



## **Parasha Behar**

May 25, 2024

*Torah:* Leviticus 25:1-27:34

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

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Galatians 6:1-10

*Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha!* Our *parasha* this *Shabbat* is *Behar*, meaning: on the mountain: 1 Then Adonai said to Moses on Mount Sinai, 2 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: When you come into the land which I give you, then the land is to keep a *Shabbat* to Adonai. 3 For six years you may sow your field and for six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits. 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. 5 You are not to reap what grows by itself during your harvest nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. It is to be a year of *Shabbat* rest for the land.” (Leviticus 25: 1-5 TLV). This is the *Sh’midah*, a principle of *Shabbat*, rest. ADONAI said to Israel: “When you enter the land I am giving you, the land itself is to observe a *Shabbat* for ADONAI.” Two chapters ago, we read: 3 “Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day is a *Shabbat* of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You are to do no work—it is a *Shabbat* to Adonai in all your dwellings.” (Leviticus 23:3 TLV). *Shabbat*, שָׁבַט, in reality means: “rest,” referring to what ADONAI did after He finished creating: 2 God completed—on the seventh day—His work that He made, and He ceased—on the seventh day—from all His work that He made. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He ceased from all His work that God created for the purpose of preparing. (Genesis 2:2-3 TLV). The TLV says ceased, but I believe “rested” is a better translation. The word used in Genesis 2 is *vayishbot*, וַיִּשְׁבֹּט, which means: “and rested.” That is the principle of *Shabbat*, whether it is the weekly *Shabbat* or *Shabbat* rest for the land, the *Sh’midah* or the *Yovel*, the 50<sup>th</sup> year Jubilee, which is also in this *parasha*. ADONAI told Moses that He requires that the land in *Eretz Yisra’el* should have its own rest, just as the Children of Israel have their rest. It is a well-established agricultural principle today that land constantly planted and harvested with no nutrients being replaced in the soil will become sterile and unproductive. But it was not a commonly known fact three thousand, two hundred seventy-five years ago. Is it possible that the Canaanites and other inhabitants had been overworking the land, and Israel was about to inherit barren land? Along with resting the land, ADONAI promised they would have food in the seventh year.

While the *Sh’midah* can only be carried out in Israel, *Shabbat* rest for the people of Israel is commanded everywhere. We are not farmers in Israel, but the principle of *Shabbat* rest for the people of Israel, wherever we are, is extremely important. Yeshua said to a group of Pharisees: 27 ..., “*Shabbat* was made for man, and not man for *Shabbat*. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of *Shabbat*.” (Mark 2:27-28 TLV). According to Leviticus 23:3, we read that *Shabbat* is “in all your dwellings,” whereas all of the *moedim* that follow in that chapter are commanded only in *Eretz Yisra’el*. We commemorate *Pesach* and *Shavuot* by looking back at their fulfillment and *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkot* by looking forward to their coming fulfillment. We commemorate them, but we don’t observe them

because 1. We are not in Israel, and 2. We cannot offer sacrifices. But we honor *Shabbat* every week.

Yeshua's words mean that ADONAI designed the Sabbath as rest for "Adam," mankind. He did not need the rest when He rested on the seventh day after six days of creating. But through resting, He established a principle for mankind to follow based upon His very being and His nature of love. ADONAI established that man needs rest and applied it to his servants and beasts of burden. ADONAI understood that the human body or animal body cannot physically withstand constant work and must be given rest. But ADONAI had to require a man to rest because without it being required, man would not rest. He would continue to drive himself, causing physical deterioration in not only his own body but also in the bodies of his hired workers and even his beasts of burden.

But physical rest is not the only reason for *Shabbat*. The most important reason is that ADONAI exists and that He created everything we can see here on earth and in the heavens. In affirming our Creator's existence, we rest in honor and obedience to Him who commanded us to rest. Yeshua's words can be understood as: "*Man was not made for Shabbat, but Shabbat for him.*" This shows us that ADONAI gave an order of importance: Man is more important than the Sabbath because he is our Father's most important creation. Therefore, in His love, ADONAI made the *Shabbat* for man, for us. How can we refuse to honor His love gift?

