

## BE'HAR – “IN THE MOUNT”

### LEVITICUS (VAY'YIKRA) 25:1 – 26:2

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The cycle of sacred seasons begun in previous portion is continued in this portion.
  - a. Weekly Sabbath, Pentecost at end of 7 weeks, the seventh month.
2. Is completed by the Sabbatical year (*sh'mittah*) and the Jubilee (*yovel*).
  - a. *Sh'mittah* comes at end of “week” of years.
  - b. *Yovel* comes at end of “week” of Sabbatical years.
3. During the Sabbatical year land was to lie fallow and be “released” from cultivation.
  - a. The land is not absolute possession of man; the land is God's.
  - b. Counteracts the natural inclination to see the land as “mine.”
  - c. It is but a “gift” from the Creator to work and reap the bounty.
4. Teaches that life is denying one's self the goal of material gain in favor of spiritual growth.
  - a. Yet we live in a natural, material world.
5. So we are told to sow and reap for six years – rest on seventh.
  - a. Just as he is to work six days and rest on seventh.
  - b. Adding purpose to our work and toil.

#### CHAPTER 25: SABBATICAL YEAR AND YOVEL

1. Verse 2: “When you come into the land” - only enforced in the land of Israel.
2. The land is to rest – not to be tilled or allow anyone to do it for him.
3. This serves the same purpose for the land as the Shabbat is to the people.
  - a. Both teach that God is primary force in the universe; not Mother Nature.
4. They both testify that God created everything in six days and rested on seventh.
5. Years of the Sh'mittah cycle allude to the 6,000 years of history culminating in the Shabbat.
  - a. This will be a period of peace and tranquility.
  - b. The soil is devoted to God by being placed in service to poor and animal creation.

**“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.” – Ex 23:10-11**

6. Interesting to consider that the soil is what we came from.
  - a. The soil responds to our obedience or disobedience.
  - b. When Israel obeyed the land provided; when disobeyed the land did not.
7. The sabbatical year was also utilized for national educational needs and to acquaint the people with the Torah.

**“And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all**

**Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.” – Deut. 31:10-13**

8. Just as weekly Sabbath is a time of study and prayer, the sabbatical year should produce spiritual growth.
9. Verse 4: “In the seventh year” – In the seventh month of the year after the harvest.
10. Verse 6: “Sabbath produce...shall be food for you” – that which grows of itself.
  - a. While it can be used for food, it is not to be stored.
  - b. It is said that, in Israel, grain that grows of itself is not uncommon.
11. Verse 8: They were to number seven of these Sabbaths for a total of 49 years.
  - a. 7 represents cycle of completion in Creation.
    - Seven days (Shabbat)
    - Seven weeks (Shavuot)
    - Seventh month (Tishri)
    - Seven years (Sh'mittah)
    - Seven, sevens (Jubilee)
12. The next year was the Jubilee of *yovel*.
  - a. In that year, Hebrew slaves with their families were emancipated.
  - b. Property, with exceptions, reverts to its original owner.
13. Served as safeguard against perpetual poverty and the monopolization of property by others.
  - a. Prevented all this property from accumulating in the hands of the few.
  - b. If not restored, there would have been two primary classes – very rich and very poor.
14. Observance is so important to the Creator that non-observance results in national devastation.
  - a. One of the signs that Ezekiel mentions in chapter 7 of the “end.”
  - b. In next portion, disobedience results in exile that the land might be repaid its Sabbaths.
  - c. Failure to observe the *sh'mittah* could also result in exile.
15. Verse 9: A shofar was blown to announce the year of Jubilee on Yom Kippur.
  - a. Identical to the *teruah* of Yom Teruah – feast of trumpets.
  - b. The word *yovel* means “sounding the shofar” thus its name.
16. The *yovel* and Yom Kippur have much in common.
  - Both symbolized “new birth.”
  - One freed from poverty, one freed from sin.
  - Both provided opportunity for a new life.
17. Verse 10: “Proclaim liberty throughout the land” – all slaves freed.
  - a. This applied even those who refused to go out in 7<sup>th</sup> year (bondsman).
  - b. Everyone returned to ancestral heritage; original division of land was restored.
  - c. Footnote: this is inscribed on Liberty Bell.
18. The heritage is the land allotted to the family as a permanent heritage.
  - a. The land and the family were entwined with one another.
  - b. Thus those compelled to sell did not sell ownership the land but leased it for crops.
  - c. Again the land is the LORD's.

