



Parshiyot Behar/Bechukkotai

May 13, 2023

Torah: Leviticus 25:1-27:34

Haftarah: Jeremiah 16:19-17:14; 32:6-27

Ketuvim Sh'lichim: Luke 4:17-21; 2Corinthians.6:14-18

Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha! This *Shabbat* we again have a double *parasha*, *Behar* (on the mountain) and *Bechukkotai* (in My laws). *Parasha Behar* is about the *sh'mitah*, the 7th year sabbatical of rest for the land, and also the *yovel*, the jubilee of the 50th year, which is also a year of rest. The *sh'mitah* is the seventh year in a seven year cycle which ADONAI created for Israel's benefit. His plans in these chapters are just another example of His love for Israel and His desire for them to succeed, success that would come if they followed His plan. His purpose was not only to give rest to the land, but also to give relief to His people. He knew, even if Israel didn't, that if you plant the land over and over year after year, the nutrients in it are depleted and the land becomes infertile. These plans were the result of His fatherly concern regarding their being able to provide for themselves through 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). The land required rest to allow the nutrients to be replenished so that it would not gradually grow less and less fertile. Without the rest, lying fallow, and the introduction of nutrients back to the ground through the compost on it, the land would eventually become unable to grow enough to support its owner. But, how would the landowner and his family live for a year without growing their crops? When ADONAI gave these requirements to Moses, Israel was in the wilderness. There were no crops being grown and they would not grow crops for another forty years. ADONAI's advance instructions were for when they came into the land which He had promised them.

But, ADONAI's principle behind the *sh'mitah* was not new. He had introduced it to the people even before they reached Mount Sinai after leaving Egypt. The principle which He showed them is, that if they were obedient to His instructions, He would provide enough for that time when nothing is available. His introduction to this principle was very early in their relationship when they had just escaped from Egypt. He introduced it to them through His miraculous provision of the manna and a little later, quail. They could only collect manna and quail six days of the week. On the sixth day, they would collect enough for that day and also for the seventh day, the *Shabbat*, the day on which they were commanded to rest. Rest was ADONAI's purpose. He rested on the seventh day after creation and His principle of rest was also behind 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). ADONAI provided enough in the sixth year for not only that year, but also enough 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 of that year were harvested. But, they could also eat of what grew naturally during the seventh year. ADONAI said: 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.*" (Leviticus 25:6 TLV). They could eat it, but couldn't harvest it. ADONAI made the same provision for their

livestock to graze on whatever grew naturally. ADONAI's plans for us, His children, are good if we follow His plan. He also provided for the poor, those who didn't own land. He 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). He thought of everything that His chosen people would need. As the old song proclaims: "What a mighty G-d we serve!"

This same principle applied to the *yovel*, the jubilee of the 50th 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 23:9-10 TLV). The year of Jubilee, the *yovel*, also included letting the land lie fallow just as in the *sh'mitah*. And, there is much more to ADONAI's provisions in it, including freedom from indentured slavery and the return of land that had been sold or lost to debt to the original owner. Israel only had to be obedient. Obey the *Torah* of the *sh'mitah* year and the *yovel* year and ADONAI promised Israel a blessing. The promises of the *sh'mitah* and the *yovel* were physical promises, but they also have underlying spiritual principles which foreshadow and promise future events. Just as ADONAI's *moadim*, His annual festivals, foreshadow future events, so too, do the *sh'mitah* and the *yovel*. They are pictures of ADONAI's endtime promises and their fulfillment will come. We read this last *Shabbat*. Habakkuk said: 3 *For the vision is yet for an appointed time. It hastens to the end and will not fail. If it should be slow in coming, wait for it, For it will surely come—it will not delay.* (Habakkuk 23:3 TLV).

Our second *parasha*, *Bechukkotai*, begins with ADONAI's promise for blessing Israel, but it had an "if" with it. It was conditional, something was required. He said: 3 *"If you walk in My statutes, keep My mitzvot and carry them out, 4 then I will give you".....* (Leviticus 26:3-4a TLV) and He detailed in the next nine verses everything He would provide for Israel. He said that if they would obey His commands, He would provide rain and the land would produce food. They would eat as much food as they wanted and live securely in their land. He would give *shalom* in the land and they would be able to defeat their enemies. And, He would put His Tabernacle among them and be their G-d. (Leviticus 26:3-13). These are wonderful promises, but they have not yet become a reality. They have not become a reality because Israel has never lived by ADONAI's regulations, His *mitzvot*. In fact, throughout the centuries, the opposite has occurred. There have been brief times of obedience, but in general, Israel has disobeyed ADONAI's commands over and over and even has regularly been guilty of worshipping other "gods." But, His promise is still in effect. ADONAI has not changed His mind. Balaam was a false prophet, but he spoke truth when he said: 19 *God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes his mind! Does He speak and then not do it, or promise and not fulfill it?* (Numbers 23:19 TLV). ADONAI's promise will be fulfilled at His perfect time.