This same principle is at work in *Shabbat* rest for the land. Because ADONAI desires the best for us, He gave Israel this instruction using the same ratio regarding the land as in the weekly *Shabbat*, six to one. Why did the rest of the land come in the seventh year? It is generally considered among Christian and Messianic scholars that the number seven represents completion. In Hebrew, seven is "*sheva*," שֶׁבַע, from a root word meaning to be complete or full. *Shabbat* is from the same root word, meaning to end, complete, or rest. Thus, *Shabbat* has both meanings, seven and rest.

Is there a third meaning, a possibility other than the two stated? Yes. *Sheva* can also refer to "swearing an oath." In Genesis 26, Isaac and Abimelech made a covenant, swearing an oath that there would be peace between themselves. Isaac's servants soon came in with the news that they had dug a well. Isaac named it *Sheva*, likely because it was the seventh well dug before peace was reached. But there is a similar word, "*shavah*," meaning oath, swear or to agree with. This play on words could be the derivation of the eventual name of the well and the place, *Beersheva*, the well of seven, the well of the oath. Understanding this, we can also understand the Sabbath to be an oath between ADONAI and those who will join it with Him: 16 *So Bnei-Yisrael is to keep the Shabbat, to observe the Shabbat throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.* (Exodus 31:16 TLV). It is a perpetual covenant between ADONAI and Israel, a binding oath. In these three meanings of *Shabbat*, we see ADONAI's intention: 1. a time of rest, 2. rest on the seventh day, and 3. an oath, a perpetual covenant of rest. 8 "*Remember Yom Shabbat, to keep it holy.*" (Exodus 20:8 TLV) means that we must keep it set apart only for ADONAI's purposes. ADONAI told Israel through Isaiah how He wants us to observe *Shabbat*: 13 "*If you turn back your foot from Shabbat, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call Shabbat a delight, the holy day of Adonai honorable, If you honor it, not going your own ways, not seeking your own pleasure, nor speaking your usual speech, 14 then You will delight yourself in Adonai, and I will let you ride over the heights of the earth, I will feed you with*

*the heritage of your father Jacob.” For the mouth of Adonai has spoken.* (Isaiah 58:13-14 TLV). What more can we say?

How are we to physically observe *Shabbat*? Rabbinic Judaism has developed a system employing *mitzvot*, commands designed to prevent a person from doing prohibited work on *Shabbat*. The early rabbis examined the work required to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They came up with 39 *melakhot*, 39 categories of work that cannot be done on the Sabbath, essentially fences constructed to prevent sin. With regard to the free will given to us by ADONAI, we respect their right to do this, honoring and loving them as our brothers and sisters of Israel for their perseverance and devotion. But we respectfully disagree. We do not believe in the *Torah Shebe'al Peh*, the Oral *Torah* upon which the *Talmuds* are based. To them, its authority is equal to the *Torah Shebiktav*, the written *Torah* given to Moses by ADONAI. This greatly affects how we consider Sabbath observance and every other observance. We believe that the written *Torah*, including the rest of the *Tanakh* and the writings of Yeshua's disciples, is *Torah* for us as members of ADONAI's New Covenant and is our only authority. Our *Kohen HaGadol*, Yeshua, our High Priest, has set the *Shabbat halacha* for us.

*1 At that time Yeshua went through the grain fields on Shabbat. His disciples became hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. 2 But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not permitted on Shabbat.” 3 But He said to them, “Haven’t you read what David did when he became hungry, and those with him? 4 How he entered into the house of God, and they ate the showbread, which was not permitted for him to eat, nor for those with him, but only for the kohanim?”* (Matthew 12:1-4 TLV). Understanding the first situation further proves that Oral *Torah* does not exist. This particular group of Pharisees made their criticism of Yeshua's disciples based upon Oral *Torah*, something that Yeshua referred to elsewhere as “the traditions of men,” and rebuked them for following them. These Pharisees considered Yeshua's disciples to be harvesting grain, but obviously, He did not. They believed that His disciples picking of grain to eat on *Shabbat* was “harvesting,” one of the 39 categories of *melakhot* which the Oral *Torah* (written down as the *Mishnah* about 200 CE) described. But Yeshua found no fault with what His disciples were doing on *Shabbat*.

