

# Parasha Meditation Behar

**Vayikra 25:1-26:2**

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

## Receiving Torah by Tuning into the Soul of the Land

### Introduction:

*Parashat Behar* is all about *emunah*. Taking one day a week off from work in order to celebrate Shabbat and demonstrate our belief in Hashem, the Creator of the world, cannot compare to implementing our faith, by taking off an entire year from working the land. Keep in mind that essentially and historically, Israel is an agrarian society. For some people it may be difficult to relate to the concepts of the Sabbatical year (*Shemita*) mentioned in this week's *parasha*. If you live in NY, LA or Chicago etc., the only practical implications of the laws of *Shemita* is to ensure that vegetables and fruits purchased from Israel have proper *kashruth* (kosher) certification. Those of us who live on the Land are fortunate enough to get a taste of the *emunah* that the *Shemita* year instills.

### Relinquishing Ownership to the Land

The concept of *Shemita* teaches us that we never really have ownership to the land, which essentially belongs only to Hashem. This is why it states, "...then the land shall keep a Shabbat to Hashem."<sup>1</sup> We, the Jewish people, are not in the center here, but rather the land has its own will and connection to Hashem. Even if I paid a lot of money, weeded all the thorns, worked myself to a sweat turning the earth, added compost, and planted delicious grapes, as soon as the *Shemita* year arrives, I am reminded how everything belongs Hashem. "...For the Land is Mine, and you are strangers and settlers with Me."<sup>2</sup>

### My first *Shemita* Experience

I experienced this during my first *Shemita* year on the land, when I looked out of my window one Thursday afternoon, and discovered to my dismay that my neighbor was helping himself to the most succulent grapes in my garden. I had planned to pick these grapes on Friday, to serve them fresh for my family and guests for Shabbat. My first instinct was to stop him, exclaiming, "What are you doing? These are my grapes!" Then the deeper realization of *Shemita* kicked in. Really, whose grapes are they after all? Whose land is it anyway? It took some processing before I realized that all my hard work on the land was really not just for myself but actually for Hashem. He gives this land to all of the Jewish people to share and live in unison and harmony upon it, as it states: "The Shabbat produce of the land shall be food for all of you, for you, for your servant, and for your maid, and for your hired servant, and for your stranger that sojourns with you..."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vayikra 25:2.

<sup>2</sup> Vayikra 25:23.

<sup>3</sup> Vayikra 25:6.

## Unity Connects the Laws of the Land with Receiving the Torah

*Parashat Behar* opens by mentioning that the Laws of the Land were “spoken to Moshe on Mount Sinai.”<sup>4</sup> Rashi asks, “What is the connection between *Shemita* and Mount Sinai? Behold, all the mitzvot were given at Sinai [but the Torah didn’t mention Mount Sinai in connection with any of the other mitzvot]. Linking the laws of *Shemita* with receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai, teaches us that the Torah does not separate between religion and the social relationships of daily living, through which we implement the general principles of Torah into the details of our lives. Moreover, the laws of *Shemita* engender unity among the Jewish people, which is essential in order to be worthy of receiving the Torah. Likewise, prior to receiving the Torah, the Jewish people encamped on the mountain in unison, “as one person with one heart.”<sup>5</sup>

## Ultimate Declaration of Faith

Israel expressed their ultimate declaration of faith when they readily accepted the Torah with the exclamation, “We will do and we will hear.”<sup>6</sup> Keeping the laws of *Shemita* likewise requires sublime faith believing firmly that even when we abstain from work, according to G\*d’s mitzvot, Hashem will take care of us. Through keeping the Laws of the Land, we ingrain within our entire being that only G\*d gives us the strength to accomplish anything in the world, rather than thinking that “My power and the might of my hand has gotten me all this wealth.”<sup>7</sup>

## Freedom from Slavery

At the end of seven cycles of the seven-year *Shemita* cycle, we “proclaim liberty to the land,” through the same shofar that vibrated at the revelation at Sinai.<sup>8</sup> During this jubilee year (*Yovel*), all the slaves go free, and every person returns to his original land and family. This way, by refraining from selling out the land and ourselves as perpetual slaves, we experience how both we and the land belong to no-one but Hashem.<sup>9</sup> *Shemita* and *Yovel* thus teach us to return to our essential selves, and let go equally of our attachments to ownership, and to being enslaved by others.

## Meditation:

Now it is time to relax and allow yourself to let go. Make yourself comfortable in your space. Breathe slowly and relax even more.

**1.** Visualize an imaginary “Shofar of Freedom” and prepare yourself to blow it as you inhale, and imagine yourself blowing the shofar with every exhalation. The sound of this shofar will allow you to relinquish ownership to that which is not part of your essential being.

<sup>4</sup> *Vayikra* 25:1.

<sup>5</sup> Rashi, *Shemot* 19:2, learns this from the fact that the Hebrew word for “encamped” is written in singular language.

<sup>6</sup> *Shemot* 19:8.

<sup>7</sup> *Devarim* 8:17.

<sup>8</sup> *Vayikra* 25:9-10, compare with *Shemot* 19:19.

<sup>9</sup> See this week’s *parasha*, *Vayikra* 25:28-55.



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2. Inhale and imagine your home, and if applicable, your garden. Exhale, blowing your imaginary shofar into your garden if you have one, and then repeat, blowing into your home, relinquishing all your attachments, and making Hashem King over your garden and home.
3. Repeat this sequence of breathing, blowing the shofar, and crowning Hashem over any particular possession of your choice, as many times as you would like.
4. Now move to your body. Blow the “Shofar of Freedom” into your forehead, crowning Hashem there. Let your shofar crown Hashem over your eyes, nose, ears, mouth, cheeks, and the back of your head, neck, and shoulders.
5. Make Hashem King over your arms and hands as you blow the breath of life into each of them. Crown Hashem over your lungs, heart and diaphragm, allowing the shofar to cleanse away all the blockages you may be holding onto there.
6. Continue crowning Hashem while blowing your shofar into your small intestine, belly and colon, purifying them and making Hashem King over them. Blow your shofar into your liver, spleen and kidneys, while crowning Hashem.
7. Finally, bring the liberating sound of the shofar into your thighs, knees, calves and feet, making Hashem King over your entire being and everything you own. Keep breathing and enjoy the new freedom from attachments you experience, coming closer to your essential self.

## Notes:

*Shemittah* comes to heal the land and give us a taste of the Garden of Eden, where there was no ownership or possession. Likewise, during the Sabbatical year, all the fruits of the trees become ownerless, belonging equally to all. By eating from the Tree of Knowledge, Adam and Chava seized ownership and breached their idyllic relationship with the land. As a consequence, the land was cursed, as it states: “Cursed is the earth because of you... in the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground...”<sup>10</sup> Instead of living in harmony with nature, receiving sustenance directly from Hashem’s giving hand, humanity became enslaved to labor, in order to make the land yield its produce. However, during every *Shemittah* year, the land gradually heals, as we learn that we are neither enslaved to working the land, nor its owner and master. *Shemittah* teaches us that we are just custodians, enjoying the privilege to be able to dwell in Hashem’s Holy Land.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Bereishit 3:17-18.

<sup>11</sup> See Avraham Arie Trugman’s beautiful article on *Parashat Behar* in his *Orchard of Delight*.

# About Us



## Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

*Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work. For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's*

*spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.*

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

*Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.*

*If you are interested in:*

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*or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>*

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At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

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