



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

בהר בחוקותי - BEHAR BECHUKOTAI

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Candle lighting: 8:10 pm  Havdallah: 9:19 pm (50 minutes after שקיעה)

Dedicated in memory of Suzanne Burger, z"l, beloved wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother.
By Alan, Marc, Lorne, Naomi, Jill, Ashley, Ari, Lia, Zoe, Shael, and Noa Burger.

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aviya@torontotorah.com



דבר תורה RABBI ELAN MAZER, CEO, MIZRACHI CANADA

Counting Toward Kedushah

Parshat Behar opens with one of the Torah's most powerful models of sanctified time. The Torah commands that for six years we work the land, plant, harvest, build, and produce. But the seventh year is different: "Shabbat Shabbaton yihyeh la'aretz," a year of rest for the land, a Shabbat for Hashem (Vayikra 25:2-4). Then the Torah continues to a larger cycle: "Vesafarta lecha sheva Shabbatot shanim," count seven cycles of seven years, forty-nine years, leading to the fiftieth year, the Yovel (Vayikra 25:8-10).

This language immediately reminds us of the days we are living through now, the days of Sefirat HaOmer. There too the Torah says, "Usfartem lachem," count for yourselves, from the bringing of the Omer until Shavuot, seven complete weeks (Vayikra 23:15-16). The Torah creates a clear parallel between the counting from Pesach to Shavuot and the counting from Shemitah to Yovel. One is counted in days and weeks. The other is counted in years and cycles of years. One is counted by each individual, as the Gemara teaches, "Sefirah lechol echad v'echad" (Menachot 65b), while the other is entrusted to Beit Din, as Chazal derive from "Vesafarta lecha," "bebeit din" (Yalkut Shimoni, Behar 659). The structure is unmistakable. Jewish time is built around sevens, and Jewish time must be counted.

This pattern appears again and again. Seven days form the week, with Shabbat as the pinnacle. Seven weeks bring us from Pesach to Shavuot (Vayikra 23:15). The seventh month, Tishrei, is filled with kedushah, with Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini

Atzeret (Vayikra 23:23-44). Seven years bring us to Shemitah (Vayikra 25:3-4). Seven Shemitah cycles bring us to Yovel (Vayikra 25:8-10). The Torah is teaching us that time is not random. Time has rhythm. Time has direction. Time has kedushah.

But there is a deeper point. The Torah does not only command us to observe the seventh day, the seventh week, the seventh month, or the seventh year. It commands us to count toward them. The Mechilta teaches that even Shabbat is not meant to be remembered only when it arrives. "Zachor et yom haShabbat lekadsho" means that we remember Shabbat from the first day of the week. We call the days Yom Rishon, Yom Sheni, Yom Shlishi, each one counted in relation to Shabbat (Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael, Yitro, Bachodesh 7). The entire week is oriented toward its sacred destination.

Why does counting matter so much?

The Sfas Emes in multiple places explains that counting gathers separate moments and binds them into one unit. A day by itself can feel ordinary. A week by itself can feel random. A year by itself can feel disconnected from a larger purpose. But when we count, we declare that this moment belongs to a process. It is not just Tuesday. It is the third day moving toward Shabbat. It is not just another day after Pesach. It is day twenty-three of the journey toward Matan Torah. It is not just another agricultural year. It is year four, or five, or six, moving toward Shemitah and ultimately toward Yovel.

This is the secret of the Torah's cycle of seven. The seventh is holy, but the goal is not that holiness should remain trapped in the seventh. Shabbat is not meant to be a holy island in an otherwise ordinary week. Shemitah is not meant to be a holy interruption in an otherwise material agricultural cycle. Shavuot is not meant to be a single day of Torah disconnected from the forty-nine days that came before it. The kedushah of the seventh radiates backward into all the units that lead toward it.

