

# PARASHAT BEHAR

(ON MOUNT)

LEVITICUS 25:1-26:2

## ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

**Y**eshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

### Haftorah

Jeremiah 32:6–27

### Testimony of Yeshua

Yeshua on the Jubilee: **Luke 4:16–21**

On helping the poor: **Matthew 19:21; 26:11; Mark 10:21; 14:7; Luke 14:13, 21; Acts 11:29; James 2:5; Galatians 6:7–10; 1 John 3:17**

On the poor being exalted: **James 1:9–11**

On the debasement of the greedy rich of the earth: **James 5:1–6**

On being a servant: **Matthew 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:21–24**

### Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion)

—**25:1** Sabbatical Year or Seven-Year Land Sabbath (*Shemittah*)

—**25:8** The Fifty-Year Jubilee (*Yovel*)

—**25:14** Sequence of Events Leading to Enslavement

—**25:23** Redemption of Ancestral Land

—**25:32** Levite Cities—The Levites' Ancestral Heritage

—**25:35** Preventing Poverty—Those Who Have Means Are to Extend Charity to Those in Need

—**25:39** An Israelite's "Slave" or Indentured Servant

### Study Questions for This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion)

**1** **25:2**, *The Stone Edition Chumash*, translates Leviticus 25:2(b) as follows, "When you come into the land that I give you the land shall observe a **Sabbath rest for [YHVH]**." Note the emphasized portion. Though the Jewish sages say this does not imply that YHVH rests, it acknowledges the fact that as YHVH "rested" after his creation of the world, so too, Israel rested in the seventh year from its agricultural work (an activity that allows the created to share with the Creator in the act of creation) on the seventh year to commemorate Elohim's act of creation (*ArtScroll Rashi Leviticus*, p. 318). The sages also note that the comparison between the Jubilee and the Sabbath is that both bear testimony to Elohim's creation of the universe in six days and his rest on the seventh. They further note that the seven years of the *Shemittah* (Sabbath year)

cycle allude to the six thousand years of history that will be climaxed by the seventh millennium, which will be a period of peace and tranquility (*ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*, p. 697).

Note how everything ancient Israel did in their day-to-day life brought them into worshipful relationship with their Creator by causing them to recall both what he had done for them (past tense) and what he would do for them prophetically (future tense). How can we follow this example and forge every aspect of our life into a never-ending recognition and praise of YHVH's past, present and future grace and love for us?

