

VAYIKRA  
TZAV  
SHEMINI  
TAZRIA-METZORA  
AHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM  
EMOR  
BEHAR-BEHUKOTAI



May 18 - 24, 2025 כ' - כ"ו אֵיר תשפ"ה



## קָה בַּפָּרָשָׁה • In This Week's Parashah

- It's a double parashah this week! We combine Behar and Behukotai.
- In Eretz Yisrael, שְׁמִטָּה (shemittah, the year of release) happens every seven years. During this year, no one can work the land and crops become public property. Anyone can come and eat.
- יּוֹבֵל (yovel) is the 50th year, when the rules of shemittah continue to apply as they do in the 49th year, plus all land gets returned to its original owners.
- Even before yovel, if your relative has money trouble and has to sell their land, you should try to help them buy it back in a process called גְּאוּלָּה (geulah, redemption).
- There is a mitzvah not to overcharge for a sale. If someone is in debt to you, treat them with compassion.
- God promises blessings if Bnei Yisrael follow the mitzvot, and some frightening punishments if they don't. This section is called the תּוֹכְהָה (tokhehah, rebuke).
- God will remember God's promises to our ancestors, and God will never punish the people too much.
- Sefer Vayikra closes with a discussion of donations to the מִשְׁכָּן (Mishkan, sanctuary for God). One of those is called מַעֲשֵׂר (ma'aser, giving one tenth of your harvest or newborn animals).





## מִדְרָשׁ • Midrash

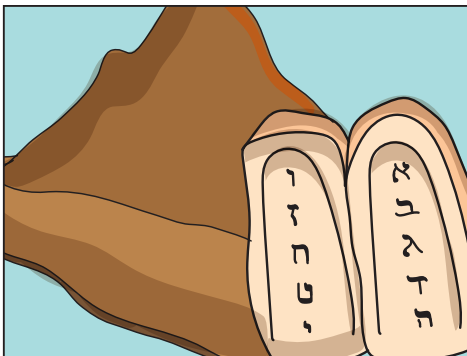
שְׁמִטָּה (shemittah, the year of release) happens every seven years, and יוֹבֵל (yovel) happens every seven shemittah cycles. Here's a midrash that explores the importance of the number seven (Vayikra Rabbah 29:11):

כָּל הַשְּׁבִיעִי חֲבִיבִיו לְעוֹלָם...

All sevens are extra beloved...

בְּדוֹרוֹת שְׁבִיעֵי חֲבִיב: אָדָם, שֵׁת, אֶנוֹשׁ, קֵינָן, מַהֲלֵלֵאל, יֶרֶד, חֲנוּךְ. וְכָתִיב (בראשית ה כד): "וַיִּתֵּן ה' חֲנוּךְ אֶת הָאֱלֹקִים."

Among the generations, the seventh is beloved: Adam, Shet, Enosh, Keinan, Mahalalel, Yered, and then Hanokh. And it is written (Bereishit 5:25); "Hanokh walked with God."



בְּאֲבוֹת שְׁבִיעֵי חֲבִיב: אַבְרָהָם, יִצְחָק, יַעֲקֹב, לֵוִי, קֵהַת, עַמְרָם, מֹשֶׁה. וְכָתִיב (שמות יט ג): "וַיַּמְשֵׁה עֲלָה אֶל הָאֱלֹקִים."

Among our ancestors, the seventh is extra beloved: Avraham, Yitzhak, Yaakov, Levi, Kehat, Amram, and then Moshe. And it is written (Shemot 19:3): "Moshe ascended to God."

בְּמַלְכִּים הַשְּׁבִיעִי חֲבִיב: שָׁאוּל, אִישׁ בִּשֵׁת, דָּוִד, שְׁלֹמֹה, רְחַבָּעָם, אֲבִיָּה, אָסָא. וְכָתִיב (דברי הימים ב יד י): "וַיִּקְרָא אָסָא אֶל ה'."

Among the kings (of Israel), the seventh is beloved: Shaul, Ish-boshet, David, Shlomo, Rehavam, Aviyah, and then Asa. And it is written (Divrei Ha-Yamim Bet 14:10): "Asa called out to God."



בשנים שביעי חביב, שְׁנַאָמֶר (שמות כג, יא):  
 "וְהַשְּׁבִיעִית תִּשְׁמַטְנָה וְנִטְשָׁתָה."

