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**Yovel (Jubilee) Years**

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Every fifty years, after [seven](seven.html) [Sabbatical](shmita.html) [cycles](cycles.html) of [seven](seven.html) years, [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s people observe the yovel, or jubilee, year. At such a [time](time.html), both the [forty](forty.html)-[ninth](nine.html) and fiftieth year are to be considered holy, and we are to abstain from working the land, free our slaves, and let the purchased properties revert back to their original tribal owners.

*Yovel* carries [three](three.html) meanings – “Ram’s [horn](shofar.html)“, “Jubilee” and “to be carried”. The [time](time.html) will come when we will be “yoveled”, carried off, to our eternal resting place; to [HaShem](hashem.html).

When is the next jubilee year?

For those who would like to [know](daat.html) when the last jubilee (yovel) year was, or when the next Jubilee year will be; please review the following chart: [yovel1](yovel1.html). This charts shows what our sages have [taught](teacher.html) regarding the year of the jubilee.

Just like [Shavuot](shavuot.html) comes on the fiftieth day of the [Omer](omer.html), and represents a departure from the natural [world](worlds.html) into the supernatural realm, so too does the yovel year signal an opportunity to rise above nature. The Encyclopedia Americana says:

“The [Jubilee] [law](law.html) as a whole was distinctly Theocratic; it vindicated the absolutism of YHVH; it meant that [Hebrews](bereans.html) were the servants of Him, and could not therefore continue to be the slaves of their fellowmen; the land belonged to Him, and was only lent to the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) [tribes](tribes.html) and families, who could not therefore be driven out by any human arrangement.”

The yovel year is dependent upon the [shmita](shmita.html), or [Sabbatical](shmita.html), year. As such, you will see these [two](two.html) [mitzvot](cmds613.html) linked throughout Torah. Both of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html) are related to [time](time.html), just as the [Sabbath](sabbath.html) and [festivals](festivals.html) are related to [time](time.html). [Time](time.html) is important to [HaShem](hashem.html).

Today, without the [Temple](temple.html), the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year and yovel cannot be observed the same way. Many farmers do observe the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year, and have reported miraculous bumper crops in the [sixth](six.html) year, as promised by the Torah. To supplement the incomes of such brave farmers, additional funds have been established to ease the financial stress of keeping the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year even in these times.

Now, let’s look at what the Torah says about the yovel.

# I. What is a yovel?

The [first](one.html) mention of *yovel* in the Torah, and hence its [creation](bara.html), is in:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 19:10-13*** *And* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes And be ready by the* [*third*](three.html) *day, because on that day* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *will come down on Mount* [*Sinai*](stages.html) *in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, ‘Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the* [*foot*](heel.html) *of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.’ Only when the yovel sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain.”*

Only when the *yovel* is drawn out may they go up the mountain... but, I thought *yovel* meant jubilee, what gives? Let’s answer this question by looking at Strong’s definition of this word:

3104 yowbel, yo-bale’; or yobel, yo-bale’; appar. from 2986; the blast of a [horn](shofar.html) (from its continuous sound); spec. the signal of the silver trumpets; hence the instrument itself and the [festival](festival.html) thus introduced:-Jubile, ram’s [horn](shofar.html), trumpet.

Strong’s suggests that a *yovel* is a [*shofar*](shofar.html). Thus we were allowed to climb the mountain after the [shofar](shofar.html) sounded. We learn from this, that the yovel year gets its [name](name.html) from the sounding of the [shofar](shofar.html). A ram’s [horn](shofar.html) is called a yovel. Yovel, as a ram’s [horn](shofar.html), was also used in Joshua chapter [six](six.html).

In ***only*** [two](two.html) cases is the blast of the [shofar](shofar.html) referred to in [Hebrew](hebrew.html) as a ***yovel***, literally ‘a jubilee’. These are during Moses’ paramount achievement (above Shemot 19:13), bringing the Torah down to Israel from Mt. [Sinai](stages.html) and during Joshua’s famous achievement, the capture of [Jericho](stages.html):

**Yehoshua (Joshua) 6:5** *... when they blow with the* [*horn*](shofar.html) *a yovel…*

These [two](two.html) cases, [Sinai](stages.html)[[1]](#footnote-1) and [Jericho](stages.html),[[2]](#footnote-2) provided liberty and [freedom](freedom.html) on a national level, just as it did in Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10, (where the yovel is again blown) as we shall soon see.

Why does the Torah use singular verbs when discussing the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year, but plural ones for yovel? The [laws](law.html) of yovel only apply when all the [tribes](tribes.html) are in the [land of Israel](city.html). According to the [Gemara](orallaw.html):

***Arachin 32b*** *But did they count the years of release and Jubilees [after the return from* [*Babylon*](bavel.html)*]? If even after the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Reuben, the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Gad and the half-*[*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Manasseh went into* [*exile*](galuyot.html)*, the Jubilees were abolished, should Nehemiah in* [*connection*](connection.html) *with whom it is said: The whole congregation together was* [*forty*](forty.html) *and* [*two*](two.html) *thousand* [*three*](three.html) *hundred and* [*three*](three.html) *score,[[3]](#footnote-3) have counted them? For it was* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: When the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Reuben, the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Gad and the half-*[*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Manasseh went into* [*exile*](galuyot.html)*, the Jubilees were abolished as it is said: And ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof,[[4]](#footnote-4) i.e., [only] at the* [*time*](time.html) *when all the inhabitants thereof* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *upon it, but not at the* [*time*](time.html) *when some of them are* [*exiled*](galuyot.html)*.* [*One*](one.html) *might have assumed that if they were there, but intermingled, the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of* [*Benjamin*](benyamin.html) *with that of Judah and the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *of Judah with that of* [*Benjamin*](benyamin.html)*, that even the [*[*laws*](law.html) *of the] Jubilee should apply, therefore it is said: ‘unto all the inhabitants thereof’, which means, only at the* [*time*](time.html) *when its inhabitants are there as [where] they ought to be, but not when they are intermingled! — Said R. Nahman b.* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*: They counted the Jubilees to keep the years of release holy.[[5]](#footnote-5) That will be right in the view of the Rabbis who hold that the fiftieth year is not included,[[6]](#footnote-6) but according to R. Judah who holds that the fiftieth year counts both ways,[[7]](#footnote-7) why was that necessary [to count the Jubilees]? It would have been enough if the years of release alone had been counted! Hence [we must say], this is not in accord with the view of R. Judah.*

Once Sancheriv, the Assyrian, [exiled](galuyot.html) Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, the [laws](law.html) of yovel no longer applied. Since yovel applies only when all the [Jews](gen-jew.html) are in the [land of Israel](city.html), the Torah uses the plural. However, the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year is observed even if there is only [one](one.html) [Jew](gen-jew.html) in the [land of Israel](city.html). Thus, the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year is discussed in the singular form.

There is a distinction between the plural “lachem” and the singular “lecha”. Regarding Sefirat HaOmer, the counting of the [omer](omer.html), the pasuk states “You shall count for yourselves”.[[8]](#footnote-8) With regards to [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel, the pasuk states “you shall count for yourself”.[[9]](#footnote-9) Chazal explain that the plural used in Sefirat HaOmer indicates that each and every individual is commanded to count, whereas the singular used when describing the counting towards the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) and Jubilee years means the [mitzva](cmds613.html) is incumbent only on the Beit Din Gadol, the Sanhedrin, in [Jerusalem](city.html).

The [freedom](freedom.html) proclaimed in the yovel year was primarily for the slaves. Why does the Torah say, *for all its inhabitants*?

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10*** *And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.*

Yovel here is linked with liberty and the [freedom](freedom.html) to start over and move forward. Just as [Sinai](stages.html) and [Jericho](stages.html) provided that opportunity on a national level.

Though being sold into slavery is demeaning the Torah demands that the master treat his slave with great sensitivity and dignity. Thus, the [Gemara](orallaw.html) says:

***Kiddushin 22a*** *Our Rabbis* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: ‘Because he is well with thee’: he must be with [i.e., equal to] thee in* [*food*](food.html) *and drink, that thou shouldst not* [*eat*](eating.html) *white bread and he black bread, thou drink old wine and he* [*new*](new.html) *wine, thou* [*sleep*](mashal.html) *on a feather bed and he on straw. Hence it was said:* ***Whoever buys a*** [***Hebrew***](hebrew.html) ***slave is like buying a master for himself****.*

Consequently, in the Jubilee year, “all inhabitants,” both the slaves and the masters, enjoy a period of [freedom](freedom.html).

It is worth noting that the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) word ‘leolam – לְעֹלָם’ is also applied to the yovel. Olam is normally translated as ‘forever’. However that is not always its meaning as we learn from the Ramban:

**Ramban’s Commentary for:**

**Shemot (**[**Exodus**](exodus.html)**) 21:6:**

**AND HE SHALL SERVE HIM ‘L’OLAM’ (FOREVER)**. **Our Rabbis interpreted[[10]](#footnote-10) this to mean until the jubilee year.** And Rabbi [Abraham](avraham.html) ibn Ezra wrote that “the meaning of ***olam*** in the Sacred Language is ‘[time](time.html).’ ***It has been already, ‘l’olamim’ which were before us*** means ‘the times’ [or ‘the ages’] ***which were before us***.[[11]](#footnote-11) ***And there he may abide ‘ad olam’[[12]](#footnote-12)*** [cannot mean ‘forever,’ for Samuel did not stay all his life in Shiloh; it must therefore mean ‘until a certain [time](time.html),’ i.e., until he comes of age]. This is why the Rabbis have said, ***and he will serve him l’olam*** means up to the [time](time.html) of the jubilee year, for of all [appointed](settimes.html) seasons In Israel the jubilee year is the most remote, and the going out to [freedom](freedom.html) is as if the [world](worlds.html) was made anew for him. The sense of the verse is then, that he should return to his status in his [first](one.html) [time](time.html), when he was free.” The student learned [in the mystic lore of the Cabala] will understand that ***l’olam*** is to be taken in its usual sense [i.e., forever], for he who works until the jubilee year has worked ***all the days of old***.[[13]](#footnote-13) In the words of the Mechilta:[[14]](#footnote-14) “Rabbi[[15]](#footnote-15) says: **Come and see that *olam* cannot mean more than fifty years, for it is said and he will serve him *‘I’olam,’* which means until the jubilee year.”** Now Rabbi [Abraham](avraham.html) ibn Ezra forgot that which he wrote with understanding in another place.[[16]](#footnote-16)

# II. When does the yovel year begin?

The Torah [commands](cmds613.html), “You shall consecrate the fiftieth year.” How is this done? At the beginning of the year the Beit Din Gadol (Sanhedrin) declares, “This year is kadosh (sanctified).” Holiness without a land is a mere [spiritual](physical.html) conception, figurative and unreal. Kedusha, holiness, is expressed in the [physical](physical.html). The supreme expression of kedusha in Israel is expressed in the agricultural [mitzvot](cmds613.html): firstfruits, tithes, fruit from newly planted trees, [Sabbatical](shmita.html) and yovel years, and challah, the portion of bread separated for the [priests](priests.html).

We may note here that, generally [speaking](mashal.html), any manifestation of kedusha, holiness, brought about by a person, starts off with great force and then becomes gradually weaker. [HaShem](hashem.html), who is able to direct reality towards a certain end, can create the opposite, a holiness which becomes increasingly stronger. (This is the difference between [Shabbat](sabbath.html) and the pilgrimage [festivals](festivals.html) and between [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel [the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) and Jubilee years]. The [physical](physical.html) parallel can be found in the area of speech. As man shouts his voice becomes weaker and weaker, whereas [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s voice *grows steadily stronger*, as we learn in the Torah’s description of the [Sinai](stages.html) [experience](experience.html). In the same way, [mourning](mourning.html) which originates in man becomes less stringent as we move away from the day of tragedy whereas our [mourning](mourning.html) which reflects that of the Shechinah culminates at its peak, on the day of tragedy itself.

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:8-22*** *“‘Count off* [*seven*](seven.html) *Sabbaths of years--*[*seven*](seven.html) *times* [*seven*](seven.html) *years--so that the* [*seven*](seven.html) *Sabbaths of years amount to a period of* [*forty*](forty.html)*-*[*nine*](nine.html) *years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each* [*one*](one.html) *of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you;* [*eat*](eating.html) *only what is taken directly from the fields. “‘In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property. “‘If you sell land to* [*one*](one.html) *of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other. You are to buy from your countryman on the basis of the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of years since the Jubilee. And he is to sell to you on the basis of the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of years left for harvesting crops. When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what he is really selling you is the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of crops. Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God. “‘Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my* [*laws*](law.html)*, and you will live safely in the land. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will* [*eat*](eating.html) *your fill and live there in safety. You may ask, “What will we* [*eat*](eating.html) *in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?” I will send you such a blessing in the* [*sixth*](six.html) *year that the land will yield enough for* [*three*](three.html) *years. While you plant during the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *year, you will* [*eat*](eating.html) *from the old crop and will continue to* [*eat*](eating.html) *from it until the harvest of the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *year comes in.*

So, the Torah indicates that we start on the tenth day of the seventh month, [Tishri](feasts.html) 10. Now, this is a bit odd; how can we have a year starting in the middle of a month? The [Talmud](orallaw.html) helps us to understand:

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***2a*** *MISHNAH. THERE ARE* [*FOUR*](four.html)[*NEW*](new.html) *YEARS.[[17]](#footnote-17) ON THE* [*FIRST*](one.html) *OF* [*NISAN*](feasts.html)*[[18]](#footnote-18) IS* [*NEW*](new.html) *YEAR FOR KINGS[[19]](#footnote-19) AND FOR* [*FESTIVALS*](festivals.html)*.[[20]](#footnote-20) ON THE* [*FIRST*](one.html) *OF* [*ELUL*](elul.html)*[[21]](#footnote-21) IS* [*NEW*](new.html) *YEAR FOR THE TITHE OF CATTLE.[[22]](#footnote-22) R. ELEAZAR AND R. SIMEON, HOWEVER, PLACE THIS ON THE* [*FIRST*](one.html) *OF* [*TISHRI*](feasts.html)*.[[23]](#footnote-23) ON THE* [*FIRST*](one.html) *OF* [*TISHRI*](feasts.html)*[[24]](#footnote-24) IS* [*NEW*](new.html) *YEAR FOR YEARS[[25]](#footnote-25), FOR RELEASE AND JUBILEE YEARS,[[26]](#footnote-26) FOR PLANTATION[[27]](#footnote-27) AND FOR [TITHE OF] VEGETABLES.[[28]](#footnote-28) ON THE* [*FIRST*](one.html) *OF SHEBAT[[29]](#footnote-29) IS* [*NEW*](new.html) *YEAR FOR TREES,[[30]](#footnote-30) ACCORDING TO THE RULING OF BETH SHAMMAI; BETH HILLEL, HOWEVER, PLACE IT ON THE* [*FIFTEENTH*](fifteen.html) *OF THAT MONTH.*

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***7b*** *But what of Jubilees which do not commence with the evening,[[31]](#footnote-31) and yet are reckoned in? — This follows the view of R. Johanan b. Ishmael the son of R. Johanan b. Beroka, who said that the Jubilee commences with the* [*New*](new.html) *Year. R. Shisha the son of R. Idi said: In fixing the* [*number*](nchart.html)*, [the Tanna] reckoned only* [*New*](new.html) *Years that are not inaugurated with some ceremony,[[32]](#footnote-32) but he does not reckon those that are inaugurated with a ceremony.[[33]](#footnote-33)*

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***8b*** *AND FOR JUBILEE YEARS. [is the* [*New*](new.html) *Year for] Jubilees on the* [*first*](one.html) *of* [*Tishri*](feasts.html)*? Surely [the* [*New*](new.html) *Year for] Jubilees is on the tenth of* [*Tishri*](feasts.html)*, as it is written, on the day of* [*atonement*](kippur.html) *shall ye make proclamation with the* [*horn*](shofar.html)*?[[34]](#footnote-34) — What* [*authority*](authority.html) *is here followed? R. Ishmael the son of R. Johanan b. Beroka, as it has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year.[[35]](#footnote-35) What is the point of these words? [It is this]. Since it says, On the day of* [*atonement*](kippur.html) *[ye shall make proclamation],[[36]](#footnote-36) I might think that the year is sanctified only from the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *onwards. Therefore it says, And ye shall sanctify the fiftieth year. This* [*teaches*](teacher.html) *that it is sanctified from its inception. On this ground R. Ishmael the son of R. Johanan b. Beroka laid down that from* [*New*](new.html) *Year to the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *slaves were neither dismissed to their homes nor subjected to their masters, but they* [*ate*](eating.html) *and drank and made merry, wearing garlands on their heads.[[37]](#footnote-37) When the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *came, the Beth din sounded the* [*horn*](shofar.html)*; slaves were dismissed to their homes and fields returned to their original owners. And the Rabbis [ — what do they make of this verse]? — [They say it* [*teaches*](teacher.html) *that] you are to sanctify years but not months.[[38]](#footnote-38)*

*Another [Baraitha]* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: ‘It is a Jubilee.[[39]](#footnote-39) What is the point of these words? — Since it says, And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year,[[40]](#footnote-40) I might think that, just as it is sanctified from its inception onwards, so it remains sanctified [for a* [*time*](time.html)*] after its termination. And there would be nothing to wonder at in this, seeing that we [regularly] add from the profane on to the holy.[[41]](#footnote-41) Therefore it says, it is a Jubilee to you, the fiftieth year, [to show that] you are to sanctify the fiftieth year, but not the fifty-*[*first*](one.html) *year.[[42]](#footnote-42)*

So, now we see that the yovel year begins on the [first](one.html) day of the seventh month, [Tishri](feasts.html) 1, but the slaves do not return to their own land till the [shofar](shofar.html) is sounded on the tenth day of the seventh month, [Tishri](feasts.html) 10.

