



BEHAR/LAG BA'OMER

YOU'RE NEVER ALONE

A Unique Solution to a Dreadful Societal Problem

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Behar

On the mountain of Sinai, G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the sabbatical year. Every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, human and beast.

Seven sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the jubilee year—on which work on the land

ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners.

Behar also contains additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury.

TEXT 1

Genesis 2:18

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקִים, לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם
לְבַדּוֹ, אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ.

G-d said, “It’s not good for man to be alone. I will make for him a helper alongside him.”

If we can't
connect with
others, are we
truly alone?



TEXT 2

Leviticus 25:39–41

לט. וְכִי יָמוּךְ אֶחָיֶךָ עִמָּךְ
וְנִמְכַּר לָךְ, לֹא תַעֲבֹד בּוֹ
עֲבֹדֶת עָבֵד.

מ. כְּשָׂכִיר כְּתוֹשֵׁב יִהְיֶה
עִמָּךְ, עַד שְׁנַת הַיָּבֵל
יַעֲבֹד עִמָּךְ.

מא. וַיֵּצֵא מֵעִמָּךְ הוּא
וּבָנָיו עִמּוֹ, וְנָשָׁב אֶל
מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ, וְאֶל אֲחֻזַּת
אֲבוֹתָיו יָשׁוּב.

39. If your brother shall become poor among you, and is sold to you as a servant, you shall not work him as a slave.

40. As a hired servant and a resident of your area he shall be with you; he shall work with you until the jubilee year.

41. Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him. He shall return to his family, and to the possession of his fathers.

TEXT 3

Talmud, Kidushin 22a

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: "וַיֵּצֵא מֵעֶמְקָהּ הוּא וּבָנָיו עִמּוֹ", אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן: אִם הוּא נִמְכָּר – בָּנָיו וּבָנוֹתָיו מִי נִמְכָּרִים? מָכָאן שָׂרְבוּ חֵיִיב בְּמִזְוֵנוֹת בָּנָיו.

כִּיּוֹצֵא בְּדָבָר אִתָּהּ אוֹמֵר: "אִם בַּעַל אִשָּׁה הוּא וַיֵּצֵאָהּ אִשְׁתּוֹ עִמּוֹ", אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן: אִם הוּא נִמְכָּר – אִשְׁתּוֹ מִי נִמְכָּרָה? מָכָאן שָׂרְבוּ חֵיִיב בְּמִזְוֵנוֹת אִשְׁתּוֹ.

Our sages taught, "Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him." Rabbi Shimon said, "If he was sold, were his sons and daughters sold? From here, we see that his master is obligated to provide sustenance for his children."

You say something similar with regard to the verse, "If he is married, then his wife shall go out with him" (Exodus 21:3). Rabbi Shimon said, "If he was sold, was his wife sold? From here, we see that his master is obligated to provide sustenance for the servant's wife."

TEXT 4

*Rabbi Yomtov Asevilli,
Kidushin, ad loc.*

ואיכא למימר, דכיון דסתמא דמילתא כל אדם זן ומפרנס אשתו
ובניו, רצתה תורה שלא יפסידו מפני מכירתו, ושיהא הרב זן
ומפרנס אותן. דקים ליה לרחמנא שאילו לא נמכר היה מפרנס
אותה, הילכך חייב במזונותיהן וכסותם.

We can argue that inasmuch as every man is assumed to sustain and support his wife and children, the Torah doesn't wish for them to be harmed because of their father's sale. This compels the master to sustain and support them. For it is evident in G-d's eyes that had this man not been sold, he would have supported his family. Therefore, the master is obliged to supply them with food and clothing.



QUESTION

Although they do not perform any labor, a servant's children are supported by the master.

Why?

TEXT 5A

*Rabbi Zerachiah Halevi,
Sefer Hama'or, Bava
Batra 108a*

שתהא רואה את הבן כאילו אביו קיים, ולפיכך יעקב קודם
לאברהם בנכסי יצחק, שהרי ביעקב אנו רואים את יצחק
כאילו הוא קיים.

