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*Shabbat Behar-Bechukotai*

*May 8, 2010*

*24 Iyar 5770*

## News

### VISITS IN CALIFORNIA

We all know that there is a great number of Jews in California, about 1 million Jews in this State. That's why Adventists who are living in California would like to have more opportunities to witness to these Jews about Yeshua. Several congregations invited me to speak about this ministry.

### SPECIAL DAY IN SANTA BARBARA

On Shabbat May 8, I will be in Santa Barbara, CA. I have received a very warm invitation from the pastor, the congregation called "*Grace Community an Adventist Place of Hope*" and the Pacific Union Conference. If some of you are from the area of Los Angeles or Santa Barbara, you are welcomed for a special time of Sabbath School and Worship on Shabbat morning (they ask me to speak at these two moments). This congregation is located,

1915 Chapala St

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

They said that for a good direction, there website can be consulted. "[gracecommunitysb.org](http://gracecommunitysb.org)". There will be a potluck for lunch.

### MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE PUC

It is always a challenge to have the support of leaders all over the world for our ministry. Most of the time, they don't understand what we call "contextualization", which means to preach the gospel in the context of the people we would like to reach. Some leaders are afraid to see "Adventist synagogues" in their territories. I will have the privilege to meet the President of the Pacific Union conference on Monday 10. I would be happy if I can be assured of your prayers for this meeting. I am sure that he is

not opposed to our ministry, that is why this ministry is progressively growing in California and Oregon but it is always good to know that people are praying for our ministry.

### NEXT VISITS

I will be in California for three weeks to support the Jewish outreach ministry in this area. I will be on May 15 in Malibu SDA Church and on May 22 in Thousand Oaks SDA church. I will give you more details on these special events in my next newsletters.

### SHAVUOT

I remind everybody that Shavuot is coming very soon, it will be on May 19 and 20, starting on May 18 evening. As you know the Jews celebrate the giving of the Torah and the law. They read several text and specially the book of Ruth which occurred at the period of Shavuot. It is good to prepare your congregation and to have a nice program where you can invite your Jewish friends. It will be a wonderful time to affirm our believe about the Law of God, especially on the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, the dietary laws etc... However, Shavuot is for us also the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). It is a good time to certify that the law can be understood and written in our heart only if we let the Holy Spirit working in our heart.

### ISRAEL FIELD SESSION

We have in Israel our administrative session each third year, since the last one was in 2007, it is time to have our next one. This session will be chaired by Dr. Bertil Wiklander, from the TED and will be held on June 2-5, let's pray for his success.

# OVERVIEW



## BEHAR

### LEVITICUS 25:1 - 26:2

The Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This “Shabbat” for the Land is called “*shemita*”. After every seventh *shemita*, the fiftieth year, *yovel* (jubilee) is announced with the sound of the shofar on Yom Kippur. This was also a year for the Land to lie fallow.

G-d promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the *shemita* and *yovel* years. During *yovel*, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work.

A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free.

The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to the first year after the sale. The Levites’ cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of one another by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment..

## BECHUKOTAI

### LEVITICUS 26:3 - 27:34

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow G-d’s commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result.

The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer*

*Vayikra*, the book of Leviticus, concludes with the details of *erachin* – the process by which someone vows to give the *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal or property.

## BLESSINGS AND PUNISHMENTS

Parashat Bechukotei begins, “If in My statutes you will walk, and My commandments you will keep, then I will give you rain in the right time, the Land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will produce fruit... you shall eat your bread with satiety and dwell in safety in your land. And I will give peace in the land and you shall lie down and no one shall make you afraid...” (Lev. 26:3-4)

G-d promises His people that if they observe the commandments, they will be blessed. Later the Parasha details the many sufferings which his people will experience if, G-d forbid, they do not obey the commandments.

The blessings are contained in 10 verses and the punishments in over 25 verses. Yet in reality, the blessings outnumber the curses because they are general blessings in which many more blessings are included. The purpose of mentioning the punishments is to impress upon us the importance of obeying G-d. According to the Jewish understanding the blessings are mentioned because G-d wants to bless us, but the punishments are mentioned because G-d does not want to bring them.

## DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE TORAH

When presenting the laws of the sabbatical year, the Torah opens with a strange statement. “And G-d spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying...” What is the connection between Mount Sinai and the sabbatical year? wonders the Talmud. After all, wasn’t the entire Torah taught at Mount Sinai. Why make particular mention of Mount Sinai with regard to one commandment?