# III. Ownership

[One](one.html) of the primary themes of the yovel year is the emphasis on ownership:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:23-55*** *“‘The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but* [*aliens*](aliens.html) *and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *of the land. “‘If* [*one*](one.html) *of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *what his countryman has sold. If, however, a man has no* [*one*](one.html) *to* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *it, He is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property. “‘If a man sells a house in a walled* [*city*](city.html)*, he retains the right of* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *a full year after its sale. During that* [*time*](time.html) *he may* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *it. If it is not* [*redeemed*](redemption.html) *before a full year has passed, the house in the walled* [*city*](city.html) *shall belong permanently to the buyer and his descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as open country. They can be* [*redeemed*](redemption.html)*, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee. “‘The Levites always have the right to* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. So the property of the Levites is redeemable--that is, a house sold in any town they hold--and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. But the pasture land belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession. “‘If* [*one*](one.html) *of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an* [*alien*](aliens.html) *or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. You must not lend him money at interest or sell him* [*food*](food.html) *at a profit. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God, who brought you* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html) *to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God. “‘If* [*one*](one.html) *of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. Then he and his children are to be released, and he will go back to his own clan and to the property of his forefathers. Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html)*, they must not be sold as slaves. Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God. “‘Your* [*male*](male+female.html) *and* [*female*](male+female.html) *slaves are to come from the* [*nations*](nations.html) *around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. You can will them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly. “‘If an* [*alien*](aliens.html) *or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and* [*one*](one.html) *of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the* [*alien*](aliens.html) *living among you or to a member of the* [*alien*](aliens.html)*‘s clan, He retains the right of* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *after he has sold himself.* [*One*](one.html) *of his relatives may* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *him: An uncle or a cousin or any* [*blood*](body.html) *relative in his clan may* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *him. Or if he prospers, he may* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *himself. He and his buyer are to count the* [*time*](time.html) *from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for his release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired man for that* [*number*](nchart.html) *of years. If many years remain, he must pay for his* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *a larger share of the price paid for him. If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to compute that and pay for his* [*redemption*](redemption.html) *accordingly. He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year; you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly. “‘Even if he is not* [*redeemed*](redemption.html) *in any of these ways, he and his children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, For the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought* [*out of Egypt*](thebirth.html)*. I am* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God.*

The Torah emphasizes that the land and His people both belong to [HaShem](hashem.html). His people do not belong to a slave master, they belong to him! The land does not belong to anyone, it belongs to [HaShem](hashem.html), and He gives it to whomever He pleases!

As The Owner of the land, He sets the price for the use of His land:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 27:16-24*** *“‘If a man dedicates to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of* [*seed*](flower.html) *required for it--fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley* [*seed*](flower.html)*. If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the* [*priest*](priests.html) *will determine the value according to the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. If the man who dedicates the field wishes to* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *it, he must add a* [*fifth*](five.html) *to its value, and the field will again become his. If, however, he does not* [*redeem*](redemption.html) *the field, or if he has sold it to someone else, it can never be* [*redeemed*](redemption.html)*. When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*; it will become the property of the* [*priests*](priests.html)*. “‘If a man dedicates to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *a field he has bought, which is not part of his family land, The* [*priest*](priests.html) *will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man must pay its value on that day as something holy to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*. In the Year of Jubilee the field will revert to the person from whom he bought it, the* [*one*](one.html) *whose land it was.*

Since [HaShem](hashem.html) owns the land, He can also determine when it should change [hands](fourteen.html), and when it should not:

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 36:1-4*** *The family heads of the clan of Gilead son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, who were from the clans of the descendants of* [*Joseph*](joseph.html)*, came and* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *before Moses and the leaders, the heads of the Israelite families. They said, “When* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *commanded my lord to give the land as an* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *to the Israelites by lot, he ordered you to give the* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. Now suppose they marry men from other Israelite* [*tribes*](tribes.html)*; then their* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *will be taken from our ancestral* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *and added to that of the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *they marry into. And so part of the* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *allotted to us will be taken away. When the Year of Jubilee for the Israelites comes, their* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *will be added to that of the* [*tribe*](tribes.html) *into which they marry, and their property will be taken from the tribal* [*inheritance*](inherit.html) *of our forefathers.”*

If a home in a walled [city](city.html) is sold, when can it be [redeemed](redemption.html)? Leviticus 25:29, only within the [first](one.html) year after the sale. Afterwards, even in yovel it does not return.

After selling an ancestral field, when can [one](one.html) [redeem](redemption.html) it? Leviticus 25:24 - Any [time](time.html) after [two](two.html) years following the sale until yovel. In the beginning of yovel it returns to the family automatically.

After selling a home in a [city](city.html) without walls, when can [one](one.html) [redeem](redemption.html) it? According to Leviticus 25:31, anytime until yovel, when it returns automatically.

One other ‘ownership’ issue, related to Yovel, is the slave who does not want to leave his master. The Targum proides some insight:

**& Targum Pseudo Jonathan For: Devarim (Deuteronomy) ‎15:16-17** *16. But if he say to you, I will not go out from you, because I love you and the men of your house, and because it has been good for him to be with you, 17. then you will take an awl, and bore (or apply) it through his ear, and that to the door of the house of judgment, and he will be your serving servant until the Jubilee. And for your handmaid also you will write a certificate of release, and give it to her.*

What makes this so facinating is that the Torah calls the period from the time of the piercing with the awl, until the Yovel, this period is called ‘forever’:

**Rashi’s Commentary on D’barim (Deut.) ‎15:17 [And he shall be] a servant [to you] forever** Heb. לְעוֹלָם . One might think that [ לְעוֹלָם , “forever”] is to be interpreted literally. Therefore, Scripture states: “[And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It will be a Jubilee for you;] and you shall return, every man to his property, and you shall return, every man to his family” (Lev. 25:10). Consequently, you learn that the term לְעוֹלָם here can mean only the period until the Jubilee. [This period is also called לְעוֹלָם .]-[Mechilta 21:6]

# IV. [Time](time.html) Periods

The [time](time.html) period associated with the yovel year, are found repeatedly in the Torah. To understand the yovel period, it would be useful to review those related [time](time.html) periods.

Torah speaks of several periods of [time](time.html) which are associated with [seven](seven.html):

✡The **week** - [seven](seven.html) days long.

✡[**Pesach**](passover.html), the [Passover](passover.html) - [seven](seven.html) days long.

✡[**Shmita**](shmita.html), or [Sabbatical](shmita.html), year - every seventh year.

✡**yovel**, or jubilee, year - after [seven](seven.html) [shmita](shmita.html) years

✡[**Shavuot**](shavuot.html), the [Feast of Weeks](shavuot.html) - after [seven](seven.html) weeks.

✡**Sefirat HaOmer**, the counting of the [omer](omer.html) - lasts for [seven](seven.html) weeks.

Torah also speaks of various purification processes which also illustrate [seven](seven.html) units of [time](time.html):

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 12:2*** *“Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives* [*birth*](birth.html) *to a son will be ceremonially unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period.*

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 15:19*** *“‘When a woman has her regular flow of* [*blood*](body.html)*, the* [*impurity*](purity.html) *of her monthly period will last* [*seven*](seven.html) *days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.*

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 15:24*** *“‘If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.*

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 19:11*** *“Whoever touches the dead* [*body*](body.html) *of anyone will be unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days.*

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 19:14*** *“This is the* [*law*](law.html) *that applies when a person dies in a tent: Anyone who enters the tent and anyone who is in it will be unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days,*

***Bamidbar (***[***Numbers***](nchart.html)***) 19:16*** *“Anyone out in the open who touches someone who has been killed with a sword or someone who has died a natural death, or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days.*

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 13:2-6*** *“When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the* [*priest*](priests.html) *or to* [*one*](one.html) *of his sons who is a* [*priest*](priests.html)*. The* [*priest*](priests.html) *is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the* [*hair*](hair.html) *in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the* [*priest*](priests.html) *examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. If the spot on his skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the* [*hair*](hair.html) *in it has not turned white, the* [*priest*](priests.html) *is to put the infected person in isolation for* [*seven*](seven.html) *days. On the seventh day the* [*priest*](priests.html) *is to examine him, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another* [*seven*](seven.html) *days. On the seventh day the* [*priest*](priests.html) *is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the* [*priest*](priests.html) *shall pronounce him* [*clean*](purity.html)*; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be* [*clean*](purity.html)*.*

Chazal understood that each of the times that the Torah speaks about a [time](time.html) period of [seven](seven.html), it is relating this [event](feasts.html) to all other [events](feasts.html) with a [time](time.html) period of [seven](seven.html). It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore all of these relationships, but I have grouped many of the periods of [seven](seven.html), together, for [study](study.html) in my paper titled: 7chart.

\* \* \*

The *Hizkuni* believes that Sefira and [Shavuot](shavuot.html) are somehow reminders for the “really” important [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of [Shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. Every seventh year is considered a [shmita](shmita.html) year, meaning that land in Eretz Yisrael may not be worked and that all debts owed by [Jews](gen-jew.html) to other [Jews](gen-jew.html) are canceled. Every fiftieth (or 49th; this is a controversy – See [yovel1](yovel1.html) to understand the various opinions) year is considered yovel, meaning that all [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves are freed and that all land which has changed [hands](fourteen.html) in the years since the last yovel now returns to the [hands](fourteen.html) of its original owner. What clues the *Hizkuni* in to the [connection](connection.html) between Sefira / [Shavuot](shavuot.html) and [shmita](shmita.html) / yovel? There are several likely possibilities:

1. The pesukim which [command](cmds613.html) [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are remarkably similar in language to those which [command](cmds613.html) Sefira and [Shavuot](shavuot.html). The language seems to beg comparison between these [two](two.html) sets of [mitzvot](cmds613.html).

2. Structurally, these [two](two.html) sets of [mitzvot](cmds613.html) are uniquely parallel: each has [seven](seven.html) sets of sevens, with a climax at the fiftieth day/year.

More fundamentally, however, where does the *Hizkuni* get the idea that [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are so important that it is necessary to institute a parallel set of [mitzvot](cmds613.html) to serve as [annual](annual.html) reminders of the entirety of the [cycle](cycles.html)? In part, the *Hizkuni* answers this question, pointing out correctly that the sections of the Torah which curse those who neglect the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) (the “tokhaha”) do reserve special wrath for the neglect of [Shmita](shmita.html) (see Vayikra 26:34, for example). Still, as a Pshat reading, it seems strained to suggest that Sefira and [Shavuot](shavuot.html) are not significant in their own right and serve only to remind us of other [mitzvot](cmds613.html). As tempting as the linguistic and structural parallels may be, there is no indication that [one](one.html) set of [mitzvot](cmds613.html) is merely a reminder for the other.

**\* \* \***

Chazal interprets the [law](law.html) of the slave who does not want to go free:

***Shemot (***[***Exodus***](exodus.html)***) 21:5-6*** *“But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ Then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.*

This means that when an “eved ivri”, the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) servant, agrees to work *forever*, that it applies only till the end of the [seven](seven.html) [cycles](cycles.html) of [shmita](shmita.html), i.e. the *yovel* year.[[43]](#footnote-43)

**\* \* \***

Just as there are [two](two.html) types of holiness in the days and the months, [Shabbat](sabbath.html) and [festivals](festivals.html), so too there are [two](two.html) types of holiness in the years themselves. The seventh year is a [Shabbat](sabbath.html) of the land. Its holiness is “fixed” like [Shabbat](sabbath.html). The holiness of yovel is like the holiness of the [festivals](festivals.html). Its holiness represents a partnership of [HaShem](hashem.html) and Man. “For it is yovel; holy it will be to you.”

If the [shofar](shofar.html) is not blown at the beginning of the yovel year then the year is not yovel. If the slaves are not set free, the year is not yovel. If the fields do not return to their original owners, the year does not have the status of yovel and it is permitted to reap and sow like an ordinary year.[[44]](#footnote-44)

\* \* \*

Parshat Behar 5758

by Rav Lipman Podolsky and

American Friends of Yeshivat Hakotel

“Give Me Liberty...”

The similarity between the [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) days of the Sefirat HaOmer, and the [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) years of the [shmita](shmita.html)-yovel [cycle](cycles.html) is absolutely striking, [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) steps of development, followed by a fiftieth period of sanctity and celebration. Is this mere coincidence, or is the Torah conveying to us a hidden message?

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) clearly [connects](connection.html) the [two](two.html): “...count [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) days, and sanctify the fiftieth, just like yovel (Sifra 167:8).” The Ramban emphasizes it further: “the [number](nchart.html) of days from the day of waving (the [Omer](omer.html) [offering](korbanot.html)) until Yom Tov ([Shavuot](shavuot.html)) is as the [number](nchart.html) of years of the [shmita](shmita.html) until the yovel; the reasoning for both is identical.” Thus, it behooves us to clarify this [connection](connection.html), and then to try to assimilate this understanding into our observance of the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of Sefirat HaOmer and preparation for [Shavuot](shavuot.html).

[First](one.html) let us elucidate the concept of yovel. The Torah says, “And you shall count for yourselves [seven](seven.html) sabbaths of years... [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) years. And you shall cause the [shofar](shofar.html) to sound in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month... And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, and you shall return every man to his possession, and every man to his family (Vayikra 25:8-10).” yovel intimates a year of [freedom](freedom.html) for all, for both slaves, and for portions of land.

What exactly does [freedom](freedom.html) mean? It cannot mean independence from [authority](authority.html), for if that were true then all fields should be rendered ownerless, not only those that had been purchased. Rather, the idea is that until this point, the slaves and sold lands were subjugated to an unnatural state, to foreign dominion. For nearly fifty years, they anticipated their return to their families and to their rightful owners.

Thus, the idea of yovel is the return to [one](one.html)‘s original condition, the optimum state. Reuven’s field of [inheritance](inherit.html) had been sold to another’s possession, and it had been held in escrow for all this [time](time.html). Now the field returns to it’s natural, primordial predicament. So too, the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave, fifty years before, had been a regular, [HaShem](hashem.html) serving [Jew](gen-jew.html). But due to certain circumstances, he had been sold as a slave, a state completely contrary to the “[freedom](freedom.html) of religion” every [Jew](gen-jew.html) deserves. “For the children of Yisrael are Mine as slaves, they are My slaves,[[45]](#footnote-45) and not slaves to slaves[[46]](#footnote-46).”

When yovel arrives the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave becomes once again a freeman, a man devoted only to the service of [HaShem](hashem.html), and not to a human master. Thus, liberty takes on a [new](new.html) meaning. It does not mean ownerless, rather it means belonging to the rightful, natural Master. With regard to fields the [legitimate](legitimate.html) owner is the heir of he to whom the parcel was originally allocated by [HaShem](hashem.html) in the wilderness. With people, the Master is [HaShem](hashem.html) Himself. When [one](one.html) returns to his natural state, to the state originally intended for him by [HaShem](hashem.html), he is said to be free.

The Ramban gives us a deeper look at verse 2: He says that the yovel symbolizes the entire history of existence, from [creation](bara.html) until the end of [time](time.html) (the phrase, “and he shall serve him forever[[47]](#footnote-47),” refers to yovel). Originally, man was created in an existence of absolute spirituality, a reality in which the presence of [HaShem](hashem.html) was palpable. In [Gan Eden](eden.html), [Adam](adam.html) possessed no internal Yetzer Hara, the lines between good and evil were clearly delineated, and [Adam](adam.html) had no [desire](needs.html) other than to bask in the ecstasy of his intimate relationship with his Creator.

After [eating](eating.html) from the tree of [knowledge](thetree.html), [Adam](adam.html) internalized the Yetzer Hara, thereby enslaving himself and his descendants to [physical](physical.html) existence. [HaShem](hashem.html) hid Himself behind the veneer of the visible universe, and man had to struggle intensely to perceive Him. Man thus became a slave to his Yetzer Hara. At the [end of days](lastdays.html), when [Mashiach](mashiach.html) shall arrive, we will return to the Source, the natural condition of man, an existence unencumbered by a Yetzer Hara[[48]](#footnote-48), an existence in which our sole [desire](needs.html) will be to derive pleasure from [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s infinite perfection[[49]](#footnote-49). Only then will we be truly free. This is the idea of yovel according to Ramban.

How does this relate to the [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) days of the [Omer](omer.html)? As we have already said, [Adam](adam.html) was created a freeman. The Shechinah enveloped him constantly. As soon as he sinned, the Shechinah retreated, and [Adam](adam.html) was left in the grip of the Yetzer Hara. No matter what strategy he employed, not matter how hard he struggled, [Adam](adam.html) was incapable of returning to the garden. No Teshuva sufficed. Just as the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave whose ear has been pierced, [Adam](adam.html) found no way to emancipate himself. Like [one](one.html) with a chronic disease for which there is no cure; all roads of return had been blocked.

This situation continued for [twenty](twenty.html)-[six](six.html) [generations](toldot.html). Then came the receiving of the Torah at Har [Sinai](stages.html). “I created the Yetzer Hara, and I created the Torah as its antidote[[50]](#footnote-50).” The Torah is the only treatment for the affliction of the Yetzer Hara. Man had finally been supplied the prescription with which to combat the bondage of his evil inclination, to overcome it, and to return to his original state, that of [freedom](freedom.html). “There is no freeman except he who studies Torah”.[[51]](#footnote-51) By engaging in Torah [study](study.html), [one](one.html) breaks the shackles of his [physical](physical.html) imprisonment, enabling him a [spiritual](physical.html) existence even on this earth, “kimei shamayim al HaAretz, like heavenly days upon earth[[52]](#footnote-52).”

