

Mazal Tov to Yitzhak ben David (ABRAHAMS) on the occasion of his barmitzvah with love from his parents

בס"ד

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DAF HASHAVUA

בהר- | BEHAR- בְּחֻקֹּתַי | BECHUKOTAI

SHABBAT ENDS:

London: 9.33pm
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Edinburgh: 10.17pm
Glasgow: 10.20pm
Hull: 9.54pm
Leeds: 9.51pm
Liverpool: 10.01pm
Manchester: 9.55pm
Nottingham: 9.51pm
Sheffield: 9.55pm
Southend: 9.29pm
Southport: 10.04pm
Jerusalem: 8.05pm

**Yom Yerushalayim
is on Friday**



"If you follow My decrees... I will provide your rains in their time, the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit" (Vayikra 26:3-4)

SIDRA BREAKDOWN

בְּהַר-בְּחֻקֹּתַי

BEHAR- BECHUKOTAI

9th & 10th Sidrot
in:

וַיִּקְרָא VAYIKRA

By Numbers:

135 VERSES
1,750 WORDS
6,809 LETTERS

Headlines:

**SHEMITA,
BLESSINGS
AND CURSES**

BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI:

Artscroll p.696

Hertz p.531

Koren Sacks p.825

Soncino p.764

HAFTARAH:

Artscroll p.1179

Hertz p.551

Koren Sacks p.1549

Soncino p.789

SIDRA SUMMARY

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – VAYIKRA 25:1-18

God instructs Moshe (Moses) to tell the nation about the mitzvot of *Shemita*. Every seventh year, the Land of Israel is 'rested' and no agricultural work is permitted. In addition, after seven cycles of seven years, the 50th year is designated as the *Yovel* (Jubilee) year. As well as the Land again being left fallow, servants go free and certain types of ancestral properties return to their original owners.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 25:19-28

God promises that people will not go hungry if they observe *Shemita* – He will provide sufficient produce in the sixth year. As a reward for keeping *Shemita*, God will also allow the nation to stay in the Land and not be exiled.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 25:29-38

In certain walled cities, a seller has the right to re-purchase a house in the first year after its sale. This does not apply in non-walled cities. There are 48 Levite cities in Israel; the laws pertaining to its fields and houses differ from other cities. One is forbidden to lend money with interest.

4TH ALIYA (REVI') – 25:39-26:9

After someone becomes a servant in an attempt to escape from his poverty, his owner is not allowed to burden him with unnecessary or overly taxing work. His relatives have a duty to try to release him from his servitude by buying out the rest of his contract from his owner. We are reminded to avoid idol worship, keep Shabbat and revere the Temple.

Point to Consider: *What is the connection between Shemita and the subsequent passages? (see Rashi to 26:1)*

Parashat Bechukotai opens with the promise that if we keep God's laws, the Land will give plenty of produce and we will not suffer any physical threat from enemies.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 26:10-46

This *aliya* opens with further blessings if we follow God's will – a huge abundance of crops and a tangible sense of God's presence amongst us. However, it then continues with the *tachacha*, the passage of retribution. If we do not listen to God's commandments and do not observe the mitzvot, the consequences will be grave. Five series of punishments are listed. These include: being captured by enemies, the Land being unproductive, livestock being destroyed, famine, hunger and being chased from the Land but finding no comfort on foreign soils. Eventually however, God will remember His covenant with the forefathers and will never fully reject Israel.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 27:1-15

One is able to make a vow pledging to give one's monetary value or the monetary value of someone else, to the Temple. These gifts are referred to as *erechin* ('valuations'). The amount is based on a list of fixed values depending on age and gender. After designating an animal to be brought as an offering, one is not allowed to try to switch its status to another animal.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI') – 27:16-34

The Torah details how to 'redeem' a house or field, as first discussed in the 3rd and 4th *aliyot*. A firstborn animal is dedicated from birth to be a Temple offering. Certain types of agricultural tithes can be redeemed if an additional fifth of the original value is added. This is the closing part of the book of *Vayikra*. We stand for the final verse and after it recite: "*Chazak, chazak ve'nitchazek*", a phrase asking for continued strength for our study of the Torah.

HAFTARAH (YIRMIYAHU 16:19-17:14)

The prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) admonishes the people for worshipping idols, forecasts the downfall of those who turn their hearts away from God and encourages those who trust in Him.