Some 40 years later, as Israel was preparing to enter the land of Canaan, following ADONAI's instructions, Moses instructed Israel to coat stones with plaster and to write the *Torah* on them. When Israel entered the land, the stones were to be set up on Mount *Eval* and the curses spoken which ADONAI would bring on Israel for disobedience. The blessings for obedience were to be pronounced on Mount *Gerizim*: 1 *"Now if you listen obediently to the voice of Adonai your God, taking care to do all His mitzvot that I am commanding you*

today, Adonai your God will set you on high—above all the nations of the earth. 2 Then all these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you listen to the voice of Adonai your God”.. (Deuteronomy 28:1-2 TLV). Some people try to appropriate these blessings for themselves without understanding the requirements. These blessings are for being obedient to *Torah*. And, they apply to us today with regard to ADONAI’s commands which are not presently inactive. Just one example of His blessing for Israel was given through Malachi: ADONAI said: *10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. Then there will be food in My House. Now test Me in this”—says Adonai-Tzva’ot—“if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out blessing for you, until no one is without enough.”* (Malachi 3:10 TLV). This is just one point of obedience. We do not test Him enough. If we do test Him, we will find that our paths are made much straighter and our burdens lighter.

Israel’s history was one of ups and downs, obedience and disobedience. From the times of the Judges and the nation of Israel under one king to the times of the two separate kingdoms, Judah and Israel, ADONAI’s chosen nation, disobeyed His *mitzvot* and followed other gods many times. ADONAI judged the northern kingdom of Israel through the Assyrians, sending them off into captivity. About one hundred years later, the Kingdom of Judah in the south of Israel was judged and punished by ADONAI through the Babylonians. ADONAI had told them ahead of time that this would happen and He said it in today’s *parasha*: 43 *“But the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its Shabbatot while it lies desolate without them, and they will accept the punishment of their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes”* (Leviticus 26:43 TLV). Israel did not follow ADONAI’s instructions regarding the *sh’mifah* year and the *yovel*. They did not give the land its required rest. And because of this, the people of the Kingdom of Judah were in captivity in Babylon for 70 years as payment. They paid for their disobedience and misuse of ADONAI’s land with one year in Babylon for each *sh’mifah* year they did not observe. At the time they were sent into captivity they had been in Israel 800 years, but in 490 of those 800 years, 70 *sh’mifim*, they did not obey ADONAI. ADONAI is long-suffering with His people whom He loves!

How does *Torah* obedience apply to Jews today? Are the Jews of today following ADONAI’s commands? My answer is not a judgment. Who am I to judge G-d’s people? This is only a realistic look at Israel in the flesh, the Jews of today. Only a very small percentage of Jews are obedient to the major terms of ADONAI’s covenant He gave at Sinai with a large majority either being very liberal, following other religions or completely atheistic. But even with all of the unbelief and disobedience among Jews today, it has not negated ADONAI’s promise to them: 44 *“Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I hate them into utter destruction, and break My covenant with them, for I am Adonai their God”* (Leviticus 26:44 TLV). G-d has not rejected His people whom He chose. *Sha’ul* very clearly saw that: 1 *I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He knew beforehand.* (Romans 11:1-2a TLV). The fact that His promise will come true in the *acharit hayamim*, the end of days, rather than earlier is not ADONAI’s fault. It is the fault of the people. But, He is patient and will bring His promise to pass when Israel meets His requirements. ADONAI is not limited by time and space and even through Israel’s disobedience, He knew, He knew beforehand, that Israel would ultimately come to Him as a fulfillment of His promise to them.

There are also questions which we must ask ourselves, those of us who are in covenant with Him today. Why do we obey His *mitzvot*? Why do we keep *Shabbat*? Why do we only

eat kosher food? Why do we obey any of the *mitzvot* which are active for us today? The answer is, we obey them because Yeshua, our Messiah, told us to. He said: 15 *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15 TLV). What are His commandments? All of the commands of *Torah* are His commandments because Yeshua, is the author of *Torah*. John wrote: 1 *"In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being"* (John 1:1-3 TLV). The English, "Word," is translated from the Greek, *logos*, which means "a statement," but the context in which it is used also implies that the *Logos* is also a person. The statement: *The Word was with God, and the Word was God* proclaims that the *Logos*, the Word, is G-d. Who is John talking about? He's talking about Yeshua who is G-d and was with G-d, ADONAI, the Father, in the beginning. John continued: 14 *"And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14 TLV). Tabernacled among us means "Yeshua, G-d, lived among us." The Word that was with G-d and was G-d, came and lived among men.

