



# פרשת בהר

# CIRCLE TIME AT YOUR Shabbos Table

...FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN...

## TELL ME A TALE >>

A dvar Torah with a story.

## THE BLESSING OF SHEMITTAH

וְכִי תֹאמְרוּ מֵה נֹאכַל בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת... וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת בְּרַכְתִּי  
לָכֶם (כה:כ-כא)

And if you will say, "What will we eat in the seventh year...?"  
...I will command My blessing for you... (25:20-21)

**Many have seen the miracles Hashem has performed for those who keep shemittah.**

**T**he farmers seated around the table were concerned. "Look," said Yankel. "We did it. We kept *shemittah*. Everyone said we couldn't do it, it was too hard, there wouldn't be enough food to feed the people...but we did it. But now *Shemittah* is over; let's plow while we can!" Many heads around the table nodded in agreement.

Reb Dov disagreed and pounded the table in urgency. "*Rabbosai*, a few more days won't ruin us! We did everything according to halachah so far, a bit longer is no big deal."

"What if it rains on Sukkos?" someone called out.

"Where will we get seed after everyone else has planted already?" another said. Everyone started talking at once, and the babble of voices filled the room.

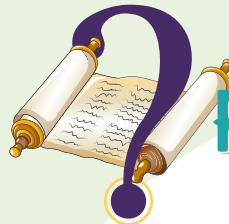
The meeting was being held in the basement of the shul of Moshav Komemius. The year was 5713 (1952), and it was a few days before Sukkos. The farmers had just finished a whole year of *shemittah*. Komemius was a *frum moshav*, and all the farms there had been unworked all year. People around the world had called them crazy for keeping *shemittah*. Almost no one else was doing it. But *talmidei chachamim* had visited all the farms, teaching about the importance of *shemittah* and the *brachos* that it brings. They campaigned hard for people to be *moser nefesh* for this unique mitzvah, and the people of Moshav Komemius had placed their faith in Hashem and hadn't worked all year.

Not everyone agreed that there would be special *brachos*. *Shemittah* nowadays is only a

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## PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

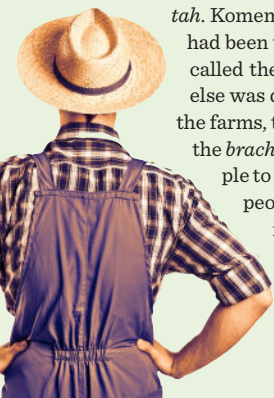
### CHUMASH BEKIUS QUESTIONS

- 1 What are three names for Har Sinai? How many mountains can you think of that are mentioned in the Torah? (There are 12.)
- 2 Where are 10 times that the number 50 appears in the Torah?
- 3 Which 3 mitzvos include counting something?
- 4 Which word in the *parshah* that means "forever" appears *nowhere* else in *Chumash*? What word with a similar meaning is often used? Which word with that meaning is *never* used in *Chumash* but is used in *Navi*?

### LEINING QUESTIONS

(Read the questions Friday night. Keep an eye out for answers during leining and shnayim mikra and check the answers Shabbos day!)

- 5 Can you find 6 words in a row that all begin with the same letter?
- 6 Can you find the same number mentioned 4 times in one *pasuk*?





## SERIAL >> CHAPTER 2

# CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main course!

Recap: Reb Shimon and his secretary, Reb Yitzchak, are traveling on a business trip with a large box of money. They stop for a nap in a beautiful but dangerous forest.

**R**eb Shimon could not fall asleep. He tossed and turned on the grassy lawn beneath the trees but could not get comfortable. As much as he enjoyed the cool breeze and the beautiful woods, he was used to his expensive, plush bed at home, and he couldn't sleep on the ground. Especially without a pillow. He needed something on which to rest his head!

Reb Yitzchak awoke and tried to help his boss get comfortable. First, they made a pillow of grasses, then moss. Finally, they tried leaves. No results! Then Reb Shimon had an idea.

"Yitzchak, would you be so kind as to fetch the box from the coach? You know, the one with the coins? It is the perfect size and shape to be a good headrest, and it even has a soft cover."

"Reb Shimon, are you sure that is a good idea? There are bandits in the forest. Do you really want to take the box out of its hiding place?"