This should be our attitude as we count the Sefirat HaOmer, preparing ourselves for receiving the Torah on [Shavuot](shavuot.html). For [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) days we look impatiently to that day when once again we will become imbued with that special quality that affords us the ability to protect ourselves from harm, and to purchase our [freedom](freedom.html). Just as a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave pines for the day that he will [merit](merit.html) to return home to his family, to his natural habitat, and to his True Master, so is it with us. On [Shavuot](shavuot.html) that special light will shine once again, [offering](korbanot.html) us an auspicious opportunity to achieve that which our ancestors achieved so many years ago, and a chance to reaffirm our link with the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people throughout the [millennia](millenium.html).

But there is [one](one.html) fundamental difference between yovel and [Shavuot](shavuot.html). On yovel the slave doesn’t have to do anything to acquire his [freedom](freedom.html). It is automatic. On [Shavuot](shavuot.html), however, nothing dramatic takes place. We don’t even have any special [mitzvot](cmds613.html) on that day (unless you count cheesecake as a [mitzva](cmds613.html)). On [Shavuot](shavuot.html) the Yetzer Hara does not evaporate into nothingness. Rather, on [Shavuot](shavuot.html) we are presented with the capacity to defeat the Yetzer Hara. “There is no freeman except he who studies Torah”.[[53]](#footnote-53) It is not sufficient to receive Torah; [one](one.html) must [know](daat.html) how to use it. And by using it, we slowly but surely cure ourselves of our disease called the Yetzer Hara.

Perhaps, deep down, this is what Patrick Henry meant when he proclaimed, “Give me liberty...” Perhaps.

Ki Hem Chayeinu... For they (the words of Torah) are our life!

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# V. How do we count for the yovel year?

The counting of the yovel year seems to be a bit confusing. If you will [study](study.html) the [yovel1](yovel1.html) chart, you will see that there are various opinions as to when we start the count. However, there is also a controversy as to whether we count fifty and then start at year [one](one.html), or whether the fiftieth year of [one](one.html) [cycle](cycles.html) is also the [first](one.html) year of the next [cycle](cycles.html). To begin to understand how to count, let’s see what the [Talmud](orallaw.html) says:

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***9a*** *And the Rabbis [ — what do they make of these words]?[[54]](#footnote-54) — [They say]: You are to count the fiftieth year, but you are not to count the fifty-*[*first*](one.html)*,[[55]](#footnote-55) to exclude the view of R. Judah, who said that the fiftieth year is reckoned both ways.[[56]](#footnote-56) We are here told that this is not so.*

*And how do we* [*know*](daat.html) *[from the Scripture] that we add from the profane on to the holy?[[57]](#footnote-57) — As it has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: In plowing* [*time*](time.html) *and in harvest* [*time*](time.html) *thou shalt rest.[[58]](#footnote-58) R. Akiba, [commenting on this,] said: There was no need [for Scripture] to specify the ploughing and harvest of the* [*Sabbatical*](shmita.html) *year, since this has already been mentioned [in] thy field thou shalt not sow etc.[[59]](#footnote-59) What must be meant therefore is the ploughing of the year before the seventh which is passing into the seventh,[[60]](#footnote-60) and the harvest of the seventh year which is continuing into the period after the seventh year.[[61]](#footnote-61) R. Ishmael said: Just as ploughing is optional,[[62]](#footnote-62) so the harvest [here referred to] is an optional* [*one*](one.html)*, excluding the harvesting of the ‘*[*Omer*](omer.html)*, which is a religious duty.[[63]](#footnote-63) Whence then does R. Ishmael derive the rule that an addition is to be made from the profane on to the holy? — From what has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: And ye shall afflict your souls on the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *day:[[64]](#footnote-64) I might think [literally] on the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *day. It therefore says, In the evening.[[65]](#footnote-65) if in the evening, I might think, after dark? It therefore says, ‘or, the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *day’.[[66]](#footnote-66) What then am I to understand? That we begin fasting while it is yet day; which shows that we add from the profane on to the holy. I* [*know*](daat.html) *this [so far] only in regard to the inception [of the holy day]; how do I* [*know*](daat.html) *it in regard to its termination? Because it says, from evening to evening. So far I have brought only the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *under the rule; how do I* [*know*](daat.html) *that it applies to Sabbaths also? Because it says, ye shall rest.[[67]](#footnote-67) How do I* [*know*](daat.html) *that it applies to* [*festivals*](festivals.html)*? Because it says, your* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*. How am I to understand this? That wherever there is an obligation to rest, we add from the profane on to the holy.*

Rashi indicates that we count [seven](seven.html) [shmita](shmita.html) years and then we consecrate the fiftieth year. This fiftieth year is not the [first](one.html) year of the next [cycle](cycles.html).

Tosafot says: ‘You are to count the fiftieth year (as fiftieth to the Jubilee), but you are not to count the fiftieth year as [one](one.html) (to the following septennate)’.

***Nedarim 61a*** *The scholars propounded: What if* [*one*](one.html) *vows, ‘Konam, if I taste wine a Jubilee’:[[68]](#footnote-68) Is the fiftieth year [counted] as before the fiftieth or as after?[[69]](#footnote-69) Come and hear: For a conflict of R. Judah and the Rabbis has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year:[[70]](#footnote-70) you must count it as the fiftieth year, but not as the fiftieth and as the* [*first*](one.html) *year [of the following jubilee].[[71]](#footnote-71) Hence they [the Sages] said: The Jubilee is not part of the [following] septennate. R. Judah maintained: The Jubilee is counted as part of the septennate. Said they to R. Judah, But Scripture saith,* [*six*](six.html) *years shalt thou sow thy field,[[72]](#footnote-72) whereas here there are only* [*five*](five.html)*![[73]](#footnote-73) He replied: But on your view, Surely it is said, and it shall bring forth fruit for* [*three*](three.html) *years.’ whereas here there are* [*four*](four.html)*![[74]](#footnote-74) But it can be referred to other* [*Sabbatical*](shmita.html) *years; hence mine too[[75]](#footnote-75) must be thus explained.*

# VI. The [Omer](omer.html) as a Pointer to the yovel[[76]](#footnote-76)

By the [commandment](cmds613.html) of Counting the [Omer](omer.html), we see [two](two.html) seemingly contradicting [commands](cmds613.html):

**We are commanded to count** [**seven**](seven.html) **complete weeks**.[[77]](#footnote-77)

**We are commanded to count 50 days**.[[78]](#footnote-78)

For halachah, we count 49 days, and Shabuot is celebrated on the fiftiethday, without any counting. There is an idea of 49 days of our efforts from below, and then [HaShem](hashem.html) completes the 50 days for us from above.

If we consider from the [time](time.html) of Ezra that there are to be 49 yovel [cycles](cycles.html) of our own efforts, we stand today 3 years ahead (in 5773 – 2016) of the beginning of the 49th [cycle](cycles.html), which begins in 5776 (2016). The 49th [cycle](cycles.html) is destined to be the completion of the efforts of the [nation](nations.html) of Israel.

If we look at the original count as being 50 year [cycles](cycles.html), and that our goal, even then, was to arrive at a yovel of yovel years, then we see an act of kindness from [HaShem](hashem.html): Switching to 49 year [cycles](cycles.html) shortens the [time](time.html) of [Galut](galuyot.html) by decades. In our case, we are set to arrive at the 48th yovel a total of 39 years earlier than we would in a 50 year [cycle](cycles.html) count. That is because the [first](one.html) 9 yovel years are identical in the [two](two.html) sets, so 48 - 9 = 39 years. [HaShem](hashem.html) has mercy on us, and the end comes towards us.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Looking at the yovel [cycles](cycles.html) as parallel to the [omer](omer.html) period, we also find parallels. To [name](name.html) a few:

3416-3765 is the period corresponding to the yovel “week” of Chesed, in which the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) stood. The Chesed she’be’Chesed (the 1st “day”), 3416-3455, included the founding of the Great Assembly (HaKnesset HaGedolah), the last remnants of prophecy until the days of [Mashiach](mashiach.html).

3816-3865 is the period corresponding to Gevurah she’bi’Gevurah (the 8th yovel [cycle](cycles.html)), in which the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed. The 8th day of the [Omer](omer.html) is the day after Isru Chag, full [mourning](mourning.html) customs begin at this point.

4992-5041 is the period corresponding to Hod she’be’Hod, which is Lag BaOmer, in which we celebrate the revelation of the [Zohar](orallaw.html). This yovel [cycle](cycles.html) brought the publication of the [Zohar](orallaw.html).

5139-5482 is the period corresponding to the yovel “week” of Yesod. Revelations of the secrets of Torah are rooted in Yesod. The Arizal lived during this period.

5482-present is the period corresponding to the yovel “week” of Malchut. The geulah is rooted in the sefirah of Yesod, per Kabbalah. The 48th yovel [cycle](cycles.html) is Yesod she’be’Malchut. Malchut she’be’Malchut will see the return of the Malchut to Am Israel with the eternal end of [exile](galuyot.html).

## A Novel Approach[[80]](#footnote-80)

The Torah [commands](cmds613.html) us to count [seven](seven.html) times [seven](seven.html) years and then celebrate the fiftieth year as a yovel (Jubilee). Proposed dates for the yovel, from various sources, are detailed in our [study](study.html) titled: [yovel1](yovel1.html). The student interested in the details should consult those studies.

[One](one.html) of the most interesting yovel calculations comes from those who combine the opinion of the Rabbanan and Hakham Yehoshua. This novel idea[[81]](#footnote-81) suggests that we count fifty years for the yovel up until the destruction of the [Temple](temple.html). After the destruction of the [Temple](temple.html) we revert to counting [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) years with the [first](one.html) year of the next [cycle](cycles.html) being the yovel year.

Remember that the major purpose of the Jubilee was the freeing of slaves to serve [HaShem](hashem.html) rather than a terrestrial master, on their own land. This suggests that the [events](feasts.html) of the yovel should be related to [freedom](freedom.html) and to a return to [Eretz Israel](city.html).

This novel calculation shows the following Jubilees and their significance:

**Yovel Year 46 - 5678**

Shortly after the beginning of the 46th yovel, the Balfour Declaration was ratified. Dated November 2, 1917 (17th Marcheshvan 5678), the Balfour Declaration is [one](one.html) of the biggest steps towards gaining international recognition for the return to [Eretz Israel](city.html).

**Yovel Year 47 - 5727**

The next yovel year, according to this calculation, was in 5727. In [Iyar](feasts.html) 5727 (June of 1967), [Yerushalayim](city.html), Yehuda, Shomron, the Golan, and Gaza came under [Jewish](gen-jew.html) control for the [first](one.html) [time](time.html) in centuries, and the move back to these areas, of [Eretz Israel](city.html), began.

**Yovel Year 48 - 5776**

This [coming](coming.html) yovel, and its [events](feasts.html), are yet to be seen. Never the less, we can learn what kinds of [events](feasts.html) to expect.

By combining Rabannan’s count and R. Yehuda’s count, we find that the last yovel year was 5727 (1967 CE), the year of the [Six](six.html) Day War. This was the 48th yovel year starting from the [time](time.html) of Ezra in 3416. The yovel year which is 49 years later is 5776. Perhaps the year following would be a fitting [time](time.html) for the Sanhedrin to assume, or rather to resume, its role in counting of [Shmita](shmita.html) and yovel years and to assume its role of leadership of Am Israel. This next yovel would start the 49th yovel period. Rather fitting that the Sanhedrin would count the last yovel before the fiftieth yovel, a yovel of yovels. Remember that only the Sanhedrin can count and sanctify the yovel year.

**[Mashiach](mashiach.html) in 5775?**

Another interesting aspect of the year 5775 is that [Mashiach](mashiach.html) ben David will arrive at the end of a [seven](seven.html) year [Shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html), according to Chazal in the [Talmud](orallaw.html):

***Sanhedrin 97a*** *‘Thus hath R. Johanan said: in the* [generation](toldot.html) *when the son of David [i.e.,* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)*] will come, scholars will be few in* [*number*](nchart.html)*, and as for the rest, their* [eyes](body.html) *will fail through sorrow and grief. Multitudes of trouble and evil decrees will be promulgated anew, each* [*new*](new.html) *evil* [*coming*](coming.html) *with haste before the other has ended.’*

*Our Rabbis* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: in the* [*seven*](seven.html) *year* [*cycle*](cycles.html) *at the end of which the son of David will come-in the* [*first*](one.html) *year, this verse will be fulfilled: And I will cause it to* rain *upon* [*one*](one.html)[*city*](city.html) *and cause it not to rain upon another* [city](city.html)*;[[82]](#footnote-82) in the second, the arrows of hunger will be sent forth;[[83]](#footnote-83) in the* [*third*](three.html)*, a great* [*famine*](famine.html)*, in the course of which men, women, and children, pious men and saints[[84]](#footnote-84) will die, and the Torah will be forgotten by its students; in the* [*fourth*](four.html)*, partial plenty;[[85]](#footnote-85) in the* [*fifth*](five.html)*, great plenty, when men will* [eat](eating.html)*, drink and rejoice, and the Torah will return to its disciples; in the* [*sixth*](six.html)*, [Heavenly] sounds;[[86]](#footnote-86) in the seventh, wars; and at the conclusion of the septennate the son of David will come* (the [first](one.html) year of the next [Shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html))*. R.* [*Joseph*](joseph.html) *demurred: But so many septennates have passed, yet has he not come! — Abaye retorted: Were there then [Heavenly] sounds in the* [*sixth*](six.html) *and wars in the seventh! Moreover, have they [sc. the troubles] been in this order![[87]](#footnote-87)*

Thus we might expect [Mashiach](mashiach.html) ben David in a yovel year. Please bear in mind that we do not [know](daat.html) for certain when the next yovel year will be. Further, Chazal have commanded us to expect [Mashiach](mashiach.html) every day. Maimonides codifies this in Principle [number](nchart.html) [twelve](twelve.html) of his [thirteen](thirteen.html) principles:

*Principle XII. The era of the* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html)

*And this is to believe that in truth that he will come and that you should be waiting for him even though he delays in* [*coming*](coming.html)*. And you should not calculate* times *for him to come, or to look in the verses of Tanakh to see when he should come. The sages say: The wisdom of those who calculate times [of his* [coming](coming.html)*] is small and that you should believe that he will be greater and more honored than all of the kings of* Israel *since the beginning of* [*time*](time.html) *as it is prophesied by all the prophets from Moses our* [teacher](teacher.html)*, peace be upon him, until Malachi, peace be upon him. And he who doubts or diminishes the greatness of the* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *is a denier in all the Torah for it testifies to the* [*Mashiach*](mashiach.html) *explicitly in the portion of Bilaam and the portion of “You are* [*gathered*](gather.html) *(towards the end of Deut)”. And part of this principle that there is no king of Israel except from the house of David and from the* [seed](flower.html) *of Solomon alone. And anyone who disputes this regarding this family is a denier of the* [*name*](name.html) *of God and in all the words of the prophets.*

Let us look **today** for [Mashiach](mashiach.html), and let [His Majesty](yeshua.html) explain how the words of Chazal are reconciled at His [coming](coming.html), Amen V’Amen!

**Judah Ben Samuel[[88]](#footnote-88)**

Judah Ben Samuel apparently followed the above novel approach in calculating the yovel. The following are his findings vis-à-vis this approach.

Following the Christian crusades to the Holy Land, between 1096 - 1270, a regular correspondence developed between the [Jews](gen-jew.html) in the Holy Land and the Christian West. Thus, for example, the Rabbis in Worms and Regensburg in Germany [knew](daat.html) that Saladin’s Ayyubids had been ruling in the Holy Land since 1187.

At this [time](time.html), Judah Ben Samuel published the results of his biblical calculations (Gematria) and astrological observations and summarized as follows: “When the Ottomans (Turks) – who were already a power to be reckoned with on the Bosporus in the [time](time.html) of Judah Ben Samuel – conquer [Jerusalem](city.html) they will rule over [Jerusalem](city.html) for [eight](eight.html) jubilees. Afterwards [Jerusalem](city.html) will become no-man’s land for [one](one.html) jubilee, and then in the tenth jubilee it will once again come back into the possession of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [nation](nations.html) – which would signify the beginning of the Messianic end [time](time.html)“.

[One](one.html) jubilee (yovel) is 50 years.[[89]](#footnote-89) It is the fiftiethyear after [seven](seven.html) times [seven](seven.html) years, the year in which each person should regain ownership of his or her land. Ben Samuel’s calculations were purely theoretical; there was absolutely no [sign](signs.html) at that [time](time.html) of their being fulfilled. He himself was not able to [experience](experience.html) their fulfillment, for it was only [three](three.html) hundred years after his death that the [first](one.html) of his predictions were to come true.

The Mamluks,[[90]](#footnote-90) who had been reigning in [Jerusalem](city.html) since 1250, were conquered in 5277 (1517) by the Ottoman Turks. They remained for [eight](eight.html) jubilees (8 x 50 = 400 years), that is to say they were in [Jerusalem](city.html) for 400 years. Exactly 400 years later, in 5677 (1917), the Ottoman Turks were conquered by the British. The League of [Nations](nations.html) conferred the Mandate for the Holy Land and [Jerusalem](city.html) to the British. Thus, from 5677 (1917), under international [law](law.html), [Jerusalem](city.html) was no-man’s land.

Then, when Israel captured [Jerusalem](city.html) in the [Six](six.html) Day War of 5727 (1967), exactly [one](one.html) jubilee (50 years) after 5677 (1917), [Jerusalem](city.html) reverted to [Jewish](gen-jew.html)-Israeli ownership once again. Thereby, according to the prophecies of Judah Ben Samuel, the Messianic End Times began.

