



Thinking Long Term

By Jared Kinches ('23)

This article was originally published in Volume 30.

In the first Aliyah of Parashat BeHar, the Torah discusses the counting of the years until the Yovel year. Pasuk Chet says: "VeSafarta Lecha Sheva Shabetot Shanim Sheva Shanim Sheva Pe'amim VeHayu Lecha Yemei Sheva Shabetot HaShanim Teisha Ve'Arba'im Shanah," "And you should count for yourselves seven weeks of years, seven years seven times, and those seven weeks of years will be 49 years." Then, in Pasuk Tet, the Torah tells us: "VeHa'avarta Shofar Teru'ah BaChodesh HaShvi'i Be'Asor LaChodesh BeYom HaKippurim Ta'aviru Shofar BeChol Arztechem," "And you shall blow the horn in the seventh month on the tenth day of the month on Yom Kippur, and the horn will pass through all your land." The Torah then tells us that the fiftieth year will be "sanctified" for all of the residents of the land.

However, when the Torah talks about the counting of the Omer in Parashat Emor, it states "USfartem Lachem MiMachorat HaShabbat MiYom Havi'achem Et Omer HaTenufah Sheva Shabatot Temimot Tihyenah," "And count for yourselves from the day after the holiday, from the day you bring the Omer HaTenufah, they will be seven full weeks" (VaYikra 23:15). At a quick glance the commandments in Emor and BeHar seem to be nearly the same, besides what is being counted. However, there's one key difference between the countings. The counting of the Omer is in plural, "USfartem Lachem," while the counting of the years until Yovel is in singular, "VeSafarta Lecha." The Gemara (Menachot 65b) states that the Mitzvah of counting the Omer is a Mitzvah for every person, not a Mitzvah on the community: "'USfartem Lachem,' Shetehei Sefirah LeChol Echad Ve'Echad." However, in the context of counting to the Yovel, the Sifra and Rambam in Mishneh Torah say that the counting is a

responsibility of the Sanhedrin. We are told that the Sanhedrin is carrying out this Mitzvah on behalf of all the Jewish people, explaining why the Torah writes in BeHar, "Lecha" in the singular.

This key difference teaches us an important concept in leadership. On our own, we simply count day by day, but to be a leader, we need to count by years. On our own, we are able to think about tomorrow or next week, but to be a leader, we need to think long term and focus on the future, ie. count by years. The Gemarain Masechet Tamid states that Alexander of Macedon said to the Chachamim that a smart person is someone who sees and anticipates the consequences of his actions. Wise leaders will always think about how their actions will impact others not tomorrow, but for many years to come. Everyone should strive to be like this. It can be as simple as our interactions with friends and parents or being careful with regard to COVID-19 as we count down the days until the virus is gone. As Jewish people we need to be the leaders that count by the years and think about the future.

And From Your Own, We Have Given to You

By Rabbi Duvie Nachbar ('96)

This article was originally published in Volume 25

The Torah establishes a theological principle with widespread implications with its introduction of the laws pertaining to Yovel. Two of the Mitzvot associated with Yovel are the return of land to its original owner and the return of Hebrew slaves to their respective families – "VeShavtem Ish El Achuzato VeIsh El Mishpachto Tashuvu" (VaYikra 25:10). Interestingly, the Torah itself provides the underlying rationale for each injunction. Concerning Yovel's termination of most sales of land, the Torah reasons, "Ki Li HaAretz Ki Geirim VeToshavim Atem Imadi," "For the land is Mine, for you are strangers and

settlers with Me" (25:23). Similarly, the Torah argues that the restoration of all Hebrew slaves during the Yovel year is attributable to Hashem's prior claim on the individual – "Ki Avaday Heim Asher Hotzeiti Otam MeiEretz Mitzrayim," "For they are My servants whom I have brought out of the land of Egypt" (25:42). Rashi (25:42 s.v. Ki Avaday Heim) comments that the phrase "Ki Avaday Heim" is Hashem's legal argument in which He claims that "Shetaray Kodem," My document of acquisition preceded the current owner's acquisition. In each instance, Hashem lays claim to our land and to our physical bodies and insists on the restoration of both during the Yovel year.