A similar situation was true with the showbread. There are six places in the *Tanakh* where the showbread is mentioned. (Exodus 25:30, Leviticus 24:5-9, 1 Samuel 21:5-7, 1 Kings 7:48, 2 Chronicles 13:11, Numbers 4:7). Only two of them refer to eating *lechem panim*, לֶחֶם פָּנִים, the bread of the presence. Leviticus 24 says: *9 It belongs to Aaron and his sons, and they are to eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him among the offerings of Adonai by fire, as a perpetual statute.* (Leviticus 24:9 TLV). The second mention told of it being eaten by someone other than a priest. Nowhere do we find it said that no one else can eat it. In fact, the *Kohen Achimelekh* gave the *lechem kodesh*, consecrated bread, to David and all the men traveling with him. (1 Samuel 21:5-7). *Achimelekh* listened to the *Ruach Kodesh* and shared the showbread with David and his men who were in need. Yeshua found no fault with this either.

Is work permitted for us on *Shabbat*? The answer is yes. One kind of work is that which we do to carry out *Shabbat* worship. Yeshua said: *5 “Or haven’t you read in the Torah that on Shabbat the kohanim in the Temple break Shabbat and yet are innocent?”* (Matthew 12:5 TLV). What the *kohanim* did to prepare sacrifices on *Shabbat* in Numbers 28:9-10 is the proof. They had to skin animals, cut up meat, and clean up afterward.

They also had to maintain the fire on the altar on which it was consumed. According to *Shimon Kefa*, Yeshua's followers are the ordinary priests of the New Covenant under our High Priest (1 Peter 2:9). To facilitate worship on *Shabbat*, we may move chairs, turn on live stream, set out food and drink and tidy up afterward and yet are innocent of violating the Sabbath.

We are told: "*Remember Yom Shabbat, to keep it holy.*" How should we keep the Day of *Shabbat* holy? What does "Keeping it holy," keeping it separated from the ordinary and common things, mean? Is this unnecessary legalism? My answer is that it depends on your relationship with ADONAI. We say we love Him. Are these just words? No, for us they are not, and we put our love into action by honoring the commands of our Creator, not only regarding *Shabbat*, but with regard to all commands possible today. *9 You are to work six days, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Shabbat to Adonai your God. In it you shall not do any work—not you, nor your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your cattle, nor the outsider that is within your gates.* (Exodus 20:8-10 TLV). The seventh day is a *Shabbat* to ADONAI, our G-d. If it is a *Shabbat* to Him, should we not take it more seriously? His instructions are very clear: "Don't do any work." That means we are not to do ordinary work, nor are our children who are household members. Our servants are not to work. To understand how our servants are not to work, we must adapt words spoken in a two thousand five hundred year old culture for today. Very few of us grow crops today and utilize hired help in the fields. In modern times, the people who serve us on *Shabbat* are our servants. They serve us in restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, movie theaters, and many other ways. When we eat in a restaurant, buy groceries, or watch a movie, our servants work on *Shabbat*. It makes no difference that these people don't honor *Shabbat*. And, it has nothing to do with money or buying or selling on *Shabbat* because the *Torah* doesn't mention using money or buying and selling on *Shabbat*. Nehemiah commanded that there be no commerce on *Shabbat* during the reconstruction of Jerusalem because it violated *Shabbat* by working and not because money was being exchanged. (Nehemiah 13:15-19). It is ADONAI's prohibition of work on *Shabbat* that we as Yeshua's disciples follow today.

Some say obeying these commands is legalism and not required by a modern understanding of Scripture? Some say it is legalism, but we understand differently. We understand that obeying Scripture commands is not legalism but a love response to the One who has given us everything. When making these kinds of personal decisions, it is important that we understand that each of us will eventually stand before Yeshua regarding them. *Sha'ul* wrote: *10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due for the things he did while in the body—whether good or bad.* (2 Corinthians 5:10 TLV). That is why what *Sha'ul* told Timothy is so important: *15 Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15 TLV). We cannot just take what we are told for granted but must search out the truth from Scripture for ourselves, like the Jews of the synagogue in Berea. (Acts 17:10-15). And we must not compare ourselves to anyone else: *4 Rather let each one examine his own work. Then he will have pride in himself alone and not in comparison to anyone else. 5 For each one will carry his own load.* (Galatians 5:4-5 TLV).

