

The Goel of Israel

This weeks reading is a double portion taken from [Parshiot Behar and Bekhukotai \(Vayikra / Leviticus 25:1-27:34\)](#). In this week's reading we find the mitzvot concerning entering the Promised Land to observe the Yovel year (Jubilee). The year of Jubilee begins with a joyful shout and with trumpets. During this year, the land is to be fallow, not to be seeded ([25:1-12](#)), all property is to revert back to its original owner ([25:13-28](#)), all slaves are to be set free ([25:39-54](#)), and all debts are to be released. The year of Jubilee is a very important festival. Within this set of commands, 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)* In [Vayikra / Leviticus 25: 12](#), we read, [כִּי יוֹבֵל הוּא קֹדֶשׁ תְּהִיָּה לָכֶם](#) meaning *"the Yovel (Jubilee), he is to be holy to you."* The idea is that this year is to be Kodesh (קֹדֶשׁ) *"Holy,"* a time of separation, where the land is to be set apart for the Lord. In addition, the idea behind this is not to wrong one another by fixing an unfair price. The reason the land is sold is due to debt. When one fell into debt they may have to sell their ancestral property as we read in [Vayikra / Leviticus 25:25](#) *'If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. (NASB)* In the time of Jubilee, one's debt may be so great, that a goel is needed to buy back, or redeem one's ancestral land. This is so the land is kept within the family and the tribes of Israel would maintain their inheritance that has been given from the Lord. The debt of an individual may however be much greater than simply selling one's ancestral land, one may also need to sell himself as a debt-slave. When this happened the goel (kinsmen-redeemer) was called upon to rescue their kinsman from debt-slavery by buying him back, as is described in [Vayikra / Leviticus 25:47](#) *'Now if the means of a stranger or of a sojourner with you becomes sufficient, and a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to him as to sell himself to a stranger who is sojourning with you, or to the descendants of a stranger's family, 25:48 then he shall have redemption right after he has been sold. One of his brothers may redeem him, (NASB)* Thus, the basic idea of *"redemption"* is rooted in the notion of debt-slavery.

In addition, the land is also understood from a similar context. During sowing and reaping, the land is constricted to produce crops. The land is therefore in a form of slavery and the Torah command indicates there is one year that it is to be set free so the land may rest. Thus, to be “redeemed” or “ransomed” is to be purchased back from slavery, of both property and person. The one who makes the payment is the goel (the kinsmen-redeemer).

ספר ויקרא פרק כה Vayikra / Leviticus 25:23-27

כג וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמְכַּר לְצִמְתָּת כִּי-לִי הָאָרֶץ כִּי-גֵרִים וְתוֹשְׁבֵי-בָיִם אַתֶּם עִמָּדִי: כֹּד וּבְכָל אֶרֶץ אֲחֻזֹּתְכֶם גְּאֹלָה תִתְּנוּ לְאֶרֶץ: ס [רביעי] כה כִּי-יָמוּךְ אָחִיךָ וּמָכַר מֵאֲחֻזָּתוֹ וּבָא גְאֹלוֹ הַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו וּגְאָל אֶת מִמְכָּר אָחִיו: כו וְאִישׁ כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה-לוֹ גְּאֹל וְהִשְׁיֵגָה יָדוֹ וּמָצָא כָּדִי גְאֹלָתוֹ: כז וְחָשַׁב אֶת-שְׁנֵי מִמְכָּרוֹ וְהִשְׁיֵב אֶת-הָעֵדֶף לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר מָכַר-לוֹ וְשָׁב לְאֲחֻזָּתוֹ: 25:23 ‘The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are but aliens and sojourners with Me. 25:24 ‘Thus for every piece of your property, you are to provide for the redemption of the land. 25:25 ‘If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold. 25:26 ‘Or in case a man has no kinsman, but so recovers his means as to find sufficient for its redemption, 25:27 then he shall calculate the years since its sale and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and so return to his property. (NASB)

The Goel (גאל) is a Hebrew term meaning “redeemer,” which according to Scripture and rabbinic tradition, denotes a person who is the nearest relative, is charged with the duty of the restoration of property, from slavery, and for avenging wrongs committed against his people (tribe). In the Authorized King James Bible, and other modern bibles, the word “Goel” is rendered as “kinsman,” “redeemer,” and “avenger.” In the book of Isaiah (see *Isaiah 49:26, 59:20, 63:16*) the Lord God is called the *Goel of Israel* (*Isaiah 49:26 ‘I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.’ NASB*, וְהִאֲכִלְתִּי אֶת-מוֹנִיךָ אֶת-בְּשָׂרָם וְכַעֲסִים

