

Parshat Behar

In the Book of Shemot it speaks about a Shemitah year: a year every seven years where the land is left to rest. In parsha Behar we are told about: "God spoke with Moses, Speak to the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land...six years you may sow your field...but in the seventh year the land shall have a shabbat of complete rest, a Shabbat of God. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. But you may eat whatever the land will produce during its Shabbat.

The Torah repeats the laws of Shemitah here in Behar. Why? So we can understand the laws that come next...

"You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years a total of forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the horn loudly, in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, Yom Kippur and you shall celebrate the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee year, each of you shall return to his holdings, each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you...you shall not sow, or reap...

So every seven times seven years in the Yoveil year, farmers stopped working. Also the laws of yoveil stated that all land must be returned to its original owner. Also slaves would be released during the yoveil year.

In return for the Israelites keeping the Yoveil year God promises that the land would provide more than enough food. There would be a miracle every forty-nine years. The fact is that the yoveil year was never followed and the Torah is just speaking of a perfect world in which the Israelites could strive to live in.