

Parashah Behar

The one where the Torah shows laws and principles about the land and its management, with the Sabbatical year (Shmita) and the Jubilee year (Yovel).

Parashah Behar highlights the concept of the Sabbatical year (Shmita) and the Jubilee year (Yovel).

Sabbatical Year (Shmita): Every seventh year is the Sabbatical year, where farmers are instructed to stop planting crops and tending to their fields. Instead, they allow the land to rest and lie fallow, or without plantings. The produce that grows during this year is considered communal property and is accessible to anyone who needs it. This practice not only rejuvenates the land, but also promotes social and economic equity by ensuring that the poor and the stranger have access to food.

Jubilee Year (Yovel): The Jubilee year occurs after seven cycles of seven years, marking the 50th year. During this special year, ancestral lands that have been sold or transferred return to their original owners. This practice ensures that land remains within the family and prevents the permanent displacement of families due to economic hardships. It also reestablishes economic balance and prevents concentration of wealth in the hands of a few.

Parashah Behar **stresses ethical business practices and fair treatment of fellow Israelites.** It discourages exploitation and unfair financial deals, highlighting the importance of honesty and integrity in all transactions.

The Torah provides guidelines for the treatment of indentured servants, who may work for a limited time to repay a debt. The parashah encourages humane treatment, instructing that they should be treated not as slaves, but rather as hired workers. Furthermore, they are to be released during the Jubilee year, ensuring that their servitude is temporary.

Parashah Behar **highlights the idea that the land belongs to a higher purpose and is entrusted to the people.** It reminds the Israelites that they are merely temporary residents and that the land ultimately belongs to a higher power.

Parashah Behar **contains a set of laws and principles that emphasizes the importance of social justice, economic equity, and ethical behavior in land ownership and management.** These principles aim to create a society where everyone can thrive while respecting the inherent dignity and rights of every individual.

Teen Takeaways from Parashah Behar

1. **Fairness matters:** Parashah Behar teaches us that fairness and equality are crucial. It's important to ensure that everyone has a fair shot at success and happiness, just like how the land gets a break to rejuvenate every seventh year. Science has proven that leaving land fallow improves its ability to provide crops. Did the ancient Israelites know this, or was there some other teaching that they wanted to convey like "who the land really belongs to"?
2. **Protect the environment:** The parashah reminds us to take care of the environment. Just like the land needs time to rest, we should be mindful of how we use natural resources and try to protect our planet.
3. **Help each other:** Behar shows us that we're all in this together. We should look out for one another and make sure nobody goes without basic needs like food and shelter.
4. **Be honest in business:** It's essential to be honest and fair in our dealings with others, especially in business. The parashah encourages us to act with integrity.
5. **Prevent permanent displacement:** Just like the Jubilee year prevents families from losing their ancestral land, we should think about how we can help people have stable homes and prevent homelessness.
6. **Support those in debt:** Behar teaches us to be compassionate and help people who are struggling with debt. It's important to show empathy and offer support to those in financial difficulty. In ancient Israel, debts were cancelled in the seventh year. Is that a good policy, or are there negative consequences that could occur? The rabbis were aware that some people might not offer loans to the poor and needy in the year or two before the Sabbatical (seventh) year. They created the "prozbul," which was an IOU that the borrower agreed to so that the loan would not be cancelled.
7. **Remember that nothing lasts forever:** Everything we have is temporary. We should appreciate what we have, use it wisely, and not take it for granted.
8. **Have faith and stay positive:** Sometimes it's important to have faith that things will work out, even if it seems tough. Trusting that things will get better can be a powerful mindset. As you grow older, you can begin to see things in the long term - the big picture. Instant gratification is not always the goal. Patience is a virtue. Some things are worth waiting for.
9. **Respect everyone:** No matter who someone is or where they come from, they deserve respect and dignity. Behar teaches us to treat everyone with kindness and respect. Judaism says that the stranger, the beggar, the person you may look down upon might be the messiah. Treat them accordingly.

Summary

Parashah Behar reminds us to be **fair, kind, and considerate to others; take care of our planet; and act with honesty and integrity in all aspects of life.** These lessons can guide us in becoming responsible and compassionate individuals as teenagers and throughout our lives.