The imperative to return land to its original owner is reinforced by a later precaution – "VeHaAretz Lo Timacheir LiTzmitut," "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity." According to Rashi (25:23 s.v. VeHaAretz Lo Timacheir), the Pasuk strengthens the imperative to return all land by placing an additional negative commandment on the buyer to not squat on the land and withhold it from the original owner. Rambam (Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 11:1) disagrees and defines the negative prohibition as addressing the seller and purchaser alike to not sell the land indefinitely, despite the ineffectiveness of their actions, were they to try. Ramban (VaYikra 25:23 s.v. VeHaAretz Lo Timacheir LiTzmitut), in his commentary on the Torah, raises an additional possibility that the prohibition rests upon the seller alone or on both the seller and the buyer to not sell the land with explicit terms for a permanent, indefinite sale. Although such terms add a measure of seriousness and substance to the sale from a psychological perspective, they will eventually create a formidable barrier when the time comes for the buyer to return the land during the Yovel year.

Ramban concludes his comments with the viewpoint that the Pasuk, in truth, does not represent an actual prohibition, but rather a note of encouragement. The observance of the laws of Yovel should not be difficult in an individual's eyes because he is not the primary landholder; instead, "Geirim VeToshavim Atem Imadi." In a similar fashion, he cites Hasagot LeSefer HaMitzvot (Lo Ta'aseh no. 227), the perspective of Behag, that the Pasuk is a description rather than a restriction: "The land cannot be sold in perpetuity" instead of "the land shall not be sold in perpetuity." The rationale for a seller's

inability to permanently sell the land is due to the fact "SheEinah SheLachem," that it does not belong to the seller in the absolute sense, and, as a result, he is incapable of violating the wishes of the true owner. As the Torat Kohanim interprets the spirit of the Pasuk, "Al Ta'asu Atzmichem Ikar," "do not make yourselves primary."

The release of Hebrew slaves is likewise reinforced by a negative commandment – "Lo Yimachru MiMekeret Aved," "They shall not be sold as slaves" (VaYikra 25:42). The precise focus of this prohibition and the exact quality of "a sale of slaves" which the Torah is seeking to forbid is not immediately clear. Rashi (25:42 s.v. Lo Yimachru MiMekeret Aved) explains the Pasuk as prohibiting a public sale of the individual, one which would make a public spectacle of the person and publicly announce that he is for sale. Others, though, relate the prohibition to the permanent duration of the sale based on the context of the preceding Pasuk – "VeYatza Meilmach Hu UVanav Imo VeShav El Mishpachto," "He shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and he shall return to his family" (25:41). Although one might have expected that an individual's personal autonomy would enable a permanent sale of himself, Seforno (25:42 s.v. Ki Avaday Heim) justifies the restriction due to Hashem's ultimate claim on a person's body – "nonetheless, since he is My slave, he is incapable of selling himself as a permanent slave."

The return of land and the restoration of Hebrew slaves both underscore Hashem's claim to that which human nature purports as belonging to the individual. We are reminded that our monetary possessions, even our physical bodies, belong to Hashem. The spirit of Yovel is captured in a Mishnah in Pirkei Avot (3:7), in which Rabi Elazar Ish Bartuta teaches, "Give to Him from that which is His, because you and that which belongs to you are His." The Mishnah supports the teaching with a Pasuk (Divrei HaYamim I 29:14) in which David rationalizes how the Jewish people were able to dedicate materials and money so generously and extensively toward the construction of the Beit HaMikdash – "Ki Mimecha HaKol UMiYadecha Natanu Lach," "For all things come from You, and from Your own we have given to You." The perspective that the Yovel year seeks to ingrain within us is relevant not only during the fiftieth year, but at all times. Our physical bodies, our personal strengths, our

time, and our financial resources belong to Hashem, and “of Your own we have given to You.” Rabbeinu Yonah (Avot 3:7 s.v. SheAtah) explains that the mentality of “SheAtah VeSheLach SheLo” affects how we invest our time, energy, and resources, and the spirit with which we do so. By investing ourselves fully, generously, and joyfully in the service of Hashem, broadly speaking, we recognize that “all things come from You, and from Your own we have given to You.”

