

# THE SABBATICAL YEAR:

A Display of  
G-d's Mastership

Original Painting By:  
YORAM RAANAN

## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Behar-Bechukosai Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

### Activating Unlimited Bounty

1. *Gemara: R' Yishmael*: One must be financially responsible for himself – and study Torah when not attending to chores.
2. *R' Shimon Bar Yochai* disagrees: When is there study time if a person is preoccupied with his financial needs?
3. Committed fully to *Torah* study, his finances will be attended by others.
4. 2nd paragraph of *Shma*: Heed my *Mitzvos* with all your hearts and souls; you won't bring in your own harvest.
5. *R' Shimon Bar Yochai*: This speaks about a person who is not doing the will of G-d.
6. *Midrash: Part 1 of Shma*: You should love G-d with all your heart, soul, and all your possessions.
7. *Midrash: Part 1* is a person willing to forgo all the comforts of life for sake of *Torah*.
8. Part 2: One commits to *Torah* and *Mitzvos* but is not willing to forego the comforts of life.
9. For one who selflessly serves G-d at a cost of one's material comfort, G-d will provide all his material needs without distraction.
10. If one toils in *Torah* at a level of being fully invested it activates a bounty that is unlimited.

### The Boomerang Effect of the Evil Eye

1. Proverbs: The overzealous for wealth has an evil eye; a loss will befall him.
2. *Midrash: Avraham* purchased the Tomb of *Machpelah* from *Ephron* for astronomical sum.
3. *Ephron* had an overwhelming sense of envy seeing the coins weighed.
4. G-d said: Because of your envy and evil eye you will be diminished.
5. *Ephron's* name is written in diminished form when he envied *Avraham*.
6. Does this matter to *Ephron*, a non-believer?
7. The family of *Cheis* who facilitated the purchase of the Tomb Of *Machpeilah* is mentioned 10 times.
8. *Midrash*: One who facilitates the acquisition of a *Torah* Sage equals fulfilling the 10 Commandments (The letter *Ches* is mentioned 10 times).
9. To facilitate the purchase of *Avraham* our Patriarch is participating in the process of meeting the objective of creation the evolvement of the Jewish People and the *Torah*.
10. The numerical value of *Ephron* in the deleted form is *Ayin Rah*.
11. Because *Ephron* had the evil eye he is not accredited with an action: the 10 Commandments.



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### A Conduit of Blessing to the World

1. All the world's blessings are due to the merit of the Jew who observes *Torah & Mitzvos*.
2. G-d told *Avraham* that the nations will be blessed through his progeny.
3. The world is denied material when the Jews fail spiritually.
4. *Midrash*: The nation should appoint two sentries for every Jew to assure he is observing *Torah* and *Mitzvos*.
5. They assure and secure the observance of the Jew, and nullify them with their decrees.
6. *Yaakov* and *Esav* battled in the womb of their mother over the physical and spiritual worlds.
7. They agreed the physical would be *Esav's* and the spiritual- *Yaakov's*.
8. *Yaakov*, in the home of *Lavan*, amassed great wealth.
9. Though material, it was only a means to facilitate the spiritual.
10. The world is for the sake of *Torah* and for the Jewish People to observe it.
11. The underpinning of all physical existence and blessings is the spirituality of the *Torah*.

**Weekly Video:** The Sabbatical Cycle Upends Agricultural Norms

## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Behar-Bechukosai



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### Forfeiting One's Share in Eternity

“When you make a sale to your fellow...”

*Midrash:* “The one who is overwhelmed with the desire for wealth has an evil eye. He does not know that diminishment will come upon him.” (Proverbs) This verse refers to many individuals: it refers to one who engages in the sale of the produce of the Sabbatical year which is not permitted. Being overwhelmed with the desire for wealth caused him to transgress. If he does not repent and make the correction for the wrong that he did, ultimately it will cause a diminishment, which is the sale of his personal effects.

