

PARSHAT BEHAR

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

THIS LAND IS 'HIS' LAND

1. To the best of your recollection, (according to Chumash) to whom does Eretz Yisrael 'belong' - i.e. to Am Yisrael or to God? [Explain this question (and its implications) before you answer it!]

2. In Parshat Behar, we find a pasuk that may provide an answer - review Vayikra 25:23, noting its context. In your opinion, why (and how) does this statement form an appropriate conclusion for the laws of 'shmitta' & 'yovel' (in 25:1-22)?

Is this statement of 'ki li kol ha-aretz' thematically congruent with God's numerous promises to Eretz Yisrael to Avraham Avinu in Breishit 12:7, 15:18, 17:7-8; etc, and to Bnei Yisrael in Shmot 6:8 & 19:5-6? Relate as well to Vayikra 25:38 & 25:55!

In your answer, relate to the **purpose** of God's choice of Avraham Avinu and His promise of Eretz Yisrael to the Avot. [Note for example Breishit 12:1-3, 18:17-19, 26:1-5 and Yaakov's 'neder' in 28:13-22. [Note as well Yeshayahu 42:5-6.]

3. Review Yirmiyahu 27:1-6 (and preferably the entire chapter), where the navi describes why God has allowed the Babylonians the right to concur the Land. Relate this chapter (especially 27:5-6) to the above questions.

Relate this as well to the 'tochacha' in Vayikra chapter 26, especially 26:3-6 in contrast to 26:27-33.

4. Finally, carefully review the very first Rashi in Chumash ("amar R. Yitzchak" on Breishit 1:1), noting how Rashi relates to the above question (and the purpose of Sefer Breishit). Be sure to pay carefully attention to how that Midrash alludes to Yirmiyahu 27:5, in both its choice words and theme! Be sure that you can explain why.

Note as well how that Rashi relates to Tehillim 111:10 and to the context of that psalm.

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

1. As you study the laws of shmitta and yovel in Vayikra chapter 25, attempt to extrapolate what type of economic system these laws create.

In terms of modern day 'macro economic systems', would you consider these laws more similar to 'capitalism' or to 'communism'?

What are the positive and negative aspects of this system, where land can only be 'borrowed' for up to 49 years, but can never be sold?

How does the Torah relate to certain potential negative aspects of this system, such as those explained in 25:14-17 and 25:20-23?

2. In chapter 25, note how the laws of shmitta (25:1-24) are immediately followed by various related cases in 25:25-55. First, note how each case is a 'parshia' (see 25:25,29,35,39,47). Be sure you can identify the specific situation of each case.

Then attempt to identify the logic in the progression from one case to the next. [When you finish (or give up) see Rashi on 26:1!]

3. Review these laws once again, noting the blend between the 'technical' economic (and judicial) laws and moral imperatives. Attempt to relate this phenomenon to the reason for why the Torah may have preferred to place these laws in Sefer Vayikra.

In what manner are these laws similar to certain laws that are found in Parshat Kedoshim?

Note as well how these laws relate to the 'header' of the second half of Sefer Vayikra in 18:1-5 (and 18:24-28), as discussed in our shiur on Parshat Acharei Mot.

Finally, note how 25:38 and 25:55 form respective 'finale psukim' for the 'parshiot' of 25:25-37 and 25:39-54.

Study these 'finale' psukim' and attempt to relate the emphasis of each 'finale' to the content of the laws in each unit.

4. Review Devarim chapter 15:, noting how that chapter also begins with laws concerning the shmitta year, followed by a set of several related laws that deal with how to help others in 'economic crisis'.

How is the overall structure of that chapter similar to chapter 25 in Sefer Vayikra?

In what manner are the laws re: shmitta in Devarim different than the laws in Vayikra, and in what manner are they similar? Attempt to relate these differences to the purpose [theme] of each book?

Compare as well the laws of shabbat, and their purpose in Vayikra 23:1-4 to the laws of shabbat in Devarim 5:10-16! Can you identify a certain similarity? If so, attempt to explain why.

SHMITTA & SEVEN

1. In addition to the shmitta cycle, where else in Sefer Vayikra do we find cycles of **seven**? Are any of these cycles of seven followed by something special?

Relate to chapters 8-> 9, 12->15, and especially chapter 23 (and the laws of Shavu'ot and Sukkot). In what manner are any of those laws similar to the laws of shmitta and yovel?

Do any of these laws relate to 'nature'?

2. Where is the first time in Chumash where we find that the number 'seven' is significant?

Can this help explain why specifically the mitzva of shmitta relates to the number seven? Relate to Breishit 1:1-2:3, and the purpose of Torah's presentation of the story of God's Creation.

In what manner are the laws of shmitta similar to the commandment to keep Shabbat.

[See also Ramban on 25:2 for a more 'kabbalistic' approach.]

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PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)

1. Can you identify any thematic connection between the topic of shmitta and yovel in Parshat Behar and any of the topics discussed in Parshat Emor or anywhere else in Sefer Vayikra? In other words, can you explain why the laws in Parshat Behar are recorded in Sefer Vayikra?

2. Review 25:1, noting how it forms a 'header' for this set of laws. and explains when and where these laws were given. Based on this 'header', would you expect for the laws in Parshat Behar to be thematically related to the previous section of laws in Parshat Emor, or to any other topic in Sefer Vayikra?

When (and from where) were the previous sections of laws in Sefer Vayikra given? [Relate to Vayikra 1:1 and 7:37-38.]

