihood secondary." One's perspective and purpose must be to serve G-d in every possible way. In order to be able to gain this appreciation and understanding, one needs to engage in Torah study. One however cannot survive only on the study of Torah. One needs to eat, sleep, and maintain his physical existence. If all of these activities are done with the intent to facilitate one's spiritual pursuits, then even his most mundane activities become spiritualized.

Torah: "Moshe said to the Children of Israel: And Now, O Israel, what is Hashem, your G-d, asking of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in all His ways..."

Chofetz Chaim: It is part of the human condition to be driven by one's desires and needs. Although it is human nature to be motivated by one's inclination, one can pause to ask oneself, "What does G-d want from me at this moment?" By reflecting upon this, one will immediately have a mindset that will allow him to decide to spiritualize his actions. For example, rather than eating in a gluttonous manner, one could eat for the sake of being able to perform mitzvos and study Torah.

This is true with every activity. If one understands and appreciates the position of the Torah regarding that matter, he will be able to "walk with G-d in all of His ways." If one does not continuously have this cognizance of G-d than one can easily lose his perspective of purpose. Although one is obligated to place a mezuzah on one's doorpost there is no obligation to kiss it upon entering or exiting. If this is so, why does one kiss the mezuzah? It is an indication of one's love for the mitzvah.

Similarly, one kisses a Torah scroll and tzitzis to demonstrate one's love for the mitzvah. In addition to establishing the proper mindset, kissing a mitzvah object also sanctifies the mouth. As we say in the Tefilah Zakah (before Yom Kippur) prayer that we have sanctified our mouths through the kissing of the Torah. Chinuch

explains that we are the product of our actions. Thus, if one conditions himself to behave with a continuous cognizance of G-d then he will be able to spiritualize himself and achieve his spiritual objective in life.

Yesode v'Shoresh ha'Avodah: When one kisses a mezuzah one should make a declaration. One should say, "I believe with absolute faith that You (G-d) are the One and Only in existence." By reciting this every time one touches the mezuzah it will strengthen one's faith and belief in G-d and draw him close to His service. Once one has been affected by this, he will more readily be able to incorporate G-d into every aspect of his life. Thus, he will be able to fulfill the dictate "In all your endeavors you will know Me..." If one does this he will merit limitless bounty from G-d and have no need to be concerned for his livelihood.

Man, Reflecting G-d's Creativity

Midrash citing a verse from Eyov: "'Who has preceded Me that I should pay (him)? Whatever is under the heavens belongs to Me...' G-d said, 'I have an obligation to reward those who do something worthy of reward.' Reb Yirmiya Ben Elazar says, '(At the time of the resurrection of the dead) There will be a Heavenly Voice that will cry out from every mountain top, 'Whoever has done for G-d should come forth and receive his rightful reward.'

"The Divine Spirit will simultaneously scream out, 'Who preceded Me that I should reward him? Is it possible for man to praise Me, if I had not infused him with a soul? Would anyone be able to circumcise his son had I not provided for him the son? Could anyone perform the mitzvah of tzitzis (fringes) had I not given him the four cornered garment? Could anyone perform the mitzvah of building a parapet had I not provided him with a house? Could anyone perform the mitzvah of succah had I not provided him with the location to build the succah?...Could anyone bring Me a sacrifice had I not provided him with the species that could be sacrificed? As it states, 'The ox, sheep, and goat...'"

If G-d had not provided whatever that was needed to perform the mitzvos, one would not be able to do so. It is only because He provides everything, including one's soul and ability to perform the mitzvah that one is able to perform mitzvos. Thus, if G-d provides everything to everyone at all times, why does the individual deserve

reward when he performs a mitzvah or good deed? Nonetheless, G-d give full merit and reward to the one who does His Will.

Gemara in Tractate Nidah: Before the conception of a child an angel brings the droplet of semen before G-d. G-d pronounces upon it the destiny of that individual: "poor or rich, strong or weak, wise or foolish, healthy or sickly.... However, G-d does not pronounce upon it: righteous or evil."

Gemara: "From here we see that everything is predestined by heaven, except one's fear of heaven." One's choice to become devoutly righteous or evil is determined by his own initiative, choice.

Chazal: Prior to Creation nothing existed. When G-d brought about existence He did so ex nihilo. Nothing existed prior to His bringing about existence; however, the state of "nothing" is a concept that cannot be fathomed by the human mind.

Gemara in Tractate Nidah: When one chooses to perform a mitzvah, although all that is needed for its performance is provided by G-d and predestined by His Will, the choice for the individual to perform it was not predetermined and thus not in existence prior to his initiative. When one chooses to perform a mitzvah, he in essence becomes a creator. He takes something that is mundane/physical and converts it to something spiritual. In fact, man (a Jew) is a creator. As the verse states, "Let us make man in His image and form..."

Just as G-d brought about existence ex nihilo so too when the Jew performs the mitzvah, he is bringing something into existence that did not exist prior to his actualization of the mitzvah. For example, when one performs the mitzvah of eating matzah on Pesach, although he is ingesting something that is made of wheat that was provided by G-d and baked in ovens that were brought about by His Will and ingested by a body that He Created,

the result of eating the matzah did no exist prior to one's decision to eat it. It is true that the opportunity was created by G-d but the sanctity and holiness that results from the eating of the matzah was brought about ex nihilo by the one who performs the mitzvah. This is the reason one is truly deserving of reward.

Ramak (Rabbi Moshe Cordeviro) in Tomer Devorah: Just as one has a residence in this world and is attired with garments, one can merit to have a spiritual residence and attire in the world to come. Although one may qualify to enter into the world to come, one must be concerned about the quality of the residence in which he will dwell. What quality of garments will he wear?

Ramak: Every aspect of one's residence and spiritual attire that he will have in the world to come will be created through the mitzvos that one actualizes throughout his lifetime. The spiritual quality of one's mitzvos will also determine one's degree of elevation in the world to come.

Chazal: In the world to come, the devoutly righteous (tzaddik) will be singled by the border (station) of his fellow. In the world to come each individual will reside in a context that was created by his own spiritual accomplishments during his lifetime. No two tzaddikim are alike and at the same level. Thus, one realizes that he did not fully actualize his potential he will be singled by his fellow's accomplishments.

Chazal: The result of studying Torah and performing mitzvos is "perfection (shleimus)." When one performs a mitzvah it is not only that he will be rewarded but he perfecting himself and making himself more complete by bringing about a spiritual entity that did not exist prior to his action. He thus assumes the posture of a creator which gives him commonality with G-d who is the ultimate Creator. Thus, he will be allowed to cleave to G-d and receive a reward that is unlimited.



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