"It's not like the bandits can't get into the coach while we are asleep," Reb Shimon said softly. "Be a good man and get the box, will you?"

Reb Yitzchak went to get the box for his employer. Sure enough, with his head resting on the precious container, Reb Shimon fell fast asleep. So did Reb Yitzchak.

A few hours later, Reb Yitzchak woke up with a start. He could see the orange light of the sun filtering through the trees. It was late afternoon! They had overslept! The sun was setting and it would soon be dark. They would be stuck in the forest with bloodthirsty thieves and bandits!

"Reb Shimon! Wake up! Wake up!" he cried urgently. "The sun has almost set. We must hurry! It will soon be dark!"

Reb Shimon opened one eye. "You are right, Yitzchak," he said. "It is late. We must *daven* Minchah!"

"Are you sure it's a good idea to—"

"Of course I'm sure. Nothing will happen if we take some time to *daven*. Besides, you are exaggerating. We still have a while before dark. Now, where's that driver?"

The driver was snoozing under another tree some distance away. "Driver! Why didn't you wake us?!" The man sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Whatsa problem?" he muttered. "I ain't nobody's alarm clock. Can't a man sleep a little?"

"Driver, we are going to *daven* Minchah, and then we must be on our way with haste. You will have to drive fast to get to the next town before dark!" The men stood and *davened* Minchah. Reb Shimon *davened* slowly, with *kavanah*, unhurried as always. Then the men climbed into the coach and set off into the gathering twilight.

The driver pushed the horses hard, flicking his reins and calling to them. But the road was winding and slow, and they couldn't go too fast for fear of overturning. They were still some distance from the next town when night fell. The driver lit some lanterns and the coach proceeded, slower now, hoping to escape the dangerous road without being stopped by criminals.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2



# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MIDRASH

וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עֲמִיתוֹ... (כה:יז)

A man should not oppress his fellow... (25:17)

We know that Rabi Akiva's 24,000 *talmidim* died during Sefirah due to a slight disrespect between them. But did you know that Rav Yochanan and Rav Shimon ben (Reish) Lakish also passed away because of misuse of words?

Reish Lakish was the chief of a group of bandits until Rav Yochanan was *mekarev* him. He became a great *talmid chacham*, married Rav Yochanan's sister, and became his lifelong *chavrusa*.

Many years later, the two *chavrusos* were discussing the *halachos* regarding at what stage of manufacture certain *keilim* were considered fully made and ready for use (at that point, they can become *tamei*). They had a disagreement over weapons, like knives and spears. Rav Yochanan commented something like, "Well, you would know."

Reish Lakish was very hurt by this and said, "What have I achieved all this time? Am I still perceived as a bandit?" He was so upset that he became deathly ill. His wife came to Rav Yochanan, her brother, and asked him to *daven* for her husband to recover, but there was nothing he could do. Reish Lakish died shortly afterward.

Rav Yochanan missed him terribly. The other *chachamim* tried to get him a new *chavrusa*, but he couldn't get over the loss of Reish Lakish and became so unstable that he wandered the streets saying, "Reish Lakish, where are you?" over and over. Eventually, the *chachamim davened* for him to be released from his pain, and he passed away as well.



# PARSHAH RHYME



Review the main points of the parshah with younger children, while challenging your family to complete the rhymes (use the "grammen" tune). Answers on the side!

- L
1. If your trees or land are in need of a fix,
  2. Do that during years one through \_\_\_\_\_.
- L
3. But in the seventh year, there's no fine-tuning.
  4. No plowing or planting, no cutting or \_\_\_\_\_.
- L
5. Hashem will send His *brachah*, don't ask how.
  6. You'll have plenty to eat, without needing to \_\_\_\_\_.
- H
7. Relax, be calm, don't make a fuss.
  8. Let the land enjoy its \_\_\_\_\_.

## Chorus

- L
9. Any land you were forced to sell,
  10. You'll get it back on the year called \_\_\_\_\_.
- L
11. You can't buy a house and have it to keep.
  12. Right before *yovel*, sell it for really \_\_\_\_\_.
- L

13. The land is Hashem's, you're just a guest.
  14. So sell it back at the owner's \_\_\_\_\_.
- H
15. Except one type of house, you needn't return at all:
  16. A house in a city that's part of the \_\_\_\_\_.