We view the child as if they perpetuated their parent's being. Therefore, for example, Jacob would precede Abraham in inheriting Isaac's property because, in Jacob's presence, we see his father Isaac as if he yet lived.

TEXT 5B

Rashi, Horayot 6a

בנים במקום אבות קיימי, וכאבות
חיים דמו.

Children stand in place of their
parents, and it is as if their
parents yet lived.

TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei
Sichot 22, p. 157*

און דאס איז אויך דער ביאור פארוואס רבו איז חייב במזונות בניו:
דאס איז מצד זייער שייכות צום אב. כשם ווי ער איז חייב במזונות
האב (העבד), אזוי איז ער חייב צו שפייזן דעם "חלק האב" וואס
איז דא אין בניו.

This explains why the master is obligated to support the servant's children: It is due to their association with the *father*. Just as he is obligated to support the father (the servant), so too is he obliged to feed the “part of the father” that exists in his *children*.



ANSWER

Children are a part of a parent's very being.

Any obligation to support the parent includes an obligation to support their children.

TEXT 7

Rashi, Leviticus 25:41

“וְאֶל אֲחֻזַּת אֲבוֹתָיו.” אֶל כְּבוֹד אֲבוֹתָיו,
וְאֵין לְזַלְזְלוֹ בְּכָךְ.

“And to the possession of his fathers.”
To the respectability of his fathers;
one cannot disparage him for his
previous servitude.

Slavery will never
deprive one of full
membership in their
family's story.



TEXT 8

*Rabbi Chaim ibn Atar,
Leviticus 25:39*

וכי ימוך אחיך וגו'. פרשה זו תרמוז למה שאמרו זכרונם
לברכה בספר הזוהר (תיקונים י), כי ה' צוה לשר אדום,
שהוא ס"מ, שלא יתנהג באכזריות עם ישראל . . . שגלות
החל הזה הוא לאדום זכור ה'.

“If your brother shall become poor, etc.” This section hints at what the *Zohar* says (*Tikunim* 10) that G-d commanded the ministering angel of Edom—who is the minister of negativity—not to treat Israel cruelly. . . . And we are currently exiled to Edom.



Slavery and Exile:

Neither can break
the bond between
parent and child.

TEXT 9A

Talmud, Megilah 29a

תנא, רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר:
בוא וראה כמה חביבין ישראל לפני
הקדוש ברוך הוא, שכל מקום שגלו
— שכינה עמהם.

גלו למצרים — שכינה עמהם,
שנאמר: "הנגלה נגליתי לבית אביך
בהיותם במצרים וגו'".

גלו לבבל — שכינה עמהם, שנאמר:
"למענכם שלחתי בבלה".

ואף כשהם עתידין ליגאל — שכינה
עמהם, שנאמר: "ושב ה' אלקיך את
שבותך". "והשיב" לא נאמר, אלא
"ושב". מלמד שהקדוש ברוך הוא שם
עמהם מבין הגלויות.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yocha'i says, "Come and see how beloved the Jewish people are to the Holy One, blessed be He. For every place they were exiled, the Divine Presence went with them.

"They were exiled to Egypt; the Divine Presence went with them, as is stated, 'Did I reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt?' (I Samuel 2:27).

"They were exiled to Babylonia; the Divine Presence went with them, as is stated, 'For your sake, I have been sent to Babylonia' (Isaiah 43:14).

"So too when, in the future, they will be redeemed, the Divine Presence will be with them, as is stated, 'Then G-d will return with your captivity' (Deuteronomy 30:3). It does not state, 'He will bring back,' but rather 'He will return,' teaching that the Holy One, blessed be He, will return with them from among the exiles."

TEXT 9B

Zohar, vol. 3, p. 90a

הָכִי תְּנִינוּ: זָכָאִין אֵינוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל, דְּבָכָל אֶתֶר
דְּאַתְגָּלוּ, שְׂכִינְתָא אֲתִגְלִיָּא בְּהַדִּיָּהוּ.

