

# Shabbat Spice

PARSHAT BEHAR



Shmittah and Yovel,  
What Can We Learn?  
By Rachie Dilamani

In this week's Parsha, Parshat Behar, we are introduced to the concepts of the *Shmittah* and the *Yovel*. On the surface, it may be hard to understand the purpose for these *mitzvot*, but by learning them closely, there is a great lesson that we can learn from them. During the *Shmittah* and the *Yovel* years, we are reminded that Hashem is ultimately in control of everything.

*Shmittah*: We are told that every 7th year, known as the *Shmittah* year, we must observe an agricultural *Shabbat*. During the *Shmittah* year, the land is not to be worked. How would this affect people financially? Why would Hashem command this of us? The *Shmittah* year reminds us that Hashem is in control of everything, including one's finances.

During this year, we stop working the land and trust Hashem to provide for us. It can sometimes be easy to get caught up in our own successes, but we must always remember our success ultimately comes from Hashem. It is Hashem who is in control of everything, not us. Even when we leave the land unworked for an entire year, Hashem continues to provide for us.

*Yovel*: Every 50th year is known as the *Yovel* year. During the *Yovel* year, all land is returned back to its original owner. This means that any purchase of land is only temporary. The *Yovel* year comes to teach us a very important lesson. What's mine isn't actually mine, it's Hashem's.

Chapter 25, Verse 23 writes: "*But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me.*" Rashi comments on this saying: "*Don't be greedy about giving back the land because it isn't yours.*"

In real estate, it's understood that the person who buys a property becomes the owner of it. The Torah is telling us that someone who buys land is in fact not the ultimate owner.

In verse 38 it says: "*I am your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your G-d.*" The land was given to us by Hashem, but ultimately it's His.

While *Shmittah* only occurs every 7 years, and *Yovel* every 50, we can apply these lessons to our everyday lives. Hashem is in control of everything and everything ultimately belongs to Hashem. By learning the laws of *Shmittah* and *Yovel*, we are reminded that we are not entitled to anything in our lives, but rather everything we have is given to us by Hashem.

CANDLE LIGHTING 7:52PM | SHABBAT ENDS 9:01PM

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SEPHARDIC BET MIDRASH

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PARSHAT BEHAR



Work to Live, or Live to Work?

By Jessica Namdar

In this week's Parasha, we read about some very important laws that apply in the land of Israel.

On Mount Sinai, G-d tells Moshe the laws of *Shmitab*. Just like we have *Shabbat* (our day of rest), so too, the land should have a *Shabbat* every seven years. This means that for six years farmers may work their land and profit from it, but on the seventh year all work should cease, and all produce becomes free for anyone to take.

A major concern that arises is: how will there be enough food to last during the *Shmitab* year? G-d promises that during the sixth year he will bless the land and produce enough food to cover until the new crop is ready to eat (in the eighth year).

The concept of *Shmitab* is very similar to *Shabbat*. For *Shabbat*, one must prepare ahead of time. HaShem purposely made it that no preparation is to be done on *Shabbat*, so one can really focus on prayer, Torah study, and spiritual growth.

Similarly, *Shmitab* requires people to prepare and work for 6 years, then pause all work and spend time growing and learning. This concept helps us put our values in order: Do we live to work, or do we work to live?

The laws of *Shmitab* are also there to remind us that the land belongs to G-d, and it must be permitted to observe its own *Shabbat*. We may mistakenly think that the land belongs to us, if we keep working and profiting from it, so Hashem wants to remind us that the earth belongs to him and he is the real owner.

After seven cycles of *Shmitab*, the 50th year is called *Yovel* (Jubilee). This is also a year of rest. In the *Yovel* year, all servants are let free and all property returns to the owner.

Another law we learn in Parshat Behar is the prohibition of charging a fellow Jew interest. When we lend someone money, we must expect back the exact amount we lent them.

The Torah is training us to do acts of kindness for others without any gain. When we lend money, we should do it for the sole purpose of helping the person. People tend to ask themselves, "What's in it for me?" But the Torah here is teaching us to do acts of kindness with no ulterior motive.

May HaShem bless us to always be able to grow and develop the attribute of kindness so we can help one another.

Shabbat Shalom!

THANK YOU TO THE SHABBAT SPICE TEAM  
RACHIE DILAMANI, VERONICA KORDMANY  
ALEXIS LIVI, ASHLEY NAMDAR, DANIELLA NAMDAR