



## **Parasha Behar**

**May 25, 2019**

*Torah:* Leviticus 25:1-26:2

*Haftarah:* Jeremiah 32:6-27

*Sh'lichim:* Luke 4:17-21

*Shabbat Shalom Mishpocha!* Our *parasha*, this week is *Behar*, “on the mountain.” *Parasha Behar* begins at Leviticus 25:1 and is about the *sh'mitah*, the sabbatical year and also the *yovel*, the 50<sup>th</sup> year, the Jubilee. The Hebrew word *sh'mitah* refers to the seventh year of ADONAI's seven year agricultural cycle and the *yovel* is the His fiftieth year of blessing following seven cycles of seven years. His purpose in establishing these times of blessing had several purposes. One was was to give rest to the land. By letting it lie fallow, unplanted, the soil was rejuvenated and returned to its earlier fertility levels. An equally important purpose was to give relief, to give rest, to His people in the form of physical rest and rest from their financial burdens. And, this provided for them spiritual rest. Regarding the land, He said: 4 “*But in the seventh year there is to be a Shabbat rest for the land—a Shabbat to Adonai. You are not to sow your field or prune your vineyard*” (Leviticus 25:4 TLV). Everything requires rest which results in replenishment of that which is needed. The land requires rest so that nutrients can be replenished to prevent it from losing its fertility and becoming unable to grow enough to support its owner.

The principle of the *sh'mitah* was first introduced to Israel at Mount Sinai, but the word *sh'mitah* itself is not found in that part of the *Torah*. The word *Sh'mitah* is related to “seven.” There are several other words for “seven” which are interrelated. The English words “the seventh,” referring to the 7<sup>th</sup> year, the *sh'mitah*, come from the Hebrew word *hashevi'it*, השביעִית. This, itself, is a form of the Hebrew word which *Elohim* used in Genesis 2 during His creation of the heavens and the earth: 2 *God completed—on the seventh (hashvi'i- השביעי) day—His work that He made, and He ceased (vayishbat - וַיִּשְׁבֹּת) —on the seventh (hashvi'i- השביעי) day—from all His work that He made* (Genesis 2:2 TLV). *Hashvi'i*, which means seventh refers here to the seventh day. *Vayishbat* is from the same root, *shem, beit, and tav - שבת, Shabbat*, which means to cease or to rest. Although *Shabbat* doesn't mean seven, it is very deeply connected with the seventh day. The connecting principle is that both we as human beings and also the land receives a Sabbath rest. As was just mentioned, the word, *sh'mitah*, is not found in Exodus,, Leviticus or Numbers, but is found in Deuteronomy and there in chapter 15, in verses 1, 2, 9, and 10. Verse 1 says: 1 “*At the end of every seven years you are to cancel debts*” (Deuteronomy 15:1 TLV). In Hebrew this is תַּעֲשֶׂה שְׁמִטָּה, מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעֵ-שָׁנִים, *Miqetz sheva-shanim ta'aseh*

sh'mitah. *Sheva-shanim* means seven years and *sh'mitah* is a form of *sheva* which means “seven” but in this case, it means “to cancel” or “to release,” and specifically with regard to debts.

We haven't spoken about the *sh'mitah* in quite a while. The last actual *sh'mitah* year was September 2014 until September 2015. At that time, there was a lot of excitement about the *sh'mitah* because Rabbi Jonathan Cahn had released his book, *The Mystery Of The Sh'mitah* a year or so before. We still have more than two years until the next *sh'mitah* arrives. We can be sure that it will bring with it much more speculation about end-time events. But, aside from the end-time speculations, the *sh'mitah* remains an active *Torah* command for today. ADONAI gave Moses this instruction: 2..... “When you come into the land which I give you, then the land is to keep a *Shabbat* to Adona” (Leviticus 25:2b TLV). But, it is not for us here. It is the land in Israel which is to receive a *Shabbat* rest. Neither Jewish farmers nor Messianic Gentile farmers who follow *Torah* in the United States are required to observe these commands. But, in Israel it is required by ADONAI and will certainly be followed by some of ADONAI's faithful in Israel just as it was by a few during the last *sh'mitah*. In Israel today many don't follow it, even among the observant. Could it be that their trust level is low? Their question seems to be, how can we live for a year without growing our crops? How can we live three years without planting or harvesting? I'm sure that there was also fear among the people in Biblical times. But, in Israel today it's not enforced as it was then. Israel today is a secular state and is not the Israel of G-d. But, we believe with perfect faith that the modern nation of Israel will one day soon become the Israel of G-d and of Messiah Yeshua!

