

## Walking in the Spirit and not after the Law... err the Flesh?

This weeks reading is from Parsahat Behar (*Vayikra / Leviticus 25:1-26:2*). The Hebrew Word “Behar” means “*on the mountain,*” it is the fifth word, and the first distinctive word, in the parashah from the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of the annual reading of the Torah, and the ninth parashah in the book of *Vayikra / Leviticus*. In this week’s reading we find the mitzvah (command) when entering the Promised Land to observe the Yovel year (year of Jubilee). The year of Jubilee begins with a joyful shout and with trumpets. During this year, the land was to be fallow, not to be seeded (*25:1-12*), all property was to revert back to its original owner (*25:13-28*), all slaves were to be set free (*25:39-54*), and all debts were to be released. The year of Jubilee is a very important festival and within the command, the Lord says *25:14 ‘If you make a sale, moreover, to your friend or buy from your friend’s hand, you shall not wrong one another. (NASB)* Let’s discuss what it means to “*wrong*” one another according to the Torah.

### ספר ויקרא פרק כה *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:12-18*

יב כי יובל הוא קדש תהיה לכם  
 מן השדה תאכלו את-תבואתה:  
 יג בשנת היובל הזאת תשובו איש  
 אל-אחוזתו: [שני] יד וכי-תמכרו  
 ממכר לעמיתך או קנה מיד עמיתך  
 אל-תונו איש את-אחיו: טו במספר  
 שנים אחר היובל תקנה מאת עמי-  
 תך במספר שני-תבואת ממכר-לך:  
 טז לפי | רב השנים תרבה מקנתו  
 ולפי מעט השנים תמעט מקנתו כי  
 מספר תבואת הוא מכר לך: יז ולא  
 תונו איש את-עמיתו ויראת מאלהיך  
 כי אני יהוה אלהיכם: יח ועשיתם  
 את-חקתי ואת-משפטי תשמרו ועשי-  
 תם אתם וישבתם על-הארץ לבטח:

*25:12 ‘For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. 25:13 ‘On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property. 25:14 ‘If you make a sale, moreover, to your friend or buy from your friend’s hand, you shall not wrong one another. 25:15 ‘Corresponding to the number of years after the jubilee, you shall buy from your friend; he is to sell to you according to the number of years of crops. 25:16 ‘In proportion to the extent of the years you shall increase its price, and in proportion to the fewness of the years you shall diminish its price, for it is a number of crops he is selling to you. 25:17 ‘So you shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God. 25:18 ‘You shall thus observe My statutes and keep My judgments, so as to carry them out, that you may live securely on the land. (NASB)*

We read in *Vayikra / Leviticus 25: 12* *כי יובל הוא קדש תהיה לכם* meaning “*the Yovel (Jubilee), he is to be holy to you.*” The idea is that this year is to be Kodesh (קדש) “*Holy,*” which suggests that this is a time of separation, or to be set apart for the Lord. The way this “*separation*” or “*set apart*” is accomplished is by each person returning to his or her land being made free, the land is to remain fallow (unplowed and unseeded), and everything returns back to its original owner, land, property, and people. In addition

to this, *Vayikra / Leviticus 25:12* states that if you make a sale or buy from your friend, here it says in the Hebrew text “*from your people*” (לְעַמִּיתְךָ) he is to do so according to the number of years of the crop (25:15) and the price is to be based upon the number of years (25:16). The idea behind this is not to wrong one another by fixing an unfair price. The interesting point of this command the effect of living securely in the land. Practicing fairness to one another is what it means to “*observe the statutes*” and “*keep the judgments*” of God. According to Midrash Rabbah Vayikra, Parshah 33, Part 1 (מדרש רבה) א (ויקרא פרשה לג סימן א) the rabbis parallel “*not doing wrong to one another*” to the “*life and death that are in the power of the tongue.*”