So it was taught: Fortunate is Israel,
for in every place they are exiled, the
Divine Presence is revealed with them.

TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Sichot
Kodesh 5740:3, p. 6*

בכדי צו אפהיטן אידן (אלע אידן און
יעדער אידן) אין גלות, און בכדי צו
ארויסנעמען זיי (דערנאך) פון גלות
("כימי צאתך מארץ מצרים אראנו
נפלאות") - פאדערט זיך ניט עס זאל זיין
"שכינה עמהן": אויך ווען דער
אויבערשטער וואלט פארבליבן אין די
הימלען און זיין אין א צושטאנד פון
פולער פרייהייט - וואלט ער געקענט פון
דארט אנפירן מיט דער וועלט און מיט
אידן, אפהיטן אידן אומעטום און אלע
מאל (וואס "לא ינום ולא יישן שומר
ישראל"), געבן זיי אלץ וואס זיי דארפן
האבן, "הזן את העולם כולו בטובו בחן
ובחסד וברחמים" און צוהיילן זייער
גאולה.

Simply protecting the Jewish people (and every Jew individually) during Exile does not require the Divine Presence to "be with them." The same holds true of G-d's ability to redeem us from Exile—as in, "Like the days of your Exodus from Egypt, I will show him wonders" (Micah 7:15). Even if the Almighty had remained in the Heavens, allowing Himself absolute freedom, He could have directed the world and protected the Jewish people everywhere. G-d is always "the Guardian of Israel who neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Psalms 121:4), and He provides for all their needs as He "nourishes the entire world in His goodness with grace, kindness, and mercy" (Grace after Meals). This alone would hasten our Redemption.

TEXT 10

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Sichot
Kodesh 5740:3, p. 6*

זאגט אבער ר' שמעון בן יוחי, אז מצד דער חיבה פון אויבערשטן צו אידן איז אוממעגליך, אז בשעת אידן געפינען זיך אין גלות, זאל ער (דער אויבערשטער) געפינען זיך אין אן אנדער צושטאנד, נאר ער איז אין גלות מיט זיי צוזאמען.

און ניט נאר אז דער גלות פון אידן מאכט אים ענג, כביכול, "בכל צרתם לו צר", דאס הייסט, אז ער אליין געפינט זיך אויף דער פרייהייט, ביז אין זיין פאלאצן, און זייענדיק דארט "לעבט ער איבער".

כביכול דאס וואס אידן לעבן איבער אין גלות - נאר "בכל מקום שגלו שכינה עמהן", אז דער אויבערשטער אליין איז, כביכול, איז א צושטאנד פון גלות, ביז "שכינה עמהן" אין דעם זעלבן צושטאנד פון גלות אין וועלכן אידן געפינען זיך.

But Rabbi Shimon bar Yocha'i says that G-d's love for the Jewish people makes this impossible. While they are in Exile, the Almighty cannot allow Himself to be in any state other than in Exile with them.

The Jewish people's experience of exile distresses Him, as it were—for "in all their pain, He was pained" (Isaiah 63:9)—which means that He limits Himself to their level of freedom. He is even present in their downfall, and He is there to "live through," as it were, everything the Jewish people live through in Exile.

Rabbi Shimon goes even a step further, stating, "For every place they were exiled, the Divine Presence went with them." This means that G-d is, as it were, situated in Exile, so much so that "the Divine Presence went with them"—subject to the exact circumstances of Exile that the Jewish people face.

TEXT 11

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Sichot
Kodesh 5740:3, pp. 6–7*

און דאס רעדט זיך ניט נאר וועגן בני ישראל, נאר אויך וועגן יעדן פרטיות'דיקן אידן. אז בכל מקום שגלו, אין יעדער ארט וואו א איד געפינט זיך אין גלות — אין יעדער לאנד (סיי אין חוץ לארץ (אין "יוניטעד סטייטס" אדער אין אן אנדער מדינה אין חוץ לארץ), סיי אין ארצנו הקדושה, וואס אויך דארט איז א מצב פון א געוואלדיקן גלות), אין יעדער שטאט, אין יעדער שכונה, און אין יעדער גאס, ביז אין א גאר ווייטן פארווארפענעם ארט וואו עס האט גולה געווען אן איין און איינציקער איד — איז מיט אים צוזאמען, אין זעלבן ארט און אין זעלבן צושטאנד, געפינט זיך דער אויבערשטער.