(דָּמָם יִשְׁפְּרוּן וְיִדְעוּ כָּל-בֶּשָׂר כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מוֹשִׁיעַךְ וְגֹאֲלְךָ אֲבִיר יַעֲקֹב: Notice all of the aspects of the Goel are found here in *Isaiah 49:26*; He (the Lord) is the One who takes revenge, the One who Saves, and the One who Redeems. That may be why the Apostle Paul wrote in *Romans 12:19* *Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord. (NASB)* This very fittingly may be applied to the Lord God in heaven since the Goel is involved in redeeming His people from captivity. In Jewish eschatology, the term mashiach, or “*Messiah*,” came to refer to a future Jewish King from the Davidic line, who is expected to be anointed with holy anointing oil and rule the Jewish people during the Messianic Age. The Messiah is often referred to as “*King Messiah*” in Hebrew, מֶלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ (melekh mashiach), and in Aramaic, malka meshiḥa (מַלְכָּא מְשִׁיחָא). Orthodox views have generally held that the Messiah will be descended from his father through the line of King David, will gather the descendants of Jacob back into the Land of Israel, usher in an era of peace, build the Third Temple, father a male heir, and re-institute the Sanhedrin, among other things. The rabbinic expectation of the Messiah is derived from the Davidic covenant.

The Davidic Covenant refers to God’s promises to David through Nathan the prophet which is found in *2 Samuel 7* and summarized in *1 Chronicles 17:11–14* and *2 Chronicles 6:16*. In this covenant, the Lord God said that through the line of David the Messiah would come. From the lineage of David and the tribe of Judah the Messiah would come and would establish a kingdom that would endure forever. This is why the rabbis say in Midrash Tehillim 67, Part 1 that “*through Judah will God be known.*” The Davidic Covenant is considered unconditional because the Lord does not place conditions of obedience upon its fulfillment meaning that the surety of the promises that were made to David rests solely on God’s faithfulness to David. The Davidic Covenant centers on several key promises that are made to David; the Lord affirms the promise of the land that He made to Abraham and at Sinai drawing us back to a Torah context. This promise is seen in *2 Samuel 7:10*, where the Lord says through the prophet, “*I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore.*” The Lord promises that David’s son will succeed him as the king of Israel and that this

son (Solomon) would build the temple, *2 Samuel 7:12-13* “*I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name.*” The promise continues and expands saying, “*I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*” (7:13), and “*Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever*” (7:16). The promise that David’s son Solomon would be blessed and build the temple becomes the promise of an everlasting kingdom. According to the promise given to David, another “*Son of David*” would rule forever and build a lasting House. This is a reference to the Messiah, where Yeshua is called the Son of David in *Matthew 21:9*. The idea that David’s “*house,*” “*kingdom,*” and “*throne*” will be established forever is significant because it shows that the Messiah will come from the lineage of David and that He will establish a kingdom from which He will reign. The manner in which the promise is written seems to summarize the intent the Lord God has in the Messiah Yeshua. The covenant is summarized by the words “*house,*” promising a dynasty in the lineage of David; “*kingdom,*” referring to a people who are governed by a king; “*throne,*” emphasizing the authority of the king’s rule; and “*forever,*” emphasizing the eternal and unconditional nature of this promise to David and to Israel. In addition, others (the prophets and the disciples) refer back to this covenant in the books of *Jeremiah 23:5, 30:9, Isaiah 9:7, 11:1, Luke 1:32, 1:69, Acts 13:34, and Revelation 3:7.*

As a result of the Torah descriptions of the Goel, He (the Lord) is the One who takes revenge, the One who Saves, and the One who Redeems. (*Take note of 2 Thessalonians 1 Paul describes Yeshua being revealed from heaven in blazing fire, which is symbolic of judgment.*) The Scriptures also list the Lord God Almighty as the redeemer of Israel in *Isaiah 49:26, 59:20, 63:16, Job 19:25, and Luke 1:68-75*. Coupled with Judaism’s Messianic expectation of the Messiah, we find within the Apostolic Writings a significant amount of literature that compare Yeshua the Messiah to the Goel in whom the Lord God Almighty, our Father in heaven, sent to redeem Israel. In *1 Corinthians 1:30*, we are told that Yeshua is our redeemer (*1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, NASB*). This concept of the redemption of Israel in the Messiah is expressed in the following verses.