Hashem Imachem

By Rabbi Chaim Jachter

Megillat Rut’s recording of the exchange of greetings between Boaz and his workers is most interesting in terms of the vital lessons of Megillat Rut. It has an extra special importance due to its reenactment by many Sephardic Jews before reciting the Berachah upon receiving an Aliyah.

A Basic Question

Megillah 14a teaches an important message – anything recorded in Tanach teaches lessons for each generation. Why is this exchange necessary for all times?

Accordingly, we must ask why we need to hear about the friendly interaction between Boaz and his workers.

Approach #1 – Ibn Ezra

Ibn Ezra notes that Boaz, the field owner, offers a hearty blessing in the name of Hashem to his workers, and the workers reciprocated with a Berachah in the name of Hashem. TABC Talmidim note the significance of an employer and his employees wishing each other well. Often, there is tension between these natural rivals. However, the tensions are overcome when Hashem is brought into the equation, as noted by TABC Talmid Yonasan Rutta.

TABC Talmidim noted the similarity between Naomi and Rut’s beautiful relationship. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, tensions often reign between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. However, by bringing Hashem into the equation, Naomi and Rut overcame this unfortunate natural tendency.

TABC Talmidim also note that this positive and healthy relationship represents part of correcting the negative energy of the time of the Shofetim to which the beginning of Megillat Rut alludes (VaYehi Beyei Shefot

HaShofetim etc.). It also shows Boaz’s willingness to transcend social barriers, which facilitates his marriage to Rut and ultimately leads to the birth of David HaMelech and Melech HaMashiach.

Chazal stress the importance of offering Chizzuk to others. Notice how Chazal (Shevi’it 5:9) promote encouragement even of Nochrim at work (or anything constructive). This is a fulfillment of VeHalachta BeDerachav, imitating Hashem’s ways. Hashem is described (Tehillim 147:6) as encouraging people to engage in a proper and constructive activity. We should get into the habit of following the example set by Boaz and his workers by constantly encouraging others! Also, consider the importance of avoiding promoting negative activities!

Approach #2 – Malbim

Malbim bases himself on the Mishna (Berachot 9:7), which records a Takanah for people to greet each other using Hashem’s name. It is important to emphasize that the Gemara (Berachot 63a) notes that Boaz made this Takanah. The Malbim explains that it is critical to note that Boaz made the Takanah, as Boaz seeks to rectify the negativity and disrespect of the time of the Shofetim by requiring people to warmly greet each other using Hashem’s name. Malbim interprets our Pasuk as Boaz coming from Beit Lechem informing his workers of the enactment of this Takanah.

This is reminiscent of a story of a family which was constantly fighting. One day the wise grandmother came to visit and insisted that everyone use the words please and thank you when speaking to each other. Soon, the unending bickering and squabbling came to an end. Showing respect is the remedy to many ills in society. Boaz insisted on invoking Hashem’s name as a reminder and warning that Hashem is watching their behavior. Bringing Hashem into the equation raises awareness that Hashem holds us accountable for poor behavior and rewards positive behavior.

Approach #3 – Vilna Gaon to Pasuk 4.

The Vilna Gaon explains that Boaz inquires whether the Shechinah is present in his fields due to concern for the mixing of the genders in the field. Boaz wonders if Hashem is present despite the mixed presence. The workers respond that Hashem’s presence remains in full force despite the mixing of the genders.

Let us consider the implications of this insight.