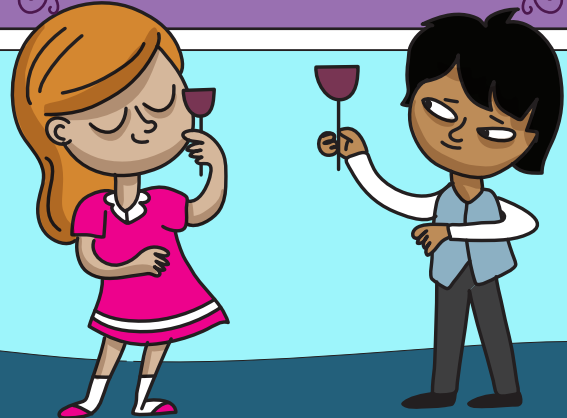
Among years, the seventh is beloved, as it says  
 (Shemot 23:11): "But in the seventh (year), you  
 shall let the land rest and leave it alone."

BE RIGHT  
 BACK



בשמיטין שביעי חביב, שְׁנַאָמֶר (ויקרא  
 כה, ז): "וְיִקְדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים."

Among shemittah cycles, the  
 seventh is beloved, as it says  
 (Vayikra 25:10): "And you shall  
 make the fiftieth year holy."

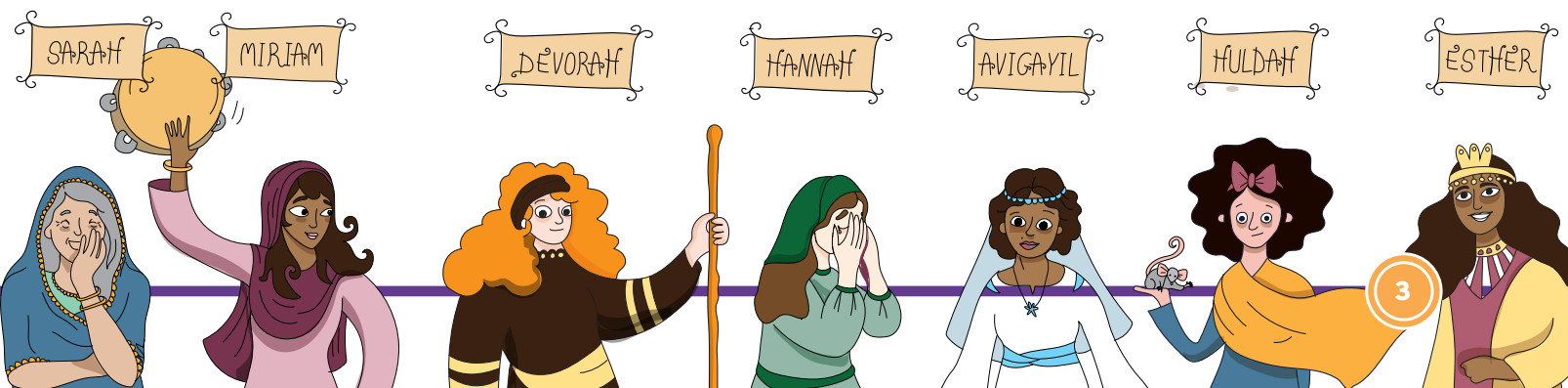


בְּיָמִים שְׁבִיעִי חָבִיב, שְׁנַאָמֶר (בראשית ב, ג):  
 "וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי."

Among days, the seventh is beloved, as  
 it says (Bereishit 2:3): "And God blessed  
 the seventh day."

- ◆ In addition to being on a cycle of seven, what do shemittah, yovel, and Shabbat have in common?
- ◆ What was the common denominator between all the people who are the seventh in their lists? What does that teach us about what might be special about shemittah, yovel, and Shabbat?
- ◆ Can you think of any other special sevens in the Torah?

Did you know that the Gemara (Megillah 14a) says there were seven נְבִיאֹת (neviot, prophets who were women) in Tanakh? Here's who they were.





## פִּרְשָׁנוֹת • Commentary

### Vayikra 25:14-17

When you sell property to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, **do not wrong one another**.

...the more years (remaining before yovel), the higher the price; the fewer years, the lower the price. What is being sold is the number of harvests.