When ADONAI spoke these requirements for Israel through Moses, the people had already been in the wilderness for a while and the Tabernacle had been constructed. They didn't know it at the time, but the first opportunity which they would have to observe these *mitzvot* in the Promised Land was almost 40 years in the future. But, even at that time in the wilderness, ADONAI's principle behind the *sh'mitah* wasn't new. He had shown it to Israel even before they reached Mount Sinai. If they would be obedient to His instructions, He would provide enough in advance to provide for the time when work was not allowed. The first time that ADONAI provided for Israel in that way was the giving of the *manna* and a little later on, the quail. He instructed them to only collect *manna* and *selav*, quail, the first six days of the week. And, on the sixth day they were to collect not only enough for that day, but also enough for the seventh day, the *Shabbat*, the day of rest. Knowing human nature, ADONAI built in a feature which prevented Israel from collecting and storing the *manna*. He knew that they would want to do that. But, He was teaching them to trust Him by trusting that their daily needs would be met: “Give us this day our daily bread.” If they tried to store it up, it would mold and rot, “self-destruct,” at the end of one day. But, when it was collected on Friday it would last through two days, both Friday and also *Shabbat*. In order to eat on the Sabbath, they had to trust!

And, it was in this same way that ADONAI would provide for Israel during the seventh year, the *sh'mitah*. ADONAI said: 21 *“Now I will command My blessing to you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a harvest sufficient for three years”* (Leviticus 25:21 TLV). This was even more than the two days which were provided for in the wilderness. In the sixth year, ADONAI would provide for three years. Just as with the *manna* and the quail, enough was provided in the sixth year for not only that year, but also for the seventh year when the land was not planted and even enough for the first year of the next seven year cycle before the crops that year were harvested. The food for these three years was a result of the perfect, natural plan of agriculture designed by the Creator of the universe plus His blessing of an extra abundance which He added during the sixth year. The land provided normal crops during the first five years and abundant crops from the sixth year, enough to last for that year and two more. And, the people could also eat what grew naturally on their land during the seventh year. 6 *“Whatever the Shabbat of the land produces will be food for yourself, for your servant, for your maidservant, for your hired worker and for the outsider dwelling among you. 7 Even for your livestock and for the animals that are in your land—all its increase will be enough food”* (Leviticus 25:6-7 TLV). ADONAI gave an increase and they could store what grew in the sixth year, but they couldn't buy or sell what grew naturally the next two years. They could, however, go out each day and collect enough for that day just as they had with the *manna*. And, He also provided food for the poor, those who didn't own land? ADONAI said: 11 *“But during the seventh year you are to let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor among your people may eat. Whatever they leave behind, the animals of the field may eat. You are to deal with your vineyard and your olive grove in the same way”* (Exodus 23:11 TLV). During that time, you expected to see other people in your field, your vineyard and your olive grove. And, you were happy to see them there.

The same principle of provision also applies to the *yovel*, the Jubilee of the 50<sup>th</sup> year. Leviticus 25:9-10 says: 9 *“Then on the tenth day of the seventh month, on Yom Kippur, you are to sound a shofar blast—you are to sound the shofar all throughout your land. 10 You are to make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It is to be a Jubilee to you, when each of you is to return to his own property and each of you is to return to his family”* (Leviticus 25:9-10 TLV). During the *yovel*, the fiftieth year, the land was to lie fallow as well as during the previous year, the forty-ninth and also in the first year of the next seven year cycle. And, ADONAI provided abundant food for each of these three years.

