



## *Parshas Behar & Lag B'Omer 2022, the plurality of life*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, Leah Mintche Bas Gittel, Shapur Avraham Avi Ben Naeema and Shaul Ben Berta.*

*This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia. May their souls be uplifted and their memories a blessing.*

Our Parsha begins with an overview of the laws of Shemitah and Yovel. Shemitah is a seven-year cycle in which we may farm the land for six years; however, we must let the land rest in the seventh year.

The Yovel cycle, which also requires letting the land rest, is the first year after seven Shemitah cycles. At this time, all Jewish slaves must be released, and all properties are reverted back to their original owners.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha concludes with the Pasuk, (26:2) הַשַּׁבָּתִים וְיִרְאוּ אֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקְדָּשֵׁי תִירְאוּ אֲנִי ה' - *"You shall guard My shabbos's (plural) and revere My sanctuary, I am the Lord."* But why does the Pasuk write Shabbos in a plural form? What is Shabbos's referring to?! Furthermore, what is *"revere my sanctuary"* alluding to as well?!

The Chizkuni (Rav Chezekiah ben Manoah, a French Rabbi from the 13th century) explains that we began the Parsha with the Mitzvah of Shemitah. Since we rest the land during Shemitah, it is also called Shabbos. Hence, our Torah portion ends with the commandment to keep both of these Shabbos's with the utmost dedication.

The Chizkuni continues that according to the Midrash Tanchuma, the words "*revere My sanctuary*" alludes to the Yovel cycle. The Rambam, Rav Moshe Ben Maimon, writes that Yovel began at the end of Yom Kippur, the 10th of Tishrei, after seven Shemitah cycles. Since Yovel was sanctified when all the Jews were in the Beis Hamikdash, he maintains that "*revere My sanctuary*" refers to Yovel.

However, The Sforno (Rav Ovadiah Sforno, an Italian commentary and doctor from the early 1500s) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that "*guard My Shabbos's*" hints at the time when we were at rest from physicality when the Beis Hamikdash was in Yerushalayim.

During these 840 years, the Jewish nation was in a metaphysical state and truly connected to G-d. Yet, they still needed to work the land for six years and rest for the seventh. As G-d's created the earth to be cultivated and farmed to feed our family and community.

The Sforno explains that contrary to today, where it is our job "*revere My sanctuary.*" Meaning, we must respect and give reverence to synagogues and schools, which are considered our "*sanctuaries*" today. G-d is outlining the duties of the Jewish people during opposing circumstances. When the Beis Hamikdash majestically stood in Yerushalayim, the duty was not to forget the importance of physicality to our spiritual life. Hence, every special occasion was marked with a unique animal sacrifice in commemoration.

Conversely, for the last two thousand years, we unfortunately do not have a Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. Our obligation is to respect the "*sanctuaries*" within our communities. To identify and recognize the pockets of Holiness hidden in our immensely material world. To see the hand of G-d in our life and change our character in service to our Creator.

This idea was demonstrated by the great Rashbi, Rav Shimon Bar Yochai, whose Yahrzeit is on Lag B'Omer. During the Roman persecution, he escaped with his son

to a cave to evade execution. They spent the next twelve years in the cave until Eliyahu HaNavi said to them to come out of hiding.

When they were traveling home, they saw farmers plowing the fields. They said to each other, *"imagine people giving up the sacred study of Torah for such worldly matters!"* As they uttered these words, the field went up in flames and destroyed all the produce. A heavenly voice rang out and said, **"Have you come out to destroy My world? Go back to your cave!"** They returned to the cave for another twelve months and only left after hearing the same heavenly voice telling them to leave. But this time, they came out with a whole different perspective.

They encountered a Jew rushing home with two bunches of hadassim - myrtle (known for their fantastic aroma) as they were traveling. They asked him what he was going to do with these bunches. *"It is to adorn my house in honor of Shabbos,"* the man replied. *"But wouldn't just one bunch be enough to fill your house with fragrance?"* they asked. He replied, *"I am taking two bunches, one for '**Remember the shabbos**' and the other for '**Keep the Shabbat**."* Rav Shimon Bar Yochai said to his son, *"see how precious the details of the Torah are to our brethren!"*

The lesson here is quite evident; there is a duality to our service to G-d. There are times when our focus must be on regretting our misdeeds and asking for repentance. There are times like Lag B'Omer, where we transcend our actions to access the flame within our soul and proclaim the oneness of G-d.

**"Anyone who helps a fellow Jew is considered as if he helped G-d himself."**

*-Rav Shimon Bar Yochai*

***May Rav Shimon Bar Yochai's immense Holiness and wisdom move us to dig within ourselves and reveal the soul's secret, known as our potential.***

*Have a joyous and meaningful Lag B'Omer & Shabbos,  
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*