***Midrash Rabbah Vayikra, Parshah 33 Part 1***

*And the Lord spoke unto Moshe and if you sell aught unto your neighbor you shall not wrong one another (Vayikra / Leviticus 25:1, 14). This bears on the text, Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Mishley / Proverbs 18:21). Aquila interprets it as a spoon-knife, death on one side and life on the other. Ben Sira says, If a man has a glowing coal before him, then if he blows on it he makes it burn up, and if he spits on it he extinguishes it. R. Jannai says, if there was a loaf that was subject to a tithe, then if a man eats it before tithing there is death in the power of the tongue, but if he first tithed it and then ate there is life in the power of the tongue. R. Hiyya b. Abba said, If he had before him a basket of figs, then if he ate of it before tithing there is death in the power of the tongue, but if he first tithed it and then ate there is life in the power of the tongue. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said to Tabbai his servant, Go and buy me good food in the market. He went and bought him tongue. He said to him, Go and buy me bad food in the market. He went and bought him a tongue. Said he to him, What is this? When I told you to get good food you bought me a tongue, and when I told you to get bad food you bought me a tongue. He replied, good comes from it and bad comes from it. When the tongue is good there is nothing better, and when it is bad there is nothing worse. Rabbi made a feast for his disciples and placed before them tender tongues and hard tongues. They began selecting the tender ones, leaving the hard ones alone. Said he to them, note what you are doing. As you select the tender and leave the hard, so let your tongues be tender to one another. Accordingly, Moshe admonishes Israel by saying, If you sell aught, you shall not wrong one another. (א וידבר ה' אל משה וכי) תמכרו ממכר לעמיתך הה"ד (משלי יח) מות וחיים ביד לשון תרגום עקי"ל ממצטרא מוכירין מות מכאן וחיים מכאן בר סירא אמר היתה לפניו גחלת ונפח בה וביערה רקק בה וכבת א"ר ינאי היה ככר טבול אכלו עד שלא עישרו מות ביד לשון עישרו ואכלו חיים ביד לשון, אמר ר' חייא בר אבא היתה לפניו כלכלה של תאנים אכלה עד שלא עישרה מות ביד לשון*

עִשְׂרָה וְאֶכְלָה חַיִּים בַּיָּד לְשׁוֹן אֲרֻשְׁבִּיג לְטֹבֵי עֲבָדֶיךָ פּוֹק זָבִין לִי צָדוּ טָבָא מִן שׁוֹקָא נִפְק זָבִין לִיָּה לִישָׁן אִ"ל פּוֹק זָבִין לִי צָדוּ בִישָׁא מִן שׁוֹקָא נִפְק זָבִין לִיָּה לִישָׁן אִ"ל מָהוּ דִּין דְּכַד אֲנָא אֲמַר לָךְ צָדוּ טָבָא אֶת זָבִין לִי לִישָׁן וְכַד אֲנָא אֲמַר לָךְ צָדוּ בִישָׁא אֶת זָבִין לִי לִישָׁן אִ"ל מִינָה טָבָתָא וּמִינָה בִישָׁתָא כַּד הוּוּ טָב לִית טָבָה מִינָה וְכַד בִּיש לִית בִּיש מִינָה רַבִּי עֲשֵׂה סְעוּדָה לְתַלְמִידֵי הַבַּיָּת לְפָנֵיהֶם לְשׁוֹנוֹת רַכִּים וּלְשׁוֹנוֹת קָשִׁים הַתְּחִילוּ בּוֹרְרִין בְּרַכִּים וּמְנִיחִין הַקָּשִׁים אֲמַר לְהֵם דְּעוּ מָה אֲתֵם עוֹשִׂין כְּשֵׁם שְׂאֲתֵם בּוֹרְרִין אֶת הַרְכִּין וּמְנִיחִין אֶת הַקָּשִׁים כַּךְ יִהְיֶה לְשׁוֹנְכֵם כַּךְ אֱלֹהִים לְאֱלֹהִים לְפִיכֵךְ מִשֶׁה (מְזַהֵר אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי תִמְכְּרוּ מִמְכָּר).