But ADONAI understands our needs on *Shabbat* and Yeshua has responded to them generously. Once on *Shabbat*, when having a meal at the home of a Pharisee, there was a man who was swollen with fluid: *3 So Yeshua said to the Torah lawyers and the*

Pharisees, *“Is it permitted to heal on Shabbat, or not?”* (Luke 14:3 TLV). They didn’t answer Him, so He laid hands on the man and healed him. Yeshua addressed their hypocrisy: *5 Then He said to them, “Which of you, with a son or an ox falling into a well on Yom Shabbat, will not immediately pull him out?”* (Luke 14:5 TLV). Yeshua addressed the same question at another time. It was the same day His disciples picked grain to eat on *Shabbat*. From the grain field, He went to a synagogue. He saw a man with a withered hand, and some men asked Him: *10 ... , “Is it permitted to heal on Shabbat?”* (Matthew 12:10b TLV). His answer was a question, *“Which of you would not pull out your sheep if he fell into a pit?”* Yeshua said: *12 “How much more valuable than is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is permitted to do good on Shabbat.”* (Matthew 12:12 TLV). Work to do good is permitted on *Shabbat*.

We should begin to prepare for *Shabbat* on Friday. In Israel where *Shabbat* is observed by everyone, shops usually close on Friday by 2 PM. Even shopkeepers must prepare for *Shabbat*. If we do our necessary shopping before the Sabbath, there will be no problem. But applying the ox and sheep imagery, we understand that Yeshua permits us to buy what is necessary if we travel on *Shabbat*. When we are at home, He permits an emergency purchase of medicine. As Yeshua said, *“The Shabbat was made for man.”* ADONAI created it for our benefit. It is our heart’s intentions that are important. If our desire is the same as Isaiah’s, we will do what ADONAI wishes us to do. He said: *13 “If you turn back your foot from Shabbat, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call Shabbat a delight, the holy day of Adonai honorable, If you honor it, not going your own ways, not seeking your own pleasure, nor speaking your usual speech, 14 then You will delight yourself in Adonai, and I will let you ride over the heights of the earth, I will feed you with the heritage of your father Jacob.” For the mouth of Adonai has spoken.* (Isaiah 58:13-14 TLV). Our heart’s desire should be to do what ADONAI wishes us to do on *Shabbat*.

The *Shabbat*, the rest we have thus far discussed, is physical. We are to rest our bodies physically, and we are to rest the soil in Eretz Yisra’el. The older generation of Israel in the wilderness did not enter ADONAI’s rest because their hearts were not true to Him. ADONAI, speaking through David (we are told it was David in Hebrews 4:7, not the Psalm), said: *10 “For forty years I loathed that generation. So I said: ‘It is a people whose heart goes astray, who do not know My ways.’ 11 Therefore I swore in My anger, ‘They shall never enter into My rest.’”* (Psalm 95:10-11 TLV). And that generation did not enter the rest of the Promised Land. The younger generation, however, did get to enter into that rest, but it was not the final rest. According to the author of Hebrews: *4 For somewhere He has spoken about the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works,” 5 and again in this passage: “They shall never enter My rest.” 6 So then it remains for some to enter into it; yet those who formerly had Good News proclaimed to them did not enter because of disobedience. 7 Again, God appoints a certain day—“Today”—saying through David after so long a time, just as it has been said before, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.* (Hebrews 4:4-8 TLV). Joshua could not give the generation that entered Israel permanent rest. But the author of Hebrews now refers to the *Besorah*, the Good News of Yeshua. He continues: *9 So there remains a Shabbat rest for the people of God. 10 For the one who has entered God’s rest has also ceased from his own work, just as God did from His.* (Hebrews 4:9-10 TLV). This is an important point: *“For the one who has entered God’s rest has also ceased from his own work.”* This means that once we have trusted in Yeshua, it is done. We have the promise of salvation. We have ceased our work, but everything is not over.