The promises of the *sh'mitah* and the *yovel* are physical promises with physical benefits. Israel was to keep the *sh'mitah* year and the *yovel* year and in their obedience, ADONAI promised a blessing. They not only received a blessing of abundant food, but also a release of debts. 1 *“At the end of every seven years you are to cancel debts. 2 This is how you are to cancel debts: every creditor is to release what he has loaned to his neighbor. He must not force his neighbor or his brother to repay, for Adonai's*

*debt cancellation has been proclaimed.* (Deuteronomy 15:1-2 TLV). The last day of the *sh'mitah* year is *Elul* 29, the day before *Rosh Hashanah*. It was on that day that a major change occurred. Everyone who owed a debt was released and every creditor released any debt owed him. *Elul* 29 was Israel's day of financial freedom, their release from financial bondage. *Sh'mitah* was their release. 1 *“At the end of every seven years you are to cancel debts. 2 This is how you are to cancel debts: every creditor is to release what he has loaned to his neighbor. He must not force his neighbor or his brother to repay, for Adonai’s debt cancellation has been proclaimed”* (Deuteronomy 15:1-2 TLV). The 29<sup>th</sup> day of *Elul* became known as the Day of the *Sh'mitah* just as the seventh year was known as the Year of the *Sh'mitah*. Every *sh'mitah* year was a time of rejoicing as all slaves were set free. The fiftieth year, the *Yovel*, would have been an even greater time rejoicing because then, even wives and children who had been living apart in the household of the master were reunited with their husband and father. 39 *“If your brother has grown poor among you and sells himself to you, you must not subject him to slave labor. 40 Let him stay with you as a hired worker or as a temporary resident. He will work for you until the Year of Jubilee, 41 then he is to be released from you—he and his children with him—and may return to his own family and to the property of his fathers”* (Leviticus 25:39-41 TLV).

As Yeshua's followers here in the United States and elsewhere outside of *eretz Yisra'el*, there is no physical promise for us today. But, in the *sh'mitah* and the *yovel*, there are foreshadowings of future promises, promises which we will receive at Yeshua's return. At that time all who have died in Messiah and His faithful ones who are alive will receive a permanent *sh'mitah*, a permanent and eternal release from the bondage of our human shell, our body. We will move into a new phase of everlasting life in which we will then live in our new, spiritual bodies, bodies very much like the body which Yeshua received at His resurrection. That *sh'mitah*, our release, will take place at the final *yovel*, the final Jubilee in time. It will be announced at the final *Yom Kippur* in time when the the *Great Shofar* will signal the end of time and the beginning of what is referred to symbolically as the “1000 year reign.” When Yeshua returns to earth as King and the *shofar* is sounded, we will have entered eternity. And, we will be with Him forever. 3 *“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the city, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 Night shall be no more, and people will have no need for lamplight or sunlight—for Adonai Elohim will shine on them. And they shall reign forever and ever”* (Revelation 22:3-5 TLV)! That is our final reward for being faithful *talmidim* of Yeshua.

What did Yeshua say about the *sh'mitah* while He was on earth? Did he actually refer to it? Yeshua began His actual earthly ministry shortly after His temptation by *HaSatan* in the wilderness. He actually began His ministry by proclaiming the Year of Jubilee. You may have missed that as you

read those passages. But, that was His very first pronouncement and He made it in His home town *synagogue* at Nazareth. Those who heard Him were very familiar with the Scriptures about the *yovel*. That's because the synagogue was also a *beit mikdash*, a house of study, the only place locally which had a *Torah* and *Haftarah* scrolls for them to study. And, they did not miss Yeshua's point. Yeshua read from one of the *Haftarah* scrolls and when He finished reading, He said in effect: "Today, right now, is the year of the Jubilee." Whether or not that year was an actual Jubilee is not the point. It was at the very least, a spiritual Jubilee for all of Israel; their Messiah had come and His redemption was available to them. Yeshua's first official act of His ministry was to read *Haftarah* in His home *synagogue*. And, when given the honor of reading from and expounding on the week's *Haftarah* portion, Yeshua read from Isaiah 61. Whether or not Isaiah 61 was the actual *Haftarah* portion for that week, we don't know, but I would like to think that it was and that ADONAI had arranged the time for His Son to begin His ministry on the *Shabbat* on which Isaiah 61 was to be read.

