

Tell a story Parshah Behar

Leviticus 25:1-27:34

by Julie Zhuk on 2022-05-16

Comments

The parsha starts out with Moses on the famous mountain top known as Mount Sinai. As G-d prepared to give the Jewish people their land He stated: "The first rule will be to keep the Sabbath. The next thing He wanted the Jews to do was work the land for six years, but by the seventh year they were to take a break. Everything that they had harvested, was what they would rely on within that next year being the seventh. Over time the Jewish people have grown to learn that the seventh year is known as the Shemittah year. G-d set it up for the Jewish people to work six years and then the seventh year, by not working they were putting their complete trust in Him. He wanted the Jewish people to rely on Him as He was our main provider. G-d knew how easily Moses worried and that would lead the Jews to having their own self-doubts of having enough food to sustain themselves. That is why G-d told Moses, He would give His blessing to the Jews in the sixth year. As I was reading this, I imagined the Jews would not be working that seventh year, G-d would make sure we would have harvested enough fruit for the next three years.

G-d wanted Moses to keep track of every six years they would work and then stop when it would be the seventh year. G-d made sure there was enough of everything for the Jewish people to have before the seventh year came in. He would not allow anything to grow during the year of Shemittah. G-d felt it was important people have a break from the everyday mundane work they were doing. Including those who were indentured servants after six years they were free. The Jewish people understood the importance of keeping this mitzvot in Israel. The Jewish people counted the seven cycles of Shemittah. When this happened, fifty years of them doing this had gone by. If we think about this in math terms, seven multiplied by seven is forty-nine. The following year being the fiftieth one is what was considered the year of the Jubilee.

This was a hard aspect of the parsha to comprehend. There are many farmers in Israel who continue this practice even now thousands of years later. Things are a lot different now than how life was for the Jewish people in the biblical days, when Moses was leading the Jews. By keeping this tradition going, these farmers in Israel still believe that everything they are given comes ultimately from G-d.

Another concept we learn from the parsha is it's forbidden to charge interest when lending a Jew money. If anyone charged their friend with interest it would say, the friend is thanking the person doing them the favor. And for doing that, the one who is offering their finances is taking a bit extra. The only thing expected from the person needing help financially is they pay back exactly how much they borrowed. This parsha focuses on the promises G-d gave the Jewish people. If the Jewish people kept the Sabbath and followed mitzvot, He would allow the earth to have rain for the crops to grow. He would allow for there to be enough food to go around for everyone. There would be peace and security in Israel among the Jews. G-d would prevent any wild beasts or armies to pass through the land where the Jews were living. If there was any

battle to be fought against a nation that was not of our own, we would be strong enough to fight it. Furthermore, G-d would ALWAYS be with us.

As we read these words, it sounds like a very nice life for Jews to have followed. After sharing all of this with the Jewish people, G-d warned them what would happen if they didn't follow His ways. If they didn't keep the Sabbath, His mitzvos, and the agreement they had with G-d to begin with. G-d warned them that they would experience many unfortunate events. G-d is an infinite being, He has no form. He is considered the protector and provider for the Jewish people. The Jewish people see Him as a parent even if He is not physically one or in the physical presence. As a parent, G-d will get angry at His children, the Jewish people. He may punish us, but He will never forget us or leave us behind. Since He sees us as His children, He wants us to treat each other like family.

This parsha emphasizes on the importance of Jews being extra kind to each other. I've mentioned how a Jew can reach out to another and help financially. The other aspect I want to bring up is how we should be careful with our words. Whatever anyone says can come off in a harsh way, and that hurt stays with people for a long time. Sometimes it stays with someone forever, therefore when talking to anyone, we need to be on our best behavior. G-d taught Moses an important lesson, which he later passed down to the Jewish people. Moses made one mistake that caused him to never be allowed into Israel. After this one mistake, there was no going back and then he passed away. When he was alive, his level of confidence wasn't nearly as good as what G-d thought of him.

Regardless of his one mistake, G-d loved him so much. G-d gave Moses everything, and the love Moses had for the Jewish people never stopped. Moses gave the Jewish people everything he could as well. What really touched me in this parsha is reading somewhere, what we own is only temporary. Things, our jobs, our homes, and the people in our lives come and go. If we can give to others, it is very eternal. Giving to others is ultimately what G-d wants Jews to do for each other. Any difficult act of kindness that one can do is a victory. In the long run, victories bring joy. When someone gives or does an act of kindness without letting another person know whom it was from, it says a lot about them. The anonymous kind act is motivated by a true desire to do acts of kindness.