Another example of one who was overwhelmed by his desire for wealth is *Ephron* the Hittite. He sold the cave of *Machpelah* to *Avraham* our Patriarch to be the burial location for Sarah his wife. After *Avraham* asked him the purchase price of the *Machpelah*, *Ephron* responded, “My lord, heed me! Land worth four hundred shekels; between me and you what is it?” (Although he was asking *Avraham* for an enormous sum, he attempted to make it seem insignificant between the two of them.)

When *Avraham* began to weigh out the silver before him, *Ephron* saw the enormous pile of wealth before him, he became overwhelmed and he expressed himself immediately, ‘Only the best of graves shall you have!’ G-d said, ‘Because you were so taken by the enormous amount of silver, I swear by your life that in the end you will have deficiency.’ What was the deficiency?

*Reb Yehudah bar Levy Bar Shalom* said that until *Ephron* had taken the silver from *Avraham*, his name is written in the *Torah* it was in its full form (including the letter ‘vav’). However, after he took the payment that *Avraham* had given, his name is written in a deficient form, with the letter ‘vav’ deleted.”

*Rabbeinu Bachya:* The name *Ephron* in its deficient form (with the ‘vav’ deleted) has the same numerical value as “*Aayin raa* (evil eye).” Although *Ephron* had the opportunity to facilitate the purchase of a *tzaddik*, which would have given him a share in eternity, because of his overwhelming greed for wealth he forfeited his portion in the ultimate recording of eternity, which is the *Torah* itself. His name is thus recorded in a diminished form.

*Midrash:* When one performs a *mitzvah* one should do it with a joyous heart. Had *Reuvain* known that the *Torah* would attest to the fact of his true intent in placing his brother *Yosef* in the pit was so that he should ultimately return to rescue him, *Reuvain* would have carried *Yosef* on his shoulders and taken him to his father *Yaakov*.

If Aaron would have known that the *Torah* would have recorded how he came out to greet his brother *Moshe* in the desert with a joyous heart, he would have gone out to greet him with musical accompaniment.

Had *Boaz* known his roasting of the kernels for *Ruth* would be recorded, he would have brought her fattened cows.

In the past, if one performed a *mitzvah* with a joyous heart, it was recorded by the prophets. However, today that there are no prophets; who records these deeds for posterity? It is *Eliyahu* and *Moshiach* who record it and G-d signs upon it. When one performs a *mitzvah* with joy, his action become part of eternity.

To be recorded in a positive context in the *Torah* has the ultimate value. *Ephron* is recorded in a context in which he facilitates the acquisition of a *tzaddik*. However, because he was overwhelmed when he saw the wealth, which was an expression of his greed, he caused his mention for eternity to be "*Ayin raa* (evil eye)." Although he did not appreciate the loss that is communicated by the *Torah* regarding his status; nevertheless, his diminishment is considered to be the ultimate loss.

*Pirkei Avos:* "Calculate the cost of a *mitzvah* against its reward..."

If one focuses on the ultimate value of a *mitzvah*, regardless of its cost factor, one will never hesitate to actualize the *mitzvah*.

## **Man's Behavior, a Reflection of One's Essence**

*Midrash:* "One who is overwhelmed and driven by the accumulation of wealth has an evil eye. He does not understand that ultimately it will bring about his diminishment." (Proverbs) This verse refers to many people throughout history. It refers to those who profit from the produce of the Sabbatical year. They are only driven by their desire of wealth, regardless of its consequences.

*Gemara:* "See how negatively impactful are the gleanings of the Sabbatical year! If one is not sensitive to the law and engages commercially in the produce of the Sabbatical year, he will ultimately need to sell his movable assets. If after needing to sell his movable assets the individual does not take heed to his financial reversal and continues to willfully engage in the produce of the Sabbatical year, he will need to sell his fixed assets. If he still does not take heed and correct his ways, he will need to sell himself as a slave even to a pagan master..."

*Gemara:* "Why initially does it state that if the individual is not 'sensitive' to the law and transgresses and later it states that if he transgresses?"