Our *Ketuvim Sh'lichim* reading today in Luke 4 is about Yeshua's reading of Isaiah 61 in the *synagogue* in Nazareth. Yeshua said: 18 *"The Ruach Adonai is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, 19 and to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor."* 20 *He closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue were focused on Him. 21 Then He began to tell them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears"* (Luke 4: 18-21 TLV). All of these things which Isaiah prophesied were both spiritual and physical benefits which the Messiah would bring in the *yovel*; and his last statement, **to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor,** was the declaration that it was about the *yovel*. That's where Yeshua stopped. But, Isaiah 61, verse 2a says: 2 *"to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor and the day of our God's vengeance,"* etc.. (Isaiah 61:2a TLV). Yeshua stopped reading at favor because the rest of the verse and the following verses are about the time of the end, the time of His second coming. By reading "the year of ADONAI's favor," Yeshua was using *remez*, the Hebraic way of teaching which used hints to refer to something in the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, which related to the point which He was making to His listeners. In this case, His hint was a reference to Leviticus 25:10-13, the proclamation of the *yovel*, the Jubilee. Yeshua was saying to those at Nazareth: "The *yovel* is here for you today and it has benefits for you." What did they do when they heard Him say that? They tried to kill Him! They had no faith in Him as Messiah. But, from our vantage point today, we understand that He revealed to them the part of the *yovel* which He would fulfill while He was on the earth.

There is more which we can learn from understanding the physical deliverance of the *sh'mitah* and the *yovel*. It's not written in these verses in Leviticus, but in them we can see ADONAI's great love for His creation, His people. David described His love: 5 *"For Your love is higher than the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds"* (Psalm 108:5 TLV). Speaking through Jeremiah, ADONAI

says to Israel: 22 *“Thus says Adonai: “Let not the wise boast in his wisdom nor the mighty boast in his might nor the rich glory in his riches. 23 But let one who boasts boast in this: that he understands and knows Me. For I am Adonai who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth. For in these things I delight.” It is a declaration of Adonai”* (Jeremiah 9:22-23 TLV). What the TLV translates as love in Psalm 108 and as lovingkindness in Jeremiah 9 are forms of the same base word, *chesed-טוֹב* which is usually translated as goodness or loving kindness. But, the TLV’s rendering as love is not without precedent; other Bible versions do the same thing. The reason they can do this is because ADONAI is perfect and that means that His goodness and loving kindness is perfect. And that relates to perfect love. Again speaking through Jeremiah, ADONAI said: 2....*“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness”* (Jeremiah 31:2b TLV). In this verse both “loved” and “love” are forms of the word *ahavah* – אָהַבָה which means love. Lovingkindness is again *chesed*. The point in all this and many other examples which we could use, is that ADONAI’s love for His people Israel, and equally for those from the nations who are now a part of Israel, is an everlasting and perfect love. It is love freely given without requiring anything of us. Yeshua explained that total love of ADONAI for us through His action: 6 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16 TLV). And, the *sh’mifah* and the *yovel* are but two examples of ADONAI’s love and lovingkindness for His people prior to Yeshua’s coming.

A second spiritual principle is that ADONAI’s people are to love their neighbor as themselves and this is what we will concentrate on today. ADONAI shows us through the verses about the *sh’mifah* and the *yovel* that we are to be aware of harmful consequences which through us could happen to our neighbor. When He speaks about these things regarding the *sh’mifah* and the *yovel*, He is showing us that we are to love them. In Leviticus 25, ADONAI said that: “If you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you are not to wrong one another.” He said: “You are not to cheat one another, but fear your God, for I am *Adonai* your God.” He said: “If your brother has become poor and his hand cannot support himself among you, then you are to uphold him. He may live with you like an outsider or a temporary resident.” He said: “You are not to lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.” He said: “If your brother has grown poor among you and sells himself to you, you must not subject him to slave labor.” And, He said: “You are not to rule over him with harshness, but fear your God.” These are just some of the examples of the way that ADONAI taught Israel to love and care for their fellow Israelites. But, the *Tanakh* also shows us that He loves those from the nations equally and He taught Israel to love those who were not of Israel. Here is just one of many verses which show this: 34 *“The outsider dwelling among you should be to you as the native-born among you. You should love him as yourself—for you dwelled as outsiders in the land of Egypt. I am Adonai your God.”* (Leviticus 19:34 TLV).