Haftarah Behar Jeremiah: 32:6-27

At the beginning of the haftarah, the prophet Jeremiah is sitting in a prison cell. There was a king at the time by the name of Zedekiah. He was in power from 434 BCE and his reign stopped in 423 BCE. Jeremiah was able to foretell that the Babylonian people would win a war against the Judeans. It wasn't just that the king was going to be in exile, but the Jewish people too. Jerusalem was destroyed as well. This did in fact happen just as Jeremiah predicted. The Babylonian army was preparing a heavy siege against Jerusalem. They wanted to penetrate the city of Jerusalem at any moment. Jeremiah was inside the city and he was trying to warn king Zedekiah that he was going to be sent into exile. It had to do with the people's sins and because of that the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem including the holy temple was going to happen fast. The king didn't want the public to hear these predictions Jeremiah was sharing. That was why he decided to send Jeremiah to prison. To imagine what this prison was like,

think about being confined in a royal compound. While in prison, G-d revealed Himself to Jeremiah. It was there that Jeremiah learned he would have the opportunity to buy a piece of land. This land was a field that was owned by Jeremiah's cousin named Hanamel. Before actually placing the purchase for this land an interesting thing happened for Jeremiah.

He was reminded by G-d that the Jewish sovereignty of the region was going to fall apart right in front of his eyes. This land they were living in was going to be handed down to a group of people called the Chaldeans. It was a challenging time for the Jewish people and a challenging decision on behalf of Jeremiah to make. He felt G-d telling him this was the right thing to do, so he went through with accepting his cousin's offer. He bought it, and everything was done legally by the book. Money was exchanged properly, there was a document of purchase that was shared before witnesses seeing that all of this did happen. Jeremiah gave the deed to his disciple, Baruch who was the son of Neriah. Baruch made sure to keep it in a safe place and where it would be kept for a number of years. Jeremiah shares the message with the Jewish people what G-d's message was. This message was crucial for the Jewish people to hear. G-d wanted the Jewish people to buy land and live on it.

G-d specifically tells the Jewish people: "Houses, fields, and vineyards should be purchased again in this land." G-d was sending a message of hope to the Jewish people. It is true he was sending this message on the evening of destruction and when they were being sent into exile. G-d wanted the Jewish people to know that eventually they would return to their homeland, Jerusalem. G-d spoke to Jeremiah while he was imprisoned thousands of years ago. With that said, there are so many different opinions on this topic. How it happened in reality, no one will ever know. What we do know, as soon as G-d appeared in front of Jeremiah in the prison something inside of him changed. Maybe because he was so grateful to G-d for His continuation of caring for himself and the Jewish people. Jeremiah had a deep desire within him to pray to G-d.

We know now that G-d listened intently to Jeremiah's prayer while he was in prison. From reading Jewish text we learn that the ways of G-d are just. G-d repairs each person according to his or her deeds. We know G-d will give back kindness to the descendants of the righteous. Even though the Jewish people messed up and G-d had a punishment in store for them, there was still a sense of hope out there. Jeremiah knew that G-d had performed miracles while the Jewish people were in Egypt and as they were getting out of there. We will always keep in mind that G-d brought the Jewish people into the land of Israel that flowed with milk and honey. Jeremiah knew why the Jewish people were being punished now, they had turned away from Him, turned away from His laws and stopped practicing the Torah.

Tragedy was just around the corner, with their oppressors the Chaldeans and their large ramps that they had set up in the city of Jerusalem. The point of these large walls were for them to surmount the city walls of Jerusalem. There was pestilence and hunger in the air. It was driving people away to the point of surrender. For so many of the Jewish people back then thinking of purchasing any land was the last thing on their mind. No Jew back then truly believed on their own at least, that the land which would be purchased wouldn't get destroyed. Jeremiah felt a deep connection to the Almighty. There are some sources out there telling us, G-d knew all along that the purchase of Jeremiah's cousin's land would be worthless.

It would be worthless in regards to the importance of the Jewish people being sent into exile. That makes Jewish people now wonder, why G-d would instruct Jeremiah to waste money like that. When Jeremiah thought about all of these things, he realized G-d still held onto the hope of the Jewish people changing their ways and coming back to Him, the Creator of the Universe. There is an infinite love and connection that the Jewish people had back then and continue to have now. That love and connection is to G-d, they saw that He had emerged triumphantly. The Jewish people were wrestling with the angel of despair, but this time they won.