

all of His people—means very little if it is not accompanied with a sincere, unadulterated and unfettered love for all people, **especially one’s brothers and sisters in the Messiah**. The Apostle John puts it this way:

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” (1 John 4:7-13).

When you meditate upon this week’s Torah portion, remember that the Holy One of Israel desires all to *truly know Him* (cf. John 3:16). There may be those who strictly observe the commandments seen in *Emor*, but because they lacked a holy demeanor and sanctified way of approaching Him—with little care or concern for others—are likely to be excluded from His Kingdom. **Make sure that your observance of the Torah is definitively coupled with a concern that all come to a saving knowledge of Yeshua as Lord!**

B’har

On the mount

Leviticus 25:1-26:2
Jeremiah 32:6-27

B’chuqotai

By My Regulations

“A Faithful Jubilee Reminder”

Leviticus 26:3-27:34
Jeremiah 16:19-17:24

The Book of Leviticus, thematically devoted to admonishing the Israelites to be holy, comes to a close this week with a double Torah portion which not only specifies some additional instructions, but also reiterates some of the consequences

of disobedience. From the opening verse of *B'har* to the closing verse of *B'chuqotai*, one finds how Moses admonished his ancient audience that he had received all of these instructions from the Lord on Mount Sinai:

“The LORD then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, “When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the LORD”” (Leviticus 25:1-2).

“These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai” (Leviticus 27:34).

Nevertheless, despite the lofty environs where these words were initially received by Moses from the Eternal One, the community of Israel not only historically—but throughout the ages—may be witnessed to have continuously struggled to comply with God’s commandments, even though there are multiple assurances that the Creator will bless those who adhere to His words throughout the Holy Scriptures. One way to surely minimize disobedience to His commandments is how the Lord included some interrelated physical activities, to remind His people about the blessings associated with obedience. We can, for example, consider the instructions regarding the sabbatical rest for the Promised Land and the year of jubilee, found in *B'har-B'chuqotai*. Even with these instructions not generally being followed because of modern circumstances, readers of the Torah still need to be reminded of their significance, as they not only teach us about our Heavenly Father’s character, but also about His purposes in the Earth.

With this in mind—especially during the current season of Counting the Omer as *Shavuot* approaches—it is difficult to overlook parallels of the weekly and yearly patterns, because of their similarity. Some profound spiritual enrichment can be derived during the annual reminder to Count the Omer for fifty days, and remember the benefits and blessings of the jubilee we are reading about this week. After all, for those who have faith in the atoning work of Yeshua the Messiah, one’s personal day of freedom from the ravages of sin, can and should be celebrated without reservation!

The Sabbath

The Divine institution of the Sabbath rest is first modeled in the account of the Creation, when the Lord rested after the six stages of His work:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. **By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.** Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:1-3).

In this ancient pronouncement, one finds that the Creator not only rested on the seventh day, but that He sanctified it or set it apart from all of the other days.

Obviously, there was something very special about the seventh day of the week from the beginning of human history. Providentially down through the ages, the seven-day cycle for life's many patterns, witnessed and detectable throughout the Holy Scriptures, has widely prevailed (despite various attempts to alter it by different civilizations). The inclusion of the command to remember the Sabbath rest is included in the Decalogue, intensifying its importance for followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11).

As we examined last week in *Emor* (Leviticus 21:1-24:23), the significance of the Sabbath rest was reaffirmed when the Lord gave Moses the appointed times, with the Sabbath notably listed first:

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these: “For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them”’” (Leviticus 23:2-4).

Sabbath for the Land

The Lord considered the seventh day of the week, as a sanctified and weekly set time for a holy convocation with Him. As our Torah reading commences, we are introduced to some ancient socio-economic policies, which build upon the one-day-in-seven pattern. While it might be said that *Shabbat* is to be a time of rest for the human being and communion with the Creator, a mandated seventh year Sabbath rest for the Promised Land in which the Israelites will settle, is detailed:

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, **‘When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.** Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year. **All of you shall have the sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you. Even your**

cattle and the animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat” (Leviticus 25:2-7).

While resting on the weekly Sabbath may have been a test of faith for many people, and it was something ostensibly adhered to during Ancient Israel’s desert sojourn with the provision of manna (Exodus 16) and a definite prohibition of work (Exodus 31:14-15)—what Moses introduced here went a bit beyond a once a week Sabbath rest for people. The Israelites were instructed to let the arable land they would possess, itself, have a “Sabbath rest,” making it lay fallow on every seventh year. No doubt, this direction was going to require a considerable amount of faith by the Israelites to rely upon the Lord to provide physical sustenance, with a year taken off from agricultural activity.

The Year of Jubilee

Moses further stated that after seven weeks of years, forty-nine years, when the fiftieth year arrived, there was to be a jubilee (Heb. *yovel*) or release and return of land to the original owners, as well as a release of indentured servants from their contractual commitments. Not only was the economy restored, but the land was to remain fallow an additional year, resulting in two consecutive years without any agricultural work. Hence for the year of jubilee, after receiving the Lord’s blessing to provide for them during the previous six years of normal agricultural activity, the Israelites had to expand their faith to believe that the Lord would provide for two uninterrupted years without any normal agricultural activity:

“You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths of years, *namely*, forty-nine years. **‘You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family.** You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in *from* its untrimmed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property’...If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, that he may return to the property of his forefathers. For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold *in a slave sale*” (Leviticus 25:2-13, 39-42).