**“The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness.” (Psalm 24:1)**

19. Torah, therefore, is not so much for the protection of property but humanity.
  - a. Understanding that those who have property are entitled to certain rights.
20. Verse 11: “You shall not sow” – Jubilee shares some features with *sh'mittah*.
21. Verse 12: The Yovel, like Sh'mittah, is holy (set apart).
  - a. One may eat of the produce in the field but may not store it.
  - b. Notice that the 49<sup>th</sup> year would be a sabbatical year followed by another rest-year.

## CHAPTER 25: LAWS OF YOVEL

1. Implied in these next commands is, if one allows greed to keep him from observing, he will:
  - Eventually lose his money and be forced to sell his movable property.
  - If unrepentant, will be forced to sell his inheritance and house.
  - Will have to borrow with interest.
  - If still unrepentant, will sell himself to another Israelite or gentile.
  - Lastly, he might sell himself and become a servant of idols.
2. Verse 14: “You shall not wrong one another”
  - a. Always strive to help your brother when possible.
  - b. Highest form of charity is to help someone make a living in honorable way.
  - c. Don't want them in position to seek charity.
3. Verse 15-16: “according to the number of years ... shall you buy.”
  - a. Again, one does not purchase land but number of crops until next Jubilee.
  - b. So, if seller puts a price based on value of land, he has defrauded his neighbor.
  - c. The land is God's so only the produce it generated could be sold.
4. Verse 18-19: “You shall dwell in the land in safety...and eat until you have enough.”
  - a. Rather than fearing in those rest years, obedience brought plenty and safety.
  - b. Obedience to God results in not having to worry for our next meal or protection.
  - c. Would be safe from perils of famine, drought and war.
  - d. Like the daily manna, they would have sufficient food to eat.

**“I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” – Psalm 37:25**

5. The key word is “righteous.”
  - a. Obedience means we don't have to worry about such things.
6. Y'shua commented on this principle:

**“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things**

**the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”**  
- Matthew 6:25-33

7. Verse 20-22: Blessing is placed on the sixth year's crop so that it lasts into the ninth year.
  - a. The exceptional crop of 6<sup>th</sup> year is compared to the double portion of the 6<sup>th</sup> day.
  - b. Lasted for three years until Sukkot of ninth year.

## **CHAPTER 25: REDEMPTION OF THE LAND**

1. Verse 23: “Shall not be sold in perpetuity” – because the land is God's.
  - a. The people are “strangers” and “settlers” – talking about Israelis.
  - b. The terms are גרים *gerim* and תושבים *toshvim*.
  - c. When Naboth is asked to sell his vineyard to Ahab, he replies:

**“The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!” – 1 Kings 21:3**

2. Verse 25: Responsibility is placed upon relatives of impoverished seller to redeem if possible.
  - a. So that it may be returned to the family.
  - b. As long as the fair amount is offered, the present owner must sell.
3. Verse 26: “If a man will have no redeemer” – homiletically alludes to God.
  - a. If no redeemer, there is only one solution – God.
  - b. If they have lost their inheritance, no man can bring them back to God.
  - c. Thus, He must redeem them and bring them back.
  - d. They went into exile and no one could redeem them, therefore He had to.
  - e. The land lay fallow while in exile, but He will redeem them.
4. Verse 32 – 34: Levitical cities were given eternal right of redemption.
  - a. Levites did not receive provinces but 48 cities scattered throughout the land.
  - b. Cities were surrounded by a ring of open land.
  - c. Because of this, their cities could be redeemed at anytime.
  - d. Their lands could not be sold.
5. Verses 35 – 38: Helping those in poverty.
  - a. Highest form of charity is to step in and help prevent someone from becoming poor.
  - b. Before he is poor, try to prevent that.
  - c. We have a responsibility to help our neighbor – we are our brother's keeper.
  - d. Verse 35: literally, “if his means (hand) falter” then give him a hand.
6. Rabbinical parable teaches if a donkey's load begins to slip, help before it falls.
  - a. In this way, one person is sufficient.
  - b. But if it falls it requires many to put it back in place.
  - c. This applies to the stranger among you as well.
  - d. The *ger* are to be helped in this manner as well.
7. Again, the principle is “love your neighbor as yourself” applies to all your brethren.
  - a. Who is my neighbor?
8. According to parable of Good Samaritan, the one you least expect.
  - a. Not the priest, Levite but the one who had a heart toward the oppressed.
9. Verse 36: In that same vein, you are not to charge interest.