## Chorus

- L
17. If someone needs money, never do this:
  18. Give a loan but charge \_\_\_\_\_.
- L
19. When a man sells himself to work in your yard,
  20. Be nice, don't make him labor too \_\_\_\_\_.
- L
21. Klal Yisrael's *avadim Ivri'im* don't belong to them;
  22. We are all *avadim* to \_\_\_\_\_.
- H
23. If he gets hold of money, let him buy his way home.
  24. He can redeem himself, so wish him \_\_\_\_\_.

Answers: 2, six 4, pruning 6, plow 8, Shabbos 10, *yovel* 12, cheap 14, request 16, wall 18, *ribbis* 20, hard 22, Hashem 24, shalom

## RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. הר סיני is also called הר אלקים and הר חורב. Other mountains mentioned in the Torah are הר נבו (also called הר העברים), הר חרמון (also called הר אררט, הר הקדם, הר הגלעד, הר שעיר, הר ההר, הר שפר, הר האמורי, הר גריזים, הר עיבל, הר פארן, (שיאן
2. (a) *Yovel* is the 50<sup>th</sup> year. (g) There are 50 sets of hooks and loops holding the roof of the Mishkan together.  
(b) We count the Omer for 50 days. (h) The Mishkan is 50 *amos* wide.  
(c) The worth of a man between the ages of 20-60 is 50 *shekalim*. (i) The *levi'im* were given 50 percent of the spoils of the war against Midyan.  
(d) The *teivah* was 50 *amos* wide. (j) One sometimes pays a fine of 50 coins to a girl's father.  
(e) Avraham asked Hashem to save Sedom in the merit of 50 *tzaddikim*.  
(f) Moshe appoints judges over groups of 50 people.
3. We count *sefirah*; *beis din* counts years to *yovel*; a *zavah* counts seven days until *taharah*.
4. לְצַמְחָתָהּ is used twice in this week's *parshah* to mean forever. The word עוֹלָם is used many times in *Chumash*. The word נָצַח is used in *Navi* (see *Shmuel I* 15:29) but not in *Chumash*.
5. וְסִפְרָתָּ לָךְ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וְיָמֵי שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים תִּשַׁע וְאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה
6. See previous answer. The same *pasuk* uses the word שָׁבַע four times!

You may be surprised to find something familiar in every haftorah.

# HAFTORAH: YOU KNOW NAVI

## SUMMARY

The haftorah of *Parshas Behar* describes the redemption of ancestral lands as it was done by Yirmiyahu Hanavi, as a symbol of the future redemption of Klal Yisrael and the rebuilding of the economy of Eretz Yisrael.

While imprisoned by King Tzidkiyahu for his painful prophecies, Yirmiyahu is told by Hashem that his cousin Chanamel will come and ask him to purchase their family land, because he must sell it; it needs to be redeemed for the family. Yirmiyahu does so and records the transaction in a document meant to last a long time. Hashem promises Yirmiyahu that this symbolizes that even after the *Churban*, there will come a time when the land market in Eretz Yisrael will again be robust. Yirmiyahu composes a heartfelt *tefillah* for that promise to be fulfilled.

## CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH

The procedure of land redemption done in the haftorah is described in the *parshah*. On a deeper level, the *nevuah* and *tefillah* related in the haftorah see the purchase of land as a promise of redemption. The *parshah* discusses the laws of *shemittah*, the neglect of which caused the exile, and stresses that we belong only to Hashem—Who will eventually redeem us from among the nations.

## YOU KNOW NAVI

The *tefillah* of Yirmiyahu contains many phrases familiar to us from our siddur, such as ה' צְבָקוֹת שְׁמוֹ, הַקֵּל הַגָּדוֹל הַגָּבוֹר, and בְּאֲתוֹת וּבְמוֹפְתִים וּבְיַד הַזָּקֵה וּבְזֵרֹעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְמוֹרָא גָּדוֹל.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

*mitzvah d'Rabbanan*, and some say there is no *brachah* from keeping *shemittah* today. But the Rav of Komemius, Rav Mendelson, had said there would be, and the farmers trusted their *rav*.

