



May 12, 2018

כז אייר תשע"ח

Parashat Behar-Bechukotai (בהר-בחוקותי)

Leviticus 25:1-27:34

Stone – p 696 Hertz – p 531 Etz Hayim—p 738

חזק חזק ונתחזק!

Chazak chazak v-nit'cha'zek!

May we be strong and strengthen each other!

Haftarah – Jeremiah 16:19-17:14 (ירמיה)

Stone – p 1179 Hertz – p 551 Etz Hayim—p 763

Kiddush is sponsored by Sisterhood

Talmud Class—6:15 PM

Minchah—7:30 PM

Seudah Sh'lishit

Shabbat Ends—8:44 PM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon – Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com

Rabbi Ephraim Zimand z"l, Emeritus

Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director – tradcong@sbcglobal.net

DAILY SERVICE TIMES

Shabbat—9:00 AM & 7:30 PM

Sunday—8:30 AM

Monday –Friday—7:00 AM & 6:30 PM

Board of Directors:

Kenneth H. Bohm, President

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Marty Levy, Ritual Vice President

Florence Schachter, Education Vice President

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Steve Roufa, Building & Grounds Vice President

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Sid Bennett

Shelah Feldman

Bill Gold

Ari Levy

Carol Max

Steven Puro

Dina Rinder

Iris Salsman

Jerry Tullman

Jeff Weisman

Justin Zeid

Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know would like to receive membership information, please contact Membership VP Elaine Farkas at 954-558-1159.

On This Week's Torah Portion – Behar-Bechukotai

Our two *parshiyot* are generally read together during non-leap years, but they have themes that appear quite different. I would like to try to relate what seem like quite disparate questions on the two.

Parashat Behar starts out with the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years (the English word Jubilee comes from the Hebrew *yovel*). The Sabbatical year, as the name suggests, comes once every seven years. The land must lie fallow, and everything that grows by itself must be left for any person or animal (domestic or wild) to eat. Virtually all agricultural work is prohibited, which means that virtually everybody in the agrarian Israelite society rested for a year.

The Jubilee Year was the 50th year following a cycle of seven Sabbatical cycles of seven years each ($7 \times 7 = 49$, and the 50th year was the Jubilee). The Jubilee year has all the restrictions of the Sabbatical year, plus additional laws, primarily laws that push a kind of social "reset" button: All ancestral land that had been sold returns to its original owner (i.e. the family to which it was assigned after the conquest of the Land under Joshua's leadership), and all Hebrew indentured servants go free to return to their families (even those who had refused to leave after their 6-year term and were supposed to serve "forever").

Abarbanel finds various symbols in these laws for the cycles of 7 and 7×7 , cycles of nature (7 days in a week) and cycles of human life ("... the days of a man's life are 70 years..." – Ps 90). He also notes that these laws hint at the fundamental impermanence of physical creation. He traces the root of the word *yovel* to *yivleh* / "to deteriorate, rot," and concludes that it indicates that just as Gd created the world from nothing, He could just as well return it to nothing at any point. This is borne out in our liturgy in the phrase *He renews in His goodness every day the work of Creation*. How can we understand this?

We learn from Kabbalah that, in fact, Gd is all that there is. Gd is unbounded and eternal, beyond time and space, beyond creation. Gd, as it were, then "contracts" Himself to "leave space" for the bounded, finite, temporal values of creation. Another way of describing this process is that Gd "hides" his essential nature ("hides His Face") so that it appears as if there is a separation between Gd and creation. In fact, however, both these explanations indicate that the entirety of creation is nothing other than the *virtual, internal dynamics* of Gd. As the Rabbis say, Gd is the place of the world; the world is not the place of Gd. In order for there to be the appearance of creation, it takes a constant act of Will on Gd's part. Were Gd to cease to will the world into being even for a moment, it would simply cease to exist, for it is nothing other than an expression of Gd's Will.

The Sabbatical and Jubilee year laws bring the relative efficacy of our own actions into sharp focus. All of our plowing and planting, sowing and reaping, buying and selling, ceases. Yet existence continues. It is like the story of the scientist who tells Gd that science has figured out how to make life from dirt. Gd asks for a demonstration. The scientist bends down and scoops up some dirt. Gd says, "Oh no – get your own dirt!" Or, in the words of the Psalmist: *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein*. The Sabbatical and Jubilee laws remind us that although we must act in the world, we and our actions are actually just part of the great cosmic drama that takes place within Gd. We dare not arrogate to ourselves ownership of action nor of its fruits.

Now turning to BeChukotai, the *parashah* introduces the *tochachah*, rebuke, with a promise of material prosperity if we follow Gd's commandments. It would seem that Torah would need to tell us of the sublime spiritual rewards of doing Gd's Will. As usual, Abarbanel reviews several approaches of the commentators who preceded him. His own view is that material rewards accrue to the community as a whole, if the behavior of the community warrants them. That is why these verses are stated in the plural. For the individual, however, the rewards of the *mitzvot* are indeed spiritual, as our Sages tell us: *The mitzvot were not given to us for personal enjoyment*.