Many scholars have [studied](study.html) and made reference to Judah Ben Samuel’s writings in an effort to understand how he reached his conclusions. Among those referencing Ben Samuel were Rabbi [Isaac](isaac.html) Ben Solomon Luria, a mystic dealing with the messianic [world](worlds.html);[[91]](#footnote-91) [Joseph](joseph.html) Solomon Delmegido,[[92]](#footnote-92) a mathematician and astronomer,[[93]](#footnote-93) Azulai I,[[94]](#footnote-94) a famed bibliographer; Samuel David Luzzatto,[[95]](#footnote-95) a Bible scholar; historian Heinrich Graetz;[[96]](#footnote-96) and Torah scholar [Jacob](israelja.html) Epstein.[[97]](#footnote-97)

The [secret](sod.html) of how Judah the Pious arrived at such accurate predictions has less to do with the actual calculations than it does with the fact that he had consecrated his life to G-d. His pupils Rabbi [Isaac](isaac.html) ben Moses,[[98]](#footnote-98) Rabbi Baruch ben Samuel[[99]](#footnote-99) and Rabbi Simcha[[100]](#footnote-100) testify that Ben Samuel was a model of abstinence and selflessness and was awaiting with a burning [desire](needs.html) the [coming](coming.html) of the [Messiah](mashiach.html).

Ben Samuel was often called “Light of Israel.” Even bishops came to him for advice. If anyone asked him where his wisdom came from he would answer, “The prophet Elijah, who will precede the [Messiah](mashiach.html), appeared to me and revealed many things to me and emphasized that the precondition for answered [prayer](prayer.html) is that it is fueled by enthusiasm and joy for the greatness and holiness of G-d.”

But to recap the astonishing predictions: In AD 4977 (1217) this scholarly and pious rabbi prophesied that the Ottoman Turks would rule over the holy [city](city.html) of [Jerusalem](city.html) for [eight](eight.html) Jubilees. Now, keep in mind, he made this prediction 300 years before the Ottoman Turks seized control of [Jerusalem](city.html) in 5277 (1517). If indeed 4977 (1217) and 5277 (1517) were jubilee years as Judah Ben Samuel believed, then his prophecy was exactly right, because exactly 400 years after the Turks took control of [Jerusalem](city.html) they were driven out of the [city](city.html) and the holy land in 5677 (1917) by the Allied forces under the [command](cmds613.html) of General George Allenby – on [Chanukah](chanukah.html), by the way.

But it gets more interesting still.

The Rabbi also prophesied that during the [ninth](nine.html) Jubilee [Jerusalem](city.html) would be a “no-man’s land.” This is exactly what happened from 5677 (1917) to 5727 (1967), due to the fact that the Holy Land was placed under British Mandate in 5677 (1917) by the League of [Nations](nations.html) and literally “belonged” to no [nation](nations.html).

Even after Israel’s war of independence in 1948-49, [Jerusalem](city.html) was still divided by a strip of land running right through the [heart](body.html) of the [city](city.html), with [Jordan](stages.html) controlling the [eastern](east.html) part of the [city](city.html) and Israel controlling the western part of the [city](city.html). That strip of land was considered and even called “no-man’s land” by both the Israelis and the Jordanians.

It was not until the [Six](six.html) Day War in 5727 (1967) when the entire West Bank of the Holy Land was conquered by the Israeli army that the whole [city](city.html) of [Jerusalem](city.html) passed back into the possession of Israel. So once again the prophecy made by the rabbi 750 years previously was fulfilled to the [letter](letters.html).

It certainly would be significant if both 5677 (1917) and 5727 (1967) were Jubilee years (see [YOVEL1](yovel1.html)), considering the significance of what happened in [Jerusalem](city.html) on those years. But it gets even more interesting, because Judah Ben Samuel also prophesied that during the 10th Jubilee [Jerusalem](city.html) would be under the control of the [Jews](gen-jew.html) and the Messianic “end times” would begin. If he’s right, the 10th Jubilee began in 5727 (1967) and will be concluded in 5777 (2017).

Let’s consider the data:

Jubilees 1-8 - 5277 (1517) to 5677 (1917) Turks will rule.

Jubilee 9 - 5677 (1917) to 5727 (1967) [Jerusalem](city.html) No man’s land.

Jubilee 10 - 5727 (1967)[[101]](#footnote-101) to 5777 (2017) “during the 10th Jubilee [Jerusalem](city.html) would be under the control of the [Jews](gen-jew.html) and the Messianic “end times” would begin”.

Jubilee 11 - begins at [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) 5777 (2017).

# VII. When is the next yovel year?

To answer this question, we need to understand that there is some discussion among the Sages, on this issue (see [yovel1](yovel1.html)). Do we start counting when Joshua entered the land? Or, do we start to count when the Israelites returned to the land after the [Babylonian](bavel.html) captivity? Or, do we start when Israel became a [nation](nations.html) in 1948? The Sages seem to lean towards the [time](time.html) when Joshua entered the land.

Why didn’t they celebrate the [festival](festival.html) of [Succoth](succoth.html)?

**Ezra-Nechemiah (Nehemiah) *8:17*** *The entire* [*community*](community.html) *returning from captivity built* [*succoth*](succoth.html)*,* [*tabernacles*](succoth.html)*, and dwelled in those* [*succoth*](succoth.html)*, for since the days of Joshua son of Nun the Children of Israel had not done so until that day, and there was exceedingly great joy.*

This enigmatic passage describing the [first](one.html) [Succoth](succoth.html) celebrated by [Jews](gen-jew.html) returning to Eretz Yisrael from [Babylonian](bavel.html) captivity under the leadership of Ezra prompts the unavoidable Talmudic challenge: “Is it possible that in the days of David the [Jews](gen-jew.html) did not build and [dwell](dwelling.html) in [Succoth](succoth.html), only in the days of Ezra?”

[Two](two.html) differing approaches are offered by the Sages. Both agree that [Jews](gen-jew.html) certainly built [Succoth](succoth.html) during the period of [time](time.html) between Joshua and Ezra (close to a [millennium](millenium.html)), but they disagree as to what subtle message is communicated in this passage.

[One](one.html) approach is that the message is a comparison between the arrival of [Jews](gen-jew.html) in Eretz Yisrael in the days of Joshua and their arrival in the days of Ezra. Just as in Joshua’s [time](time.html) they began calculating [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel and practicing tithing, so did they begin again to do so in the days of Ezra. This is cited as a source for the position that the initial sanctification of the land by Yehoshua came to an end with the [exile](galuyot.html) to [Babylon](bavel.html), and required a [new](new.html) sanctification when they returned.[[102]](#footnote-102)

To help you count the yovel years, consider the following:

***Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 40:1*** *In the* [*twenty*](twenty.html)*-*[*fifth*](five.html) *year of our* [*exile*](galuyot.html)*, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the* [*fourteenth*](fourteen.html) *year after the fall of the* [*city*](city.html)*--on that very day the* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *of* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *was upon me and he took me there.*

Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 40:1, According to the [Talmud](orallaw.html)[[103]](#footnote-103), this was a jubilee year, while the release years (shmitot) and jubilee years did not commence until the land had been divided. The calculation is then as follows: The [Temple](temple.html) was built [four](four.html) hundred and eighty years after the [Exodus](exodus.html), which was [four](four.html) hundred and [forty](forty.html) years after their entry into [Eretz Israel](city.html). The [Temple](temple.html) stood [four](four.html) hundred and [ten](ten.html) years, making a total of [eight](eight.html) hundred and fifty years from their entry until its destruction, which is [thirty](thirty.html)-[seven](seven.html) Jubilees. Deducting [fourteen](fourteen.html) years for conquest and division, as these did not count for Jubilee, we find that it was destroyed [fourteen](fourteen.html) years before a Jubilee year, and therefore the [fourteenth](fourteen.html) year after its destruction was a Jubilee year. (The [Talmud](orallaw.html) deduces that this was a Jubilee year independently of this calculation.)[[104]](#footnote-104)

The Israelites crossed the [Jordan](stages.html) just after [Passover](passover.html) in 2489 a.m. They celebrated the [first](one.html) yovel year in **2553** a.m.

The Israelites returned from captivity in 3408 a.m.

The last [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year will be in 5999 a.m.

The Kabbalistic yovel year will commence in 6000 a.m.

The Rambam calculated that the next yovel year would be in 5765[[105]](#footnote-105). There is a difficulty with this opinion: Halachicaly, we accept that we can determine [shmita](shmita.html) years by dividing the current year by [seven](seven.html). All those years which are evenly divisible by [seven](seven.html) are [shmita](shmita.html) years. So, the last [shmita](shmita.html) year was in 5754, and the next will be in 5761. Since, in [Tishri](feasts.html) of 1998 (September 21, 1998), we will begin counting 5759, then we [know](daat.html) that we have a disconnect between the Rambam’s yovel year calculation and the [shmita](shmita.html) year calculations. If the next [shmita](shmita.html) year is in 5761, we would expect that the next yovel year to be in 5762. Why then does Rambam say 5765?

In addition, the [laws](law.html) pertaining to a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave only apply when yovel, is in effect. Added to the [fourteen](fourteen.html) years mentioned above of capturing and apportioning the land, this means that these [laws](law.html) will only begin to be applicable sixty [four](four.html) years after they enter the land. The [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people, obviously do not realize that so much [time](time.html) will elapse until these [laws](law.html) are applicable, but [HaShem](hashem.html) certainly knows. Why then must this [mitzva](cmds613.html) be the [first](one.html) [one](one.html) [HaShem](hashem.html) gives to Moshe, is it really so urgent?

***Sanhedrin 97b*** *Elijah said to Rab Judah, the brother of R. Salia the pious: ‘The* [*world*](worlds.html) *shall exist not less than eighty* [*five*](five.html) *jubilees,[[106]](#footnote-106) and in the last jubilee the son of David will come.’[[107]](#footnote-107) He asked him, ‘At the beginning or at the end?’[[108]](#footnote-108) — He replied, ‘I do not* [*know*](daat.html)*.’ ‘Shall [this period] be completed or not?’[[109]](#footnote-109) - ‘I do not* [*know*](daat.html)*,’ he answered. R. Ashi said: He* [*spoke*](mashal.html) *thus to him, ‘Before that, do not expect him; afterwards thou mayest await him.’[[110]](#footnote-110)*

The year 5776 is a Yovel year, marking the end of Yovel period 48 of history’s second Yovel count, which commenced in the beginning of Bayit Sheni, in year 3416. Year 5776 is also the [first](one.html) year of Yovel period 49, after Ezra. Before Ezra, the initial count of Yovel periods commenced in year 1383, 54 years after Yetziat Mitzrayim. Thus, 36 Yovel periods of 50 years were counted until the destruction of [Yerushalayim](city.html) in year 3175. Summing up, the year 5776 is the beginning of Yovel period 85.

According to the [Talmud](orallaw.html) the yovel year did not come into effect automatically, with the advent of the fiftieth year, but the Bet Din had to see to it’s implementation and officially proclaimed it by sounding the [shofar](shofar.html)[[111]](#footnote-111).

It was the duty of the Bet Din to count the years of the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year as [one](one.html) counts the [omer](omer.html). The duty of counting the [omer](omer.html) fell on every Israelite, whereas the counting of [Sabbatical](shmita.html) years fell only on the Bet Din[[112]](#footnote-112).

Although, the Torah records that the yovel release of slaves and the return of the land took place on Yom [HaKippurim](kippur.html), the yovel was regarded as starting on [Yom Teruah](teruah.html) (Sifra). At the beginning of the yovel year, in addition to sounding the [shofar](shofar.html), a special [prayer](prayer.html) was recited which included Malkhuyyot, Zikhronot, and Shofarot, as on [Yom Teruah](teruah.html)[[113]](#footnote-113).[[114]](#footnote-114)

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***8b*** *AND FOR JUBILEE YEARS. [is the* [*New*](new.html) *Year for] Jubilees on the* [*first*](one.html) *of* [*Tishri*](feasts.html)*? Surely [the* [*New*](new.html) *Year for] Jubilees is on the tenth of* [*Tishri*](feasts.html)*, as it is written, on the day of* [*atonement*](kippur.html) *shall ye make proclamation with the* [*horn*](shofar.html)*?[[115]](#footnote-115) — What* [*authority*](authority.html) *is here followed? R. Ishmael the son of R. Johanan b. Beroka, as it has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year.[[116]](#footnote-116) What is the point of these words? [It is this]. Since it says, On the day of* [*atonement*](kippur.html) *[ye shall make proclamation], I might think that the year is sanctified only from the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *onwards. Therefore it says, And ye shall sanctify the fiftieth year. This* [*teaches*](teacher.html) *that it is sanctified from its inception. On this ground R. Ishmael the son of R. Johanan b. Beroka laid down that from* [*New*](new.html) *Year to the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *slaves were neither dismissed to their homes nor subjected to their masters, but they* [*ate*](eating.html) *and drank and made merry, wearing garlands on their heads.[[117]](#footnote-117) When the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *came, the Beth din sounded the* [*horn*](shofar.html)*; slaves were dismissed to their homes and fields returned to their original owners. And the Rabbis [ — what do they make of this verse]? — [They say it* [*teaches*](teacher.html) *that] you are to sanctify years but not months.[[118]](#footnote-118)*

***Sanhedrin 97b*** *The* [*world*](worlds.html) *will endure not less than 85 yovel years, and on the last yovel the Son of David will come*.

There is a tradition that the [Jews](gen-jew.html) spent [seventy](seventy.html) years in [Babylonian](bavel.html) captivity because they failed to observe [seventy](seventy.html) yovels.[[119]](#footnote-119)

Yovel years were not observed after the [Babylonian](bavel.html) captivity.[[120]](#footnote-120)

***Avodah Zarah 9b*** *Said R. Huna the son of R. Yahoshua (Joshua): If* [*one*](one.html) *does not* [*know*](daat.html) *what the year is in the* [*Sabbatical*](shmita.html)[*cycle*](cycles.html) *of* [*seven*](seven.html) *years, let him add* [*one*](one.html) *year [to that in the era of the Destruction] and let him put aside the hundreds as Jubilee* [*Cycles*](cycles.html) *and* [*convert*](aliens.html) *the remainder into* [*Sabbatical*](shmita.html)[*Cycles*](cycles.html) *[of* [*seven*](seven.html) *years each] after adding thereto* [*two*](two.html) *years for every complete century; what is left over will give him the* [*number*](nchart.html) *of the given year in the current* [*Sabbatical*](shmita.html)[*Cycle*](cycles.html)*. As a mnemonical* [*sign*](signs.html) *[for adding* [*two*](two.html) *years for every century, think of the verse]. For these* [*two*](two.html) *years hath the* [*famine*](famine.html) *been in the land.*

**\* \* \***

The Torah [commands](cmds613.html):

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10*** *You shall sanctify the fiftieth year.*

How is this done? At the beginning of the year the Beit Din declares, “This year is Kadosh.(holy)”

**\* \* \***

[***Rosh HaShana***](teruah.html) ***9a*** *And the Rabbis [ — what do they make of these words]?[[121]](#footnote-121) — [They say]: You are to count the fiftieth year, but you are not to count the fifty-*[*first*](one.html)*,[[122]](#footnote-122) to exclude the view of R. Judah, who said that the fiftieth year is reckoned both ways.[[123]](#footnote-123) We are here told that this is not so.*

*And how do we* [*know*](daat.html) *[from the Scripture] that we add from the profane on to the holy?[[124]](#footnote-124) — As it has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: In plowing* [*time*](time.html) *and in harvest* [*time*](time.html) *thou shalt rest.[[125]](#footnote-125) R. Akiba, [commenting on this,] said: There was no need [for Scripture] to specify the ploughing and harvest of the* [*Sabbatical*](shmita.html) *year, since this has already been mentioned [in] thy field thou shalt not sow etc.[[126]](#footnote-126) What must be meant therefore is the ploughing of the year before the seventh which is passing into the seventh,[[127]](#footnote-127) and the harvest of the seventh year which is continuing into the period after the seventh year.[[128]](#footnote-128) R. Ishmael said: Just as ploughing is optional,[[129]](#footnote-129) so the harvest [here referred to] is an optional* [*one*](one.html)*, excluding the harvesting of the ‘*[*Omer*](omer.html)*, which is a religious duty.[[130]](#footnote-130) Whence then does R. Ishmael derive the rule that an addition is to be made from the profane on to the holy? — From what has been* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: And ye shall afflict your souls on the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *day:[[131]](#footnote-131) I might think [literally] on the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *day. It therefore says, In the evening.[[132]](#footnote-132) if in the evening, I might think, after dark? It therefore says, ‘or, the* [*ninth*](nine.html) *day’.[[133]](#footnote-133) What then am I to understand? That we begin fasting while it is yet day; which shows that we add from the profane on to the holy. I* [*know*](daat.html) *this [so far] only in regard to the inception [of the holy day]; how do I* [*know*](daat.html) *it in regard to its termination? Because it says, from evening to evening. So far I have brought only the Day of* [*Atonement*](kippur.html) *under the rule; how do I* [*know*](daat.html) *that it applies to Sabbaths also? Because it says, ye shall rest.[[134]](#footnote-134) How do I* [*know*](daat.html) *that it applies to* [*festivals*](festivals.html)*? Because it says, your* [*Sabbath*](sabbath.html)*. How am I to understand this? That wherever there is an obligation to rest, we add from the profane on to the holy.*

**\* \* \***

***Arachin 13a*** *R. Ashi said: He does not count the* [*six*](six.html) *years until Ezra had come up and dedicated [the* [*Sanctuary*](mikdash.html)*].[[135]](#footnote-135) For it is written: Then ceased the work of the* [*house of God*](housegod.html) *which is at* [*Jerusalem*](city.html)*.[[136]](#footnote-136) And it is also written: And this house was finished on the* [*third*](three.html) *day of the month* [*Adar*](feasts.html)*, which was in the* [*sixth*](six.html) *year of the reign of Darius the king.[[137]](#footnote-137) And a Tanna* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: About the same* [*time*](time.html) *in the following year Ezra with his* [*exiled*](galuyot.html)[*community*](community.html) *went up [to the Land], as it is said: And he came to* [*Jerusalem*](city.html) *in the* [*fifth*](five.html) *month, which was in the seventh year of the king.[[138]](#footnote-138) [To revert to] the main text: ‘Seventeen jubilee* [*cycles*](cycles.html) *did Israel count from the* [*time*](time.html) *they entered the Land until they left it’. But you cannot say that they counted from the moment they entered. For if you were to say so, then it would be found that the* [*Temple*](temple.html) *was destroyed at the beginning of a* [*seven*](seven.html) *years* [*cycle*](cycles.html) *and you could not account for: ‘In the* [*fourteenth*](fourteen.html) *year after that the* [*city*](city.html) *was smitten, etc.’ Whence do we* [*know*](daat.html) *that it took* [*seven*](seven.html) *years to conquer [the Land]? — Caleb said:* [*Forty*](forty.html) *years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from* [*Kadesh*](stages.html)*-Barnea to spy out the land[[139]](#footnote-139) . . . and now, lo, I am this day* [*four*](four.html)*-score and* [*five*](five.html) *years old.[[140]](#footnote-140) And a Master said: ‘The* [*first*](one.html) *year Moses built the* [*tabernacle*](mikdash.html)*, in the second the* [*tabernacle*](mikdash.html) *was put up, then he sent out the spies. When Caleb passed over the* [*Jordan*](stages.html) *how old therefore was he? He was* [*two*](two.html) *years less than eighty years old.[[141]](#footnote-141) When he distributed the inheritances, he said: ‘Now, lo, I am this day* [*four*](four.html)*-score and* [*five*](five.html) *years old’. Whence it follows that it took* [*seven*](seven.html) *years for them to conquer the land. And whence do we* [*know*](daat.html) *that it took them* [*seven*](seven.html) *years to distribute it? — If you like, say: Since the conquest took* [*seven*](seven.html) *years, so did the distribution. Or, if you like, say: Because otherwise* [*one*](one.html) *could not account for ‘In the* [*fourteenth*](fourteen.html) *year after that the* [*city*](city.html) *was smitten’.*

**\* \* \***

Sources:

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot [Shmita](shmita.html) Veyovel, 10:4,8

# VIII. Torah requirements for the yovel year

1) We perform no agricultural work in Eretz Yisrael in the last year of every [seven](seven.html) years, that we consider all produce which grows (by itself) that year ownerless and allow the poor and the animals to take it;

2) We cancel all loans between [Jews](gen-jew.html) in this seventh year;

3) We treat the last year of every fifty years just like we treat a seventh year, abstaining from agricultural work etc.;

4) We free all [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves in this fiftieth year;

5) We return to the original owners all land which has been sold in the past [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) years.