Even as we know that G-d loves us, Yeshua emphasized to us our responsibility to love G-d. He did this by using another Hebraic principle which was in use in Israel at that time, *gezera shavah*. This means “similar laws, similar verdicts.” In this method of teaching, similar phrases from different passages in the Tanakh were connected. The result was an analogy, a method which teaches a lesson by connecting similarity between two things. To respond to the hypocrisy of certain Scribes and Pharisees, Yeshua used methods with which they would have been familiar. This particular way of teaching was well known in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and had been also been used by *Rabbi Hillel*, the well-known Pharisaic *rabbi* of a generation before Yeshua’s time. Three particular places in which Yeshua used it were Matthew 22, Luke 10 and Mark 12. We’ll use Matthew 22 as our example: *34 But the Pharisees, when they heard that Yeshua had silenced the Sadducees, gathered together in one place. 35 And testing Him, one of them, a lawyer, asked, 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Torah?” 37 And He said to him, ““You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”* (Matthew 22:34-40 TLV). The matching phrases which Yeshua connected are “you shall love.” They are found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 where we find the *Shema* and in Leviticus 19:17-18 regarding loving your neighbor. In Hebrew, these English words are represented by just one word, *v’ahavta*. You are very familiar with it and that it means “and you shall love.” Yeshua connected our requirement to love the Father with loving our neighbor. *V’ahavta et ADONAI Elohekha*: “and you shall love ADONAI your G-d” relates to *v’ahavta l’rei’akha kamokha*: “and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” What we have to come to understand is that love for our neighbor is also an expression of our love for G-d. We can’t “not love” our neighbor and love ADONAI. And, everything which Yeshua taught us throughout all His words is tied together with these two different expressions of love; G-d’s and ours.

As we read the Gospels, we see that Yeshua found good in people in whom it wasn’t obvious to others. He found it in the Samaritan woman at the well, he found it in the tax collectors Matthew and Zacchaeus, he found it in the criminal on the stake beside Him and He found it in many, many others. In every case, Yeshua focused on the good which He found in them. As we have read those verses before, we may not have recognized that His response to them was instruction for us, but it was. It was His example to us showing us how we are to relate to our neighbor. We are to find something good in everyone with whom we interact. The question is, can we find something good in those with whom we may have disagreement? But, that is what Yeshua is teaching us and that is His desire for us. It’s not easy to find good in those we don’t have a good opinion of and we definitely cannot do it unless we make a conscious decision to do it. Can you make a decision today to look with different eyes at those with whom you disagree? You won’t be able to think of everyone today, but you can

make that decision. I encourage you to reevaluate your approach to those you may not like. It won't all happen at once, but it can happen and it will happen if you don't give up and give in to your old negative thoughts. That applies to me as well. ADONAI has shown me recently that my thoughts about my neighbor come up short and it was that realization which led me to give this message. All of us fall short with regard to the command to love our neighbor. Yeshua's message to us regarding our neighbor is that we are to be slow to criticize, slow to judge, and slow to condemn. By His example, He encourages us to find the best in people in whom we may not have initially seen any good. He's calling us to remember that daily, to remember that loving our neighbor, even our rivals, is a major part of our expression of our love for ADONAI. Can we really love ADONAI if we don't love our neighbor? Loving our neighbor is loving ADONAI.

After teaching about the two greatest commandments, Yeshua said: 40 "*The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*" (Matthew 22:40 TLV). We can easily see the connection of loving ADONAI being fulfilled in *Torah*, but we may not as easily see the fulfillment of the *Torah* and Prophets in loving our neighbor. In teaching us this, Yeshua emphasized not only the importance of loving our neighbor, but also that the whole of *Torah* and Prophets teaches us to love our neighbor. It's like the old song, "Love and marriage go together like horse and carriage; you can't have one without the other." For us that teaches: "Love G-d and your neighbor, you can't have one without the other." The end result is that by loving our neighbor we are actually loving ADONAI and in so doing are fulfilling the *Torah* and Prophets.

Then, the question comes up, how are we to love our neighbor? How? *V'ahavta l'rei'akha kamokha*: How do we love our neighbor *kamokhah*; how do we love our neighbor "as ourselves?" Some have said that *kamokha*, as yourself, means that we are to "love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves." That's a good idea, but one really difficult to walk out. But, that's not what "as ourselves" usually meant in Hebraic thought. *Kamokhah* was understood to describe a quality of love, not quantity, but quality. But, how can we understand quality? Some of the rabbis teach that we can understand it by understanding "love your neighbor as yourself" as "love your neighbor who is like you." Their point was that we are all basically the same. We all have the same good and bad thoughts about each other. What this shows us is that we are to open our hearts and try and understand what we have in common with our neighbor. Think about their human shortcomings which may lead them to actions which we don't like, some of which we also have. By consciously thinking about the ways in which we are alike, we can begin to open our hearts to compassion for them. As we think about these things, we should also concentrate on the thought that they are created in ADONAI's image. When we have difficult neighbors, seeing them as created in His image will help us to focus more on them in a more positive way. And, we must also remember Yeshua's words: 31 "Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even

sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are doing good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do this” (Luke 6:31-33 TLV). Thinking about and combining all of these different thoughts, we can find conclusion in this statement: “Love your neighbor who is, just as you are, created in the image of YHVH.” Love your neighbor in the way that you would want to be loved is the application of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” *Yeshua*’s disciple John states it even more forcefully. He said: *20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen* (1John 4:20 TLV). We all sin and we are all dependent upon ADONAI’s grace and forgiveness. With the help of the *Ruach*, the Holy Spirit, we can see the image of G-d even in a person who appears to us as unlovely. We have been commanded to love the unlovely!

Many of us struggle with these interpersonal relationships in our minds. I am no exception. We may not say it out loud, but we think unholy thoughts about some of our neighbors. It’s very easy for us to take some small thing personally and then set up in our heart the sin of unforgiveness against another person. *Yeshua* is grieving over us, over His Body, because so many of us hold anger and unforgiveness in our hearts? But down deep, we don’t want those thoughts. We all want to be right with ADONAI. We don’t want to have unforgiveness and we frequently beat ourselves up mentally after we think bad thoughts about others. But, there is something we can do. We can change our old way of dealing with hurts caused by our neighbor by getting on a new path. Getting out of that rut is something which each of us can do and which each of us should want to do. When you are at home in your quiet time, ask ADONAI to bring to mind those whom you have something against and whom you haven’t forgiven. As you do this, remember *Yeshua*’s words: *14 For if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions*” (Matthew 6:13-15 TLV). And, then forgive those who have been brought to mind. After you have forgiven them, forget their transgressions. Put them completely out of your mind. If *Yeshua* forgives our sins and puts them away “as far as the east is from the west,” shouldn’t we do the same for those whom we forgive? As a pastor friend used to say: “don’t nurse it or rehearse it.” The greatest point here is not that ADONAI won’t answer our prayers, but that by forgiving we obtain *sh’mittah*, release from the bondage brought about by our negative thoughts.

The *sh’mittah* and the *yovel* are but two examples of His love for us, the people of His Israel. And, it is through His love that *Yeshua* teaches us to love even the unlovely. As you read and see the national news, take a good look at those who appear unlovely to you. Then, look for the good in them just as *Yeshua* does. And, pray for them rather than condemning them. Remember that even though they may not know ADONAI or even claim there is no G-d, still they are made in His image. Look even closer to home and see the good in those around you with whom you may disagree. What began in

our *parasha* as ADONAI's love for us has reached its climax by teaching us the way that we are to love Him. And, the hardest way to love Him is through our neighbor. But, no matter how hard it is, it is our love for our unlovely neighbor which ultimately delivers the greatest benefit to our relationship with our Father. *Sha'ul* said: *2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready. Indeed, even now you are not yet ready"...*, (1Corinthians 3:2 TLV). We can be ready! As each of us purposes to make adjustments in our hearts in the favor of our neighbor, we are beginning to eat the meat of Yeshua's message. And, His High Priestly Prayer to ADONAI for us shows us the depth of the relationship which He wishes for us. We are reading it in Kevin Geoffrey's Messianic Jewish Literal Translation of the *B'rit Chadasha*: *"I have given to [the eleven] your word, and the world hates them, because they are not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them out of evil. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world; sanctify them in Your truth, Your word is truth. As you sent me to the world, I also send them to the world, and for them do I sanctify myself, that they themselves may also be sanctified in truth. And not in regard to those alone do I ask, but also in regard to those who shall believe in Me through their word..."* (John 17:14-20 MJLT). We, Yeshua's *talmidim*, are not of this world. Yeshua said it in John 17 and *Sha'ul* reconfirmed it: *20 "For our citizenship is in heaven, and from there we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah" (Philippians 3:20 TLV)*. We are not citizens of this world, but are citizens of Heaven and are called to a higher calling than the citizens of this world!! "Love your neighbor who is like you." *Shabbat shalom!*