*Rav Huna* explains, 'When one initially transgresses a prohibition and repeats that behavior, it is permitted to him.' It is definitely not permitted; however, he perceives it as if it were permitted to him. He thus behaves in a manner as if he is doing nothing wrong. What is the meaning of this?

*Rabbeinu Yonah:* When one sins for the first time in a particular area, his degree of culpability is not as great as one who repeats the sins in the same area of prohibition. This is because initially, one was not aware of his vulnerability in that area and he came upon sin without realizing his degree of susceptibility. However, once one transgresses and realizes that he has vulnerability in this area, he must take the proper precautions to guarantee that he will not repeat his sin again.

The repeated offender has greater culpability because he did not value the wrong sufficiently to address the areas of his weakness. It is evident that this individual was not sufficiently concerned. It is similar to a dog who regurgitates and returns later to eat its vomit. "The Wrath of G-d will be upon the one who repeats his transgression..."

If one fails in a particular area and understands that he did wrong, his conscience will prevent him from repeating the transgression. However, if he desires to once again repeat and engage in the forbidden behavior, then he must suppress his conscience in order to allow him to transgress. Therefore he perceives the action as something that is permitted as he does not live with guilt.

*Gemara:* "If one sees a *Torah* sage sinning in the nighttime period, one should assume that perhaps he had repented by the morning. Not perhaps, but he had

definitely repented by the morning.” Why must one assume that the *Torah* sage “definitely” repented?

*Gemara*: A true *Torah* sage is one whose external behavior is consistent with his inner commitment to *Torah*. He is not merely a repository of *Torah* knowledge but rather the *Torah* sage is one who has fully internalized his *Torah* study and lives it every moment in all aspects of his life. Such an individual lives his life totally based on the truths of the *Torah*. The only reason he falters is because he had a temporary lapse of clarity due to his human frailty. However, because he is continuously engaged in *Torah* study, he will appreciate the wrong and repent immediately.

In contrast, an ordinary person who has not integrated *Torah* into every aspect of his life will sense the wrong and be pained by it and thus does not repent immediately.

*Chazon Ish* zt”l writes in one of his letters that the greatest pain that he ever experienced was when he sinned. His sin may have been in a minute area that most individuals would not even consider it to be a transgression. However, for an individual with his level of clarity and sanctity, any failing is painful because he fully internalized and appreciated the wrong.

Before *Yom Kippur*, the *Chofetz Chaim* would repent for the forty-five minutes of time throughout the year that he may not have engaged in the *Torah* to its fullest (*bitul Torah*). One should be taken aback by the mere fact that he kept a record of every moment of his year and how it was utilized and invested. In addition, one needs to appreciate what the *Chofetz Chaim* considered to be *bitul Torah*. It is only because of his level of sensitivity to holiness that he was able to understand and appreciate what was considered a spiritual failing.

If the average person does not engage in *Torah* study for one hour a day, it will not seem as a grave issue. If that same individual misses an entire day of *Torah* study, it may also not seem as a major spiritual failing because he will relieve his conscience by minimizing the wrong and putting it in a permitted context. This the application of one doing something that is wrong and perceiving it as permitted.

## Discerning Between the Physical & Spiritual

On the seventh year of the Sabbatical Cycle - *Shmita*, all agricultural activities must cease. Although one

will not plant his field during the seventh year and he will not have the new crop available to him until the ninth year, the *Torah* tells us that one should not be concerned. “You shall perform My Decrees, and observe My Ordinances...The land will give its fruit and you will eat to be sated.”

*Rashi*: “There will be blessing in one’s innards.” Although one will only eat a miniscule amount of produce, he will be nourished and sated.

*Mishna*: During the reign of *Shimon HaTzaddik*, the High Priest, a special blessing existed within the showbread. If a *Kohen* would eat as little as the equivalent of a bean-sized portion of the showbread, he would be satiated. Similarly, the produce of the sixth year that is eaten in the seventh year will contain a special blessing that will allow the individual who eats even a miniscule amount to be fully nourished and satiated.