Hebrews, chapter 11 gives us a partial answer as to how we are to enter that rest: *1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of realities not seen. 2 For by it the elders received commendation. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen did not come from anything visible.* (Hebrews 11:1-3 TLV). Faith is trusting. The Greek word *pistis* also implies faithfulness. It begins by believing that ADONAI's words are true. Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain by faith. Abraham left his home to a place that ADONAI would show him by trusting. Abraham offered up Isaac by trusting in ADONAI. And many more had their merit attested to because of their faith. But none of those except Abraham received what had been promised (we discussed that last week): *39 And all these, though commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised— 40 because God had provided something better for us, so that only with us would they reach perfection.* (Hebrews 11:39-40 TLV).

The “something better” is Yeshua's sacrifice, something much better than bulls and goats. But even after trusting in Yeshua, we must persevere. *1 Therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also get rid of every weight and entangling sin. Let us run with endurance the race set before us, 2 focusing on Yeshua, the initiator and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and He has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.* (Hebrews 12:1-2 TLV). We must keep pursuing *shalom*. *Sha'ul* also tells us that we must complete the race and uses words similar to those of the writer of Hebrews. This point in the words of Yogi Berra is: “It ain't over til it's over.” We must complete the race. We have been brought to the goal through the mediator of a new covenant. Yeshua's blood gives us life and our promise of *Shabbat* rest.

Yeshua said to Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, a Pharisee who had come to Him with a question about being born again: *13 “No one has gone up into heaven except the One who came down from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 so that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life! 16 “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. 17 God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”* (John 3:13-17 TLV). The Hebrew *yachid* means only. ADONAI gave His only and unique Son, His “*monogenē* Son, the Greek equivalent of *yachid*” that we might have eternal life. Just as Isaac was Abraham's *yachid* son who was spared to carry on Abraham's seed, Yeshua is the *yachid* Son of His Father, ADONAI, who raises up spiritual seed. By his being lifted up, we can have eternal life through faith that his death paid the price for us. It is this salvation that provides our *Shabbat* Rest. It is explained this way: *15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that those called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—since a death has taken place that redeems them from violations under the first covenant.* (Hebrews 9:15 TLV). Not only is Yeshua the Mediator, but also the High Priest of the New Covenant. But we have not yet entered the promised eternal inheritance, our *Shabbat* rest. We must persevere to the end. We are told: *1 Let us fear then! Though a promise of entering His rest is left open, some of you would seem to have fallen short.* (Hebrews 4:1 TLV).

We have the promise of entering our spiritual Sabbath Rest, but we must continue to be aware that we might be judged to have fallen short of it. The Greek word in Hebrews 4:1, “*phobeo*,” means not only to fear but to be terrified, to be terrified that we might not enter His rest. In 1 Corinthians 9, *Sha'ul* explained all he did to prepare to enter the rest

and then why he did it: *23 I do it all for the sake of the Good News so that I might be a fellow partaker of it.* (1 Corinthians 9:23 TLV) and goes on to say: *24 Don't you know that in a stadium the runners all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win! 25 Every competitor exercises self-control in all respects. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we do it to receive an imperishable one. 26 So I run in this way—not aimlessly. So I box in this way—not beating the air. 27 Rather, I punish my body and bring it into submission so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.* (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 TLV). We too, must put aside the sins which hamper our progress and keep running with endurance. As we think about Yeshua and the tremendous hostility he endured, we realize how small our burden is and that we can continue to carry it toward the race's finish line to receive the prize of eternal Sabbath Rest. *10 For the one who has entered God's rest has also ceased from his own work, just as God did from His. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through the same pattern of disobedience.* (Hebrews 4:10-11 TLV). When Messiah Yeshua returns as *Melech Mashiach*, King Messiah, we will enter our eternal Sabbath Rest. We will have run the race faithfully and rested from our work, a finished work, and will receive our promise of rest.

Take *Sha'ul's* advice and study to show yourself approved. What we do on *Shabbat* and every day in this lifetime is important and it stabilizes our relationship with Yeshua, a relationship that promises our eternal *Shabbat* rest. We can't say "Yeshua, I trust in You" and then live any way we want. What we do is important. *Sha'ul* wrote: *12 Therefore, my loved ones, just as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence—work out your salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For the One working in you is God—both to will and to work for His good pleasure.* (Philippians 2:12-13 TLV). You have heard a very heavy concentration of Scripture today. I encourage you to take time to go back through it and digest it more completely. *Shabbat shalom!*