That is why the Sfas Emes writes that through Shemitah, holiness is drawn into all six years of work. When the farmer knows that the seventh year will be a year of rest, faith, equality, and surrender to Hashem, then even the six years of planting and harvesting are changed. They are no longer merely years of production. They become years that are moving toward kedushah.

We often think of holiness as an event: Shabbat, Yom Tov, a meaningful shiur, a powerful tefillah, an inspiring moment. But the Torah teaches that kedushah is not meant to remain an event. It is meant to shape the time around it. The question is not only how we experience Shabbat, but how Shabbat changes our Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. The question is not only how we celebrate Shavuot, but how the days before Shavuot become days of longing, growth, and preparation. The question is not only how Shemitah transforms the seventh year, but how it gives purpose to the six years that came before. Counting is the bridge between the ordinary and the holy.



מדרש RABBI SHMAYA HENDEL, MAGGID SHIUR

“וְקִרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ” — The Sparrow and the Nature of Freedom

At the opening of Parashat Behar, the Torah presents the laws of the יובל (Jubilee). Two central laws define this year: the release of slaves and the return of land to its original owners. On the surface, these laws appear to limit the duration of ownership or servitude. Yet, on a deeper level, they express a more radical idea: true, permanent subjugation does not ultimately exist in the Torah's worldview.

This is particularly clear in the laws of land sales. The Torah states:

לְפִי רֶבֶעַת הַשָּׁנִים תִּרְבֶּה מִקְנָתוֹ וּלְפִי מֵעֹט הַשָּׁנִים תִּמְעֹט מִקְנָתוֹ

As the number of years from the time of the sale until the Jubilee year decreases, so does the price of the land. It appears that a discount is given when we are closer to the Jubilee year. However, the continuation of the verse expresses something more fundamental:

כִּי מִסֵּפֶר תְּבוּאָתוֹ הוּא מִכֹּר לָךְ

“For it is a number of harvests that he is selling to you.”

The Torah reframes the transaction entirely. One does not truly acquire land, rather, one acquires the produce, the yield over time. The “sale” is essentially a lease. Ownership of land, in the absolute sense, is an illusion.

A parallel idea appears in the release of slaves. The Torah commands:

“וְקִרְאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ”

“You shall proclaim דרוֹר, freedom, throughout the land.”

What is דרוֹר? The midrash in the Sifra explains that it means freedom, rooted in the word דר — “to dwell.” A free person is one who can live wherever he chooses.

The Gemara in Shabbat deepens this idea through the image of the פור דרוֹר sparrow. This bird does not accept authority and is called דרוֹר because “מִפְּנֵי שֶׁדִּירָה בְּבֵית” “כְּבִשָּׁדָה”, “it dwells in a house as in the field.” Even when confined, it behaves as if it is free. Its essence cannot be subdued.

This metaphor reveals the Torah's deeper message. When the Torah proclaims דרוֹר for slaves, it is not merely legislating release at a fixed time. It is asserting that the very notion of absolute subjugation is unnatural. Just as the sparrow cannot truly be domesticated, a human being cannot truly be owned.

The יובל is not merely a legal reset but a theological statement. It affirms that, in a just world, a person cannot rightfully be deprived of his physical and economic freedom.



מחשבה RABBI AMI YUNGER, COO, MIZRACHI CANADA

When Sovereignty Returned

Based on Kima Kima by Rav Chaim Drukman

Can we celebrate a Jewish sovereignty that does not resemble the מלכות of King David? If leadership is flawed and far from the ideal of דוד המלך, what exactly are we celebrating?

The Rambam opens Hilchot Chanukah by describing the oppression of the Greeks. They issued decrees against Torah, blocked mitzvah observance, violated Jewish life, entered the Beit HaMikdash, breached its walls, and defiled its purity. Then Hashem had mercy on His people:

וגברו בני חשמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו מלך מן הכהנים וחזרה מלכות ישראל יתר על מאתיים שנה עד החורבן השני. “The sons of the Chashmonaim, the Kohanim Gedolim, overcame them, killed them, saved Israel from their hands, appointed a king from the Kohanim, and sovereignty returned to Israel for more than two hundred years until the second destruction.”