The Talmud explains that this we are meant to draw a parallel from this commandment to all the other commandments in the Torah. Just as the laws

of the sabbatical year, which require that the land be left fallow every seventh year, were taught in full at Mount Sinai so too were all the laws of the Torah taught there. The question remains: Why were the laws of the sabbatical year singled out as the example which all the other laws follow? The commentators point to an interesting passage a little deeper into the Torah portion we are reading this week. “And if you shall say, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we cannot plant nor gather in our produce, then I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield enough produce for three years.’” This, the commentators explain, is the point the Torah is making here. Just as the sabbatical laws were formulated by the Almighty and not by men, so too are all the other laws of the Torah from Mount Sinai, divine in origin and not the product of human imagination.

Every seventh year, Jews in Israel (according to the Jewish tradition the laws of *shmitah* and *yovel* can be applied only in Eretz Israel) were not permitted to work their fields. Rabbi Zalmen Marozov says, everything that grew during that year was free for everyone to take. The *Shemitah* year, was to be a year dedicated to spiritual growth, rather than acquiring physical wealth. It was a year when everyone shared in whatever grew in the fields.

## MIRACLES OR NATURAL EVENTS

The Torah states, “And if you shall say, what will we eat in the seventh year, for we have not planted or gathered in our grain [due to the restrictions of *Shmitah*], I will appoint My blessing to you in the sixth year, and it will yield enough grain for the three-year period [the year before *Shmitah*, the *Shmitah* year, and the following year, until you can plant and reap the harvest].” (Leviticus 25:20-21)

Sforno writes that the nature of God’s miracle varied according to the quality of bitachon (faith (“assurance” in God) shown by G-d’s people. If their bitachon was great, the miracle was that a year’s quantity sufficed for three years. If not, they received three years’ quantity of grain in the sixth year. The first was a hidden miracle; the second obvious to everyone.

Why, we might wonder, did the lower level of bitachon evoke the more obvious miracle, i.e., the threefold quantity of grain?

The traditional sources explain that God avoids doing open miracles. Such miracles seem to imply that the natural order God created, and which He described as “very good,” is not complete and needs adjustment from time to time.

In reality, there is no difference between nature and miracles; both are expressions of the Divine will. The Splitting of the Sea, the Sages say, was already decreed from the Creation of the world. It and other miracles are merely natural events which occur infrequently; nature is miraculous events which occur regularly.

## GIBOREI KOACH

The Midrash calls the people who observe the *Shmitah*: “Masters of strength (*giborei koach*) who fulfill My words”. In other words, it takes tremendous courage and faith to observe the *Shmitah*.

However, Rabbi Frand asks this question: Where is the great strength of faith in observing *Shmitah*? If the promise of “I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year...” comes true, then the farmer has already put away income for the seventh and eighth years from his bumper crop on the sixth year. He can sit back and draw on his reserves that are already in the bank! Where, then, is there manifestation of the attribute of ‘*giborei koach*’ [master of spiritual strength]?

The Shemen-ha-Tov makes an interesting observation which is really a reality of life. Human beings have an unbelievable capacity to forget. In other words, even though a person might have made triple his normal income in the sixth year, if in the middle of the seventh year he sees that there will be no income that year, he begins to get nervous. He does not like to have to draw down the reserves, which he has stashed away in the bank from his bumper crop in year six of the cycle!

In fact, it takes strength and faith during the seventh year to not ask “what’s going to be?” when the land is lying fallow, regardless of how much money one was able to stash away during the sixth year. Such an attitude is truly worth the accolade of “Masters of strength (*giborei koach*) who fulfill My words.”

## G-D'S FOOTSTEPS

**T**he Torah states, “And I will walk among you, and I will be your G-d and you shall be My people.” (Lev. ) This is indeed a special blessing to recognize that G-d walks among us at all times.

The following parable explains it beautifully and is worthwhile giving some thought when we go through difficult periods in life, which we all go through one time or another.

A person, who through his lifetime experienced difficult periods, returned his soul to its maker. In heaven he was shown a replay of his entire life. He was shown all the steps he took throughout his life; where he went and what he did. To his amazement he saw four footsteps, instead of only two.

“But I have only two feet? Why do I see four footsteps?” he asked the angel. “Two are yours and the other two are G-d’s. He walked with you wherever you went!” replied the angel.

“But why, as I watch the difficult times in my life and the difficult steps I went through, I see only two footsteps? Where was G-d then?”

The angel looked at him and smiled, “You’re mistaken. The two footsteps you see during your difficult journeys through life are not yours! They are G-d’s footsteps! During those times G-d carried you!”

## OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

**A** man, who had business in a distant city, bid his wife farewell, left his apartment and went out to the street to find a taxi. To his delight, a taxi was standing at the curbside. At the airport, he found a skycap waiting to take his luggage just as he opened his door. His ticket was waiting for him at the counter, and once again, he was delighted to discover he had been assigned his favorite seat. What wonderful coincidences, he thought.

The coincidences continued throughout his trip, and he marveled at his good fortune. Finally, he arrived at the hotel in the city of his destination and found that a delicious meal had been prepared for him. Moreover, the food was prepared and arranged exactly as he preferred it!

Aha! he thought. This is too much to attribute to coincidence. Now I clearly see my wife’s loving hand. She made sure that I was happy and comfortable every step of the way. I must thank her not only for the meal, but for every convenience I have so fortuitously encountered on my trip.

Rabbi Naftali Reich comments: In our own lives, most of us can easily think of at least one or two times when we saw clearly the Almighty’s hand leading us through difficult times. But think about it. Does not it stand to reason that all the other good things that have happened to us in the normal course of events, all the little coincidences that we are so accustomed to taking for granted, all of these were also engineered by the loving hand of the Almighty? Once we come to this realization, our relationship with Him will rise to a new level and will be forever spiritually enriched.

## ENJOYING YOUR TRIP

**T**wo cross-country travelers met in a roadside inn. “Tough trip,” one of them commented to the other. “But just one thousand miles to go, and I’ll reach the coast. How about you? “I’m also heading for the coast. I’ve covered two thousand miles already, and I’ve had a very good trip. “Really? Say, if we’re both going coast to coast, how come I find the trip tough and you don’t?”

The other thought for a moment, then he said, “It’s really quite simple. You say you have a thousand miles to go, which shows your mind is totally focused on the destination, and the entire trip is just terrible drudgery. I say I’ve already covered two thousand miles, which shows the trip itself has value to me. I enjoyed the spectacular vistas, seeing new places and observing their ways of life. I look at my two thousand miles as an accomplishment, and so, I’m having a very good trip.”

## EDITOR

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## HAFTARA

### Jeremiah 32:6-27

## BESORAT YESHUA

### Mark 3:1-30

**HAFTARA:** In this text of Jeremiah we have an illustration of the year of Yovel. “**Jeremiah said, ‘The word of the LORD came to me: Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours’”** (Jer. 32:6-7).

However, Jeremiah wanted to be certain that this revelation was truly from God. It was a strange order. Jeremiah had received the revelation from God that the people of Israel would be deported to Babylon, Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. There was no sense in buying a property now. It would be better to keep these seventeen shekels of silver and to use them in Babylon where they would be living. It was very strange. The Lord had to confirm to Jeremiah that this revelation was true. And it was confirmed by his cousin. “**Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD”** (Jer. 32:8). He obeyed and bought the land.

“**And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales.** (Jer. 32:9-10).

Why did the Lord want Jeremiah to spend this money in Jerusalem, to buy land that would be taken by the Babylonians? “**Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land “** (Jer. 32:14-15).

The main message of this purchase is that there is hope. God is not going to abandon his people or to reject them. He wants to teach them a lesson. He wants to push them to fulfil his mission which is to share the knowledge of God. That is why this money was not lost. **OUR HOPE IS IN THE LORD.**

**PARASHA:** Our text of Leviticus is about the Sabbatical year. Through the action of Israel on the Sabbatical Jubilee year, God wants to teach to Israel the right way to keep the Shabbat. “**You shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. ... In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property.... When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. ... You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God “** (Leviticus 25:3).

If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, ....(Leviticus 25:25-26).

**BESORAH:** It was very important to do good on the Sabbatical year and the jubilee year. Yeshua inaugurated a time of Jubilee and he wanted to illustrate in his way how to keep the Shabbat in this freedom time. “**Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, ‘Come forward.’ Then he said to them, ‘Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?’”** (Mark 3:1-4).

The Shabbat is to be a blessing for all human beings and it is allowed to do good on Shabbat. That’s why Yeshua wanted to heal this man on Shabbat. It is true that he could have healed this man any day of the week, however it was a good time to demonstrate God’s love on Shabbat. Most Christians today don’t keep the Shabbat because they have not understood the freedom and the blessing of the Shabbat in the Mashiach. They just see the Shabbat through how they see the Jewish keeping of that day. It is time to come back to the true keeping of the Shabbat taught by the Mashiach, in words and in actions.