- 2** **25:4**, *A Sabbath of rest unto the land*. The land Sabbath teaches that our means of producing an income belong entirely to YHVH. He gives us life, breath, land, health, eyesight, physical and mental abilities ... everything that we need to survive. Now imagine losing, say, your health. Or your eyesight? Or due to an illness, say through a stroke or an injury to the head, you became mentally impaired. Where would you be financially? All belong to YHVH and he gives us everything we need with which to work our land, do our job, raise our family, educate ourselves, etc. Are we as grateful to him as we should be?
- 3** **25:9**, The word *jubilee* is the Hebrew word *yovel* (יובל) *Strong's* H3104; *TWOT* 835e) meaning "ram's horn trumpet." The ram's horn would be sounded at special events as a proclamation of great joy and jubilation such as would be the case at the commencement of the Jubilee Year when all debts were forgiven, all indentured servants were set free, all land was returned to its original owners, and all agricultural activity ceased for a year of rest. The arrival of the Jubilee Year was announced on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) with the blast of a shofar called the *shofar bagadol* or the great or final shofar blast (to be distinguished from the *first* and *second* shofar blasts that occur on the feasts of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Yom Teruah* (Day of Trumpets) respectively. This same event prophetically corresponds with the return of the exiles (the "lost ten tribes") to the land of Israel (which is an aspect of what the Jewish sages call the "final redemption") and the return of Yeshua the Messiah.
- Do you carry in your heart the expectancy of this day? Though the reality of it seems like a far-off dream, as was the case with the Israelites as they lived in anticipation of the next Jubilee Year regardless of whether it was 20, 30, 40 years in the future. Are you preparing for it and are you ready? Are you ready to be set free from bondage to the Babylonian religious, economic and political system that grips and enslaves our world and us? Are you ready to return to your ancestral home and heritage in the land of Israel?
- 4** The land Sabbath, Jubilee Year and the prohibition against charging interest to needy brethren teach us against greed or covetousness, for the value of a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. Our modern culture is highly materialistic and it is easy to be swept into this mode. Are you driven by the need to possess material wealth and to have many possessions? Do you find security in these things? Is your life ruled by fear (the opposite of faith) so that you feel compelled to surround yourself with material goods to give you a feeling of security? Where would your life be if all your material goods were destroyed by a fire, flood, hurricane or tornado? Would your life's perspective, values and priorities suddenly change? If so, why not make those changes now and reorient yourself along more righteous and spiritual and less materialistic, more YHVH-oriented lines?
- 5** **25:21**, *And I will command my blessing*. The land Sabbaths forced the Israelites to depend totally on YHVH to bless them triple-fold in the sixth year so that they would have enough food to last in the seventh year as well as during year one again while awaiting the harvest of that year's crops. Do you have that kind of faith to trust YHVH so implicitly for your provisions? Think back of the ways and times he has supernaturally provided for you and your family when you thought there was no way through. Now take a moment to thank YHVH for the mercy and grace he extended to you in your time of need.
- 6** Though Israel was given these laws concerning the land Sabbaths, and though YHVH provided them with a glorious opportunity to demonstrate incredible faith in YHVH to bless them abundantly in the sixth year, and see his miraculous provision, thereby strengthening their faith, thereby receiving even more blessings from YHVH the next time, thus strengthening their faith to even a higher level bringing of more blessings and so on, *Israel never kept the land Sabbaths for 490 years*. Israel took the path of least resistance, which was to *not* trust YHVH's Word and promises, but to trust in themselves and their own

reasonings. This led to the demise of their nation and ultimate captivity for 70 years—one year for each of the 70 land Sabbaths they missed during that 490 years. What is our point? All of YHVH's laws, even the seemingly least important ones, are important and effect not only our lives, but those of future generations, for they set laws of cause and effect into motion that YHVH has spiritually programmed into the universe. What commandments do you let slip by figuring they are not that important? Let the Spirit of Elohim convict you; let YHVH bring you back into obedience to his commands so that you and your future generations can be blessed.

**7** The land Sabbaths, Jubilee Year and years of release teach us that we are simply stewards of what YHVH has given us and that he owns it all. Are you truly a good steward of all that he has placed under your care? Do you worship him and evidence your gratitude to him by caring for and wisely using the time, talent and treasures he has given you?

**8** **25:35**, *If your brethren become poor*. What do you do to help the poor? Treating them fairly and helping them when it is in your power to do so is very important in YHVH's spiritual economy.

**9** It is not in our power to ransom the poor from the power of sin and death. Yeshua did that. This is what the Jubilee Year ultimately points to: the redemptive work of Yeshua. We can, however, point people to the Redeemer. Are we constantly looking for opportunities to witness to the heathen about the message of the gospel and Yeshua's work on the cross? If not why not?

**10** In 25:55 we read, "For the Children of Israel are my slaves/servants, whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt—I am YHVH, your Elohim." Here YHVH states dogmatically that he brought or redeemed them out of slavery to Egypt so that they could **become his slaves**. Does this trouble you? It did not seem to trouble the apostles of Yeshua who referred to themselves many times as YHVH's bondservants/slaves (e.g. Rom 1:1; Tit 1:1; Jas 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev 1:1). Perhaps their view of slavery is different than ours. Did they see two categories of slavery and that all humans fall into one or the other category: slavery to the world, flesh and the devil that leads to death as compared to "slavery" to the Word and the Spirit of YHVH that leads to life? There is no escape. One is either a slave to the law of sin and death or to the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua (Rom 8:1–2). Those who have been redeemed by the blood of Yeshua have become Yeshua's purchased possession as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19–20:

What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Set-Apart Spirit which is in you, which you have of Elohim, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify Elohim in your body, and in your spirit, which are Elohim's.