Romans 3:23-24

3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 3:24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (NASB)

Titus 2:14

2:14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (NASB)

Galatians 3:13-14, 4:4-5

3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (NASB)

4:4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 4:5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (NASB)

Colossians 1:4

1:4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (NASB)

1 Peter 1:15-19

1:15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 1:16 because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' 1:17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from

*your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 1:19
but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and
spotless, the blood of Christ. (NASB)*

Paul in *Romans 3* describes the debt that we have before God due to our sin and how the Messiah Yeshua redeems us from that debt. What is the debt we have before the Lord God in heaven? In *Titus 2* and *Galatians 3 and 4* states that we are redeemed from lawless deeds (sin) and that Yeshua has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, in the sense that by our sins we are guilty before God. (Note that the curse comes by reason of disobedience 'sin' according to the Torah. Paul is not saying the Law is a curse.) Paul to the Colossians says that Yeshua rescued us from this present evil age. Peter says that we were redeemed by blood. Note how he mentions that one is judged by his works, and that we were not redeemed by silver or gold, as in the case of the human Goel with regard to the earthly things. Yeshua's redemption (the Messiah's redemption) takes on a spiritual aspect. As a result the Goel takes upon a much broader aspect in the Apostolic Writings having both earthly and heavenly responsibilities.

According to the Apostolic Writings, Yeshua the Messiah redeems from the power of Satan (*Acts 26:18, Galatians 1:4, and Colossians 1:13*). He redeems from the coming judgment (*Romans 5:9, 8:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:9*), and from death (*1 Corinthians 15:54-57, Hebrews 2:14-15*) Yeshua's redemption comes through his incarnation (*Romans 8:3, Galatians 4:4-5, Hebrews 2:14*) and is achieved by his sacrificial death (*2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:12, 1 Peter 1:18-19, and Revelation 1:5*). Consistent with the Torah, Yeshua redeems by paying a ransom (*Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, Acts 20:28, Hebrews 9:15, and Revelation 5:9*). The redemption for His people is related to our debt before God, His redemption brings the forgiveness of sins (*Acts 26:18, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:15, and 1 John 1:7*). Yeshua also redeems believers to make them pure (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and 7:23, Titus 2:14*). In addition, Yeshua's redemption enables the Gentiles to receive the promised blessings listed in the Torah (*Galatians 3:14, 4:5, and 5:1, and Hebrews 9:15*), so that they may receive final redemption (*Luke 21:28, Romans 8:23, and Ephesians 1:14 and 4:30*)

A very important observation on the Goel, according to Jewish tradition, when there was no heir, the court had the right to assume the position

of the “*goel*.” This draws in the concept of the “heavenly court” making every man, woman, and child guilty before God due to sin. The Torah states that the blood-revenge was applicable only to the person of the guilty man and not to the other members of his family (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 24:16* ‘Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin. NASB and *2 Kings 14:6* But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to what is written in the book of the Law of Moses, as the Lord commanded, saying, ‘The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death for his own sin.’ NASB) The intent was to prevent generational feuds, where only the guilty would die and not the entire family. In addition, the king himself, as the highest judicial authority, was also entitled to take control and guide the blood-revenge (*2 Samuel 14:8*). The following example from King David’s life illustrates this point.

2 Samuel 14:4-19

14:4 Now when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself and said, ‘Help, O king.’ 14:5 The king said to her, ‘What is your trouble?’ And she answered, ‘Truly I am a widow, for my husband is dead. 14:6 ‘Your maidservant had two sons, but the two of them struggled together in the field, and there was no one to separate them, so one struck the other and killed him. 14:7 ‘Now behold, the whole family has risen against your maidservant, and they say, ‘Hand over the one who struck his brother, that we may put him to death for the life of his brother whom he killed, and destroy the heir also.’ Thus they will extinguish my coal which is left, so as to leave my husband neither name nor remnant on the face of the earth.’ 14:8 Then the king said to the woman, ‘Go to your house, and I will give orders concerning you.’ 14:9 The woman of Tekoa said to the king, ‘O my lord, the king, the iniquity is on me and my father’s house, but the king and his throne are guiltless.’ 14:10 So the king said, ‘Whoever speaks to you, bring him to me, and he will not touch you anymore.’ 14:11 Then she said, ‘Please let

the king remember the Lord your God, so that the avenger of blood will not continue to destroy, otherwise they will destroy my son. And he said, As the Lord lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the ground. 14:12 Then the woman said, 'Please let your maidservant speak a word to my lord the king.' And he said, 'Speak.' 14:13 The woman said, 'Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one who is guilty, in that the king does not bring back his banished one. 14:14 For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him. 14:15 'Now the reason I have come to speak this word to my lord the king is that the people have made me afraid; so your maidservant said, 'Let me now speak to the king, perhaps the king will perform the request of his maidservant. 14:16 'For the king will hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man who would destroy both me and my son from the inheritance of God.' 14:17 'Then your maidservant said, 'Please let the word of my lord the king be comforting, for as the angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and evil. And may the Lord your God be with you.' 14:18 Then the king answered and said to the woman, 'Please do not hide anything from me that I am about to ask you.' And the woman said, 'Let my lord the king please speak.' 14:19 So the king said, 'Is the hand of Joab with you in all this?' And the woman replied, 'As your soul lives, my lord the king, no one can turn to the right or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken. Indeed, it was your servant Joab who commanded me, and it was he who put all these words in the mouth of your maidservant; (NASB)