The Rambam mentions two reasons for Chanukah. First, Jewish sovereignty returned. Only afterward does he describe the miracle of the oil. That order matters. Chanukah is not only about the Beit HaMikdash and the Menorah. It is also about the return of Jewish rule in Eretz Yisrael.

This is especially important because the Rambam does not write only that sovereignty returned. He adds that it remained “for more than two hundred years.” That includes years when the kingdom was deeply flawed. The early Chashmonaim were righteous and holy, but their successors were not. Some became Tzedukim, opposing Chazal and Torah Shebe’al Peh. The Gemara records the terrible actions of Alexander Yannai (Kiddushin 66a, Sotah 47a), and later of Herod (Bava Batra 3b).

The Rambam knew this. In his commentary to the Mishnah in Yoma (1:3), he writes that during the Second Beit HaMikdash, “the kings did not follow the

proper tradition” and appointed Kohanim Gedolim by force, even when they were unfit.

Yet the Rambam still defines the return of sovereignty as part of the miracle of Chanukah.

This teaches a critical principle. Jewish sovereignty has value even when it is incomplete. Even when the state of the nation is not perfect. Even when its leaders are flawed. Even when religious life is not yet what it should be.

For most of the Second Beit HaMikdash period, the Jewish people lived under foreign rule, first under Persia and later under Greece. Some explain that this is why the Rambam held that even during the Second Beit HaMikdash, Jews still fasted on Tisha B'Av. The Mikdash stood. The Kohanim served. The Leviim sang. But Jewish rule had not fully returned.

A land under foreign control is still missing something essential.

Yom HaAtzmaut must be understood in this framework. The modern State of Israel is not the final geulah. It is not perfect. It has failures, divisions, and deep challenges. But the return of Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Yisrael is not a small political fact. It is a Torah reality with halachic weight.

After centuries of exile, Am Yisrael once again governs its land, defends its people, builds its cities, gathers exiles, and carries responsibility for Jewish national life.

That itself is immense.

Chanukah teaches us that we do not wait for perfection before recognizing redemption. We give thanks when malchut returns to Israel. Even partial sovereignty is not exile. It is the beginning of binyan.



Birkat Ha'Ilanot in Toronto

Question: Baruch Hashem, after a long, freezing winter, spring has finally arrived in Toronto and the trees are beginning to bloom. Can we recite *Birkat Ha'Ilanot* with Hashem's Name even though it's not the month of Nissan? And is it appropriate to organize a community-wide recitation on Shabbat?

Answer: The Gemara (Berachot 43b) teaches that one who goes out during the season of Nissan and sees blossoming trees recites *Birkat Ha'Ilanot*. This is codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 226). Some authorities add that one should recite the blessing over fruit-bearing trees, since the blessing praises the enjoyment we derive from them. There is also an opinion that it is preferable to have two such trees, as the Gemara and *Shulchan Aruch* use plural language. However, many poskim clarify that this is not essential, and one may recite the blessing even on a single fruit-bearing tree.

However, two major debates arise between halachic authorities and the kabbalistic tradition:

1. Must the blessing be recited specifically in Nissan? Although the Gemara and *Shulchan*

Aruch mention "the days of Nissan," the *Mishnah Berurah* explains that this reflects the climate of warmer regions, where trees typically blossom in Nissan. In colder climates—like Toronto—the blessing may certainly be recited later, when the trees actually bloom. In fact, in places like Australia, where seasons are reversed, the blessing is recited in Tishrei! That said, if someone already recited the blessing earlier (e.g., in Nissan, in the location where he lives), they would not repeat it later in another location.