Do you live your life, make choices, do or do not do things, say or do not say things every day with this reality in mind? Is Yeshua truly your Lord and Master? Do you just recite these words, or does all that you say, think and do reflect this reality?

## HAFTORAH READING—JEREMIAH 32:6-27

### Simply Trust and Obey

**J**EREMIAH WAS IN PRISON FOR PREACHING THE POLITICALLY INCORRECT MESSAGE that YHVH's judgment was coming upon Judah for her sins against YHVH. While in prison, YHVH instructed the prophet to redeem a piece of his family's ancestral land even while foreign troops were besieging the city of Jerusalem. This was not an exercise in foolish futility on Jeremiah's part, but rather it was a prophetic act demonstrating to the people of Judah YHVH's unfailing love. After the country had been laid waste by foreign conquerors, YHVH would in time redeem his people and land and allow Israel once again to possess it.

**1** YHVH asks Jeremiah to buy a field in a land that is about to be conquered by foreign troops. To the mind, this is an illogical thing to do—a waste of money. When Jeremiah questions YHVH about this (verses 16–25), YHVH's answer, in effect, is "Trust and obey" (verse 27). For the prophet to have done this, he first had to hear the voice of YHVH to be able to "trust and obey" it. Then he had to yield totally his will to that of YHVH's. It is a two-step process. Can you think of some times where you have not sought

YHVH's voice, but have leaned to your own understandings, which Scripture says not to do (Prov 3:5), and the outcome has not gone well for you? Have you ever sought and heard his voice, but not obeyed it? What was the outcome? And then, have you heard and obeyed his voice even though doing so made no sense to the natural man? What was the outcome?

**2** When YHVH asked Jeremiah to purchase the land, he sought assurance of his faith from YHVH. His prayer (verses 16–25) is not one of impudence or complaining, but of faithful and respectful questioning. YHVH honored this prayer and answered him in the next verse. What are some other examples in Scripture of righteous people respectfully petitioning YHVH (or other authority figures) and receiving an answer? Some examples could include John the Baptist (Matt 11:2–3), Gideon (Judg 6:36–40), the Daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27:1–11), the Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1–6), Ruth (Ruth 3), Esther (Est 5:1–14), and Moses (Exod 32:30–33). Can you think of others?

**3** **Verse 27**, *Is there anything too hard for me?* Jeremiah already knew the answer to his question, for when he is praying he says, “There is nothing too hard for you” (verse 17). YHVH answers Jeremiah by simply reassuring the prophet of what he already knew about YHVH's character. He had come to YHVH with the best thoughts about him, and YHVH gives him the answer that his thoughts are true (*The Soncino Edition Pentateuch*, p. 541). Has this ever happened to you? Isn't this a way for YHVH to teach his children to listen to and trust the inner voice of YHVH's Spirit in them?

Consider the words of Christian commentator Matthew Henry about this passage of Scripture,

Jeremiah adores [YHVH] and his infinite perfections. When at any time we are perplexed about the methods of Providence, it is good for us to look to first principles. Let us consider that [Elohim] is the fountain of all being, power, and life; that with him no difficulty is such as cannot be overcome; that he is [an Elohim] of boundless mercy; that is [an Elohim] of strict justice; and that he directs every thing for the best. Jeremiah owns that [Elohim] was righteous in causing evil to come upon them. Whatever trouble we are in, personal or public, we may comfort ourselves that [YHVH] sees it, and knows how to remedy it. We must not dispute [Elohim's] will, but we may seek to know what it means.