Here in *2 Samuel 14:4-19*, the woman is speaking to David regarding the avenger of blood and Joab. She attempts to draw a parallel to the Lord God who causes one to be exiled or cast out, but does not take away life

which allows for the possibility of the goel to come and redeem the one in exile. She is calling upon the Lord and using His example of mercy on Israel. From this idea of the human goel as a redeemer of his kinsmen in their times of trouble, there are to be found many allusions to the Lord God Almighty as the Divine Goel, who is involved in redeeming His people on a national scale (compare *Shemot / Exodus 6:6, 15:13, and Tehillim / Psalms 74:2*), and on an individual scale where the people themselves become the “redeemed” ones (*Tehillim / Psalms 107:2 and Isaiah 62:12*). The reference to the Lord God as the Goel, the one who would “redeem” His people was applicable to the relationship between the Lord and Israel in the period of the Babylonian exile. During the Babylonian exile, the people would have actually looked to the Lord God to restore their land to them, and the impoverished individual looked to his kinsman to secure a restoration of his inheritance.

The redeemer is therefore paralleled to the one who saves. The Hebrew word for “*He will save*” is יוֹשִׁיעַ (“yoshia”) which is derived from the root “to save” (יָשַׁע, yasha) and is the root word the name of “Yeshua” (יֵשׁוּעַ) is derived from. The name given to Yeshua reveals to us what he has done, the Messiah saves, the Messiah is our redeemer. The etymology of the name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) shows that it is a contraction on the name Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ). The meaning of the name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) is provided for us explicitly within the text in *Matthew 1:21*, the NASB renders the verse as “*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Yeshua), for he will save his people from their sins.*” According to the Apostolic Writings, the Lord God sent His only begotten son Yeshua יֵשׁוּעַ to lay His life down on our behalf, to redeem us from the debt of sin that we have before the Father in heaven. As a result of these things, we are told there is power in the name and that power is sustained by the authority of the one who stands behind that name according to the Scriptures. The essential matter is that we place our faith in the One the Lord God Almighty sent to save us from our sins, the one through whom we are redeemed, God’s Goel. By this reason, *Acts 2:21* says ‘*And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*’ (NASB)

In conclusion, the *Mishnah Pesachim 10:6* states the following:

Mishnah Pesachim 10:6

Up until which point should he recite? The House of Shammai says: Up to 'as a happy mother of children'. The House of Hillel says: Up to 'flint stone into a water-spring', and conclude with the blessing of redemption. Rabbi Tarfon says: 'who redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt', but without a concluding blessing. Rabbi Akiva says: 'O YHVH our God and God of our ancestors--may we come to reach other seasons and festivals in peace, joyful in the rebuilding of your city, and jubilant in your Temple service, where we will eat from the offerings and Passover sacrifices etc.' until 'Bless you YHVH, Redeemer of Israel.

עד היכן הוא אומר, בית שמאי אומרים: עד אם הבנים שמחה, ובית הלל אומרים: עד חלמיש למעינו מים. וחותרם בגאלה. רבי טרפון אומר: אשר גאלנו וגאל את אבותינו ממצרים, ולא היה חותרם. רבי עקיבא אומר: כן ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו יגיענו למועדים ולרגלים אחרים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, שמחים בבנין עירך וששים בעבודתך, ונאכל שם מן הזבחים ומן הפסחים כו', עד ברוך אתה ה' גאל ישראל.

The rabbis are affirming that the Lord God Almighty made good on His promises and for this we are to speak of the blessing of the redemption that He has provided for His people and to look forward to God's seasons and His festivals in peace and joy. He chose us to be his people, and He chose the Messiah to be our redeemer, the Goel of mankind. In the Psalms and the Prophets, God is described as the One who stands up for Israel to vindicate them. Yeshua, the Word manifest in the flesh (*John 1:14*) is our kinsman who paid the redemption price and set us free from the debt that we had gotten ourselves into by our sins. And in similar manner, Yeshua stood up and vindicated us ... Praise the Lord for such a wonderful salvation! Halelluia!