Let’s look at the effect of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html) on us: they shatter the illusion we might otherwise begin to believe that the ‘reality’ of earning our bread is the *real* reality and that worshipping [HaShem](hashem.html) is a nice addendum but is not part of the hard-nosed real [world](worlds.html). There is perhaps nothing more hard-nosed and *real* than [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. Imagine if this were to happen next week, the government announces that all work is to stop for the next year, all [food](food.html) which grows is deemed ownerless, all debts are canceled, all land returns to the people who owned it half a century ago. Sound like a recipe for economic chaos and disaster? Exactly! By mandating this behavior, the Torah punctures our illusion of reality and shoves it aside before a more *real* reality: we are forced to recognize that we own what we do only by the generosity of [HaShem](hashem.html) and that the economy is completely instrumental; it is not at all important in any axiological sense, it is there only to facilitate our service of [HaShem](hashem.html).

This lesson is so important that it is followed by a series of warnings about what will happen if we do not keep the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel: the blessings and curses[[142]](#footnote-142). The fact that the blessings and curses is aimed primarily at reinforcing our observance of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel is supported by several features of the text. Most basically, the Torah’s placing the blessings and curses immediately after the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel intimates that the warnings apply most directly to these [mitzvot](cmds613.html).

The [connection](connection.html) between [shmita](shmita.html) / yovel and the blessings and curses is strengthened further by the ‘bookends’ with which the Torah surrounds the section on [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel and the blessings and curses. We note that the Torah begins the parasha with the news that what we are about to learn was delivered by [HaShem](hashem.html) to Moshe at [Sinai](stages.html). Then come the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. Then comes the, and just after the blessings and curses, the Torah places another bookend, reporting that what we have just read was what [HaShem](hashem.html) communicated to Moshe at [Sinai](stages.html). (Another such bookend appears at the end of Parashat BeHukotai, sealing Sefer Vayikra.) What the Torah may be hinting again by placing bookends before [shmita](shmita.html) / yovel and after the blessings and curses is that these warnings are aimed at neglect of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html) in particular.

Further and more explicit evidence of the [connection](connection.html) between the blessings and curses and [shmita](shmita.html) / yovel can be found in the text of the blessings and curses itself. As the blessings and curses begins, it sounds like a general warning about neglecting any of the [mitzvot](cmds613.html): (26:14-15) “If you do not listen to Me, and do not do all of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html); if you despise My [laws](law.html), and if your souls revile My statutes, by not doing all of My [mitzvot](cmds613.html), thereby abrogating My [covenant](covenant.html) . . . .” However, as we move toward the end of the blessings and curses, it seems clearer that the phrase “all of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html)“ refers not to the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) as a whole, but to “these [mitzvot](cmds613.html)“ which have just been discussed: [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. After the Torah describes how the rebellious [nation](nations.html) would be driven out of its land:

“*Then* the land will enjoy its Sabbaths [=[shmita](shmita.html) years], all the days of its abandonment, with your being in the land of your enemies; *then* the land will rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths! All the days of its abandonment, it shall rest the rests it did not rest during your Sabbaths [i.e., during the years that were supposed to have been [shmita](shmita.html) years], when you lived upon it!” (26:34-35).

“The land shall be abandoned of them, and it shall enjoy its Sabbaths in its abandonment from them, and they [the [nation](nations.html)] shall expiate for their [sin](sin.html), since they despised My statutes and their souls reviled My [laws](law.html)“ (26:43).

We commit [sins](sin.html), unnamed at the beginning of the blessings and curses, but by the end it seems apparent that the abandonment of the land and the consequent cessation of its cultivation through agriculture atones for the [sins](sin.html). The best conclusion: the [sins](sin.html) referred to by the blessings and curses are the neglect of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. Our not ceasing working the land during [shmita](shmita.html) requires our [exile](galuyot.html) from the land so that it can rest on the Sabbaths we have denied it; our not canceling loans during [shmita](shmita.html) requires that we become impoverished and powerless; our not returning land to its owners during yovel requires that we be denied ownership over even our own land; our not freeing [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves during yovel requires that we ourselves be taken captive and sold as slaves by those whom [HaShem](hashem.html) sends to conquer us; midah keneged midah, measure for measure.

**MEETING THE CHALLENGE:**

The Torah knows how difficult it is to keep [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. It is certainly a tall order to take a forced [sabbatical](shmita.html), to resist the urge to try to make the maximum profit by planting during this year, and to trust that [HaShem](hashem.html) will provide enough [food](food.html) to compensate for this year’s lack of harvest. It is a tremendous challenge to [forgive](forgive.html) all loans to [Jews](gen-jew.html) every [seven](seven.html) years. It is certainly no simple matter to release [one](one.html)‘s hold on [one](one.html)‘s real estate empire and return the parcels of land to their owners, and in a society which accepts slavery, it is almost ‘unrealistic’ to expect that slave owners will release their [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves in response to a Divine [command](cmds613.html). But this is what [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel demand.

The Torah prepares us for the challenge of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel in various ways. [One](one.html) way is the blessings and curses, a warning of the dire [consequences](conseq.html) of neglect: disease, destruction, disaster, death. Other indications that the Torah expects these [mitzvot](cmds613.html) to run into resistance, and other ways in which the Torah tries to strengthen us, are amply provided by the text itself. [First](one.html), the Torah anticipates our fear that if we do not plant in the seventh year, we will starve:

***Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:20-21*** *If you shall say, “What shall we* [*eat*](eating.html) *in the seventh year? After all, we shall not be planting or gathering our produce!” I shall* [*command*](cmds613.html) *My blessing for you in the* [*sixth*](six.html) *year, and it will provide produce for* [*three*](three.html) *years.*

Next, the Torah anticipates that canceling all loans to [Jews](gen-jew.html) will prove a very unpopular [mitzva](cmds613.html), and duly warns and encourages us:

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 15:7-10*** *If there shall be among you a pauper, from among your brothers, in* [*one*](one.html) *of your gates, in your land, which* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your God is giving to you--do not harden your* [*heart*](body.html) *and do not close your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *to your poor brother; instead, completely open your* [*hand*](fourteen.html) *to him and lend him enough to provide whatever he lacks. Beware lest there be an evil thought in your* [*heart*](body.html)*, saying, “The seventh year, the year of* [*shmita*](shmita.html) *[literally, ‘cancellation’] is approaching,” and your shall look ungenerously upon your poor brother, and you shall not give to him, and he shall call out against you to* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, and there will be* [*sin*](sin.html) *in you. You shall surely give to him, and let your* [*heart*](body.html) *not be bitter when you when you give him, for because of this thing* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, your God, shall bless you in all of your works and in all of your efforts.*

**HINTS FROM THE RAMBAM:**

The Rambam’s Hilkhot [shmita](shmita.html) ve-yovel ([Laws](law.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel) provides subtle but crucial confirmation that [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are [mitzvot](cmds613.html) that we accepted as a [nation](nations.html) somewhat reluctantly. Instead of warnings and exhortations, these indications are assumptions which are built into the halakhic system:

Chapter 1, [Law](law.html) 12 -- [One](one.html) who plants during the seventh year, whether purposely or accidentally [i.e., with or without the awareness that it is the seventh year and that planting is forbidden], must uproot what he has planted, for *the* [*Jews*](gen-jew.html) *are suspected by [*[*halacha*](walking.html)*] of violating the* [*laws*](law.html) *of the seventh year,* [!!!] and if we were to permit leaving the plant in the ground if it had been planted accidentally, those who had planted purposely would just claim to have planted accidentally.

Chapter 4, [Law](law.html) [two](two.html) -- All plants which grow wild during this year are rabbinically prohibited to be [eaten](eating.html). Why did they [the rabbis] decree that they be forbidden? Because of the sinners: so that [one](one.html) should not go and secretly plant grain and beans and garden vegetables in his field, and then when they sprout he would [eat](eating.html) them and claim that they grew wild; therefore they forbade all wild plants which sprout during the seventh year.[[143]](#footnote-143)

Chapter 9, [Law](law.html) 16 -- When Hillel the Elder saw that the people were refusing to lend money to each other and were transgressing the verse written in the Torah, “Beware lest there be an evil thought in your [heart](body.html) . . .”, he established for them the “pruzbul”, [a special contract] which would prevent the cancellation of their debts to each other . . . .

Clearly, [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are difficult [mitzvot](cmds613.html), and they require the Torah’s encouragement.

[TWO](two.html) SIDES OF A COIN:

We have seen that the blessings and curses appears closely connected to the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel (or, more precisely, the neglect of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html)) and that the Torah and [halacha](walking.html) take pains to encourage observance of these [mitzvot](cmds613.html) and prevent abuses of the [halacha](walking.html). But now that we have zeroed in these [mitzvot](cmds613.html) as the focus of the blessings and curses, we return to the question with which we began: what is the purpose of the blessings and curses? Does the Torah expect us to be frightened by these threats into properly keeping [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel? Perhaps threats work in some cultures (or in all cultures in some centuries), but from our perspective in the 20th century, and considering that most of us are products of Western culture to a significant degree, threats don’t usually have much effect. (If this is not obvious to you, take a look around and try to estimate what percentage of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people remain faithful to the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the Torah, despite the many warnings and exhortations the Torah offers.) Since the Torah is an eternal and Divinely authored document, we must be able to find significance in it in all [generations](toldot.html) and in all cultures. So what does message does the blessings and curses communicate to us?

Surprisingly, the blessings and curses may [teach](teacher.html) us the same lesson as [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel themselves attempt to [teach](teacher.html) us.

In the ‘normal’ course of life, we go about our business, doing our best to achieve some level of material comfort. The [world](worlds.html) either rewards our efforts or doesn’t, but either way, we are eternally and tragically prone to [two](two.html) enormous errors: 1) we begin to believe that making money and achieving domination over material and people are ultimate goals in their own right, and 2) we begin to believe that credit for our success or failure (but particularly our success) goes entirely to us. [Shmita](shmita.html) and yovel come to prevent or correct these errors: completely interrupting the economy with a [mitzva](cmds613.html) which arrives every few years has a nasty way of sucking all of the wind out of the pursuit of wealth and reminding us that in any [event](feasts.html) we are not in control of the system.

But there is another option. [Shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are only [one](one.html) way of helping us maintain our awareness of these truths and therefore forcing us to look outside wealth and power to find the goals of our lives. Although [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are obligatory, in some sense, they are a ‘voluntary’ way of reminding ourselves of where our ultimate attention should be directed. If we choose to reject [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel and insist that the economy (and our pursuit of wealth and power) will march on no matter what, [HaShem](hashem.html) has other options for reminding us of these truths. We can either choose to puncture the economic facade every [seven](seven.html) years of our own volition, shattering our own mounting illusions and taming our growing greed, or [HaShem](hashem.html) will do the puncturing for us. Either way, we will remain inescapably aware of what [HaShem](hashem.html) [wants](needs.html) us to [know](daat.html), but we get to choose whether to take the ‘bitter pill’ ourselves, or have our figurative national limbs amputated by [plague](plagues.html), invasion, destruction, [exile](galuyot.html), and oppression.

That this is [one](one.html) of the deeper meanings of the blessings and curses is hinted by the Torah and by the Rambam’s interpretation of it. The blessings and curses uses the word “keri” several times to describe the unacceptable behavior of the [Jews](gen-jew.html) in rejecting [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel; [HaShem](hashem.html) promises powerful retribution. But, amazingly, we still have the potential to miss the point. Apparently, *nothing* can guarantee that someone who refuses to see [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s control of the [world](worlds.html) will suddenly open his [eyes](body.html). [Shmita](shmita.html) and yovel are good options, but we can choose to ignore them. Destruction and punishment are more highly aggressive options, but they too can fail at their task if we do not see our misfortune as [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s “plan B” for getting us to look away from the material [world](worlds.html) and ourselves and toward Him and His goals for us:

**Rambam,** [**Laws**](law.html) **of Fast Days, Chapter 1:**

[Law](law.html) 1 -- It is a positive biblical [command](cmds613.html) to [cry](mashal.html) out and to blow with trumpets over every crisis which comes upon the [community](community.html) .

[Law](law.html) [two](two.html) -- This practice is among the paths of repentance, for when a crisis comes and they [cry](mashal.html) out over it and blow the trumpets, all will [know](daat.html) that it is because of their evil deeds that evil has befallen them . . . and this will cause them to [try to] remove the crisis from upon them.

[Law](law.html) 3 -- But if they do not [cry](mashal.html) out and blow, and instead say, “This disaster which has occurred to us is just the way of the [world](worlds.html),” “This crisis simply happened by coincidence,” this is the way of callousness, and causes them to maintain their evil ways, and then the crisis will grow into further crises, as it says in the Torah [in the blessings and curses in our parasha], “You have behaved with Me as if all is ‘keri’ [happenstance], so I shall behave with you with wrathful keri [happenstance],” meaning, “If I bring upon you a crisis to make you repent, if you then say that it is a meaningless coincidence, I will add fury to that occurrence [and punish you further].”

As the blessings and curses begins, [HaShem](hashem.html) warns that He will punish us for ignoring [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel; according to the interpretation we have been developing, the point is not so much to punish us as to provide a less friendly way of achieving what [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel were supposed to achieve (26:14-17). Our planting will yield nothing (as our voluntary non-planting during [shmita](shmita.html) should have done) and our security will be destroyed by diseases which blind and confuse us. Our sense of control and mastery will be shattered by defeat at the [hands](fourteen.html) of our enemies. If we still do not respond, we are punished further (18-20): [HaShem](hashem.html) will “smash the pride of your power”; He will turn the sky and ground into unyielding metal, and our attempts to violate [shmita](shmita.html) will amount to nothing. At this point the Torah introduces the word ‘keri’: “If you behave with Me with keri” (21), if you ascribe these disasters to global warming or acid rain or ozone depletion or any other cause other natural process unconnected with the theological lesson of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel, “I will add to your suffering [seven](seven.html) times for your [sin](sin.html).” Because we refused to make our [food](food.html) available to the animal as commanded during [shmita](shmita.html), the animals will help make us suffer and topple the sense of domination and order we have imposed on the [world](worlds.html). [HaShem](hashem.html) sarcastically asserts that He will respond to our claim of ‘keri’ with more of that ‘keri’; if we believe it is all just part of the natural process, then we will just keep getting more of that ‘natural process’ until it dawns on us to wonder whether something is amiss. Eventually, we are to be [exiled](galuyot.html), and then “the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths.” Again, [HaShem](hashem.html) speaks with bitter sarcasm: if we refuse to accept [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel, and if we reject our suffering’s meaning, then finally at least the unthinking *land* will understand and will celebrate [shmita](shmita.html) when there is no [one](one.html) left to pick up a shovel and violate the [Sabbath](sabbath.html) of the land.

In this light, the blessings we find just before the blessings and curses, which are promised to us if we keep [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel, also take on [new](new.html) meaning. These blessings are not simply rewards for good behavior and obedience, they are in fact only possible if we keep [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel. We can be allowed to enjoy material success, military victory, personal fertility, and other blessings only if we keep [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel because otherwise these blessings begin to compete with [HaShem](hashem.html) for our attention. Only if we ‘voluntarily’ impose [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel on ourselves and remind ourselves of the ultimate goals to which we are to dedicate ourselves can we be trusted to properly interpret the meaning of our success.