“If you will say: What will we eat in the seventh year? -Behold! We will not sow and not gather in our crops! I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and I will yield a crop sufficient for the three-year period.”

*Sforno*: “If the Jewish people will not have faith in G-d and will question the fact that they will be satiated with a lesser amount of food, then G-d will command His blessing to come upon the physical to provide a yield that will be the equivalent of three years.”

If they have faith in G-d, then the less will be the equivalent of more; however, if they do not have sufficient faith, then G-d will give them quantitatively a three-year crop in the sixth year of the sabbatical Cycle.

When *Moshe* returned to Egypt and presented himself to the Jewish people as the Redeemer, the verse states, “The people believed...”

*Midrash*: “The moment they believed, the bondage ceased.” Why was this so?

*Maharal of Prague* zt”l: The concepts of effect and dominance have relevance to the physical. Something that exists within the spiritual realm is not affected. The Jewish people, being slaves in a pagan environment for an extended period of time, were fully influenced and affected by their pagan masters and the environment of Egypt. The spiritual erosion of the Jewish people was something that was not out of the ordinary because there is a concept within the

physical realm of “cause and effect.” They were fully affected and thus became pagans.

However, if regardless of the environment and negative influences one is unaffected, it is a demonstration of a characteristic of the spiritual realm, which is to remain unaffected. The moment the Jewish people declared their belief in Moshe as the Redeemer, meaning they believed in G-d as the Omnipotent Being, they ceased to be affected beings. They assumed a spiritual classification, which cannot be affected, causing the bondage to cease.

A slave is totally dominated by his master in every aspect of his being. A person who lives his life as an affected being can be dominated. However, when the Jewish people declared their belief in G-d and Moshe being His agent, they demonstrated that they are no longer affected beings. Thus, the bondage could no longer continue.

*Gemara:* “Blessing only comes upon something that is concealed from the eye, not something that is measured, weighed, or counted.”

*Maharal of Prague:* The concept of a blessing is something of spiritual nature, which is within the realm of the unlimited, and has no relevance to quantification. Once one’s harvest is quantified, it is no longer subject to blessing because it assumes a physical status.

When one has faith in G-d and fully believes that having less will not deny him his material needs, although it is contrary to rational thought, one will merit that the less will be equivalent to more. It is because accepting G-d’s Word as fact is not within the realm of the physical, and therefore his belief causes him to assume a spiritual profile, which has no relevance to quantity.

In contrast, if one needs physical assurances, because G-d’s Word is not sufficient for him to be confident that he will have enough, then G-d will provide His blessing in a manner that manifests itself in the physical. Then the crop of the sixth year will be the equivalent of a three-year yield.

## All Ends in Holiness

*Ramchal:* When G-d created the world, He created it with an entity of “time.” Within the entity of time there are instances that are considered to be “holy -*kodesh*” and other times to be “ordinary - *chol*.” Within

the times that are *kodesh* there are various levels of holiness, with *Shabbos* being the most holy. Festivals, *Chol HaMoed* (intermediary days), and *Rosh Chodesh* (the beginning of the new month) all have their own particular levels of holiness.

The majority of the days of the year are ordinary (*chol*) because they possess no sanctity. The number of days that are holy were designated to be so and were decreed to have the degree that is necessary in order to maintain the balance of existence.

The days of the year are cyclical and are composed of cycles of seven (six ordinary days and closing with the seventh day that is holy). Why is number seven the basis for the cycles?

G-d brought about all existence in seven days. Every aspect of existence is contained within the number seven. It is a complete measure because that unit of time was needed to bring about existence. The number seven spans all existence and all time periods. “For a thousand years in Your sight is but a day...” (Psalms)

*Gemara:* Each of the seven days of Creation corresponds to a thousand years of existence. Just as G-d created existence in six days and refrained from His creative activity on the seventh day, *Shabbos*, so too will physical existence extend for six thousand years (corresponding to each day of Creation) and in the seventh thousandth year the world will remain fallow (non-existent state). It will only be in the eighth thousandth year that G-d will recreate existence in its perfect state.