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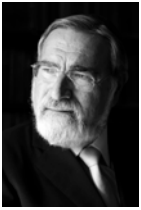
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COVENANT AND CONVERSATION

THE POWER OF A CURSE

This is an abridged version of Rabbi Sacks' 2020 Covenant & Conversation essay. Learn more from Rabbi Sacks at www.rabbisacks.org

The book of *Vayikra* closes with the blessings that follow if the people are faithful to their covenant with God, then the curses that befall them if they are not. The general principle is clear. The fate of the nation mirrors their conduct. If people behaved well, the nation would prosper. If they behaved badly, bad things would happen.

Bechukotai sets out the terms: if you obey God, there will be rain in its season, the ground will yield crops and the trees fruit; there will be peace. The curses are almost three times as long and much more dramatic:

"But if you will not listen to Me and carry out all these commands... I will bring on you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and sap your strength... I will break your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze..." (*Vayikra* 26:14-37).

The word *keri*, is repeated seven times. It appears nowhere else in *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible). Its meaning is uncertain; it may mean rebelliousness, indifference, hard-heartedness, reluctance or being-left-to-chance. But the message is clear: if you act toward Me with *keri*, says God, I will turn that same

attribute against you.

This seemingly contradicts a basic principle of Judaism, that God's generosity to the faithful exceeds punishment of those who are not. "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands ... He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (*Shemot* 34:6-7). Rashi (1040-1105) does the arithmetic: "It follows that the measure of reward is greater than the measure of punishment by five hundred to one, for regarding the measure of good it says: "maintaining love to thousands" (meaning at least two thousand generations), while punishment lasts for at most four generations.

The whole idea is that God's love and forgiveness are stronger than His justice and punishment. Why, therefore, are the curses in this week's *parasha* so much longer and stronger than the blessings?

The answer is that God loves and forgives, with the proviso that when we do wrong, we acknowledge it, express remorse, make restitution, and repent. In the middle of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy is the

statement, "Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished" (*Shemot* 34:7). God does not forgive unrepentant sinners, because if He did, the world would be a worse place. More people would sin if there were no downside to doing so.

The curses are so dramatic not because God seeks to punish, but the precise opposite. They are like a parent warning a young child not to play with electricity. The parent may deliberately intend to scare the child, but out of love.

Judaism is a religion of love and forgiveness, but also justice. Imagine a country that had laws but no punishments. Would people keep the law? No. Everyone would choose to be a free-rider, taking advantage of others without contributing oneself. Without punishment, there is no effective law, and without law there is no society. That is why the *tochachah* is so powerful and fear-inducing. The fear of bad is the most powerful motivator of good.

The Torah, painting in graphic detail what can happen to a nation when it loses its moral bearings, is speaking to us in every generation, saying: Beware. Take note. Don't function on autopilot. Avoid the bad. Choose the good.



THE COMMENTATORS: IBN EZRA

BY: **RABBI MICHAEL LAITNER**

US Director of Education, Interim rabbi at Belmont US

Is there a “Jewish renaissance man” and inspiration for a philosophy which utilises academic disciplines outside of the Torah, such as linguistics, to assist our understanding of Judaism?

A leading candidate must be Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, whose commentary on the Torah is printed in standard editions of any *Mikraot Gedolot* (Chumash with commentaries) and is foundational to the contribution of the medieval commentators.

His upbringing in Spain encouraged him to master many disciplines, including but not limited to grammar, poetry, mathematics, philosophy, linguistics and astronomy. He applied this knowledge to his commentaries, with a particular focus on emphasising the *peshat*, the straightforward rather than applied meaning of the text, which he sought to explain in his search for truth.

His life was not an easy one, affected by poverty, suffering dislocation and the need to defend Judaism against the Karaite movement, which only accepted the *Tanach* (written Hebrew Bible) as the authority on Jewish law and belief. It denied fundamental tenets of Judaism, primarily the *Torah Shebe’al Peh* (Oral Law) and rabbinic authority to enact laws.

As with all *mefareshim* (commentators), his own personal experiences are important influences

on his commentary. In doing so, they not only demonstrate his priorities when addressing the Jews of his time but also stand the test of time for addressing questions and methodology of study that apply in all ages, including our own. Let’s consider an example from the start of *Parashat Behar*.