The end of the blessings and curses promises that no matter how bad things get, [HaShem](hashem.html) will never abandon us completely. But this is comforting only now that we have seen the blessings and curses in empirical historical Technicolor. In our century, now that [HaShem](hashem.html) has shown us a smile of gracious generosity, may we think creatively and seriously to find personal ways to remind ourselves of our ultimate goals and to prevent ourselves from being blinded by greed and egotism.

# IX. Questions[[144]](#footnote-144)

**Question**: The Torah [commands](cmds613.html), “You shall sanctify the fiftieth year (Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10).” How is this done?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10 - At the beginning of the year the Beit Din Gadol declares, “This year is Kadosh.”

**Question**: Where does the yovel year get its [name](name.html)?

**Answer:** Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10 - From the sounding of the [shofar](shofar.html). A ram’s [horn](shofar.html) is called a yovel.

**Question**: Which [two](two.html) “returns” are announced by the [shofar](shofar.html) during yovel?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:10 - The return of the land to its original owner, and the “return” ([freedom](freedom.html)) of the slave from slavery

**Question**: In verse Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:14, to what does “al tonu” (don’t harm) refer?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:14 - “Ona’as mamon”, harming someone financially.

**Question**: In verse Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:17, to what does “don’t harm” refer?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:17 harming someone with words.

**Question**: After selling an ancestral field, when can [one](one.html) [redeem](redemption.html) it?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:24 - Any [time](time.html) after [two](two.html) years following the sale until yovel. In the beginning of yovel it returns to the family automatically.

**Question**: If a home in a walled [city](city.html) is sold, when can it be [redeemed](redemption.html)?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:29 - Only within the [first](one.html) year after the sale. Afterwards, even in yovel it does not return.

**Question**: After selling a home in a [city](city.html) without walls, when can [one](one.html) [redeem](redemption.html) it?

**Answer**: Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:31 - Anytime until yovel, when it returns automatically.

**Question**: On the [third](three.html) day of [creation](bara.html), the plants only grew up to the surface of the ground. On the [sixth](six.html) day, after [Adam](adam.html) was created, he [prayed](prayer.html) for rain and plants began to appear on the earth’s surface. Why on the [third](three.html) day did they only grow up to the surface and not further?

**Answer**: The [first](one.html) day of [creation](bara.html) was the 25th of [Elul](elul.html), with man being created on [Rosh Hashana](teruah.html)h, the [first](one.html) of [Tishri](feasts.html)[[145]](#footnote-145). According to the [Midrash](orallaw.html)[[146]](#footnote-146), “the Torah preceded the [world](worlds.html) by 2000 years.” In accordance with the Torah [command](cmds613.html) designating every fiftieth year to be yovel (the jubilee year, in which farmers in Israel are forbidden to work the land), the 2000th year was the fortieth yovel year. Thus, the [first](one.html) [five](five.html) days of [creation](bara.html) were therefore the last [five](five.html) days of the fortieth yovel year.

“He tells His words to [Yaakov](israelja.html), His [laws](law.html) and His judgments to Israel” (Tehillim ([Psalms](psalms1.html)) 147:19). Our sages explain this to mean that whatever [HaShem](hashem.html) [commands](cmds613.html) us to do in the Torah it is because He Himself “fulfills” the deed as well (Shemot Rabbah 30:9). To show how He, too, observes the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of yovel, [HaShem](hashem.html) created the plants on the [third](three.html) day, but didn’t allow them to penetrate the ground as it was still the yovel year. On the [sixth](six.html) day of [creation](bara.html), the [first](one.html) day of the [new](new.html) year following the yovel, when farmers would once again be allowed to work their fields, [HaShem](hashem.html) answered [Adam](adam.html)‘s [prayers](prayer.html) for rain and made the plants emerge and [flower](flower.html) on earth.

If [one](one.html) makes a condition that a sale would not be revoked on the yovel, is the sale revoked at the [time](time.html) of the yovel?[[147]](#footnote-147) According to the [Gemara](orallaw.html), this condition is invalid.

# X. Yovel in the Mishneh Torah

Translation: Mishneh Torah Hilchot [Shmita](shmita.html) v’yovel Chapter 10.

It is a positive [commandment](cmds613.html) to count years, [seven](seven.html) by [seven](seven.html), and to sanctify the fiftieth year, as it is written “And you shall count for yourself [seven](seven.html) sabbaths of years... and you shall sanctify the fiftiethyear” (Leviticus 25:8). And these [two](two.html) [commandments](cmds613.html) are the responsibility of the Great Court (the Sanhedrin) alone. And from when did they start to count? They started [fourteen](fourteen.html) years after entering the land, as it is written “For [six](six.html) years you shall plant your fields, and for [six](six.html) years you shall prune your vineyard” (Leviticus 25:3), when every person should [know](daat.html) their land. And they spent [seven](seven.html) years conquering the land, and [seven](seven.html) years in dividing it.

We see from this that in the year 2503 from the [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) after the [birth](thebirth.html) of [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon, which is the 2nd year of [creation](bara.html), they began to count. And they did the year 2510 from [creation](bara.html), which is the 21st year from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael, [Shmita](shmita.html). And they counted [seven](seven.html) [Shmita](shmita.html) years and sanctified the fiftiethyear, which was the 64th year from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael.

Am Yisrael counted seventeen yovels, from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael to the [time](time.html) they left, and the year they left, in which the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed, was the year after [Shmita](shmita.html), and year [thirty-six](thirtysix.html) of the yovel, for the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) stood 410 years.

And due to the destruction of the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), this count ceased, for the land was nullified. And the land remained destroyed, 70 years; and the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was built, and stood 420 years. And in the 7th year from its construction, Ezra came up to Eretz Yisrael, and that is the Bi’ah Shniyah, and from this year a [new](new.html) count began. And they made the 13th year of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) [Shmita](shmita.html), and they counted [seven](seven.html) [Shmita](shmita.html) years and sanctified the fiftiethyear, even though there was no yovel during the [time](time.html) of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), they would count it in order to sanctify the [Shmita](shmita.html) years.

We see from this that the year that the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed, whose start is from [Tishri](feasts.html) after the destruction by [two](two.html) months, for it is from [Tishri](feasts.html) that we count [Shmita](shmita.html) and yovel, that year was the year after [Shmita](shmita.html), and year [fifteen](fifteen.html) of the 9th yovel.

And according to this calculation, this year, which is 1107 of the Destruction, which is 1487 to the count of Shtarot, which is 4936 to [Creation](bara.html), is a [Shmita](shmita.html) year, and it is year 21 from the yovel.

However, all of the Geonim said that it is a tradition in their [hands](fourteen.html), from [one](one.html) [generation](toldot.html) to the next, that they only counted [Shmita](shmita.html) during the [seventy](seventy.html) years between the Destruction of the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) and the Building of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), without yovel, and thus it is since it was destroyed this last [time](time.html), we don’t count the fiftiethyear, but rather just every [seven](seven.html) years alone, from the beginning of the year of the Destruction. And thus is the conclusion from the [Talmud](orallaw.html) Avodah Zarah, according to this calculation, which is a tradition.

And the year of [Shmita](shmita.html) is well [known](daat.html) by the Geonim and the people of Eretz Yisrael, and all of them counted only from the years of the Destruction, and removing the remainders of [seven](seven.html). And according to this calculation, this year which is 1107 to the Destruction, is the year after [Shmita](shmita.html). And this is what we rely on, and according to this calculation we [teach](teacher.html) for the matter of Maaser, and [Shmita](shmita.html), and Shmitat Kesafim, for the tradition and the deed are great pillars for instruction, and upon them it is proper to depend.

The yovel year is not included in the count of the years, but rather the 49th year is [Shmita](shmita.html), the fiftiethyear is yovel, and the 51st year is the beginning of the [seven](seven.html) year [cycle](cycles.html) of [Shmita](shmita.html). And thus it is in every yovel [cycle](cycles.html).

Since the [tribes](tribes.html) of Reuven, Gad, and the half [tribe](tribes.html) of Menashe were [exiled](galuyot.html), the yovels have been cancelled, as it is said “And you shall proclaim [freedom](freedom.html) in the land, to all its inhabitants” (Vayikra 25:10), in a [time](time.html) that all of its inhabitants are upon it. And this is also when they are not mixed [tribe](tribes.html) amongst [tribe](tribes.html), but rather that they are all settled properly.

At the [time](time.html) that the yovel is observed in the Land (of Israel), it is observed outside of the Land (of Israel), as it says “it is yovel” (Vayikra 25:10, 11, 12), in every place, regardless of whether or not the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) is [standing](mashal.html). And at the [time](time.html) that the yovel is observed, so too are the [laws](law.html) of the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) slave, the [laws](law.html) of the houses of walled cities, the [laws](law.html) of sanctified fields, the [laws](law.html) of the field of [inheritance](inherit.html), and it is possible to receive a [Ger](aliens.html) Toshav, and [Shmita](shmita.html) is observed in the Land (of Israel), and the cancellation of debts in every place, from the Torah.

And at the [time](time.html) that the yovel is not observed, the ([laws](law.html) of the) [Hebrew](hebrew.html) slave, and not the houses of walled cities, and not the field of [inheritance](inherit.html), and not the sanctified field, and it is not possible to accept a [Ger](aliens.html) Toshav, and [Shmita](shmita.html) is observed from their words (i.e. from rabbinical ordinance), and thus the cancellation of debts is observed everywhere from their words as we have explained.

It is a positive [mitzvah](cmds613.html) to blow the [shofar](shofar.html) on the 10th of [Tishri](feasts.html) in the yovel year. And this [mitzvah](cmds613.html) is given over to the Beit Din [first](one.html), and every individual is required to blow (as well), as it is said “Pass a [shofar](shofar.html)“ (Vayikra 25:9), and (we) blow the [shofar](shofar.html) [nine](nine.html) times, like it is blown on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html), and it is passed through the entire area of Israel.

The [shofar](shofar.html) of yovel and of [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) are the same in every way, and they are the same regarding the manner of blowing, but in yovel, it is blown in a Beit Din that sanctified the month or in a Beit Din that did not sanctify the month. And every individual is required to blow as long as the Beit Din is still [sitting](mashal.html), and not (necessarily) in front of the Beit Din. And on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) which falls on [Shabbat](sabbath.html), they would not blow except at a Beit Din that sanctified the month, and not every individual blows, except in front of the Beit Din.

[Three](three.html) things delay in the yovel: Blowing (of the [shofar](shofar.html)), sending (freeing) the servants, and the return of fields to their owners, which is what is called the release of lands. From [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) until [Yom Kippur](kippur.html), the slaves would not go to their homes, and they would not serve their masters, and fields would not return to their owners, but rather the slaves are [eating](eating.html) and drinking and rejoicing, and their crowns are on their heads. And when [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) arrives, the Beit Din blows the [shofar](shofar.html), and the slaves go to their homes, and the fields return to their owners.

The [law](law.html) of yovel with the rest of the land and the [law](law.html) of [Shmita](shmita.html) are equal in every way. Everything that is forbidden in [Shmita](shmita.html) from the work of the land is forbidden in yovel, and everything that is allowed in [Shmita](shmita.html) is allowed in yovel. And all the labors for which [one](one.html) would receive lashes during [Shmita](shmita.html), [one](one.html) receives lashes (for those offenses) in yovel, and the [law](law.html) of the fruits of yovel in [eating](eating.html) and selling and in burning are like the fruits of [Shmita](shmita.html) in every way.

And in this way [Shmita](shmita.html) is more than yovel, in that [Shmita](shmita.html) causes the cancellation of debts, and yovel does not cancel debts. And yovel is more than [Shmita](shmita.html) in that yovel frees slaves and releases land. And this is the [law](law.html) of the sale of fields spoken of in the Torah, and this is a positive [mitzvah](cmds613.html), as it is said “[redemption](redemption.html) you shall give to the land” (Vayikra 25:24). Yovel releases land at its beginning, and [Shmita](shmita.html) doesn’t cancel debts but at its end, as we have explained.

# XI. Selected Essays

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

VIRTUAL BEIT [MIDRASH](orallaw.html) PROJECT (VBM) \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

[ROSH HASHANA](teruah.html)

## Menachem Leibtag

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

To our surprise, Chumash appears to have left out the [two](two.html) primary aspects of the [holiday](festival.html) which we call [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html):

\* That it marks the beginning of the [NEW](new.html) YEAR, and

\* That it is a Day of Judgment. This shiur attempts to uncover them.

INTRODUCTION

Chumash contains only [two](two.html) brief and ambiguous references to [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html):

1) In Parshat Emor: “On the SEVENTH month, on the [first](one.html) day of that month, you shall have a day of rest - ZICHRON TRU’AH...” (Vayikra 23:23-25)

2) In Parshat Pinchas: “On the SEVENTH month ... You shall have a [YOM TERUAH](teruah.html)...”. (Bamidbar 29:1-6)

In both of these Parshiot, the Torah [commands](cmds613.html) us to observe a [holiday](festival.html) on the [first](one.html) day of the SEVENTH month without even hinting as to why this day or month is special. Furthermore, the Torah tells us to observe this day as a ZICHRON TRU’AH, or YOM TRU’AH, without explaining precisely what these phrases mean! How does the SEVENTH month (‘MID-year’) become the [NEW](new.html) year? How does [YOM TERUAH](teruah.html) become a day of judgment?

To answer these questions, we must [first](one.html) explain the biblical concept of a ‘year’.

THE BIBLICAL YEAR

Although it is commonly assumed that [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) marks the anniversary of [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s [creation](bara.html) of the [world](worlds.html), this specific issue is a controversy in the [Talmud](orallaw.html) between R’ Eliezer and R’ Yehoshua[[148]](#footnote-148). According to R’ Yehoshua, who claims that the [world](worlds.html) was created in [Nisan](feasts.html) (the [first](one.html) month), is there nothing special about the [first](one.html) of [Tishri](feasts.html) (the seventh month)? And even according to R’ Eliezer, who claims that the [world](worlds.html) was created in [Tishri](feasts.html), why should the anniversary of the [Creation](bara.html) provoke a yearly ‘Day of Judgment’?

In Chumash itself, we find [TWO](two.html) yearly [cycles](cycles.html). The [cycle](cycles.html) which begins in [Nisan](feasts.html) is best [known](daat.html), for the Torah explicitly [commands](cmds613.html) us to count all of the months from [Nisan](feasts.html) (“parshat ha’chodesh”/ see Shemot 12:1-2). However, the [cycle](cycles.html) which begins in [Tishri](feasts.html) is less well [known](daat.html), for it is only implicit. Nonetheless, a quick analysis of several [mitzvot](cmds613.html) and pesukim can show how obvious it really is. The most obvious proof is from the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of “[shmita](shmita.html)“: “[Six](six.html) YEARS you shall plant your fields... and [gather](gather.html) your produce, but on the seventh YEAR the land shall have complete rest... (Vayikra 25:3-5)

Although the Torah does not specify the precise [time](time.html) of year when this [cycle](cycles.html) begins, it can be inferred from the [law](law.html) of the “yovel” year which follows: “You shall count [seven](seven.html) [cycles](cycles.html) of [seven](seven.html) years... then you shall blow the [shofar](shofar.html) on the SEVENTH MONTH, on the tenth day of the month... (Vayikra 25:8-9)

If the yovel year begins on the SEVENTH MONTH, then obviously the entire [shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html) must begin in the SEVENTH month. In addition to this textual proof, there is a very logical reason why the [shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html) should begin in the SEVENTH month. As we [know](daat.html), the [mitzvah](cmds613.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) relates to planting and harvesting [one](one.html)‘s field. Since the fall season (i.e. [Tishri](feasts.html)) marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the next year’s planting season, it makes sense that the [shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html) begin in [Tishri](feasts.html). In other words, in addition to the yearly [cycle](cycles.html) which begins in [Nisan](feasts.html), and relates to the [Exodus](exodus.html) and our national [redemption](redemption.html), another yearly [cycle](cycles.html) exists which begins in [Tishri](feasts.html) and relates to the natural [cycle](cycles.html) of the agricultural year. Proof of this ‘agricultural [cycle](cycles.html)‘ is found in the Torah’s presentation of the “shalosh regalim”: “[Three](three.html) times a year you shall hold a [festival](festival.html) for Me: Observe chag HaMatzot... in the spring... chag ha’katzir, when you [first](one.html) reap your grain harvest, and chag ha’asif - AT THE END OF THE YEAR - when you [GATHER](gather.html) YOUR PRODUCE (fruit harvest) from the fields...” (Shemot 23:14-16)

Here, the Torah specifically states that the harvest [holiday](festival.html), better [known](daat.html) as [Succoth](succoth.html), is the END OF THE YEAR. [Parshat Emor states specifically that this [holiday](festival.html) is to be celebrated in the SEVENTH month. (See Vayikra 23:39!)] If the previous year ends in [Tishri](feasts.html), the [new](new.html) year must also begin in [Tishri](feasts.html).

Our final proof is found in the Torah’s presentation of the [mitzvah](cmds613.html) of [HAKHEL](hakhel.html), which [connects](connection.html) both the [shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html) and [Succoth](succoth.html) to the END OF THE YEAR: “At the END of every [seven](seven.html) years, at the turn of the [SHMITA](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html), on CHAG HA’[SUCCOTH](succoth.html)... you shall read this Torah...” (Devarim 31:10-11)

Once again we find that the Torah considers the [time](time.html) of year of [Succoth](succoth.html) as the end of the agricultural year. Thus far, we have proven that the SEVENTH month is indeed the beginning of the [NEW](new.html) YEAR, i.e. the agricultural [new](new.html) year. Based on this understanding, we can now explain why it becomes a day of judgment.