I'd like to look at one of the explanations that Abarbanel quotes, that of Rabbeinu Nissim (14th century, Catalonia). Rabbeinu Nissim points out that physical rewards are an outer expression of Divine Providence, that is, Gd's overseeing of the affairs of human beings, and the world as a whole. We understand Gd to be transcendental to the world, and we understand that the transcendent, being beyond boundaries, is also beyond time, space and change. How then can Gd interact with this world that He created. Nevertheless, by adjusting His action in the world to ours, He makes it apparent that He *does* interact with the sublunary realms.

Based on our discussion above, perhaps we can get a better understanding of Divine Providence. Gd is not actually separate from the world. The world exists within Gd. Only in our finite state of mind we perceive ourselves and creation as separate from Gd, and it is only in this state of consciousness that the issue of whether Gd acts in creation or not arises. From Gd's perspective, He is all that there is, and whatever He does, He does within His own nature. Our job is to grow to the point where we realize this truth and live it. The commandments of the Torah, each in its own way, are our teachers.

***Shabbat Shalom!* Rafi Rabinoff**

Chag Shavuot Sameach!

Shabbat, May 19—Erev Shavuot

Rabbi's Talmud Class 5:15 PM

Minchah 6:30 PM at Traditional

Candlelighting: 8:50 PM

West County Tikkun Leil Shavuot 7:00 PM (see flyer)

Arvit 9:00 PM at B'nai Amoona

Sunday, May 20—Day 1

Shacharit: 9:00 AM

Minchah/Arvit 7:45 PM

Candlelighting 8:50 PM

Monday, May 21—Day 2

Shacharit 9:00 AM with chanting of

Megillat Ruth and *Yizkor*.

Minchah /Arvit 7:45 PM

PLEASE JOIN US FOR
A WEST COUNTY

TIKKUN LEIL SHAVUOT



A night of study, prayer, music, community, Schmoozing and Noshing facilitated by the Clergy and Education Staff* of B'nai Amoona, Shaare Emeth, Shir Hadash, Temple Emanuel, Temple Israel, Traditional, and United Hebrew and St Louis Jewish Federation, Center for Jewish Learning.

**with special presentations by Rabbi Or Rose, Director, Center for Global Judaism, Hebrew College, and Dr. Judith Rosenbaum, Executive Director of the Jewish Women's Archive*

SATURDAY, MAY 19

Minchah 6:00 pm

Program 7:00 pm - 12:00 am

**Congregation B'nai Amoona
324 S. Mason Rd | St. Louis, MO | 63141**

Join us for all or part of the evening. Everyone is welcome.

Please bring a food or personal care item as a donation to the Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry.

RSVP at www.bnaiamoona.com

Questions? Contact Amy Maupin at 314-576-9990 x131



UPCOMING EVENTS

Celebrate Shavuot!

Shabbat, May 19—Erev Shavuot

Rabbi's Talmud Class 5:15 PM; Minchah 6:30 PM; Candlelighting 8:50 PM

West County Tikkun Leil Shavuot 7:00 PM at B'nai Amoona

Arvit 9:00 PM at B'nai Amoona

Sunday, May 20—Day 1

Shacharit: 9:00 AM; Minchah/Arvit 7:45 PM; Candlelighting 8:50 PM

Monday, May 21—Day 2

Shacharit 9:00 AM with chanting of Megillat Ruth and Yizkor

Minchah/Arvit 7:45 PM

Shabbat, May 26 ***Kiddush and seudah sh'lishit are sponsored by Steve Pessin*** in memory of his mother, Miriam Pessin.

Sunday, May 27 Stone dedication for Miriam Pessin, 10:30 AM, Chesed Shel Emeth Cemetery on White Road.

Sunday, May 27 Jewish War Veterans Memorial Day Program, 11:00 AM at United Hebrew Congregation.

Sunday, June 3 Shedding Light on Alzheimer's: A Jewish Perspective, 9:15 AM—12:45 PM, Shaare Emeth. For caregivers and families facing Alzheimer's disease, memory loss or dementia. Register at 800-272-3900 or www.alz.org/greatermissouri

Please support our Capital Campaign!! Information has been mailed out and is also available in the May/June Newsletter. Please give generously and help us pave the way to our future!!

We're looking for...YOU—to sponsor a Kiddush! Call Marian, 314-576-5230 to reserve your date. Not ready to sponsor but would like to contribute to offset our Kiddush costs? It's easy to do—you can mail your donation to Traditional (note: Kiddush Fund in memo) or donate online at <https://www.traditional-congregation.org/donate> and select Kiddush Fund Donation. Thank you!



Visit our website www.traditional-congregation.org

PRAYER

“Between”

More than meditation
More than insight
More than feeling
Between us are claims,
Obligations, commandments
To act, to do, to behave our beliefs.

*I seek God not as if God were
Alone, an isolated person,
He or She, a process, a power,
A being a thing.
I seek God not as if I were alone
A thinker, a meditator, a
Discrete entity.*

I see God in connection in the
Nexus of community
I pray and celebrate the
Betweenness
Which binds and holds us
Together.

*Rabbi Harold Schulweis
(abridged)*

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

I avoid looking forward or backward,
and try to keep looking upward.

Charlotte Bronte