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15/16 May 2020

22 Iyyar 5780

THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY OF COUNTING OF THE OMER

SHABBAT B'HAR-B'CHUKKOTAI

Parashat B'har-B'chukkotai is one of seven designated Torah portions that, depending upon the number of Sabbaths in a year, is either read as two separate portions or combined to assure the reading of the entire Torah. While this volume will combine them, it will present an interpretation on each of their most important themes.

Parashat B'har presents laws regulating the sabbatical year and the jubilee year. The people are told that for six years they are to sow their fields and prune their vineyards, but, during the seventh year, the land is to be given a complete rest, a Sabbath. Every fiftieth year is to be a jubilee year in which land and vineyards must not be worked and in which liberty will be granted to all Israelites enslaved during the previous forty-nine years. The jubilee year also marks a return of any properties purchased during the previous forty-nine years to the original owner-families who had been given the land at the time the Israelites entered it.

Parashat B'chukkotai is filled with God's promises to the people if they are loyal and faithfully follow all the commandments and with God's warnings if they disobey. Peace, security, and ruin will come if they spurn God's commandments. The portion also includes brief discussions of the payment of vows and gifts made to the sanctuary.

יט וּנְתַנָּה הָאָרֶץ פְּרִיָּהּ וְאֶכְלֶתֶם לְשָׁבַע וַיִּשְׁבַּתֶּם לְבִטָּח עָלֶיהָ: כ וְכִי
 תֹאמְרוּ מִה־נֹּאכַל בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית הֵן לֹא נִזְרַע וְלֹא נִאֶסְף אֶת־תְּבוּאָתָנוּ:
 כא וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת־בְּרַכְתִּי לָכֶם בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית וְעָשִׂתָ אֶת־הַתְּבוּאָה לְשֵׁלֶשׁ
 הַשָּׁנִים: כב וּזְרַעְתֶּם אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁמִינִת וְאֶכְלֶתֶם מִן־הַתְּבוּאָה יִשּׁוּן עַד
 הַשָּׁנָה הַתְּשִׁיעִת עַד־בּוֹא תְּבוּאָתָהּ תֹאכְלוּ יִשּׁוּן: כג וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמְכַּר
 לְצַמְתֹּת כִּי־לִי הָאָרֶץ כִּי־גֵרִים וְתוֹשְׁבִים אַתֶּם עַמְדִּי: כד וּבְכָל אֶרֶץ
 אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם גֹּאֲלָה תִתְּנוּ לָאָרֶץ: כה כִּי־יִמּוֹךְ אַחִיד וּמְכַר מֵאֲחֻזַּתוֹ וּבָא גֹאֲלוֹ
 הַקָּרֵב אֵלָיו וּגְאָל אֶת מִמְכָּר אָחִיו: כו וְאִישׁ כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה־לּוֹ גֹּאֵל וְהִשְׁיִגָה
 יָדוֹ וּמָצָא כְּדִי גֹאֲלֵתוֹ: כז וְחָשַׁב אֶת־שְׁנֵי מִמְכָּרוֹ וְהִשִּׁיב אֶת־הָעֵדֹף לְאִישׁ
 אֲשֶׁר מְכַר־לוֹ וְשָׁב לְאֲחֻזַּתוֹ: כח וְאִם לֹא־מָצָאָה יָדוֹ דֵּי הַשִּׁיב לוֹ וְהָיָה
 מִמְכָּרוֹ בְּיַד הַקֹּנֵה אוֹתוֹ עַד שְׁנַת הַיּוֹבֵל וְיָצָא בַּיּוֹבֵל וְשָׁב לְאֲחֻזַּתוֹ:
 כט וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִמְכֹר בֵּית־מוֹשָׁב עִיר חוֹמָה וְהִיְתָה גֹאֲלֵתוֹ עַד־תֵּם שְׁנַת
 מִמְכָּרוֹ יָמִים תִּהְיֶה גֹאֲלֵתוֹ: ל וְאִם לֹא־יִגְאָל עַד־מְלֹאת לוֹ שָׁנָה תִּמְיַמָּהּ
 וְקָם הַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר־בְּעִיר אֲשֶׁר־לֹא חוֹמָה לְצַמְיַתָּהּ לִקְנֶה אוֹתוֹ לְדֹרֹתָיו לֹא
 יָצָא בַּיּוֹבֵל: לא וּבְתֵי הַחֲצִירִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהֶם חוֹמָה סָבִיב עַל־שְׂדֵה הָאָרֶץ
 יִחָשֵׁב גֹּאֲלָהּ תִּהְיֶה־לּוֹ וּבַיּוֹבֵל יָצָא: לב וְעָרֵי הַלְּוִיִּם בְּתֵי עָרֵי אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם
 גֹּאֲלֵת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה לְלוֹוִים: לג וְאֲשֶׁר יִגְאָל מִן־הַלְּוִיִּם וְיָצָא מִמְכָּר־בַּיִת
 וְעִיר אֲחֻזַּתוֹ בַּיּוֹבֵל כִּי בְתֵי עָרֵי הַלְּוִיִּם הוּא אֲחֻזַּתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 לד וְשְׂדֵה מִגְרֵשׁ עָרֵיהֶם לֹא יִמְכֹּר כִּי־אֲחֻזַּת עוֹלָם הוּא לָהֶם:
 לה וְכִי־יִמּוֹךְ אַחִיד וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עַמְּךָ וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ גֵר וְתוֹשֵׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ:
 לו אֶל־תִּנְקַח מֵאֲתוֹ נֶשֶׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית וְיִרְאֵתָ מֵאֲלֵהֶיךָ וְחִי אַחִיד עִמָּךְ:
 לז אֶת־כֶּסֶף לֹא־תִתֶּן לוֹ בְּנֶשֶׁךְ וּבְמִרְבִּית לֹא־תִתֶּן אֶכְלָךְ: לח אֲנִי יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְתֵת לָכֶם אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
 לְהִיּוֹת לָכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים

LEVITICUS 25:19-38

19 Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. 20 You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" 21 I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. 22 While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in. 23 "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers. 24 Throughout the land that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. 25 "If one of your fellow Israelites becomes poor and sells some of their property, their nearest relative is to come and redeem what they have sold. 26 If, however, there is no one to redeem it for them but later on they prosper and acquire sufficient means to redeem it themselves, 27 they are to determine the value for the years since they sold it and refund the balance to the one to whom they sold it; they can then go back to their own property. 28 But if they do not acquire the means to repay, what was sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and they can then go back to their property. 29 "Anyone who sells a house in a walled city retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time the seller may redeem it. 30 If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and the buyer's descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. 31 But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as belonging to the open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee. 32 "The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. 33 So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. 34 But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession. 35 "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. 36 Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. 37 You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit. 38 I am the Eternal One your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

JEREMIAH 16:20-17:14

Can a man make gods for himself, and they are no gods?" Therefore, behold I let them know; at this time I will let them know My power and My might, and they shall know that My Name is the Eternal One. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, with a diamond point, engraved on the tablet of their heart and on the horns of your altars. As they remember their children, [so do they remember] their altars, and their asherim by the green trees upon the high hills. You, who sit upon the mountain in the field, I will give your substance, all your treasures for a spoil! Your high places are made for sin within all your borders. And you shall release, and [I will avenge Myself] of you because of your heritage that I gave you, and I will make you serve your enemies in the land that you did not know, for you have kindled fire in My nostrils that shall burn forever. So says God: Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart turns away from the Eternal One. He shall be like a lone tree in the plain, and will not see when good comes, and will dwell on parched land in the desert, on salt-sodden soil that is not habitable. Blessed is the man who trusts in God, the Eternal One shall be his trust. For he shall be like a tree planted by the water, and by a rivulet spreads its roots, and will not see when heat comes, and its leaves shall be green, and in the year of drought will not be anxious, neither shall it cease from bearing fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things, and when it is sick, who will recognize it? I, the Eternal One, search the heart, test the kidneys, to give everyone according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. The partridge calls but has not laid, so it is he who gathers riches but not by right; he shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end he stands dishonoured. As a Throne of Glory, exalted from the beginning, so is the place of our Sanctuary. Adonai, who is the source of the hopes of Israel, all that forsake You shall be shamed, and they who turn away from me shall be marked out on the earth that they have forsaken the source of living waters, the Eternal One. Heal me, O God, then shall I be healed; help me, then I shall be helped, for You are my praise!