- a. The word נֶשֶׁךְ *neshekh* literally means “biting” – biting into someone’s resources.
  - b. Without reducing the amount of the loan.
  - c. Those who would be tempted to such are reminded to “fear God.”
10. This teaches that, ultimately, the resources we have are not ours but on loan to us from God.
- a. Thus, when another of His people are in need, He “reclaims” it for their benefit.
11. Verse 38: He reminds us that He took us from Egypt, therefore:
- a. We are to accept all His commands, even those difficult ones.
  - b. Remember the callousness of the taskmasters – don’t be like them.

## CHAPTER 25: HEBREWS ARE NOT TO BE PERMANENT SLAVES

1. Slavery in Torah fundamentally different than in other systems of ancient world.
  - a. Even different than what existed in America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - b. Eliezer, servant to Abraham, was treated with respect and was trusted.
  - c. Cruelty that resulted in serious injury to slave secured his freedom.
2. They are not slaves in the accepted sense of the word.
  - They don’t lose status in community.
  - They are not excused from keeping the commands.
3. Perhaps better term would be “indentured servants.”
  - a. For a specific amount of time are not free to resign their employment.
  - b. But are to be treated with kindness and consideration.
  - c. The master is responsible to take care of his family.
4. Verse 39: “Do not work him with slave labor” – no degrading tasks.
  - a. His services are to be utilized for skilled labor or working in field.
5. Verse 40: Whatever the term of service, when Jubilee comes, he is free.
6. Verse 41: “He shall return to his family and to his ancestral heritage.”
  - a. He returns to all rights, privileges and position he enjoyed prior to servitude.
  - b. His slave experience is not to be held against him.
7. This alludes to the fact that when we are redeemed by Messiah, “old things pass away.”
8. Verse 42: “They are my servants ... taken from the land of Egypt.”
  - a. God’s people are not to be treated like others – i.e. sold on auction block.
  - b. Not to be degraded.
  - c. To do so would be to act as Pharaoh acted toward them – he was destroyed.
  - d. Verse 43: Warned against making him serve with rigor – same word in Egypt.
9. Ultimate degradation was for Israelite to be sold to non-Israelite.
  - a. Kinsmen are encouraged to redeem him without depriving owner of his rights.
  - b. Of course, wouldn’t be necessary if he had been helped before this happened.
  - c. This is not to say we should enable someone to be lazy and incompetent.
10. Nevertheless, redeem as soon as possible that he not assimilate into their culture.
  - a. This shows that Israel controls the country and laws must be followed by all.
  - b. Also shows that Torah doesn’t allow the Israelites to take him by force.
  - c. Law must be followed at all times.
11. Verse 50: “Make a reckoning with his purchaser” – Is entitled to his rights too.
  - a. It is considered that to steal from non-Israelite is worse than stealing from an Israelite.
  - b. Israelite would rail against you.
  - c. Non-Israelite will rail against the Torah and all God’s people.

- d. This desecrates the Name.
  - e. Jacob wanted his sons to return the money found in their sacks asap.
12. This instruction to redeem the Hebrew from non-Hebrew explains why the “king who knew not Joseph” came to power – Israel could not continue to assimilate into Egypt.
13. Verse 53: Israelite forbidden to stand by and watch a fellow man be treated harshly.
- a. Maybe why Moses killed the taskmaster.

## **CHAPTER 26: WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY**

1. Verse 1: “Do not make idols” – Assuming an Israelite is servant to a non-Israelite.
  - a. Should not say that because his master serves idols, that he should follow suit.
2. Verse 2: “Observe my Sabbaths” – under same assumption, continue to keep Shabbat.
3. Three things we are to do even under the worst of circumstances:
  - Avoid idolatry – acknowledges He alone is God.
  - Observe Shabbat – acknowledges He is Creator.
  - Revere My Sanctuary – by keeping the pilgrimage festivals (keeping the feasts).
4. In this Israel remains “set apart.”
5. To not keep Shabbat is tantamount to idolatry – both deny His authority.
6. Sabbath observance includes observance of the seventh year which is related to reverence for the Sanctuary.
  - a. The Temple was destroyed and the people exiled for failing to keep *sh'mittah*.
7. As always, being set apart in spite of circumstances is the primary point being addressed.