On the one hand, the concerns about mixing the genders are relevant. On the other hand, the mixed environment facilitated Rut and Boaz's meeting in a "natural setting" and for their relationship to begin to grow. Without this meeting, the marriage of Boaz and Rut would not have happened. No one would have made this against all odds Shidduch! It was only due to their meeting in the coed environment in the field that Rut and Boaz married! Consider that if not for this mixed environment, David HaMelech/Mashiach would not be born!! Recall how Yaakov Avinu and Rachel Imeinu also met in a "natural" coed setting.

However, we must also consider the words of the Rambam (Hilchot Yom Tov 6:21), who forcefully sets forth the need to separate the genders during times of celebration, especially when wine is being served.

However, the Rambam in Hilchot Matenat Anayim does not mention a requirement to separate the genders when collecting Leket, Shichecha, Pei'ah, etc. Nor does the Rambam in Hilchot Sechirut mention such a requirement regarding the workplace. Apparently, a mixed environment is appropriate in a work or Chessed setting but not in a party-like setting.

In light of the Rambam, marriageable age young men and women working together in Kiruv and Chessed projects such as Camp HASC seems most appropriate. However, we must also consider Rut Rabbah 4:6, which shows that even in a permitted coed setting, one must observe Tzeni'ut. Rut, the Midrash teaches, did not "flirt" with the reapers, unlike the many women who did. Instead, she engaged in a meaningful conversation with a select member of the opposite gender (Boaz) with whom there is a prospect of marriage.

Approach #4 – based on Rav Yehuda Bachrach's Imah Shel Malchut

Rav Bachrach understands that Boaz visited the field primarily to oversee the Aniyim taking their Pei'ah, Leket, etc. from his fields. Rav Bachrach cites the following sources which show that this is the responsibility of the field owner Pei'ah 4:5 בשחר ובחצות ומנחה. שלוש אבעיות ביום, בשחר ובחצות ומנחה. שלוש אבעיות ביום - שלש אבעיות ביום. Rav Ovadia MiBartenura explains: שלש אבעיות ביום - שלש אבעיות ביום. Tiferet Yisrael explains: שלש אבעיות ביום - שלש אבעיות ביום. אבעיות לשון גלוי בעה"ב בשדה כדי שיכנסו העניים מדעתו לחלק פאה, מפני שאז מצויין שם ג' כתות חלשות וכדמסיק, להכי יהיה הבעה"ב שם לעמוד לימין צדקם ושלא יעשו להם חבירהם עול

Based on these Mekorot, we can explain Boaz saying Hashem Imachem (similar to the Vilna Gaon) as a question. Is Hashem with you? Are you observing His laws regarding gifts to the poor?

We can similarly understand the reapers' response of Yevarechecha Hashem based on Devarim 24:19 in your explanation - כִּי תִקְצֹר קִצִּירָךְ בְּשָׂדֶךָ וְשָׂכַחְתָּ עִמָּךְ בְּשָׂדֶךָ, לֹא תָשׁוּב לְקַחְתּוֹ--לִגְר לִיתוֹם וְלֵאלֵמָנָה, יִהְיֶה: לְמַעַן יִבְרַכְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂה יְדֶיךָ. Yevarechecha Hashem is a phrase used in connection with those who honor the Mitzvot to leave the various gifts to the poor. Accordingly, the reapers are saying that the Halachot are being fully observed to the extent that the Berachah promised by Hashem will be forthcoming.

Conclusion – The Sephardic Practice

Rav Soloveitchik understands this phrase (that the Minhagim of the Jewish People is Torah), often used by many Rishonim and Acharonim, to be an obligation upon us to learn and understand our people's Minhagim. Based on our four approaches to our Pasuk, we can explain the Sephardic Minhag.

Whether a reminder of Hashem's presence like the Malbim, an exchange of pleasant greetings like Ibn Ezra or a question as to whether one is adhering to Hashem's laws, Boaz' Takanah remains in full force in Sephardic congregations. Maintaining Boaz' Takanah is a most critical lesson for all generations to bear in mind its manifold lessons.

Ultimately, Boaz' greeting paved the way to the birth of David HaMelech and Mashiach. Those who following Boaz' path brings Ge'ulah.

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