RAIN - AND THE [NEW](new.html) YEAR Before we continue, we must review the different [stages](stages.html) of the agricultural year in the [Land of Israel](city.html): \* The planting season begins during the autumn months of Cheshvan & [Kislev](feasts.html), continuing into the winter. [Recall, that in the [Land of Israel](city.html), it only [rains](rains.html) between [Succoth](succoth.html) and [Pesach](passover.html).] \* The grain harvest begins in the spring with the barley harvest in [Nisan](feasts.html) and the wheat harvest in [Iyar](feasts.html) and [Sivan](feasts.html).

\* The fruit harvest begins in the summer months of [Tammuz](feasts.html) and [Av](feasts.html), and continues until [Tishri](feasts.html).

With this in mind, we can proceed. Due to the nature of this [cycle](cycles.html), the ultimate success of the agricultural year hinges on the amount of RAIN that falls in the months of Cheshvan and [Kislev](feasts.html) (late autumn and early winter). This early rainy season is so critical that the [first](one.html) [three](three.html) chapters of Mesechet Taanit describe in detail the public fasts which are declared should the [first](one.html) rain be only a few weeks late! Should more than a month go by without rain, more severe public fasts are declared, [SIX](six.html) Berachot are added to “shmoneh esray” - including ZICHRONOT AND SHOFROT, similar to the Berachot added on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html)! [I recommend that you scan through the mishnayot of Mesechet Taanit in order to appreciate this point.]

It is not coincidental that on these fast days we daven as on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html). As mentioned above, the month of [Tishri](feasts.html) marks the beginning of the [new](new.html) agricultural year, and thus the forthcoming rainy season. It is precisely this rainy season which DETERMINES THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE YEAR. Insufficient rain in the autumn leads to thirst, drought, [famine](famine.html), and disease in the spring and summer. Thus, from nature’s perspective, it is the early rainy season which determines ‘who will live and who will die, who by thirst and who by [famine](famine.html), who by war and who by disease...’. Due to the importance of this early rain, man will do everything in his power to make sure that indeed it will fall. In ancient Canaan, people believed that worshiping a pantheon of rain and fertility gods such as Baal and Asheyra would secure adequate rain. Modern man, on the other [hand](fourteen.html), believes that rainfall is simply determined by chance, according to the whims of nature. Chumash tells us exactly the opposite - the rain that falls in the [land of Israel](city.html) is a DIRECT function of [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s “hashgacha” (providence). “For the land which you are about to enter is NOT like the land of Egypt [which receives a constant water supply from the Nile] ... the land which you are about to possess [Eretz Yisrael] contains hills and valleys, [there] you will drink water from the RAIN FROM [HEAVEN](heaven.html) (matar ha’shamayim)...” (Devarim 11:10-11)

After stating the land’s DEPENDENCE on RAIN FROM [HEAVEN](heaven.html) for its water supply, the Torah informs us that God Himself oversees this rainfall: “It is a land which the Lord your God LOOKS AFTER [doresh otah], always He keeps HIS EYE on it, from - REISHIT HaShana - the year’s beginning to the year’s end.” (Devarim 11:12) [See previous shiur on Parshat Ekev.]

Interestingly enough, this is the only [time](time.html) in Chumash where we find the [name](name.html) [ROSH HASHANA](teruah.html) (=REISHIT HASHANA); precisely in the context of the rainy season, at the start of the agricultural year!

This theme develops in the next parsha - “v’haya im shmoa” (the second parsha of daily kriyat [shema](shema.html)!): “Should you listen to my [mitzvot](cmds613.html)... then I will grant the RAIN for you IN SEASON (lit. at the proper [time](time.html)) -’YOREH u’MALKOSH’ - the early rain and the late rain... BEWARE, should you go astray... then God will shut the [heavens](heaven.html) so that there WILL BE NO RAIN...” (Devarim 11:13-16)

Yet again, we find that the amount of rain which falls, especially during the critical season, is a DIRECT function of [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s “hashgacha”, and thus, a direct result of our religious behavior.

Based on this interpretation, the biblical importance of celebrating a [holiday](festival.html) on the [first](one.html) day of [Tishri](feasts.html) now becomes clear. As we anticipate the forthcoming agricultural year and its critical rainy season, we dedicate a special day in which we abstain from work (“shabbaton”/ Vayikra 23:23) in order to [gather](gather.html) together (“mikra kodesh”) and proclaim [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s DOMINION over the entire [Creation](bara.html). Based on our deeds, and our willingness to serve Him, He will determine the fate of the forthcoming year. Our fate lies in HIS [hands](fourteen.html), NOT in the [hands](fourteen.html) of nature or any other god. [We therefore dedicate the month of [Elul](elul.html) to repentance, in preparation for this day, in order to prove to [HaShem](hashem.html) that we are indeed worthy of a good judgment (according to the guidelines of parshat “v’haya im shmoa”).]

Up until this point, we have uncovered the biblical reason why the SEVENTH month is considered the beginning of a [NEW](new.html) year and a [time](time.html) of judgment. In anticipation of the rainy season and its influence on the fate of the agricultural year, the Torah [commands](cmds613.html) Bnei Yisrael to set aside a special day in which we must recognize that the fate of the forthcoming year will be determined by [HaShem](hashem.html). With this background, we can better appreciate the significance of the special [mitzva](cmds613.html) which the Torah [commands](cmds613.html) us to keep on this day: 1) ZICHRON TRU’AH (in Parshat Emor) 2) YOM TRU’AH (in Parshat Pinchas) Why does the Torah [command](cmds613.html) us to sound a TRU’AH specifically on this day?

“YOM TRU’AH” IN THE BIBLE Today, a [shofar](shofar.html) is considered a ‘religious artifact’, usually purchased at the local “sforim” store or Judaica shop. Back in the [time](time.html) of the Bible, things were a little different. Then, a [shofar](shofar.html) would have been sold by the local ‘[arms](body.html) dealer’, for it was used as the primary communications tool in war. Military commanders and officers used the [shofar](shofar.html) to communicate important signals to their troops (e.g. Gidon and his 300 men / Shoftim 7:16-20). Similarly, civil defense personnel used the [shofar](shofar.html) to warn civilians of possible [attack](attacks.html) and to mobilize reserves (see Amos 3:6). Therefore, in a manner similar to [one](one.html)‘s gut reaction to the sound of a siren today, the sound of a teruah in biblical times meant immediate danger. [Hearing](mashal.html) that sound was associated with going to battle or being under [attack](attacks.html), i.e. a situation where [one](one.html)‘s life is on the line. For example, the prophet Tzfania uses the phrase YOM [SHOFAR](shofar.html) U’TRU’AH to describe a situation of war and terrible destruction. “At that [time](time.html) [on the YOM [HASHEM](hashem.html)], I will search [Yerushalayim](city.html) with candles and I will punish the men... who say to themselves ‘GOD DOES NOT REWARD NOR DOES HE PUNISH’ [i.e. no hashgacha!]... The great day of the Lord is approaching... it is bitter, there a warrior shrieks. That day shall be a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress (“tzarah u’mtzuka”), a day of calamity and desolation...., YOM [SHOFAR](shofar.html) U’TRU’AH ...” (Tzfania 1:12-16)

According to this pasuk, “[yom teruah](teruah.html)“ and “yom [shofar](shofar.html)“ clearly imply a day of imminent danger and war.

The prophet Amos also refers to the [shofar](shofar.html) in a similar context: “Should a [shofar](shofar.html) be sounded in the town, would its people not be frightened (ye’cheradu)? Could misfortune come to a town if God had not caused it?” (see Amos 3:6 and its context) [See also Yoel 2:1-3,11-14 & 2:15-17, & Yirmiyahu 4:3-8.]

Therefore, the Torah instructs us to make a “[yom teruah](teruah.html)“ on the [first](one.html) day of the seventh month in order to create an atmosphere which simulates the tension and fear of war. We are supposed to feel on this day, just as we would on a day of war - that our lives are truly in danger. This explains “[yom teruah](teruah.html)“. What is the meaning of “zichron teruah”?

ZICHRON TRU’AH Luckily, there is a pasuk in Parshat Bha’alotcha which ties together these [two](two.html) words: “Should war take place in your land...- v’HA’RAY’O’TEM - you must sound a TRU’AH with the trumpet (b’chatzotzrot), v’NIZ’KAR’TEM - and you will be REMEMBERED by the Lord your [HaShem](hashem.html), and He will [save](salvation.html) you from your enemies.” (Bamidbar 10:9)

Should war break out, [HaShem](hashem.html) [commands](cmds613.html) us to sound a TRU’AH in [prayer](prayer.html) to [HaShem](hashem.html) - in anticipation of that war. In doing so, we are recognizing [HaShem](hashem.html)‘s hashgacha over the outcome of the forthcoming battle, and thus show Him that we deserve His special providence. This parallels the situation on the [first](one.html) of [Tishri](feasts.html). In anticipation of the forthcoming rainy reason, we must sound a TRU’AH in order to remind ourselves that [HaShem](hashem.html) will determine the fate of the year and ask for His special providence. Therefore, this day is not only a YOM TRU’AH - a day of AWE on which our lives are judged, but also a ZICHRON TRU’AH - a day on which we must sound the [shofar](shofar.html) in order that [HaShem](hashem.html) will REMEMBER us.

[SHOFAR](shofar.html) SHEL AYIL Even though [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) is commonly referred to as the [JEWISH](gen-jew.html) [New](new.html) Year, it is actually the [NEW](new.html) YEAR for ALL mankind. Nonetheless, Am Yisrael is [first](one.html) to declare God’s kingdom on this day, for it is our national duty to proclaim His [Name](name.html). As we begin the year by sounding the TRU’AH, we specifically use a [shofar](shofar.html) from an “ayil” (a ram) - the symbol of “akeidat [Yitzchak](isaac.html)“, a testimony of our total devotion to [HaShem](hashem.html). In doing so, we remind the Almighty of His choice of [Avraham](avraham.html) Avinu and His special relationship with his children, in order that He NOT judge us like any other [nation](nations.html); but rather as His own special [Nation](nations.html).

[Shabbat](sabbath.html) shalom & shana tova, Menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. In Chodesh [Tishri](feasts.html), the ‘seventh’ month, we find many “chagim” which relate to nature, especially the ‘[seven](seven.html)‘ days of [Succoth](succoth.html) marking the culmination of harvest season of the previous year. We also find [three](three.html) days of ‘Judgment’, [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html)h, [Yom Kippur](kippur.html), and [Shemini Atzeret](shemini.html).

1. Compare the [korban](korbanot.html) musaf of each of these [three](three.html) chagim. ([one](one.html) par, [one](one.html) ayil, [seven](seven.html) kvasim and [one](one.html) seir l’chatat).

2. In what way are these chagim connected? Note the use of the word “zeh” and “ach” in Vayikra 23:23-40.

3. According to Chazal, when are we judged for water? How does this relate to the above shiur?

4. Relate this to the tefillah of the [Kohen](kohen.html) Gadol on [Yom Kippur](kippur.html)! (It’s in your Machzor at the end of the [seder](haggada.html) avodah.)

B. Why does [HaShem](hashem.html) need Am Yisrael to proclaim him king? The [one](one.html) thing [HaShem](hashem.html), k’vyachol, can NOT do is make himself king. A kingdom is meaningless if there are no subjects. A king becomes king when and because he is accepted by his subjects. Similarly, only when [HaShem](hashem.html) is accepted and recognized by man does He become Melech. 1. Relate this to our davening on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html).

2 Explain changing “E-l HaKadosh” - to “Melech Hakadosh” according to this concept.

C. The [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [New](new.html) Year, the [New](new.html) Year special and unique to Am Yisrael is actually [Nisan](feasts.html) - “HaChodesh Hazeh lechem Rosh Chodashim Rishon hu lachem lchodshei HaShana” (Shemot 12:1-2). Yitzhak Mitzrayim (which took place in [Nisan](feasts.html)) marks the [birth](thebirth.html) of the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [Nation](nations.html).

1. What aspects of [Pesach](passover.html) and Chag HaMatzot emphasize that we are a special [nation](nations.html), different than other [nations](nations.html).

2. What aspect of the chagim in [Tishri](feasts.html), relate to all mankind. (Note 70 parim on [Succoth](succoth.html) etc. - see also Zechariah chap 14)

D. TKI’AH / TRU’AH - AC/DC A short explanation concerning the biblical difference between TKI’AH and TRU’AH. TKI’AH implies a straight note (like DC current), while TRU’AH implies an oscillating - up & down - note (like AC current). A TKI’AH usually indicates a public rejoicing or an ‘all clear signal’, while a TRU’AH usually indicates a warning of some sort. [Those of you who were in Israel during the Gulf War [know](daat.html) what I am referring to.] This distinction is found in Parshat Bha’alotcha in [connection](connection.html) to the [mitzvah](cmds613.html) of “chatzotzrot” (trumpets). 1. Read Bamidbar 10:1-10. Note that according to that parsha, the “tekiah” was used as a signal for gathering the [camp](stages.html) and happy occasions (10:3-4,7,10), while the “teruah” was used as a signal to prepare for [travel](mashal.html) in military formation and war (10:5-6,9). Relate this to the above shiur, see Ramban & Ibn Ezra.

E. It seems strange that the yovel year should begin on [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) (see Vayikra 25:8-10). It should begin on the [first](one.html) of [Tishri](feasts.html) - Rosh Ha’shana. 1. Relate the [laws](law.html) of yovel to the [laws](law.html) of [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) to find a thematic [connection](connection.html) between them. Could this be the reason why [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) was chosen to proclaim the yovel? 2. Why do you think that Chazal learn many halachot of [shofar](shofar.html) and [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) from the [laws](law.html) of yovel? 3. See Mesechet [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) 33b-34a. Relate this [Gemara](orallaw.html) to the above shiur.

**\* \* \***

The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit [Midrash](orallaw.html)

Parshat HaShavua

Yeshivat Har Etzion

**PARASHAT BEHAR**

## Rav Reuven Taragin

**Behar-Bechukotai - The Ownership of God and Man**

I) Relationship to Sefer Vayikra

As opposed to the preceding parshiot which Moshe received in the ohel [moed](settimes.html), the [three](three.html) chapters of Behar and Bechukotai (25-27) were given “behar” - at [Sinai](stages.html) (25:1, 26:46, and 27:34). The placement of these Sinaitic chapters in Sefer Vayikra can be attributed to their [connection](connection.html) to themes of the Sefer. Ibn Ezra (25:1) parallels the [exile](galuyot.html) threatened as punishment for neglect of the “[shmita](shmita.html)“ ([sabbatical](shmita.html) year) [laws](law.html) (26:34-5) to the same fate linked in chapter 18 to improper marital practices. Additionally, Behar’s stress on interpersonal responsibility (25:6,10,14,39,49) mirrors that of Kedoshim’s list of “kedusha” [commandments](cmds613.html). (Chapter 19. See especially the parallel between verses 25:14,17 and verse 19:33.) Thirdly, Bechukotai’s discussion of sanctified objects in perek 27 can be seen as parallel to the voluntary offerings whose delineation opens Sefer Vayikra.

II) Interrelationship

The Ramban (27:1) addresses the interrelationship between the [three](three.html) chapters. Although all [three](three.html) chapters were of Sinaitic origin, verse 26:46 divides the [three](three.html) into [two](two.html) units. The [first](one.html) unit includes the [commandments](cmds613.html) of chapter 25 and the curses of chapter 26. The curses were included in the [commandment](cmds613.html) revelation because they share a cause and effect relationship with the [commandments](cmds613.html). The neglect of the [shmita](shmita.html) [laws](law.html), which open chapter 25, bring the curses (26:34-5). The second unit, chapter 27, deals with the [laws](law.html) of sanctified objects.

The Ramban points out that the [commandment](cmds613.html) sections of each unit ordain “yovel” (jubilee year) as the emancipation point for sold or sanctified objects. I think that a closer examination of the [commandments](cmds613.html) found in Behar and Bechukotai will considerably enhance our appreciation of the Ramban’s linkage.

III) Behar - Chapter 25

A) [Two](two.html) Themes

Although Behar opens with the [shmita](shmita.html) [laws](law.html) (25:1-8), verse 9 and onward focus on yovel. What’s more, [four](four.html) out of the [five](five.html) units that follow the completion of the [shmita](shmita.html) / yovel [laws](law.html) include a reference to yovel.

1. (25:25-28) The return of sold land.

2. (29-34) The return of sold houses.

3. (39-46) The emancipation of [Jewish](gen-jew.html)-owned slaves.

4. ((47-55) Foreign-owned slaves.

In all [four](four.html) cases, the yovel reverses the previous sale. The last verse of the parasha, “You shall observe my Shabbatot and fear my [Mikdash](mikdash.html), I am [HaShem](hashem.html)“ (26:2), seems to break the yovel theme of the rest of the parasha. Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni are so influenced by the centrality of the yovel theme that they explain this verse in reference to [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel as well, [shmita](shmita.html) being “[shabbat](sabbath.html) HaAretz,” and yovel being “kodesh” (25:10,12).

Yovel’s frequent appearance makes the presence of the chapter’s “yovelless” center unit (35-38), which prohibits usury, seem anomalous. I think the presence of the usury prohibition most clearly expresses a second theme present in the chapter - the special consideration [Jews](gen-jew.html) are expected to show their brethren. This theme is reflected not only by the usury prohibition, but also by the following unit ([fourth](four.html) overall) that contrasts the [laws](law.html) of [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves with those of [gentile](gen-jew.html) ones.

The unit of slavery (39-45) subdivides into [two](two.html) sub-units. Each sub-unit opens and closes with a matched phrase - the [first](one.html) by “he shall not be sold/work as a slave” (39,42) and the second by “you shall not work him ‘befarekh’ (with rigor/ to break his spirit).” (43,46) The [first](one.html) sub-unit mandates that a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave be freed at yovel; the second sub-unit contrasts this special dispensation with the management of a [gentile](gen-jew.html) slave who may/must be enslaved indefinitely. (See further [study](study.html) questions.)