This is true not only of the Jewish people as a whole but of every individual Jew. In every place where a Jew is found in Exile—in every land (whether outside the Holy Land, in the United States or elsewhere, or even in our Holy Land where Exile's effect is deeply felt), in every city, in every neighborhood, on every street; even far in the hinterlands where a single, lonesome Jew is exiled—together with that Jew, in every situation and circumstance, we find the Almighty.

In the darkest part
of our pain, G-d is
right there alongside us.



TEXT 12

*Rabbi Joseph B.
Soloveitchik, The Lonely
Man of Faith (New York:
Doubleday, 1992), p. 3*

I am lonely because at times I feel rejected and thrust away by everybody, not excluding my most intimate friends, and the words of the psalmist, “My father and my mother have forsaken me,” ring quite often in my ears like the plaintive cooing of the turtledove.

TEXT 13

Psalms 27:10

כִּי אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי, וְה' יֶאֱסָפֵנִי.

For my father and mother have
forsaken me, but G-d will
gather me up.

Even when we feel
overwhelmed by
loneliness, we can find
comfort in G-d's constant
presence.

One is never truly alone.



TEXT 14

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Igrot
Kodesh 15, p. 414*

מהו בכלל ענין הבדידות, בה בשעה שהנה ה' נצב עליו במקום זה ומביט עליו, ובוהן כליות ולב אם עובדו כראוי (הודעת רבינו הזקן בתניא ריש פרק מא), ותיכף מודיע רבנו הזקן גם המסקנא מזה, וזה לשונו: "ועל כן צריך לעבוד לפניו וכו' ויעמיק במחשבה זו ויאריך בה וכו'". ואם ישתדל להתבונן במסקנא זו, תיכף יראה שאינו בודד, ואדרבה.

What, in fact, is loneliness? At this very moment, “Behold G-d stands above you, and though the whole earth is full of His glory, He scans your mind and heart to see whether you are serving Him properly” (as Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi informs us in *Tanya*, chapter 41). In that same chapter, Rabbi Shneur Zalman immediately leads us to the logical conclusion of this: “If so, one ought to serve Him, . . . and one ought to meditate deeply on this thought, and at length, etc.” If you put in effort meditating on this conclusion, you will immediately see that you are not lonely—quite the contrary.



The key to
recognizing G-d's
ever-present
existence lies in
adopting a deeper
view of reality.

TEXT 15A

Deuteronomy 32:12

ה' בָּדַד יְנַחֵנוּ, וְאֵין עִמּוֹ אֵל נִכְרִי:

G-d led them alone, and no
strange power opposed them.

TEXT 15B

*Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim
ben Aharon of Luntshitz,
Keli Yakar Al HaTorah,
ad loc.*

ו"בדד" קאי על ישראל, שהבדילם מן
העמים להיותם עם אחד מיוחד אליו
יתברך.

“Alone” refers to the Jewish
people, for He distinguished them
from the peoples to be a people
exclusively devoted to Him.

In today's world, our unique relationship with G-d gives us the confidence to resist negativity.

In tomorrow's world, it will wash away the pain of loneliness for good.



KEY POINTS

1. Judaism views loneliness as an acute problem that should be avoided.
2. A person's family is considered an inseparable extension of the parent's very being, particularly his or her children.
3. G-d is like "family" to us, as it were, so when we're dragged into Exile, so is He.
4. G-d doesn't just *empathize* with, or even actually feel, the pain of our Exile. He is with us in Exile, *experiencing* it together with us.
5. The fact that G-d is so intrinsically connected with us and present in our lives is the Jewish antidote to loneliness, as we are never alone. G-d is always right there by our side, a true "friend."