The Lord chose to have the year of jubilee, which occurred just once every fifty years, to be commemorated on the tenth day of the seventh month—on what was already designated as the Day of Atonement or *Yom Kippur*:

“On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God” (Leviticus 23:27-28).

The contrast between the day the year of jubilee is announced—on what is supposed to be the most solemn convocation of the year—is something to contemplate. The year of jubilee is to be announced by the blowing of the *shofar*, which is also commanded to be blown annually on the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24). For forty-nine consecutive years the Israelites would, seemingly, humbly commemorate the Day of Atonement, with the high priest presenting the various offerings to atone for the sins of the people. But then on every fiftieth year, the blowing of the *shofar* announcing the year of jubilee, would likely have set in motion an entirely different set of emotions, as ancestral lands were returned to the original owners, indentured servants were released, and the socio-economic order was restored. Yet, nowhere does the Torah state that the perpetual observance of *Yom Kippur* was terminated—not even on the year of jubilee.

A Future Jubilee

Over the centuries, one can see how followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob associated the year of jubilee with the coming reign of the Messiah of Israel. This connection is perhaps best illustrated by the Prophet Isaiah, who spoke of the Servant of the Lord coming to bring release to the captives, freedom to prisoners, and the inauguration of a new age of justice and favor for the righteous:

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn *in Zion*, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; And they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. But you will be called the priests of the LORD; you will be spoken of *as* ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame *you will have a double portion*, and

instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs" (Isaiah 61:1-7).

For centuries following the prophecies declared by Isaiah, different Jewish traditions emerged, incorporating the blowing of the *shofar* into the *Yom Kippur* convocation, perhaps as a reminder of the dual purpose of the *shofar* blowing during the year of jubilee. After all, the joy associated with hearing the *shofar* blast on the day of jubilee with the arrival of the anticipated Messiah, contrasted with the solemnity of the *shofar* sounds on the Feast of Trumpets announcing the coming of the Day of Atonement, had to be disconcerting.

In a similar vein, perhaps this contrast explains some of the mixed emotions found in Nazareth, when Yeshua the Messiah read from the Isaiah prophecy on a Sabbath, and alluded to Himself being the fulfillment of the prophecy:

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD' [Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6]. **And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.** And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' **And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips;** and they were saying, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' And He said to them, 'No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, "Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" And He said, 'Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, *in the land of Sidon*, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.' **And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.** But passing through their midst, He went His way" (Luke 4:16-30).

Shofars Blowing

Needless to say, the highly anticipated coming of the Messiah of Israel evokes a tremendous amount of emotion, whether it is linked to the themes of the year of jubilee and its *shofar* blast, and the *shofar* blast announcing His arrival, or simply His

First Coming in the First Century and its attendant miracles. It can be generally recognized from both the Prophets and the Apostolic Scriptures, that there is definitely a trumpet to be sounded when the Messiah returns:

“It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:13).

“Then the LORD will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning; And the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, and will march in the storm winds of the south” (Zechariah 9:14).

“And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. **And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other**” (Matthew 24:30-31; cf. Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15).

“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. **Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.** For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

Suffice it to say, since following the jubilee instructions largely ended centuries ago, primarily due to Ancient Israel’s disregard for even following the seven-year Sabbath rest for the land (Jeremiah 9:9-16; 25:4-18), there is a lack of consensus on when and how the jubilee should or should not be recognized not only in Judaism, but in Christianity.

However, for those observing the annual feasts of the Lord, there is a distinct parallel between what should have been done over every fifty-year period, and what is done on an annual basis during the Counting of the Omer for the seven weeks between Passover and the Feast of Weeks or *Shavuot*. The similarities are difficult to ignore, because the “fifty day” pattern is so similar to the “fifty year” pattern. Perhaps the Lord wants people to make the connection each and every year. Faithful followers of the Holy One can be reminded of the benefits of the jubilee, whether it is a restoration of the economic order, or the setting free of the captives to sin, or the coming reign of the Messiah, when they come together to remember the Feast of Weeks on the fiftieth day of the Omer Count. While this

day is recognized as a time of multiple offerings and proclamations, note some of the parallels in these verses from Leviticus 23. Not only is there a similar count, emphasizing fifty, but there is also a focus on taking care of the needy and the sojourner when restoration is made:

“You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two *loaves* of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an *ephah*; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD. Along with the bread you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the LORD; they are to be holy to the LORD for the priest. **On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual statute in all your dwelling places throughout your generations. When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleanings of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God**” (Leviticus 23:16-22).

This week, may we reflect on the blessings of the jubilee year in our own personal lives—as there was a decisive moment in the past when through faith in Yeshua the Messiah, we were each set free from the bondage of sin (Romans 7). Whether one rehearses it on *Shavuot*, or every morning in prayer, or when reading a Psalm, we are reminded that the Earth and each individual soul is the Lord’s creation:

“A Psalm of David. **The earth is the LORD’s, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.** For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers” (Psalm 24:1-2).

Perhaps in this season with *Shavuot* rapidly approaching, our appreciation for the reminder will be heightened. I hope that we will each remember all that He has done for us, and proclaim our thanks for His salvation!