John went on to say that "All things were made through Him." (John 1:3a). Yeshua, the *Logos*, the Word, is the Creator. This is confirmed by *Sha'ul* who wrote: 5 *For even if there are so-called "gods," whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, through whom are all things, and we exist through Him.* (1Corinthians 8:5-6 TLV). We proclaim this belief each *Shabbat* in our confession before the *Shema*. We did today. (Also Colossians 1:16-17). If all things were made through Him, then that includes *Torah*. And, Yeshua stated that not one jot or tittle of it would pass away before heaven and earth pass away (Matthew 5:17-18).

Every person who has said yes to Yeshua should know to what they have said yes. If their salvation experience was a direct response to the Holy Spirit speaking to their heart and they knew nothing about Scripture, immediately afterward they should have sought to understand to what they had just agreed. Whether they knew it or not, they had just entered into a covenant, but which covenant? Of the three covenants ADONAI made with Israel, the first one is called the Abrahamic Covenant. ADONAI made it with Abram and through it promised the Land of Canaan to his descendants: 18 *On that day Adonai cut a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River":* (Genesis 15:18 TLV). Sometime later, ADONAI re-affirmed that covenant and changed *Avram's* and *Sarai's* names to *Avraham* and *Sarah* and commanded him to circumcise all the men of his household. The sign of the covenant of the land (Genesis 17:8) is circumcision: 11 *"You must be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and this will become a sign of the covenant between Me and you."* (Genesis 17:11 TLV). And, *B'rit Milah*, the covenant of circumcision, has been performed on all Jewish males since then. It is performed at eight days of age and it officially brings them into the Covenant of Abraham. All Jews, both male and female, are members of this covenant by being born as descendants of Abraham. All Jews today are covenant partners with ADONAI through this covenant whether they choose to recognize it or not.

The second covenant that ADONAI made with Abraham's descendants, Israel, was the Covenant at Sinai: 5 *"Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine."* (Exodus 19:5 TLV). 8 *Then Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which Adonai has cut with you, in agreement with all these words."* (Exodus

24:8 TLV). Moses, and later his brother Aaron, were the mediators, priests standing between ADONAI and the covenant nation. This covenant required a Tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood to enable ADONAI's covenant requirements. Today, without those two elements, the overall covenant made at Sinai is inactive.

Why is it inactive? It is because it has been superseded. ADONAI has made a new covenant with Israel and it is now the active covenant. What is this covenant which ADONAI made with Israel? It is the "New Covenant": 30 "*Behold, days are coming*"—it is a declaration of Adonai— "*when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*" (Jeremiah 31:30 TLV). Why is the Covenant at Sinai inactive today? 9 *...then He said, "Behold, I come to do Your will."* He takes away the first to establish the second. 10 *By His will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Messiah Yeshua once for all.* (Hebrews 10:9-10 TLV). Yeshua, the perfect sacrifice for our sins, is also the Mediator of the New Covenant: 5 *For there is one God and there is one Mediator between God and men—a human, Messiah Yeshua, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all—the testimony at the proper time.* (1Timothy 2:5-6 TLV). This Scripture is also a part of our *Shabbat* proclamation. 6 *But now Yeshua has obtained a more excellent ministry, insofar as He is the mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted on better promises.* (Hebrews 8:6 TLV). The New Covenant is now ADONAI's active covenant with Israel and has been since the year 30 CE when Yeshua died for Israel's sins, becoming the Mediator, *Kohen HaGadol*, the High Priest of that better covenant. There is no promise of salvation or way of salvation outside of being a member of ADONAI's active covenant with Israel. Entrance into the New Covenant is only through Yeshua, its Mediator, its High Priest: 6 *Yeshua said to him (Thomas), "I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me."* (John 14:6 TLV). This applies to both Jews and Gentile. There is no other way. It is G-d's way.

How about Gentiles? Without G-d, Gentiles are outside of Israel. *Sha'ul* describes it: 12 *At that time you (Gentiles) were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* (Ephesians 2:12 TLV). The New Covenant is a covenant of promise and Gentiles are born outside it. But, the love of the Father is equally to Gentiles and He has opened His covenant with Israel to us: 13 *But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah.* (Ephesians 2:13 TLV). And, all people, Jews and Gentiles, all who have trusted in Yeshua, are covenant partners of the New Covenant and members of the Commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12-13).

