

Parshas Behar

This week's Parsha is Behar, which begins with the commandments of leaving your fields to rest for a year after a 6-year cycle and an additional year called Yovel every 49th year. In this process, all land is returned to its original owners, slaves go free, and the nation gathers. Shortly after those laws, the prohibition against charging interest is written.

Right before the commandments against interest, 25:35 states, "If your brother becomes poor, and is unable to support himself among you, you shall support him, so that he may be able to subsist among you, whether a proselyte or a resident." Then, the laws of interest are written.

The connection between first laws of Shemitta and the laws against charging interest are connected because they are both about the intense way we must serve and believe in Hashem and have faith that he is the master of the universe. Taking the risk of leaving your land and returning land and freeing slaves understandably takes a massive leap of faith.

Furthermore, charging interest to Jews is understandably the way one would make money grow. Not charging money (like rent) for using your money takes a massive leap of faith. But the Torah sets the stage for you to care for your brothers and not take advantage of them by ensuring you care for them. Because Hashem ultimately provides, and we must have faith in the same.

Rashi explains the same in the words 'And you shall be afraid of Hashem' because

we would keep to these laws out of fear of Hashem, and we were explicitly (as stated similarly in other Parshas) taken out of Mitzraim to serve Hashem with these difficult laws included.

The subsequent laws relate to Jewish servants because, thematically, they are synergistic with the previous ones in how one must treat servants (similar to it being the first commandment after the Ten Commandments in Parshas Mishpatim).

Rashi at the end of the Parsha (26:1) nicely summarizes that the Parsha follows a theme beginning with one who lusts for money, sinning and leading themselves astray.

The Parsha concludes 26:2, "You shall keep my Shabboses and show reverence for My Temple, I am Hashem." My father told me from the Alter Rebbe the following. Why does it say My Shabboses, i.e. plural? One answer is that it follows the adage that if all the Jews kept 2 Shabboses, Mashiach would come. However, the Alter Rebbe explains from Chassidus and Kabbala that just keeping one Shabbos is all that's required, but it is Shabbos on the two levels, upper and lower, that one must keep. That one must take a part of Shabbos into their everyday mundane lives. What this means, is the same faith we have keeping Shabbos, more so, that by keeping Shabbos we recognize the ultimate Kingship of Hashem, we coronate Him as the Master of the Universe and truly believe, then Mashiach can come. Shabbos isn't just for the 7th day; it is for the entire week, living with faith in Hashem. This means keeping the commandments like from this Parsha because, unlike other

commandments, they require a complete leap of faith. We do them because Hashem commanded us to, which is why they are stated, Behar Sinai (the name of the Parsha), because they summarize what all Mitzvos are about, to do them for Hashem, and because Hashem said so. Furthermore, Shabbos is the lashon of Shevus, which means to return.

In this way, may we complete all our Mitzvos and live our lives full of Shabbos so we may be close to and return to Hashem and be blessed with Mashiach and delivery from our enemies.

Good Shabbos.