**Do not wrong one another**, but fear your Lord; for I God am your Lord.

### ויקרא כה:יד-יז

וְכִי-תִמְכְּרוּ מִמֶּכֶר לַעֲמִיתְךָ אוֹ קָנָה מִיַּד עֲמִיתְךָ אֶל-תּוֹנוֹ אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו:

לְפִי רֹב הַשָּׁנִים תִּרְבֶּה מִקְנָתוֹ וּלְפִי מְעַט הַשָּׁנִים תִּמְעִיט מִקְנָתוֹ כִּי מִסְפַּר תְּבוּאוֹת הוּא מִכַּר לָךְ:

וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת-עַמִּיתוֹ וְיָרֵאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיכֶם:

Our פִּרְשָׁנִים (parshanim, commentators) notice that there is a double warning about not wronging one another: **אֶל-תּוֹנוּ** (al tonu) at the beginning, and **וְלֹא תוֹנוּ** (ve-lo tonu) at the end. They wonder: why does this warning appear twice?

רש"י

אֶל תּוֹנוֹ - זוֹ אוֹנָאת מָמוֹן.  
וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עַמִּיתוֹ - כָּאֵן הַזֵּהִיר עַל אוֹנָאת דְּבָרִים.



### Rashi

The first warning is about harming someone financially.  
The second warning is about harming someone with words.



### אבן עזרא

וְטַעַם וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עַמִּיתוֹ - אֲזַהֲרָה לְמוֹכֵר,  
כִּי הָרֵאוּשׁוֹן לְקוֹנָה.

### Ibn Ezra

The second warning is directed to a seller.  
The first warning is directed to a buyer.

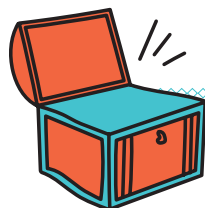
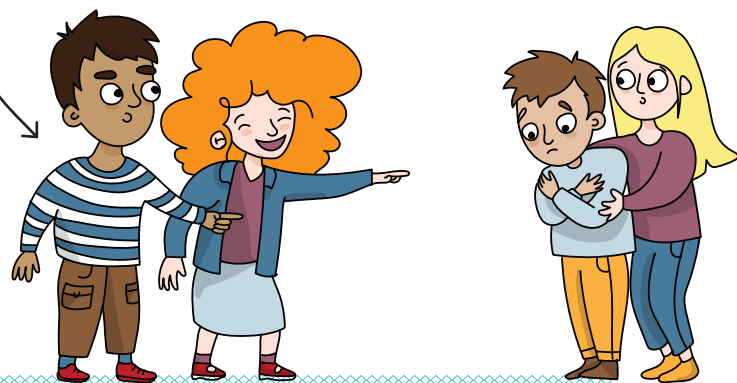


Both commentators think the repetition means that the Torah is talking about two different kinds of harm, but they break it down differently. Rashi sees our pesukim as referring to two completely different categories of אֹנֶאָה (ona'ah, harming someone). Harming someone in business is called אֹנֶאָת מָמוֹן (ona'at mamon). But you're also not allowed to harm someone emotionally, like with words. This is called אֹנֶאָת דְּבָרִים (ona'at devarim).

Ona'at devarim includes teasing people or calling them names. It also includes any kind of making someone feel bad, for example by excluding them, by embarrassing them, or by raising their hopes and then disappointing them—even if you do it without any words at all! The Talmud discusses ona'at devarim for pages and pages and warns us to be extremely cautious about other people's feelings.



- ♦ Think about Rashi: How are ona'at mamon and ona'at devarim similar to one another? How do they differ?
- ♦ Think about Ibn Ezra: How can a seller take advantage of a buyer? How can a buyer take advantage of a seller? Is one of these scenarios more likely?



## קֹה דָה • What's Going On Here?

יּוֹבֵל (yovel) is the fiftieth year, when the rules of שְׁמִטָּה (shemittah, the year of release) continue to apply as they do in the 49th year, plus all land gets returned to its original owners. What does the word "yovel" mean?

- ♦ **Rashi** says it's a reference to the shofar blast that announces the start of the year. The same word comes up as the sign that Benei Yisrael would be allowed to go up Mount Sinai after the Torah was given, and Rashi there also says that this sign, the "yovel," is a shofar blast.
- ♦ **Haketav Ve-Ha-Kabbalah** says it's connected to the word בְּלִילָה (belilah, to mix up), and it refers to the way the extreme differences between people who have a lot, and people who don't have much, all get mixed up when land is returned to people.
- ♦ **Ha'amek Davar** says it's from הוֹבְלָה (hovalah, movement), referring to how people would move from their places of work to their homes because they couldn't do farming work.



## דִּקְוָה שֶׁל דִּיּוּן • One-Minute Debate

### How to play:

Here are some arguments to get you started, but try to come up with your own. Then debate someone!