*Ramchal:* “Whatever the cycle may be, it always ends with a period of sanctity; the week ends with the *Shabbos* (which is innately holy), and the cycle of six years ends with the *Shmita* year (Sabbatical year which is holy).

*Since these cycles end with a period of holiness every aspect of the cycle is affected and impacted by it since it is attached and related to the holiness of the conclusion. For example, the Shabbos elevates the entire week since it is the conclusion of the cycle. As a result of this, all existence ultimately ends with holiness.*

This is the great gift that was given to the Jewish people because G-d wants them to be a holy people. He did not give this to the nations of the world who have no relevance to holiness.”

What is the basis for holiness? Mt. Sinai assumed a holy status only when the Divine Presence descended upon it. After the Divine Presence ascended, it reverted back to its ordinary status.

Holiness comes upon something only if G-d associates Himself with it. The Jewish people are holy only because G-d chose to take them as His people. Thus, there is a bond between G-d and His people. The land of Israel is the holy land because it is His location.

*Gemara*: "One who lives outside of the Land of Israel, it is as if he has no G-d."

*Maharsha*: The world was divided among the seventy root nations of the world. Each location has relevance to that particular nation. Every nation was given an archangel to oversee its existence and function. All sustenance that comes from G-d to every nation is transmitted through the archangel of each nation.

The Land of Israel has no archangel associated with it, because G-d Himself directly oversees all of its needs. Thus, all the sustenance and influences relating to the Land of Israel emanate directly from G-d without an intermediary. This is the basis for the holy status of the Land of Israel.

Similarly, *Shabbos* is holy because of G-d's relevance to it. So too is the seventh thousandth year of existence (the time the world will be fallow) holy because of its equivalence to *Shabbos*.

The ultimate purpose of existence is to acknowledge and understand that G-d is the Creator and the One Who has dominion over all. Since every day of the week is attached to the *Shabbos*, each day, although it may be ordinary in its own right, has relevance to holiness and the acknowledgement of G-d as the Creator.

There is a positive commandment to remember the *Shabbos* and sanctify it. Every day we recite a Psalm related to that day of the week. On Sunday we say, "It is the first day of the *Shabbos*." Monday is the "second day of the *Shabbos*," etc.

By counting towards the *Shabbos*, we acknowledge the objective of the week which is the *Shabbos*. By relating each day of the week to the *Shabbos*, one fulfills the positive commandment of remembering the *Shabbos* and sanctifying it.

*Gemara*: *Shammai* the elder would go to the market on the first day of the week and purchase a quality steer for the *Shabbos*. Every subsequent day he would go out again to seek out another steer that may be of a greater quality for the *Shabbos*. His perspective of every day was to acknowledge the special status of *Shabbos*.

The produce of *Shmita*, the seventh year, is holy because it is the yield of the land that is holy. However, this level of holiness only manifests itself in the seventh year, which is the commemoration of G-d being the Creator of existence.

## **Sacrifice, a Prerequisite for Torah**

"If you follow in My Statutes and observe My commandments and perform them; then I will provide you rains in their time..."

*Rashi*: "If you follow My Statutes" means "If you toil in My *Torah*."

In order for G-d to provide material blessing on an abundant level, one must be fully dedicated to fulfilling the objective of Creation, which is the study of the *Torah*.

"*Bereishis bara Elokim es ha'shamayim v'es ha'aretz* (In the Beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth)..."

*Midrash*: "*Bereishis*" can be interpreted to mean that the world was created for the sake of *Torah* which is referred to as "*reishis* (choicest)" and the Jewish people who are also referred to as "*reishis*."