2. Can *Birkat Ha'Ilanot* be recited on Shabbat?

Here, kabbalistic sources suggest avoiding it on Shabbat for fascinating reasons: perhaps one might come to pick fruit, or due to deeper spiritual concepts related to "selecting" (*borer*) and elevating hidden sparks within creation.

These ideas, while meaningful, are not part of the straightforward halachic framework. Practically speaking, most halachic authorities permit reciting *Birkat Ha'Ilanot* on Shabbat and Yom Tov. The concern of picking fruit is minimal, especially since the blessing is ideally recited before the fruit is fully developed.

Another fascinating discussion concerns whether women recite *Birkat Ha'Ilanot*. At first glance, one might argue that women should be exempt, since the blessing is recited during a specific season and could be classified as a *mitzvat aseh shehazman grama* (a time-bound positive commandment), from which women are generally exempt.

However, later authorities clarify that this comparison is not accurate. *Birkat Ha'Ilanot* is not a mitzvah that can be performed year-round but is restricted by the Torah to a particular time. Rather, it is a response to a natural phenomenon—the blossoming of trees—which inherently occurs only once a year. As such, it does not fall under the classic category of time-bound mitzvot, and women may—and indeed commonly do—recite this beautiful blessing.

Bottom line: In Toronto, you may absolutely recite *Birkat Ha'Ilanot* when the trees bloom—even beyond Nissan—and technically even on Shabbat. Women as well may recite the blessing. But if you can, enhance the experience: step outside during the week, gather your family, and turn this beautiful mitzvah into a moment of appreciation for Hashem's renewing world.



The Zechut of Eretz Israel

As we conclude the Book of Vayikra and approach Yom Yerushalayim, the Torah closes the sections of curses in Parashat Bechukotai with powerful words of consolation:

וִיִּזְכְּרֵי אֶת בְּרִיתִי יִעֲקֹב, וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק, וְאֶת בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֶזְכֹּר וְהָאֶרֶץ אֶזְכֹּר

"And I will remember My covenant with Yaakov, and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham I will remember and I will remember the Land." (ויקרא כ"ו, ט"ב)

What is the meaning of "and I will remember the Land"?

When the Baal HaTanya was released from prison, he wrote to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev that the Holy Land and its inhabitants were what stood by him to be saved from distress, and will stand by the Jewish people in the future as well. On this idea, Rabbi Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, author of *Eim HaBanim Semeichah*, explains that a person can be saved from suffering through the merit of the Land of Israel and its inhabitants, based on our verse: "and I will remember the Land."

Rashi asks: why are the Patriarchs listed in reverse order in this pasuk? He explains that even if the merit of the Patriarchs, the greatest of the great, would not suffice, the merit of the land still stands. There is a unique quality to the Land of Israel, to the extent that its merit surpasses even that of the Patriarchs, and through it redemption comes.

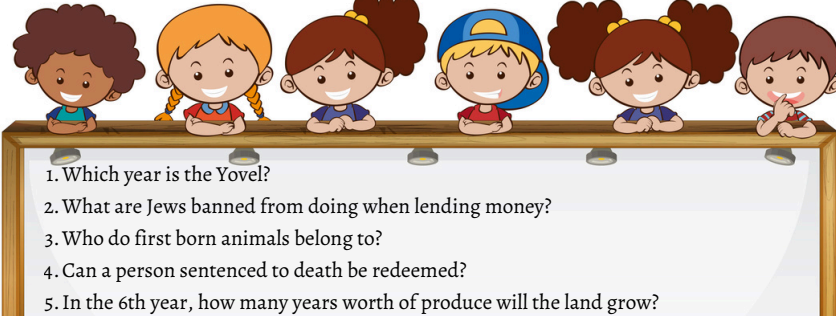
This is not only about personal salvation, but about the redemption of the entire nation of Israel.