For a true one-minute debate, give each side 30 seconds to make its best case.

**Debate: Punishment is an effective way to make sure people make good choices.**

### Agree!



- ♦ Even adults get punished! When they get speeding tickets, it's a reminder to slow down and drive more carefully.
- ♦ If you do the right thing because you're afraid of getting punished, eventually you'll learn to do the right thing for its own sake.

### Disagree!



- ♦ Getting punished just makes people angry. You don't learn anything from it.
- ♦ People should make good choices because it's the right thing to do. If you do the right thing just because you're afraid of punishment, or just because you want a reward, that's not really so good.



## רִנֵּה שֶׁל עִבְרִית • A Moment of Hebrew

### Vayikra 25:10

And you shall make the fiftieth year holy. You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land, for all its inhabitants. It shall be a **yovel**: each of you shall return to your **holding** and each of you shall return to your family.

### ויקרא כה:י

וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת שְׁנַת הַחֲמִשִּׁים  
שָׁנָה וּקְרַאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל  
לְשִׁבְיָהּ יוֹבֵל הוּא תְּהִיָּה לָכֶם  
וְשִׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל אֲחֻזָּתוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶל  
מִשְׁפַּחַתוֹ תָּשֻׁבוּ:

## Find the Word!

לָאָחַז (שָׂרֵשׁ א.ח.ז.)

◆ To hold, to grasp  
(le-ehoz)

There is a twin brother who grabbed hold of his brother's heel as they were being born. Can you find the word that shows that he grasped the heel? It shares our שָׂרֵשׁ (shoresh, root)! (Hint: check out Bereishit 25:26.)

= אַחֲזָה

1. Property
2. Estate
3. Mansion  
(ahuzah)

= אָחַז אֶת הַשּׁוֹר בְּקַרְנָיו

To take the bull by the horns,  
to act in a decisive way  
(ahaz et ha-shor bekarnav)

= אַחֲזִיזַת עֵינַיִם

Sleight of hand, trickery  
(ahizat einayim)

= אָחֻז  
Percent  
(ahuz)



## קריאת התורה • Torah Reading

Have you ever had exciting news to give someone? How did you speak to them?

Did you ever need to tell someone something really upsetting? How did you tell them? Sometimes, we change the way we speak to match the mood of what we are trying to say.

In this week's Torah reading, the third aliyah is a tough one. In it, God briefly promises lots of blessings if the people follow the mitzvot, but then horrible punishments and suffering if they don't. Some of the threats are really awful, including the whole land being destroyed and the people being thrown out into foreign countries. This section is called the תּוֹכַחָה (tokhehah, rebuke), and it is really hard to hear.

We do a few things to try to make it easier to handle:

### Rule #1:



We don't break up this aliyah in the middle. We want to get it over in one shot. That's why it is so long (37 verses) when other aliyot in the parashah are so short. (The first and second aliyot are only 3 verses each!)

### Rule #2:



You don't call someone up to recite the blessings for this aliyah unless they want to be called up. How could you offer someone to be on the receiving end of such horrible curses? In many communities, this aliyah is either given to the rabbi or to the person reading the aliyah; they absorb the blow for the rest of us.

### Rule #3: Shhh!



Just like you might pull someone aside and give them bad news quietly, there is a longstanding tradition to read this passage softly and quickly. It is too hard for us to hear such painful things loudly. Listen carefully and you can hear the reader be loud at the beginning of the aliyah for the end of the blessings, get quiet for the curses, and then get loud again when things get better at the end of the aliyah.





## שאלות השבוע • Parashah Scavenger Hunt

The answers to the first seven questions can be found in the matching numbered aliyah in the Torah reading. **The answers to the last three are harder and can come from anywhere in the parashah.**

### aliyot:

- 1) Vayikra 25:1 to 25:18
- 2) 25:19 to 25: 28
- 3) 25:29 to 25:38
- 4) 25:39 to 26:9
- 5) 26:10 to 26:46
- 6) 27:1 to 27:15
- 7) 27:16 to 27:34

*Good luck!*

1 During a יוֹבֵל (yovel) year, what's the date when the shofar is blown?

2 Why can't you sell land permanently?

3 What land can never be sold?

4 How many times are we told not to force workers to do really hard labor, called פֶּרֶךְ (perekh)?



5 What will God not smell?

6 Are substitutions allowed in sacrifices?

7 What goes under a staff?

8 When will the land produce triple the amount of a normal year?

9 What's the cheapest time to buy land? How do you know?

10 Why does the Torah say that Benei Yisrael cannot be allowed to be slaves to other people?

\*  
Look for the answers on page 12!

