

# KUSHNER COMMENTS



Shabbat Candle Lighting: 7: 42 PM  
Havdalah: 8: 42 PM

(Times are for Livingston, NJ)

## Parsha Summary: *Parshat Behar– Bechukotai*

*Parshat Behar* presents the topics of *shmittah* (the sabbatical year ) and *yovel* (the jubilee year ) in addition to other important laws. In *parshat Bechukotai*, Hashem first enumerates the rewards for proper adherence to His laws and then He warns *Bnei Yisrael* of the dire consequences that will occur should they disregard His *mitzvot*. *Sefer Vayikra* then concludes with the laws of *arachin*, a special set of laws regarding the values of gifts promised to the *Beit Hamikdash*.

**Chazak! Chazak! Venitchazek!**

*It's All What You See*

Ms. Chana Baila Krupka

In *Behar-Bechukotai*, we learn about the *mitzvot* of *shmitah* (the sabbatical year ) and *yovel* (the jubilee year.) The *passuk* describes *shmitah* as “*Shabbat LaHashem.*” The use of the word “*Shabbat*” for *shmitah* and its connection to our weekly “*Shabbat*” is discussed by many of the commentators. *Ramban* ( 25:2 ) explains the connection, saying that anyone who does not keep *shmitah* is denying that God is the creator of the world. He explains that the Ten Commandments state that we must remember *Shabbat* since *Hashem* created the world in seven days and the same reasoning applies to the seven years of the *shmitah* cycle. Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch posits that the purpose of the weekly Shabbat is to focus on God ’ s original creation of the world, while the purpose of *shmitah* is to remind us that everything we have in this world belongs to Hashem.

The teachings of *Ramban* and Rav Hirsch serve to remind us that everything that was, is, and will be is a gift from Hashem. By understanding this, we learn humility that must affect our perception of ourselves as well as our perception of others. *Rashi* in 25:6 clarifies the connection between *shmitah* and humility by explaining that the prohibition of working the land during *shmitah* only applies to work that would be done by an owner, like sowing and pruning. Anyone is permitted to eat and enjoy the products of the land; the prohibition refers to acts of showing ownership. In essence, *shmitah* allows all people, wealthy or poor, to see themselves as equals before God and their fellow man.

This mitzvah of *shmitah* is so important that the Torah teaches us that exile comes when we don ’ t keep *shmitah* and *yovel*. *Rashi* 26:35 explains that the 70 years of the Babylonian exile corresponds to the 70 *shmittot* and the years of *yovel* that were not kept. When we do not acknowledge the gift of land that God gave us and when we do not internalize a sense of humility, we are at fault. Our enemies can then challenge us and

(continued on the back of the page)

פרשת בהר בכקותאי



Hashem created the world in six days and on the seventh day He rested. The seventh day, *Shabbat*, is the day to commemorate that Hashem is the creator of the world. All faithful Jews stop everything to keep *Shabbat*. This shows our belief in God that He will always support us. He makes us feel comfortable enough to stop working for a whole day and honor Him.

This week's *parsha* mentions the *shmitah* year. The meaning of "*shmitah*" is "the act of letting go." During the *shmitah* year, the farmers in *Eretz Yisrael* let go of their land and stop planting. Like *Shabbat*, the *shmitah* year shows our trust in God. The land in *Eretz Yisrael* is so beautiful and the farms are very rich. The farmers may get caught up in the land, forgetting who is truly responsible for the success of their farms. In order to remember that Hashem is the creator of the world and of our productive fields, we have the *shmitah* year. When we stop producing for a whole year, we are showing complete faith in God that He will make sure that we have enough food for ourselves and for our families.

Hashem promised us three things should we follow the rules of *shmitah* year: First, the harvest from the year before the *shmitah* year will last for three years. Second, during the year itself, people will be full even if they eat a small amount. Last, if we keep the *mitzvah* then we will be safe in *Eretz Yisrael*, but if we do not follow the *mitzvah*, our enemies will exile us. The punishment for not following the laws of the *shmitah* year is so strict because the *mitzvah* of *shmitah* is a sign of faith in Hashem. If we do not follow the laws, it shows that we do not believe in Hashem.

We are lucky to have the chance to show our belief and love for Hashem. We should take advantage of this opportunity and follow the *mitzvah* with happiness.

*Jillian Cumsky is a sophomore at RKYHS.*

capture the land. Yet by keeping Hashem's commandments, we are told "Five of you will pursue a hundred, a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand, and your enemy will fall before you by the sword" (26:8). Thus, when we recognize Hashem's control and presence in our world, we are worthy of His miracles.

Throughout Jewish history, we must strive to see the hand of God in all that occurs. It is striking that this year the *parsha* of *shmitah* occurs before the week of *Yom Yerushalayim*. There are those who would see the capture of Yerushalayim simply as a military victory. As Jews, we celebrate Hashem giving us, through a small army of Israeli soldiers, the city of Yerushalayim. It is no coincidence that as our young soldiers approached the *kotel* that day, they blew the shofar and cried, giving thanks to Hashem for their victory.

As we prepare ourselves to receive the Torah, let us focus and show gratitude for all that we have been given. In that way, may we be worthy so that we may all permanently return to the land of Israel where we can live a life that is "*kulo Shabbat u' menuchah*," completely *Shabbat* and rest (as quoted by the Ramban 25:2) after we hear the blowing of the shofar of the final redemption.

*Ms. Krupka teaches Tanach at RKYHS.*