In our generation as well, the struggle is not merely over territory or borders. At its core, the conflict in every generation revolves around Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash. Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlap writes that even if Israel possesses only the level of Yaakov, they will be redeemed; if only the self-sacrifice of Yitzchak, they will be redeemed; if only the merit of Avraham, they will be redeemed. And even if none of these remain, the merit of the Land itself still stands for them.

This is the merit of the soldiers who fight for the Land, and of the residents who live along its borders, in the North, in the South, in Yehuda and Shomron, and everywhere. The self-sacrifice of the Jewish people for their Land is not secondary; it is itself a manifestation of that very merit of the Land described by the Torah.

From here emerges a fundamental idea: when the Jewish people know with clarity the importance of the Land of Israel for its people, there is no confusion. When the belief is clear, that the entire Land was given to the Jewish people, the path itself becomes clear.

The more we strengthen our love for the Land and our dedication to it, the more we will merit the fulfillment of: "and I will remember the Land" - that Hashem will remember His covenant with the Land and redeem us with a complete redemption, speedily in our days.



1. Which year is the Yovel?
2. What are Jews banned from doing when lending money?
3. Who do first born animals belong to?
4. Can a person sentenced to death be redeemed?
5. In the 6th year, how many years worth of produce will the land grow?

- Answers:
1. The Yovel is the 50th year.
 2. Jews are banned from charging interest.
 3. First born animals belong to Hashem.
 4. No.
 5. 3 Years.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Shabbat	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
	Seudah Shlishit Shiur	Or Chaim	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Ori Ezra
Sunday	Men's Semichat Chaver: Basar Bechalav	Clanton Park	9:00 AM	Rabbi Spitz & Rabbi Mann
	Shiur b'Ivrit	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	9:00 AM	Rabbi Mann & Rabbi Hendel
	Megillat Esther	Or Chaim	8:15 AM	Rabbi Aviad Pituchay-Chotam
	Smichas chaver	Mishkan Avraham	After Maariv	Rabbi Mann
Monday	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
Tuesday	Tzurba Chaburah: Niddah	Zoom	10:00AM	Mrs. Sonenberg - register at yoatzot.ca/chabura
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Tzurba Chabura: Shabbat	Zoom	10:00AM	Mrs Sonenberg - register at yoatzot.ca/chabura
	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Iyun - Moed Katan	BAYT Rabbi's Office	8:00 PM	R' Diena
Thursday	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan	Shomrai Shabbos	8:00 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	70 Faces of Torah on the Parsha	BAYT	8:00PM	Rabbi Shaanan Scherer
	Mizrachi Mishmar	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	8:00 PM	Rabbi Singer
	Womens Hafrashat Challah	Clanton Park	7:30 PM	Rebbetzin Mann
Daily	Gemara Brachot	Shaarei Shomayim	6:45 AM	R' Diena

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 7&8	Shabbat Drashot	Clanton Park Synagogue	Rav Elan Mazer	Erev Shabbat, Pre Mincha, Seuda Shlishit
May 8	Shiur After Kiddush	Or Chaim Minyan	Rav Elan Mazer	
May 13	Dilemmas in Medical Ethics in Israel	Shaarei Shomayim 8:00PM	Rabbi Yuval Cherlow	Register at mizrachi.ca/ethics
May 14	Yom Yerushalayim	BAYT 8:00 PM	Rabbi Yuval Cherlow	
May 19	Shabbat Drashot	Clanton Park & Or Chaim	Rabbi Yuval Cherlow	

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash
Rabbi Yehuda Mann
ymann@torontotorah.com

Maggidei Shiur Rabbi Ezer Diena · Rabbi Ori Ezra · Mrs. Aviya Ezra · Rabbi Josh Gutenberg · Rabbi Shaanan Scherer · Rabbi Chaim Singer · Mrs. Rifka Sonenberg · Rabbi Shmaya Hendel · Rabbi Aviad Pituchay-Chotam · Rabbi Jeff Turtel · Rabbi Ami Yunger