3. Quickly review chapter 26, simply to identify its primary topic, i.e. the "tochacha" [rebuke]. In what manner does the "tochacha" in chapter 26 relate to the laws in chapter 25? In what manner does it relate to the other laws in Sefer Vayikra?

Based on the 'header' in 25:1 [pay attention to the new 'dibbur' that begins, noting where it ends], be sure that you understand why chapters 25 & 26 form a unit. Can you identify any thematic connections between chapter 25 and 26.

Be sure that you can explain the final pasuk of chapter 26.

4. Based on 26:34-35, explain why the 'tochacha' in chapter 26 follows the laws of shmitta in chapters 25. Attempt to relate this as well to the theme of the second half of Sefer Vayikra (i.e. relate to the unit that begins with chapter 18, noting especially 18:24-30!

Based on our shiur on the two halves of Sefer Vayikra (see TSC shiur on Parshat Acharei Mot), can you explain why the tochacha forms an appropriate conclusion to the second half of Sefer Vayikra? [Be sure to relate to 18:25-28.]

5. Returning now to Parshat Emor, do you think that the laws recorded in chapter 24 (i.e. 24:1-9) 'belong' in Sefer Vayikra?

Explain why they do or why they don't. [Relate to Shmot 25:23-40 & 27:20-21.]

Similarly, would you say that the story (and its subsequent laws) in 24:10-23 belong in Sefer Vayikra?

If any of these topics do not 'belong' in Sefer Vayikra, where in Chumash would you say that each of these parshiot (in chapter 24) do 'belong'?

6. Based on its header (see 25:1/ compare with 1:1), does Parshat Behar 'belong' in Sefer Vayikra or in Sefer Shmot?

Based on its content, in what sefer does it belong?

Relate to Shmot 23:9-12. [See also commentaries of Chizkuni on Shmot 24:7 and Ibn Ezra on 25:1.]

7. How does 26:1-2 thematically connect to either chapter 25, which precedes it, or to chapter 26, which follows?

In your opinion, why do you think that a new chapter begins two psukim before the end of Parshat Behar? [Note the parshiot divisions as well and how they relate to the chapter divisions! In your opinion, which division makes more sense?]

Would you consider these laws in 26:1-2 new or 'repeats'?

If they are repeats, where in Chumash were they first mentioned? [Relate to both Sefer Shmot and Sefer Vayikra.]

Why do you think that they are being repeated at this point?

8. Based on your answers to the above questions, you should have found several topics towards the end of Sefer Vayikra that appear to 'belong' in Sefer Shmot; make a list of those topics, noting next to each one where in Chumash they **do** belong!

As you study your list, see if you can identify a pattern? If so, can you offer an explanation for this pattern?

PART III - PARSHANUT

1. The opening pasuk of Parshat Behar tells us that these mitzvot were given on Har Sinai.

Let's say this parsha began like most other parshiot with simply 'va-yedaber Hashem el Moshe leimor' without mentioning Har Sinai. If so, then from **where** would we have thought that these mitzvot were given? [on Har Sinai?, the ohel mo'ed?, somewhere else?]

Up until this point, where have the other mitzvot recorded in Sefer Vayikra been given from?

[Relate to Vayikra 1:1; 7:37-38; and 16:1.]

2. Is this the first time in the Torah that we find details about the laws of shmitta? If not, where else did we learn about it?

Relate to Shmot 23:11-12, and its context.

What is the nature of the other mitzvot recorded in Shmot chapter 23? (i.e. the unit Shmot 20:19->23:19)]

Where and when were those mitzvot given?

How does this relate to the first pasuk in Behar?

3. Now, see the Midrash quoted by Rashi on the first pasuk in Parshat Behar ["ma inyan shmitta etzel Har Sinai"].

What basic assumption does this Midrash make which leads to this question? What is that assumption based on?

How does Rashi explain the answer of the Midrash to this question? How does Ramban explain that Midrash?

[Can you explain **why** they argue.]

Can you suggest a more simple answer to the question raised by the Midrash?

4. Now, see Ibn Ezra. Why does he immediately say 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar...'? Is he not bothered by the question raised by Rashi?

How would he answer that question based on his peirush?

How does he explain **why** this parsha is 'out of place'?

See also Rashbam; would you consider this a similar approach?

5. Next, see Chizkuni.

Is his basic approach the same as Ibn Ezra or different?

How does he explain **why** this parsha is 'out of place'?

How is this different from Ibn Ezra's explanation?

6. Now, see Seforno.

Does he explain like Rashi or like Ibn Ezra?

How does he explain **why** this Parsha is 'out of place'?

7. See Ramban once again, note how first he explains what he understands as 'pshat' of the Midrash quoted by Rashi (arguing with Rashi's own explanation of that Midrash)..

Continue this Ramban until he begins 'lefi da'ati' - [according to my opinion...]. Note how here he begins his own explanation of this pasuk!

Even though just about **all** of the other mefarshim understand that this parsha is a classic case of 'ein mukdam u-me'uchar' - Ramban 'gallantly' defends his position that Chumash progresses in chronological order. Read this Ramban carefully, and note how he beautifully explains the chronological order of the entire Sefer! Note also how he relates the laws of shmitta and especially the tochacha to the **second** Luchot! [Relate this to our shiur on the 13 Midot.]

Even though this Ramban is very lengthy, it is very worthwhile - both to help you understand Sefer Vayikra and to appreciate Ramban's approach and methodology. Note how he provides a comprehensive explanation for the progression of most all of the parshiot is Sefer Vayikra.

[As you read this Ramban, note how 'loyal' he remains to his opinion of 'yeish mukdam u-me'uchar ba-Torah'.]

be-hatzlacha,
menachem