“On Mount Sinai, the Lord spoke to Moshe: “Speak to the Israelites. Say: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord.” (Vayikra 25:1-2)¹

Here is one question Ibn Ezra addresses as he explores the *peshat*:

Why does the Torah specify that this particular mitzva, the *Shemita* (sabbatical year), described here as “a Sabbath to the Lord”, was given at Mount Sinai, rather than simply saying “And God spoke to Moses, saying”, which is the usual introduction to a mitzva in the Torah?

Ibn Ezra applies the principle that the order of presentation in the Torah is not necessarily chronological as it can also be thematic. In doing so, he upholds the integrity of the Torah, both its text and, by extension, the *Torah Shebe’al Peh*.

Accordingly, the Torah references Mount Sinai, since the laws of *Shemita* are part of the covenant recorded earlier on in the Book of *Shemot* (ch. 23). These laws are listed more expansively here and further into *Parashat Behar*, since neglecting them is connected to the

IBN EZRA

Name: Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra

Known as: Ibn Ezra

Lived: c. 1089-1164

Main location: Born in Tudela, Spain. Travelled widely, sometimes due to expulsion, including France, North Africa and England

Writings: Commentary on the Torah and other parts of the *Tanach* (Hebrew Bible), such as the *Megillot*; poetry



“ The Ibn Ezra’s commentary is not always easy to understand but is immensely rewarding to study, especially for those who find benefit from his “Renaissance man” approach.

punishments of exile listed in the next *parasha*, *Bechukotai*.

The ongoing application of the laws of *Shemita* as stated in the Torah, and their linkage to Jewish history, is primarily through the mechanism of the *Torah Shebe’al Peh*. In tandem with many other *mefareshim*, Ibn Ezra worked consistently to strengthen our appreciation of the *Torah Shebe’al Peh* and thereby of genuine Jewish belief and practice, especially given the challenge of the Karaites.

The Ibn Ezra’s commentary is not always easy to understand but is immensely rewarding to study, especially for those who find benefit from his “Renaissance man” approach.

¹ Translation of Rabbi Sacks, reproduced with permission.



WHEN THE NOISE BECOMES A PRAYER AN ARTICLE FOR YOM YERUSHALAYIM

BY: **RABBI GIDEON SYLVESTER**

US Israel Rabbi



The noise in my synagogue begins early. But it's not the chatter of bored congregants or the cries of boisterous kids. Here in Jerusalem, the noise comes from the surrounding building sites whose drills and hammers almost drown out our prayers.

At first, it aggravated me. My great-grandparents waded through Russia's deep snow in order to reach their synagogue, face Jerusalem and pray to return there. I am privileged to live in our holiest city, but my attempts to pray are constantly interrupted by the clamour of construction sites.

My sense of frustration persisted until one day when I was reciting the prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem. Suddenly, I realised that while I might be deafened by the din, my prayers were being answered as I spoke. If you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs, you certainly cannot build a city without the noise of construction.

Our prayers for Jerusalem mirror the words of the prophet Zechariah, who encouraged the construction of the Second Temple and spoke repeatedly of God dwelling in the city.¹

For Zechariah, evidence of God's presence would be found in the plentiful produce of the land: "The vine will produce its grapes, the land will yield its crops, and the sky will provide its dew . . ." (*Zechariah* 8:12). The Talmud cites similar prophecies as evidence that the messianic era will be accompanied by the flourishing of our fields. In the early years of the modern State of Israel, with its food shortages and rationing, this may have seemed a utopian dream. But today our shops burst with the bounty of Israel's fruits and vegetables.

Zechariah exquisitely describes the return of Jews to our land and Jerusalem's streets filled with the young and old. "Old men and women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem . . . And the streets of the city shall be filled with boys and girls playing . . ." (*Zechariah* 8:4-5). Parallel verses from *Yirmiyahu* (Jeremiah) are recited in the *Sheva Berachot*, the Seven Blessings recited at every wedding. My Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yehuda Amital (1924-2010), noted that an additional line in the *Sheva Berachot* describes young men returning from their drinking parties. "Our rabbis understood

“ Yom Yerushalayim marks our aspiration to establish Jerusalem as the harmonious moral and religious capital of the world, but it also celebrates the thrilling reality of Jews returning to our capital city to build their lives.

that not everyone would be exceptionally pious. These are not our ideal yeshiva students”, he said. “Yet, the Men of the Great Assembly who composed the prayer included them in their description of Jews living normal lives in a pulsating city. This too is part of God's plan”.²

Yom Yerushalayim marks our aspiration to establish Jerusalem as the harmonious moral and religious capital of the world, but it also celebrates the thrilling reality of Jews returning to our capital city to build their lives. Now that I understand this, there is no greater privilege than praying with the sounds of Jerusalem's growth in the background.