Now, it was time to plant again. The farmers were meeting to decide when to start plowing the fields. Plowing took a long time, and the rains were expected to start any day. The wheat seed had to be in the ground before the rain fell. There was no time to waste, and some were pushing to start plowing on Chol Hamoed Sukkos.

The farmers discussed the issue and finally turned to the *rav* for a ruling. Rav Mendelson stroked his beard, deep in thought.

"This is not a simple *she'eilah*," he said finally. "I will travel to Bnei Brak to consult with the Chazon Ish. He will tell us what to do, and we will follow his ruling." The meeting broke up without a decision. A few days later, the Chazon Ish listened carefully to the farmers' concerns, as described by Rav Mendelson. If they started plowing too late, they could miss the rain and ruin the entire crop. After a whole year of no income, that would be devastating.

"Who says it will rain on time this year?" the Chazon Ish said, after hearing the question. "Hashem controls the rain."

"Yes, but is it not correct *hishtadlus* to plow as soon as possible, even on Chol Hamoed?"

"You kept *shemittah*. You can also keep Chol Hamoed without any major leniencies," the Chazon Ish said. "May Hashem send you His *brachah*."

Rav Mendelson relayed the Chazon Ish's ruling to the farmers, who accepted it without question. He then went to the Belzer Rebbe, Rav Aharon of Belz, who gave his hearty *brachah* as well.

After Sukkos, the men plowed the fields and hurried to the merchants to purchase grain seed that had not been worked on during *shemittah*. "Sorry," they were told. "It has all been sold already."

"Everything? Isn't there anything left?"

"All gone. Why are you so late? The planting season was a while ago!"

The farmers went from merchant to merchant, with no luck. What could they plant? Should they use grain from farms that were worked on *shemittah*?

The farmers met again. "We kept *shemittah*, and we'll keep it all the way through!" they decided.

Someone heard that there was a kibbutz that still had some old wheat seed left over from a full year earlier, the sixth year. Desperate, the farmers of Komemius went there. They were shown an old storehouse filled with rotting, smelly, wormy wheat kernels. "There it is," they were told. "You can buy it if you'd like, but it won't grow!"

Again, Rev Mendelson hurried to the Chazon Ish and the Belzer Rav. Should they plant rotten wheat? Plowing was expensive. If the wheat didn't grow, it would be even worse than not planting at all!

"Buy it. Plant it! Hashem will help," the Chazon Ish advised. The farmers bought the rotten wheat and planted it with *tefillos* on their lips. All the farmers from the surrounding farms laughed. "First you don't plant for a year, then you plow late, then you plant worms," they chortled. "This *moshav* will not last long!"

In the meantime, the rain still had not fallen. At the surrounding farms, all the wheat that had been planted during *shemittah* or on Sukkos dried out. With no rain for weeks after the planting, it was all ruined.

The rains came down as soon as the farmers of Komemius finished plowing and planting, right in time for the soggy, rotten kernels to sprout. That spring, only Komemius had wheat to sell, grown through the blessings of the Chazon Ish and the Belzer Rebbe, *shemittah*, and Sukkos.

כִּי לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
(כה:נה)

*Because Bnei Yisrael are Mine... (25:55)*

Throughout the generations, anti-Semites have referred to Jews as “dogs.” Why did *hashgachah* make them come up with this particular insult? The *Sefer Kushiyos* finds a comfort for Klal Yisrael in the answer.

Dogs = כלבים = 102 = בניים  
= children

**They are reminding us that we are Hashem’s children!**

The first letters of **כִּי לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** hint to this idea, as they spell **כלבי**.