I said a moment ago that Jews and Gentiles of today have options. We can all choose to accept Yeshua and be a part of ADONAI's active covenant, the New Covenant, or we can reject Him and not be in covenant with ADONAI. I am speaking to you as a Gentile whom ADONAI called into a Jewish ministry. This is not my opinion, but truth based upon Scripture, the Word of G-d. I personally know many Jews who have trusted in Yeshua who say exactly the same thing; there is only one way. It's through Yeshua. And, not just Messianic rabbis, but also Jewish lay people. As much as we love our traditional Jewish brothers and sisters, we cannot say otherwise. ADONAI has clearly laid out the way to enter His covenant and He has only provided that one way. I know that there are many orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews and other traditional Jews who love G-d with all of their hearts. But, their love is based upon beliefs which are not supported by Scripture today. The truth is that there is no salvation in the Covenant made at Sinai today, not even a promise of salvation. The atonement offered under it is no longer available because the elements which enabled it are no longer available. It was only available when there was a Temple and a

Levitical priesthood and neither is present today. The third and most important reason that there is no atonement in the Covenant at Sinai is because ADONAI has made a new covenant with Israel, a covenant which has superseded it. Contrary to what some Jews believe, the *Talmud* cannot provide salvation. The laws which *Rabbi Yochanan BenZakkai* and others enacted at *Yavneh* following the destruction of the Temple and which have become a part of the *Talmud*, are man's laws, not G-d's. Their plan of salvation devised in desperation, no matter how sincere, the plan of *Torah*, *Tzedakah* and *Tefillah*, is not equivalent to the sacrifices formerly offered under ADONAI's authority through the Covenant made at Sinai. The study of *Torah*, the giving of alms and ritual prayer cannot provide a covenant relationship with ADONAI. He said: 1 *"For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives—for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life."* (Leviticus 17:11 TLV). It was blood which brought atonement when the Covenant at Sinai was in effect and it is blood which brings atonement under the New Covenant: 13 *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Messiah—who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God—cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* (Hebrews 9:13-14 TLV). Yeshua is the only way because His blood is the only blood which ADONAI, the Father, has accepted.

Here is the question again. Why must we, Yeshua's followers, be obedient to ADONAI's *Torah*? The simplest answer is that it is a matter of covenant loyalty. What is covenant loyalty? It is being loyal to a covenant of which you are a part. It's keeping a promise. A covenant is a sacred, binding agreement, in our case, an agreement between us and ADONAI. Covenant loyalty is keeping our part of the agreement. What did we agree to? In announcing the New Covenant through Jeremiah, ADONAI said: 32 *"But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days" —it is a declaration of Adonai— "I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people."* (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). ADONAI has written His *Torah* on our hearts. He wrote it when He cut the covenant with His Son's, Yeshua's, blood. He is keeping His part of the agreement. Are we? Jews and Gentiles of today have two options. We can be covenant partners and loyal to the active covenant with ADONAI or can reject His covenant.

We, the Jews and Gentiles who are a part of Messianic Judaism are here because ADONAI has called us here. We are here because He has given us a supernatural love for the Nation of Israel and the Jewish people and the primary part of our ministry is that we earnestly desire their salvation. Our fervent prayer is that the day that "all Israel" is saved will come soon. *Sha'ul* had a personal meeting with Yeshua on the road to Damascus. We don't know what Yeshua said to him, but it is likely that he learned from Yeshua about the salvation of all Israel. *Sha'ul* prophesied: 26 ...*"and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins"* (Romans 11:26-27 TLV). It will be a group event, all at one time, after they have repented and turned to Yeshua. Our *Ketuvim Shlichim* reading today includes a quote from today's *parasha*, Leviticus 26. Verse 12. *Sha'ul* wrote to the Corinthians: 6 ... *"I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."* (2Corinthians 6:16b TLV). But, there was an even more complete expression of what ADONAI is going to do. He gave Ezekiel a vision of the future, a vision to prepare Israel for that coming day. ADONAI said: 24 *"For I will take you from the nations, gather you out of all the countries and bring you back to your own land."* (Ezekiel 26:24 TLV). He has done that and more. He has restored Israel's authority over

Jerusalem and it is no longer “trodden underfoot of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). ADONAI continued: 25 “*Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols.* 26 *Moreover I will give you a new heart. I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* 27 *I will put My Ruach within you. Then I will cause you to walk in My laws, so you will keep My rulings and do them.*” (Ezekiel 26:25-27 TLV). The point is that “ADONAI Himself, will do it.” You see all of the “I wills,” seven of them in these three verses. They are ADONAI’s promise of the salvation of all Israel and He said: “I will do it!” We pray for that day to come soon.

The *Sh'mitah*, the *Yovel*, the weekly *Shabbat* and ADONAI’s *Moedim*, are all types and shadows of His future events, including, yes, even including the salvation of all Israel. There is a coming Jubilee that will include not only the salvation of all Israel, but the restoration of all things. Yeshua taught us to pray: 9 “*Our Father in heaven, sanctified be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come,...*” We pray for that that day to come soon. And, we are joining our prayers with the more than one million of Jesus’s followers in the Church who are praying for Israel in the “Isaiah 62 Global Solemn Assembly” during the days of May 7th through the 28th. *Shabbat shalom!*