Based on *Vayikra / Leviticus 25*, the midrash draws a parallel to “*not doing wrong to one another*” and “*death and life being in the power of the tongue.*” The idea is to be tender to one another in treating each other in righteousness, kindness, and holiness. We learn in the midrash that there is a connection between what we say and what we do. The prophet Isaiah said in *Isaiah 3:8* the people’s speech (Leshonam, לְשׁוֹנָם) is connected to the way they walked (u’maalleyhem, וּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם) suggesting that the way one speaks follows through by the way one walks. Note also the children of Israel had Aaron build them a golden calf (in Parashat Ki Tisa), and the words of their lips indicated their desire and plan to walk in sin before the Lord at the mountain of Sinai in the desert. In addition to this, David says in *Tehillim / Psalms 39*, בְּאֶמְרָתִי אֶשְׁמְרָה דְּרָכֵי מַחְטָא בְּלִשׁוֹנִי אֶשְׁמֵר, *39:1 I said, ‘I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence. (NASB)* David says “*I said, I will guard/keep my ways.*” He says that he will take heed to his ways so that he does not sin with his tongue. Taking heed of our ways, examining our ways is something every man should do to his actions, conduct, and conversation like David is suggesting in his Psalm. This is what it means to walk in faith, to walk in God’s ways, in His truth and not in error. We are told to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, this is the path of righteousness and holiness. We are to seek holiness and take heed not to embrace error or immorality.

These last few weeks we have been studying *Vayikra / Leviticus* from Parashat Kedoshim (*Vayikra / Leviticus 19:1-20:27*) and Parashat Behar (*Vayikra / Leviticus 25:1-26:2*). In the rabbinic literature, the evil tongue is described as being the source of all plagues and is worse than shedding blood, sexual immorality, and idolatry (*Mishnah Arachin 15b, Midrash Rabba Deuteronomy 6:8, Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, 53, Bava Batra 164b*). What we say and how we say has some very significant spiritual consequences. When the Apostle Paul was writing to the non-Jewish believers in Galatia, he wrote on the topic of the tongue and biting and devouring one another in *Galatians 5:13-26*.

### ***Galatians 5:13-26***

*5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one*

*another. 5:14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 5:17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 5:19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another. (NASB)*

What is interesting about Paul's words to the Galatians, is that he is speaking on this very same topic of the evil tongue. Most people believe Paul was quoting Yeshua's words but in fact, both Yeshua and Paul were quoting from Parashat Kedoshim out of the Torah. Paul quotes from *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:18* in *Galatians 5:14* to love your neighbor as yourself. In addition to this, Paul may possibly be basing his exhortation to the Galatians out of Parashat Behar in *Vayikra / Leviticus 25*, similar to Midrash Rabbah in saying to "not do wrong to one another" versus "death and life being in the power of the tongue." In Paul's discussion on the tongue, the biting and devouring one another he contrasts the walking in the Spirit to walking in the flesh. He lists the attributes of those who walk in the Flesh, and those who walk in the Spirit.

- *The deeds of the flesh are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these...*
- *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 5:23 gentleness, self-control...*

He says those who walk in the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God, and those who walk in the Spirit, against such there is no Law. The most interesting aspect of these Scriptures is with regard to the Torah Portions. Paul speaks of loving our neighbor and doing no wrong to one another and walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is synonymous to submitting our lives to these commands. Submitting our lives to God's Torah,

we submit to His ways, to peace, to love, to joy, to goodness, to faithfulness, to patience, and to life. This is what it means to walk in the Messiah, in Yeshua, in Christ, and God enables us, and transforms us in His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. In addition to this, to walk after the flesh is to not walk in God's ways which is synonymous to not submitting our lives to God's Torah. Have you ever heard that walking after the flesh is following the Law? Can you see this is not really true? That is some serious food for thought!