¹ The Abudraham points to *Zechariah* 8:3, but see also *Zechariah* 2: 14-15.

² The relevant clip can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/VoTUxGqwgYc>





SEFER YIRMIYAHU (JEREMIAH) – PART 3

A DESIRE TO RE-UNIFY THE KINGDOMS

BY: **PNINA SAVERY**

Ma'ayan and US Educator

Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) begins his prophetic career in the 13th year of King Yoshiyahu (Josiah) of Yehuda's reign. He comes from a family of priests living in Anatot, a town in the tribal region of Binyamin. Interestingly, the town sits on the border between the kingdoms of Yehuda and Yisrael.

This background helps us to understand his early prophecies, which are a call to the exiled tribes of Yisrael, asking them to return. Not everyone from the northern kingdom was exiled by the Assyrians, and now the prophet urges them to come to Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) and to reunite with their fellow Jews (see *Yirmiyahu* 3:12,14). This fits closely with King Yoshiyahu's call to unite the kingdoms together.¹

Similarly, chapter 31 of *Sefer Yirmiyahu* is directed at the Jews of Shomron (Samaria) with positive words of love and comfort. The message is of hope: "you will again plant vineyards in the hills of Shomron" (31:4). Not only will those remaining in the Shomron be returned to the rest of the Jewish people, but God will "gather them from the ends of the earth" presumably referring to those exiled to other lands (31:7).

The idea of Yirmiyahu

advocating for a reunification of all the tribes connects to the following idea, explained in the Talmud. King Yoshiyahu discovers a Sefer Torah open in the Temple grounds and seeks advice from Chulda the prophetess, rather than Yirmiyahu who was her contemporary (*Melachim Bet*, chapter 22). According to the Talmud, the royal advisors were not able to ask for guidance from Yirmiyahu because he had travelled out of Israel. He had been searching for the northern tribes who had been exiled previously by the Assyrians.² This was such an important matter that Yirmiyahu spent time travelling abroad.

By calling for the exiled northern tribes to return to their brethren in Yerushalayim, Yirmiyahu is calling for a return to the golden days of King David and King Shlomo, before the country became divided into two kingdoms. This did not happen within Yirmiyahu's own lifetime, so it remains a prophecy of consolation for the future. We still await the return of the scattered people, the unity of the nation as the "sons of Yaakov" as opposed to the two different kingdoms (*Yirmiyahu* 30:10).

“ The message is of hope: “you will again plant vineyards in the hills of Shomron” (31:4).

In contrast to the encouraging words directed at the northern tribes, Yirmiyahu turns to the people of Yehuda with harsh rebukes. Early in King Yoshiyahu's reign, the people are steeped in idolatrous practices. This had become endemic during the time of the previous king, Menashe. The people are accused of running after foreign cultures and practices to gain spiritual fulfilment, when in fact they could find it right in front of them if only they looked (*Yirmiyahu* 2:18).

The prophet criticises the leaders for misleading the people spiritually and religiously. Even the priests are criticised for not properly educating the people in religious doctrine (*Yirmiyahu* 2:8). As Yirmiyahu himself comes from a family of *Kohanim* (priests) who are distanced from the Temple service, his rebuke of fellow priests will become an important theme.

¹ This was discussed in our article on *Melachim Bet*, chapter 23.

² Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Megilla* 14b.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI

8-9 MAY | 22 IYAR

AN EQUAL TORAH



BY: **JACOB EPSTEIN**

Tribe gap year student

With *Behar-Bechukotai*, the book of *Vayikra* comes to a close. *Vayikra* is a challenging book of Torah to learn! We began with the foundational stories of creation and our world in *Sefer* (the book of) *Bereishit*, the most famous story in history of the Exodus in *Shemot*, followed by the drama of the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Then comes *Vayikra*, which seems to be twenty-seven chapters and close to nine

hundred verses of sacrifices, Tabernacle business and very detailed halachic passages that take entire *parashiot*.

