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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Behar – Release Your Debt

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Behar (Beh-hahr), which is Hebrew for “On the mountain,” and it goes from Leviticus 25:1 to Leviticus 26:2.

This Torah portion gives instructions concerning the *Shemittah* and *Yovel*—that is, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. It also gives limits on debt servitude. The parashah concludes with a reminder to keep God’s Sabbaths and reverence His sanctuary.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk about forgiving debt.

In this week’s Torah Portion we read about the *Shemittah*, or Sabbatical Year. A lot of believers who are embracing the roots of their faith and who have a new appreciation for the Torah, they wonder about this aspect of God’s Word. What does the *Shemittah* mean for believers today, and how might it apply to us?

The *Shemittah* is the seventh year in an agricultural cycle of seven years on the biblical calendar. God told the Israelites that they are allowed to work their fields for six years, but in the seventh year they are to allow the land to rest. Furthermore, not only were they to let the land rest, but also they were to release all debt owed to them by their fellow Israelites. In fact, the term *Shemittah* in Hebrew literally means “release.”

So what might this mean for us today? For instance, many believers around the world wonder if it’s wrong to work on their farm or even tend to their backyard gardens during the *Shemittah* year. Well, it’s not according to the commandment. Let’s look closely at the context:

Leviticus 25:2

Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **when you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord (YHWH).**

As we can see, according to Scripture, the command to let the land rest on the *Shemittah* applies

specifically to the land of Israel—“the land that I give you.” Only *that* land is commanded to rest, not the land of America or Mexico or wherever else. So the literal aspect of the commandment doesn’t apply to us right now.

Obviously, this doesn’t mean that this part of God’s Word has no value for us as believers today. Agriculturally speaking, it is still good to let the land rest. It is still a practice that is followed today, just not necessarily every seven years, but perhaps it would be good if it was.

Also, God’s commandments are not just arbitrary religious rules, but meant to teach us spiritual principles. For instance, one aspect of the *Shemithah*, as we see in Deuteronomy, is debt release (Deuteronomy 15:1-3). Yeshua compared debt to unforgiveness.

For example, when Peter asked how many times one should forgive their brother who sinned against them, Yeshua said “seventy-seven times,” which is basically to say an unlimited number of times. Then he proceeds to tell a parable about a servant whose master had released him from the large debt that he owed. But then that same servant refused to release his fellow servant of a debt owed to him. The parable was meant to expose the hypocrisy of those who refuse to forgive others despite the fact that God has forgiven them, and Yeshua makes this clear at the conclusion of the parable:

Matthew 18:32-35

Then his master summoned him and said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, **if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.**

Some of us are holding onto unforgiveness toward those who’ve hurt us. We keep them enslaved to our own grudges. Ironically, because we refuse to forgive, *we* become slaves to our own bitterness.

The *Shemithah* reminds us that we are to release our brother’s debt—we are to forgive them. We are to let go of your grudges. Free yourself.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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