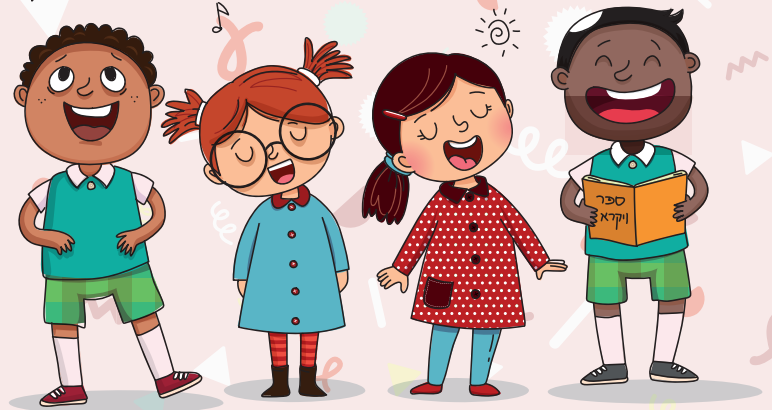




# חזק חזק ונתחזק

## חזרה • Vayikra in Review

This week we celebrate the completion of Sefer Vayikra! Here are some of the big themes we've covered:



קִרְבָּנוֹת  
(korbanot,  
sacrifices)



טִמְאָה וְטָהָרָה  
(tumah ve-  
taharah, impurity  
and purity)



קְדוּשִׁים תִּהְיוּ  
(kedoshim tihyu, you  
shall be holy, including  
rules for treating other  
people well)



מִצְוֹת הַתְּלוּיֹת בְּאֶרֶץ  
(mitzvot ha-teluyot  
ba-aretz, agricultural  
laws of the Land of  
Israel)

**What is the most important part of Sefer Vayikra, the takeaway message that the Torah wants you to understand above all else?**

According to Rabbi Akiva (Sifra Kedoshim Perek 4), there is one line in Vayikra which contains the most important rule in the whole Torah:

### Vayikra 19:18

Love your neighbor like yourself

ויקרא יט:יח

וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ

Rabbi Akiva calls this principle a כָּלֵל גָּדוֹל (khal gadol, general category or summary) of the Torah.

The Talmud (Shabbat 31a) tells a story about a time that the great scholar Hillel paraphrased this pasuk:

A person came to Shammai and asked him to teach the whole Torah while standing on one leg.

Shammai said, "No way! The Torah is way too complex for that." Then the person came to Hillel with the same question.

Hillel said, "If there's something you don't like when it's done to you, don't do it to someone else. That is the entire point of the Torah, and the rest is commentary. Now go learn it!"



- ♦ Why would Rabbi Akiva call "love your neighbor as yourself" a klal gadol, and why would Hillel think this summarizes all the details of the Torah? Can you think of Torah details that are captured by this pasuk?
- ♦ Some people think that when young children start to learn Torah, they should begin with Sefer Vayikra. Does this surprise you? Why might they say this?



## בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

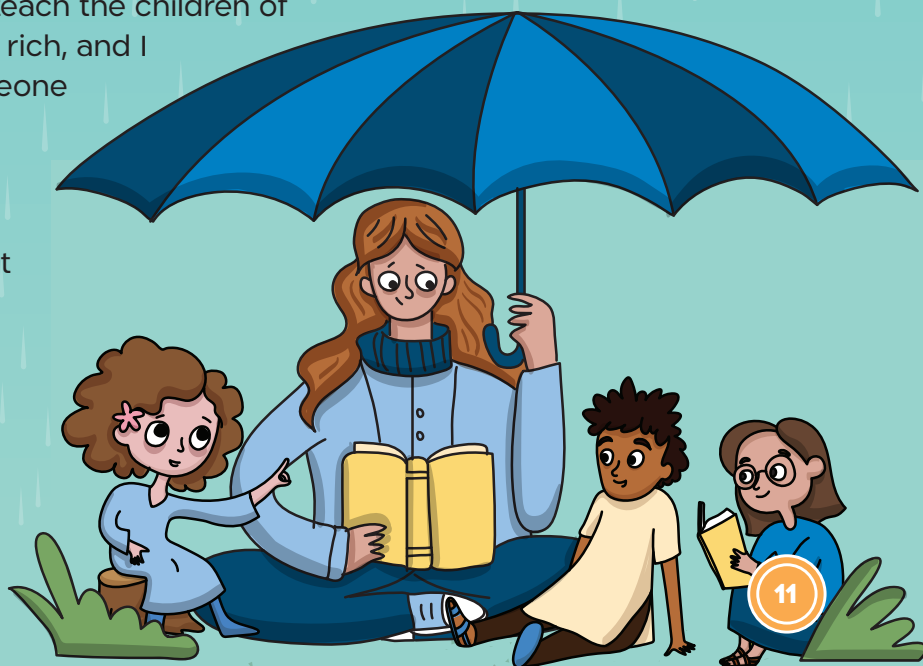
A major sign of God's blessing in Parashat Behukotai (and throughout the Torah) is rain. When it falls at the right time and in the right amount, rain makes crops grow and makes it possible for everyone to have enough food to eat.