When the Jewish people were initially offered the *Torah* by G-d at Sinai, their response was the unequivocal declaration of "*Naaseh V'nishma* (We will do and we will listen)." However, we find that after this declaration, G-d held a mountain over their heads with an ultimatum saying, "If you accept the *Torah* it will be good. If not, you will be buried there (under the mountain)."

*Tosfos*: "If they had already accepted the *Torah* with their unequivocal declaration of *Naaseh V'nishma*, why did G-d need to hold the mountain over their heads?"

The fires that they saw at Sinai were a representation of the fires of *gehenom* (if they should fail, it would be their punishment). After seeing the fires, they wanted to retract from their commitment. G-d held the mountain over their heads in order for them to understand that they could not retract from their commitment to Him.

*Midrash*: "Initially when the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* by declaring 'Naaseh v'nishma' it was regarding the Written *Torah*, which requires a minimal level of toil to acquire it. However, G-d held the mountain over their heads so that they should also accept the Oral *Torah*, which contains the details and complexities of the less severe and more severe *mitzvos*.

In order to acquire the Oral Law, it requires sacrifice, pain, and selfless dedication. One must dedicate himself to G-d and love Him with "all of his heart and all of his soul and all of his possessions" in order to acquire the Oral Law.

How do we know that this level of love is relevant to the study of *Torah*? It is written in the first paragraph of *Shema*, "...Teach them to your children..." There is no mention there of material reward for one's toiling in *Torah*.

However, in the second paragraph of the *Shema* it states, "If you will hearken to My commandments...to love Hashem your G-d...with all your heart and with all your soul...then I will provide rain for your land..."

When one performs the *mitzvos*, G-d will provide him with material abundance. The second paragraph does not mention, 'with all your possessions' as it does in the first paragraph. This is to teach us that the second paragraph is referring to one who is not willing to part with the comforts of life, and only desires to engage in *Torah* in a manner that does not infringe upon his material needs and amenities.

This individual is not able to acquire the Oral *Torah* at an advanced level. In order to acquire the Oral Law, one must be willing to experience great pain and be deprived of sleep. One must be willing to compromise his being for the sake of its acquisition. The individual who does not partake in worldly pleasures, his reward is reserved for the world to come.

We see from the *Midrash* that if one is dedicated to the *Torah* and is willing to endure pain for its acquisition,

he is not rewarded with the material. This seems to be a contradiction because *Chazal* tell us regarding the prerequisite of meriting bounty that one must follow G-d's Statutes as it states "If you will follow My Statutes..." which means toiling in *Torah*. However, although one who toils in *Torah* will merit material blessing and protection, the ultimate reward is reserved for the World to Come.

*Gemara*: The generation of *Reb Yehudah b'Reb Elae* demonstrated an exceptional level of fear of G-d. Their level of dedication to *Torah* was to such an extent that despite their level of impoverishment, six individuals were able to be covered with one garment when they engaged in the study of *Torah*. *Reb Yehudah b'Reb Elae* himself was so immersed in his *Torah* study that although he was located in the upper part of the market, his garment extended to the lower market. Because of his immersion in *Torah* he was oblivious to his state of attire.

A *tzedoki* (heretic) observed *Rava* engrossed in *Torah* study to such a degree that he was not aware that his hand was wedged under his heel, causing it to bleed. The heretic said to *Rava*, "You impulsive people! Just as in the past your mouth spoke before your ears listened, you are behaving in a similar impulsive manner – not thinking about the consequences of your behavior."

When *Reb Shimon Bar Yochai* was hidden in a cave for twelve years he would cover his body with sand when studying *Torah*. When he emerged from the cave his skin was cracked and fissured from the years of being covered by sand. When *Reb Pinchas Ben Yair* saw his cracked flesh, he shed a tear, which fell upon the wound and caused him great pain. *Reb Pinchas Ben Yair* said, 'Woe to me that I should see you suffer to this degree!' *Rebbe Shimon* replied, "Woe to me if I did not suffer to this degree!" He was only able to attain the *Torah* at his special advanced level because of his suffering and sacrifice.