However, looking deeper, the true beauty of *Vayikra* can be discovered in the very minutiae it deals with. *Bereishit* spans over 2000 years, *Shemot* is 210 years, while *Vayikra* is merely 8 days. That deserves its own *Sefer*? Absolutely. In *Vayikra*, we get to know the ins and outs of how our religion works, and how to practically apply it to our lives, along with the morals we have gained from the stories of *Bereishit* and *Shemot*.

In *Behar*, the *Shemita* year and how to observe it is introduced,

without which we wouldn't have crops to feed the people, and we would all starve. Pretty integral, right? And if one was not paying attention and just trudging through *Vayikra* to start *Bemidbar*, there comes the supernatural curses of *Bechukotai*. If the Jewish people neglect God and His laws, they will suffer in death and exile. Despite this, God won't forget them and will bring them back if they desire to hold the Torah dear once again. *Vayikra* teaches us that every part of the Torah is of equal importance, and that the inspiration of being at Sinai must translate into keeping the mitzvot that God blessed us with.

Questions and Parasha Wordsearch:

1. The name of which other *parasha* is contained within the name of one of our *parashiot*?
2. Aside from Moshe, which three other people are mentioned explicitly by name in our *parashiot*?

Find these words in the grid. The words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

Z	F	E	T	Z	W	H	M	Q	Q	C	F
K	B	S	B	A	Q	T	A	M	E	I	V
O	H	M	Q	H	B	V	J	L	B	P	W
R	Q	A	I	V	J	B	L	U	O	I	O
B	F	N	E	H	O	K	A	E	P	H	H
A	G	S	Z	P	S	K	B	H	V	S	Q
N	P	X	V	A	D	O	E	O	S	O	W
U	T	A	T	A	H	C	D	N	I	R	Y
V	I	U	D	I	V	C	I	E	T	B	N
Y	O	M	K	I	P	P	U	R	K	E	Z
J	C	M	E	B	F	R	O	H	A	T	V

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| YOM KIPPUR | YOVEL |
| KEDOSHIM | TAMEI |
| KORBAN | CHATAT |
| OLAH | PE'AH |
| SHABBAT | |
| TAHOR | |
| KOHEN | |
| VIDUI | |





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI: SECRET CHESED HERO!

The Parasha of Bechukotai teaches us to walk in God's ways. That can look different for everyone... but here's an incredible example!



Gershon Burd seemed like a regular, friendly man - but after he passed away, his family discovered that he had been a secret Chesed (kindness) hero!

I NEED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING, BATYA! FOR YEARS I GAVE OUT MONEY EACH MONTH TO FAMILIES WHO WERE STRUGGLING. BUT THEY NEVER KNEW... IT WAS ALL FROM GERSHON!



WE HAVE THE BEST STATIONERY SHOP HERE IN THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM. FREE BIRTHDAY BALLOONS FOR EVERY KID!



UMM... ABOUT THAT... GERSHON'S BEEN PAYING FOR THEM!



A BOY COULDN'T AFFORD TO GO TO YESHIVA (TALMUDIC COLLEGE), SO GERSHON 'FOUND' THE MONEY. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS BY NOW. YEP! HE PAID THE FEES HIMSELF, TO GIVE THE BOY THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY TORAH.

LOOK AT THIS AMAZING FLIGHT DEAL!



WOW, I'VE NEVER SEEN FLIGHTS SO CHEAP! I CAN FINALLY VISIT MY SICK MUM IN THE USA.

WE KNOW WHO FUNDED THAT DEAL!

'COUPONS' FOR OUTINGS IN THE HOLIDAYS, SURPRISE HELP, EVEN SUBSIDISED THERAPY!



PIECE BY PIECE THE PICTURE CAME TOGETHER. GERSHON HAD BEEN HELPING PEOPLE - WITHOUT ANYONE KNOWING!

HOW DID GERSHON AFFORD IT ALL? HE SPENT ALMOST NOTHING ON HIMSELF, BUYING CHEAP AND SECOND HAND, BECAUSE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO HIM WAS GIVING TO OTHER PEOPLE.



NO CAPE... NO CREDIT... JUST HIS WAY OF WALKING IN GOD'S WAYS.



HOW COULD YOU WALK IN GOD'S WAYS?

Page Editor: Rabbi Nicky Goldmeier Writer: Shira Chaik Cartoonist: Paul Solomon

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