The Talmud (Ta'anit 24a) wonders: What can we do to encourage God to bring us the rain we need? It tells a story about Rav.

Rav came to a place where there wasn't enough rain. He declared a fast but no rain came. The prayer leader went down to lead services. He said, "מְשִׁיב הָרוּחַ (Mashiv Ha-Ruah, Who brings the wind)," and the wind blew; he said, "מוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם (Morid Ha-Geshem, Who causes the rain to fall)," and the rain came.

Rav said to the prayer leader, "What do you do?" The prayer leader said, "I teach Torah to children, and I teach the children of the poor and the children of the rich, and I never take any money from someone who can't pay."

- ♦ Rain is a sign of God's kindness. What does God want to see in order to be kind to us? The lesson that Rav learns here is that God wants us to be kind to each other, and then God will be kind to us.





## בואו נדבר על זה • Tell Me More About This!

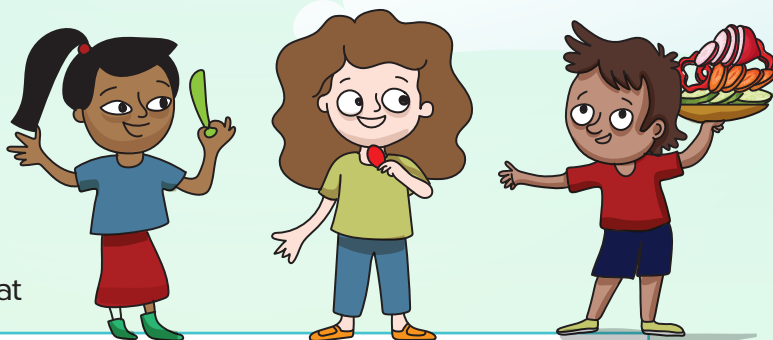
In your class at school, do kids have their own sets of markers? If someone is nice to you, you're probably happy to share your markers with them. (But maybe not your lucky eraser!) The mitzvah of שְׁמִטָּה (shemittah, the year of release) helps us think about personal and communal property.

For example, imagine that everyone in your class released ownership of their markers, glue sticks, scissors, etc. Together, you could create a communal supply closet. Anyone could use what they need.

Or consider food. Does everyone bring their own snack or lunch each day? What

would happen if, instead, each person took a turn providing snacks or lunches for everyone else?

Imagine if these experiments lasted for a whole year. What problems do you think might arise? What positive outcomes could happen for your class or community?



### Parashah Scavenger Hunt Answers:

1. The tenth day of the seventh month, which is Yom Kippur (25:9)
2. Because the land belongs to God, and we are גֵּרִים וְתוֹשָׁבִים (geirim ve-toshavim, strangers living on it) (25:23)
3. The open fields that surround the cities where לְוִיִּם (Levi'im, members of the tribe of Levi) live (25:34)
4. Three times (25:43, 25:46, 25:53)
5. The pleasant smells of Benei Yisrael's offerings (26:31)
6. Nope! If you dedicate an animal as a sacrifice and then try to switch it out with another one, they are both holy and you must offer both of them. (27:10)
7. All the cattle as it's being counted for מַעֲשֵׂר (maaser, one tenth being donated to God) (27:32)
8. The sixth year, right before שְׁמִטָּה (shemittah, the year of release) (25:21)
9. Right before a יוֹבֵל (yovel) year - the price would be lowest since the land would soon be returned to its original owner because of yovel (25:15-16)
10. Because we are already slaves to God! (25:55)



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