# TREATS FROM TARGUM

*So much more than just translation – quick insights into Targum Onkelos!*

וּבְשָׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית שָׁבַת שְׁבִתוֹן יְהִי לְאַרְץ שְׁבַת לָהּ (כה:ד)

**תרגום אונקלוס:** וּבְשָׁבַת שְׁבִיעִיתָ נִיחַ שְׁמִטָּתָּ יְהִי לְאַרְעָא דְתַשְׁמִט קְדָם יי

*What is the proper translation of the verb שָׁבַת? Usually, Onkelos translates it as “שבא” (see above, לב, כג,ג, ל). But in this pasuk, he first translates it as נִיחַ, and later as תַּשְׁמִט. What’s going on?*

- Whenever a word in the Torah has different halachic term in Chazal, Onkelos always uses Chazal’s term. Chazal call שְׁבִיעִית by the name and verb שְׁמִיטָה, so he uses that word.
- שָׁבַת in this *pasuk* means to desist from doing work. When that refers to an *issur melachah* like Shabbos or Yom Kippur, Onkelos uses the term שבא. When it is a lighter *issur*, he calls it נִיחַ. In his translation of the *pasuk* describing the *issur melachah* of Yom Tov, the word נִיחַ is also used, because *melachah* is permitted for *ochel nefesh*, food preparation.

# THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, 5660 (1800), the Jewish slaves held on the island of Malta were freed.

The tiny Mediterranean islands of Malta (between Italy and Tunisia) were a place of terror for Jewish travelers during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1530, the Christian king Charles V of Spain installed a band of monks on the island armed with ships and weapons. Their job was to attack any Muslim sea traffic passing nearby, because Muslims and Christians were at war. When the war ended, the monks continued attacking passing ships for hundreds of years.

Called the Order of the Knights of St. John, the monks destroyed ships and took the passengers as slaves. Most of the travelers in the area were Jews, and there were thousands of Jewish slaves in Malta at any one time. It was almost impossible to escape.

Some Jews were ransomed by their communities, but many were imprisoned for a long time. A Turkish invasion of Malta was possibly sponsored by Jewish communities in an attempt to solve the problem, but it failed. A revolt of slaves in 1749 also failed.

The Knights were finally disbanded when Napoleon captured Malta in 1798. The Jewish slaves were sent home two years later.



# HALACHAH

## Being Fair to Workers



### **Is it a mitzvah to be gentle with workers?**

The Torah tells us regarding an *eved Ivri*, *lo sirdeh bo b'farech*—"do not give him work called '*parech*.'" This refers to work like we did in Mitzrayim, i.e., backbreaking labor. According to many *poskim*, this also includes busy work that does not have any real point. Rav Chaim Kanievsky adds that this includes putting a person in a situation where he has to do work he does not want to do or that he did not sign up to do.

### **To whom does this issur apply?**

The halachah is stated regarding an *eved Ivri*. Many *poskim* rule that it applies to paid employees as well, because an *eved Ivri* is in essence a hired worker, as he is not owned. It does not apply directly to an *eved Canaani*, but the concepts of *chillul Hashem* and *eivah* make it clear that disparate treatment may not be ap-

plied. All agree that even if the *issur* does not directly apply today, it still lays out proper ethical behavior.

### **What are some applications?**

If a boss hires workers, and they cannot work in the promised job for some reason (lack of materials, COVID-19, or something similar), he should not force them to do random jobs, like mopping the floors or anything else they did not sign up to do. If the boss intends to make use of his workers in any way he can, he must stipulate so in the original hiring agreement.

Some argue that in an arrangement in which the employer pays an employee for his time, and the employee can decide at some point if he wishes to stop working and lose the rest of his salary, it might be permitted to give him such work—because a new agreement is implied.

Some types of work are assumed to be within the boss's rights to add to an employee's responsibilities. A *dayan* must be consulted for each individual case.

### **Does this issur apply in any other context?**

Rav Chaim applies this *issur* to someone who leaves *sefarim* around the *beis midrash* and does not put them away. Aside from causing *bittul Torah* to people who search for a *sefer* and cannot find it (the Steipler wrote a letter strongly condemning this), Rav Chaim notes that the *gabbai* or *shamash* may be forced to collect the *sefarim* and return them to the shelves in order to do parts of his job, such as putting on tablecloths or tidying the *beis midrash*. Unless this is his explicit responsibility, Rav Chaim says that the person who leaves *sefarim* around violates *lo sirdeh bo b'farech*.

## THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

**"IF YOU WILL NOT BE A BETTER PERSON TOMORROW THAN YOU ARE TODAY, WHAT'S THE POINT IN HAVING A TOMORROW?"**

— Rebbe Nachman of Breslov



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