

Beit Chachamin

PARSHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI

8TH MAY, 2026

COME & LEARN

THE BIG RECAP [PARSHA SUMMARY]

1 – God speaks to Moses on Mount Sinai and commands that the land in Israel must rest every seventh year. After seven cycles of seven years, the fiftieth year is declared holy as the Jubilee, with liberty proclaimed throughout the land. In that year, property returns to its original family, and people are not allowed to overcharge one another when buying and selling based on the years left until Jubilee.

2 – The people are told what they will eat in the seventh year, when the land is resting. God promises a blessing in the sixth year that will provide enough food for three years. Land sold because of poverty may be redeemed by a relative, or returned in the Jubilee if it is not redeemed sooner.

3 – Houses in walled cities have a different rule: if they are not redeemed within a year, they stay with the buyer. Houses in unwalled villages are treated more like open land and can return in the Jubilee. If a fellow Israelite becomes poor, they must be supported, not exploited, and no interest or profit should be taken from them.

4 – If an Israelite falls into poverty and is sold, they are not to be treated as a slave, but as a hired worker until the Jubilee year. Israel is told not to make or worship idols, to keep Shabbat, and to revere the sanctuary.

4 (cont.) – If they follow God’s laws and walk in His statutes, they will have rain, crops, peace, and safety in the land.

5 – God says that if the people reject the covenant, severe troubles will come in stages, including fear, drought, loss, and exile. Even so, God promises not to destroy them completely or break the covenant with their ancestors. If they confess their wrongdoing and humble themselves, God will remember the covenant and not reject them forever.

6 – If someone makes a vow dedicating a person to God, that person is assigned a value based on age and gender. Animals that are vowed also receive rules about whether they can be substituted or redeemed. Houses dedicated to God can be redeemed by paying the set value, with an added fifth.

7 – If a field is dedicated, its value is measured according to the amount of seed it can produce and the number of years until Jubilee. Anything declared completely devoted cannot be sold or redeemed. The section ends by saying that the tithe of the land, whether from grain or fruit, belongs to God and is holy.

PARSHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI

Parshat Behar-Bechukotai tells an interesting story of ownership. These verses focus on a person who has fallen into straits, meaning deep financial trouble or a hard situation that leaves them unable to manage on their own. They teach that even in that kind of crisis, people are meant to respond with fairness and be helpful. And ultimately trust that the land and the people ultimately belong to God.

LEVITICUS 25:23

וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמָּכַר לְצִמְתָּת כִּי לִי הָאָרֶץ כִּי גֵרִים וְתוֹשְׁבִים אַתֶּם עַמִּדִּי:

But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is Mine; you are but strangers resident with Me.

LEVITICUS 25:25

כִּי־יִמּוֹךְ אַחִיךָ וּמָכַר מֵאֲחֻזָּתוֹ וּבָא גֹאֲלוֹ הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו וּגְאָל אֶת מִמְכָּר אַחִיו:

If one of your kin is in straits and has to sell part of a holding, the nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what that relative has sold.

LEVITICUS 25:35

וְכִי־יִמּוֹךְ אַחִיךָ וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךְ וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ:

If your kin, being in straits, come under your authority, and are held by you as though resident aliens, let them live by your side:

LEVITICUS 26:3-4

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעִשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם:

וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַנָּה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פֵּרוֹ:

If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season, so that the earth shall yield its produce and the trees of the field their fruit.

Taken together, these lines call for a community in which people are responsible for one another. When Israel lives this way, the land can flourish and the community can stay rooted in covenant.