The limitation of the period of a [Jew](gen-jew.html)‘s enslavement, as opposed to that of the average slave, most emphatically reflects the Torah’s insistence in the framework of the [two](two.html) sub-units that he basically is not to be treated as a slave. The unique, super-erogatory treatment of a [Jewish](gen-jew.html) slave is confirmed by the formulation of the concluding verse - “And your brothers - the sons of Israel - a man over his brother shall not rule with rigor (46).”

The unique [compassion](jonah.html) [Jews](gen-jew.html) must show [one](one.html) another already appears within the framework of the initial exposition of the yovel [laws](law.html). The Torah inserts [four](four.html) verses that deal with fraud (14-17) in an artificially created space between the presentation of the [shmita](shmita.html) / yovel [laws](law.html) (1-13) and their [justification](justification.html) and summary (18-24). Just as in the slave unit, the mini-unit blends into the context by using adherence to yovel [laws](law.html) as the example of a proper sale.

The Torah reinforces the relationship between the [third](three.html) and [fourth](four.html) units and the fraud mini-unit, all [three](three.html) based on [Jewish](gen-jew.html) social responsibility, by including the phrase - “And you shall fear your God” in all [three](three.html) of these units (17,36,43) and nowhere else in the chapter.

Thus, the [four](four.html) units that follow the [shmita](shmita.html)/yovel [laws](law.html) can be divided into [two](two.html) groups which make [two](two.html) independent points. The [first](one.html) [two](two.html) units deal with the sale of property and mandate that the sale not be final. The yovel [liberation](freedom.html) and the [redemption](redemption.html) possibility, the central component added by the [first](one.html) [two](two.html) units, express the limitation in [one](one.html)‘s ownership - “the land may not be sold forever for the land is mine; you are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all [inheritance](inherit.html) land you shall grant [redemption](redemption.html) (23-4).” The second group of [two](two.html) units deals with the [compassion](jonah.html) that must be shown to other [Jews](gen-jew.html) - whether freemen or slaves. The second of the [two](two.html) units mentions the yovel emancipation as an indication of the fact that no [Jew](gen-jew.html) should be treated as a slave.

B) The Relationship Between the [Two](two.html)

The [two](two.html) distinct themes - yovel and the special treatment of [Jewish](gen-jew.html) brethren - are related both conceptually and textually. Conceptually, both are reflections of the limits God’s underlying ownership places on man’s. Just as “the land may not be sold forever for the land is mine,” (23) so too no [Jew](gen-jew.html) can be owned “for they are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt.” (42) Additionally, recognition of the fact that even [one](one.html)‘s basic [freedom](freedom.html) from the bondage of Egypt, is a product of God’s [compassion](jonah.html), should bring [one](one.html) to show unique [compassion](jonah.html) to fellow [Jews](gen-jew.html) in settings besides slavery, such as loans and others business dealings.

The Torah intertwines the [two](two.html) themes in the [fifth](five.html) unit (47-55) applying both to a [Jew](gen-jew.html) who, out of desperation, enslaves himself to a [gentile](gen-jew.html). Ideally the slave’s relatives, even distant, should show [compassion](jonah.html) and [redeem](redemption.html) their brother. The [redemption](redemption.html) clause, heretofore (in the [first](one.html) [two](two.html) units, which dealt with property) an expression of the man’s restricted land ownership now reflects the responsibility fellow [Jews](gen-jew.html) have to enslaved brethren.

If no [one](one.html) redeems the slave, the Torah adds [two](two.html) stipulations. “The [gentile](gen-jew.html) may not rule over him with vigor in your sight” (53), for [one](one.html) should find a foreigner’s lack of [compassion](jonah.html) for another [Jew](gen-jew.html) as intolerable as his own. Additionally, the slave must be freed at yovel - “for the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people are my servants that I brought [out of Egypt](thebirth.html); I am [HaShem](hashem.html) - their God” (55).

IV) Chapter 27 (Bechukotai) and Parashat Behar

Chapter 27 applies Behar’s theme of God’s exclusive ownership to “hekdesh” (objects owned by the [Temple](temple.html)). The chapter stresses the unacceptability of a [Jew](gen-jew.html) being owned by distinguishing between the dedication of property and self-dedication. That the [two](two.html) types of dedication are meant to be contrasted rather than understood as a continuum may be seen by the fact that they are separated by a mesora-break (after 27:8), the ONLY [one](one.html) in the perek. Dedication generally applies to the object actually dedicated. Although the possibility of [redemption](redemption.html) generally exists, it is merely an option. What’s more, it meets with a penalty - an extra [fifth](five.html) is adas a surcharge. Otherwise, the object remains hekdesh and may be purchased by another. A [Jew](gen-jew.html)‘s self-dedication, though, has only [one](one.html) resolution - personal [redemption](redemption.html); another’s acquisition or a permanent state of hekdesh-ownership are not considered possible. Even hekdesh cannot possess another [Jew](gen-jew.html).

Likewise, the Torah limits the scope of hekdesh’s hold on property. Although an animal fit for [sacrifice](korbanot.html) or a “cherem” fall inextricably under hekdesh’s control, land that is dedicated returns to it’s original owner through [redemption](redemption.html) or, in certain circumstances, yovel. Hekdesh fairs no better than the commoner; it’s control is likewise undermined by God’s underlying ownership.

“Bekhor” ([first](one.html) born animal), singled out as an exception (26), fits well within the framework of the chapter. God’s execution of yetziat Mitzrayim grants Him ownership of man, and therefore hekdesh’s ability to control man is limited. It also grants him ownership of all firstborns and, thus, preempts man’s sanctification.

Thus, it is not merely the mutual mention of yovel that characterizes the [two](two.html) chapters, but the joint limitation of ownership of both land (the [redemption](redemption.html) clause) and man (the dedication being a vow, not a transfer of ownership).

Further questions:

1. “You shall enslave them (non-[Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves) forever” (25,46). R. Akiva (Gittin 38b) interprets this as a prohibition on the emancipation of non-[Jewish](gen-jew.html) slaves, although in context it could easily have been interpreted as merely excluding the MANDATORY emancipation at yovel. How does his interpretation strengthen the underlying theme of the contrast between slaves, as explained in the shiur?

2. Halachically, [redemption](redemption.html) applies to any [Jew](gen-jew.html) sold as a slave (Kiddushin 14b). Explicitly, however, the Torah mentions it only in regard to a [female](male+female.html) slave (Shemot 21:4) and, in our parasha, in regard to a slave sold to a non-[Jew](gen-jew.html) (25:48). Why are these [two](two.html) cases stressed? What does this indicate about the context for this halakhic institution?

3. Are [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel “religious” institutions (about God’s ownership of the land) or social institutions (about equality and [freedom](freedom.html))? Read carefully the opening of the parasha and compare to Shemot 23, 10-12 (Shemot 23:12 is about [Shabbat](sabbath.html) - but notice the context of [Shabbat](sabbath.html) in that verse!) and Devarim 15:1-2; 12-18.

4. yovel, including even counting the fiftieth year separately, depends on “kol yoshveha aleha” - having the [Jewish](gen-jew.html) people as a whole living in Eretz Yisrael. This is the only [mitzva](cmds613.html) hateluya ba-aretz with this stipulation. Why is the [mitzva](cmds613.html) dependent not only on kedushat ha-aretz, but also on the presence of the people in the land?

## The Agricultural and Historical Significance

## Of Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html)

By Rav [Yaakov](israelja.html) Medan

Translated by Zev Jacobson

Each of the chagim (holidays) has a dual significance which is rooted and expressed in the duality of our [calendar](calendar.html). The [Jewish](gen-jew.html) [calendar](calendar.html) is based on the movement of both the [sun](hachama.html) and the [moon](chodesh.html), in contradistinction to the solar [calendar](calendar.html) of ancient Egypt (and the Western [world](worlds.html)) and the lunar [calendar](calendar.html) of ancient [Babylon](bavel.html) (and the Islamic [world](worlds.html)). We calculate the months according to the waxing and waning of the [moon](chodesh.html) (29 or 30 days to each month), but adjust the years based on the [cycle](cycles.html) of the [sun](hachama.html) and the seasons. (The lunar year is only 354 days long, as opposed to the 365 days of the solar year. In order that [Pesach](passover.html) should fall out in the spring, we add an extra month every few years.)

Correspondingly, each [holiday](festival.html) has both a historical and an agricultural significance. [Pesach](passover.html) commemorates Yetzi’at Mitzrayim (the [Exodus](exodus.html)) and marks the beginning of the barley harvest. [Shavuot](shavuot.html) commemorates Matan Torah (the Giving of the Torah) and marks the beginning of the wheat harvest. [Succoth](succoth.html) commemorates the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness and marks the season when the produce is [gathered](gather.html) in from the fields. The agricultural significance of the chagim is connected with the solar [cycle](cycles.html) that determines the seasons and represents the stable, natural, unchanging flow of [time](time.html). However, the historical element of each [holiday](festival.html) is linked to a specific day of a specific month and is, thus, connected with the lunar [cycle](cycles.html) - [one](one.html) that involves constant flux as expressed in the appearance and disappearance of the [moon](chodesh.html). This phenomenon is representative of the waning and waxing of the [nations](nations.html) of the [world](worlds.html) who rise to power and then fade away.

The combination of these [two](two.html) [cycles](cycles.html) into [one](one.html) unit is an assertion of faith: [HaShem](hashem.html), who is responsible for the [creation](bara.html) of the [world](worlds.html) and who causes plants to grow, is the [one](one.html) who controls history. The God of Nature is He who [redeemed](redemption.html) us [from Egypt](thebirth.html). However, there is also a unique link between each [festival](festival.html) and the [time](time.html) of year that it is celebrated - as will presently be explained.

The Torah (Devarim 16:1) assigns great importance to the period of the year when [Pesach](passover.html) must be celebrated - Chodesh Ha-[Aviv](feasts.html) (Spring). The [Festival](festival.html) of [Freedom](freedom.html), which commemorates the unique historical [event](feasts.html) of the [Exodus](exodus.html), must coincide with the start of the [annual](annual.html) agricultural season - the harvest. What is the [connection](connection.html) between the [two](two.html)?

For the [six](six.html) months from [Succoth](succoth.html) until [Pesach](passover.html), the farmer is a slave to his land. He must clear the fields of stones, plough, sow and water without seeing the fruits of his labor. However, when the middle of [Nisan](feasts.html) comes, a dramatic change takes place. The farmer is transformed from [one](one.html) who “sows in [tears](mashal.html)“ to [one](one.html) who “reaps in joy”. He is now master of his land and earns his daily bread from it. This [new](new.html)-found [freedom](freedom.html) commences on [Pesach](passover.html) when the barley harvest begins, as beforehand [one](one.html) is not permitted to benefit from the current year’s grain. Thus, the [two](two.html) freedoms - agricultural and historical - go [hand](fourteen.html)-in-[hand](fourteen.html). A barley [offering](korbanot.html) ([korban](korbanot.html) [omer](omer.html)) is brought in the [Temple](temple.html) on the second day of [Pesach](passover.html), expressing our recognition that it is God who causes the [rains](rains.html) to fall and the grain to grow, just as it is He who [redeemed](redemption.html) us from bondage.

We are commanded to count fifty days from [Pesach](passover.html) until [Shavuot](shavuot.html) (Vayikra 23:15-18). This is called Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html) (counting of the [Omer](omer.html)) and is so termed because it commences on the day that the [Omer](omer.html) is offered. From the verses in the Torah, it seems that the significance of this counting relates purely to the agricultural [cycle](cycles.html): we mark off the days between the barley [offering](korbanot.html) of [Pesach](passover.html) and the wheat [offering](korbanot.html) (shtei ha-lechem - the [two](two.html) loaves) which is brought on [Shavuot](shavuot.html).

Since barley ripens before wheat, these fifty days represent the interlude when only barley is being harvested. The farmer eagerly anticipates the [new](new.html) crop that he will soon harvest. In the words of our Sages, he waits as “a bride awaits her [wedding](wedding.html) day.”

Barley is used primarily as animal fodder; it is the

superior wheat that will serve as [food](food.html) for him and his family. Furthermore, the barley [offering](korbanot.html) permits the current year’s grain to be [eaten](eating.html) only outside of the [Temple](temple.html); whereas the wheat [offering](korbanot.html) permits it to be used in the [Temple](temple.html) itself as part of the sacrificial service. Just as a bride is not satisfied with her engagement to her groom, but awaits their [marriage](mashal.html), so too the farmer awaits the [time](time.html) when his grain will enter the [House of God](housegod.html) - symbolic of the close relationship between man his Maker. With every day that passes, the farmer gives thanks to [HaShem](hashem.html) for having sustained and blessed him in the [inheritance](inherit.html) that was promised to his forefathers.

However, our Sages identify [Shavuot](shavuot.html) as the date of the giving of the Torah, and it is the historical significance of the day that lends the central meaning to the analogy of a “bride anticipating her [wedding](wedding.html) day.” The [Exodus](exodus.html) is compared to an engagement between [HaShem](hashem.html) and Israel. By redeeming us from bondage, He chose us to be His people, His beloved (see Shir Ha-Shirim, Yirmiyahu 2:2, and Hoshea ch. 2). However, the union was only sealed at the [foot](heel.html) of Mount [Sinai](stages.html) where we voluntarily accepted the Torah, thus forging a special bond with God. Upon [leaving Egypt](thebirth.html), the [Jews](gen-jew.html) counted each day that brought them closer to [Shavuot](shavuot.html), to the intimate [connection](connection.html) that they yearned to have.

Every year, we relive this feeling of longing and anticipation. We eagerly await the [festival](festival.html) of [Shavuot](shavuot.html) when our [covenant](covenant.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html) is re-affirmed and renewed. We hope and [pray](prayer.html) that the bread of affliction - the poor man’s bread of [Pesach](passover.html) - is transformed into the full, rich loaves of the [Shavuot](shavuot.html) service. Thus, Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html) as a period of transformation and longing is relevant in both the agricultural and the historical senses. The satisfaction and fulfillment of [Shavuot](shavuot.html) is also to be experienced in both these realms, although the Sages place more emphasis on the historical overtones of the day. Note, however, that the focus of the historical [experience](experience.html) is not merely recollection of the past, but reliving it in the present.

It is somewhat puzzling that while the Torah speaks directly of both aspects of [Pesach](passover.html) - agricultural and historical - it focuses solely on the agricultural significance of Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html) and [Shavuot](shavuot.html). In fact, it is the Sages who calculate that Matan Torah took place on the selfsame day that we are commanded to offer the shtei ha-lechem. Why does the Torah not mention the historical significance of the day at all?

While it is true that there is no direct mention of [Shavuot](shavuot.html) as the commemoration of the revelation at [Sinai](stages.html), the [connection](connection.html) is very strongly hinted at in the verses by the use of Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html) as the link between [Pesach](passover.html) and [Shavuot](shavuot.html), as will be explained.

Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html) is very similar to the [mitzva](cmds613.html) of Sefirat Ha-yovel, whereby we are enjoined to count 49 years and consecrate the fiftiethyear as the yovel (Jubilee). This similarity is expressed both in the verses themselves (compare Vayikra 23:15-16 to 25:8-10) and in the [laws](law.html) relevant to the actual counting. (For example, with regard to Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html), we are commanded to count [seven](seven.html) sets of [seven](seven.html) days - each set comprising a week; with regard to Sefirat Ha-yovel, we are commanded to count [seven](seven.html) sets of [seven](seven.html) years - each set comprising [one](one.html) [shmita](shmita.html) [cycle](cycles.html) where the ground is worked for [six](six.html) years and left untouched in the seventh year. In both cases it is a [mitzva](cmds613.html) to count each day or year AND each individual set.) It is clear that the similarity between the [two](two.html) is not accidental and by taking a closer look at Sefirat Ha-yovel, we can better understand Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html).

On [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) of the fiftieth year, a [shofar](shofar.html) is blown throughout the land to proclaim the yovel year. Another term for [shofar](shofar.html) is “yovel,” and hence the [name](name.html) of the year. The basis of this practice has its roots in Matan Torah, where [HaShem](hashem.html) announced His presence with “the powerful sound of the [shofar](shofar.html)“ (Shemot 19:19) and signified that His presence had departed from the mountain by a long [shofar](shofar.html) blast (“bimshokh ha-YOVEL,” Shemot 19:13). The sound of the [shofar](shofar.html) on yovel parallels the [shofar](shofar.html) at [Sinai](stages.html) and, thus, the counting of the yovel is strongly reminiscent of the build-up to Matan Torah.

Furthermore, on the [Succoth](succoth.html) following the [shmita](shmita.html) year, there is a [mitzva](cmds613.html) of [Hakhel](hakhel.html) (Gathering) where every able-bodied man, woman and child is enjoined to make a pilgrimage to [Jerusalem](city.html) and [gather](gather.html) together to hear words of Torah from the [mouth](body.html) of the king (Devarim 31:10-12). The purpose of [Hakhel](hakhel.html), in the words of the scriptures, is: “In order that you may hear and in order that you may learn to fear the Lord your God.” This, too, is cited as the purpose of Matan Torah (see, e.g., Shemot 20:18), where the entire [nation](nations.html) congregated to hear the words of [HaShem](hashem.html).

In the yovel year, this assumed greater significance, as all slaves were freed on [Yom Kippur](kippur.html) and were, thus, able to participate in the communal acceptance of the Torah that took place on [Hakhel](hakhel.html). Thus, the Sefirat Ha-yovel was in fact a countdown to the [freedom](freedom.html) from slavery and embracing of the Torah. By way of comparison, it follows that Sefirat Ha-[Omer](omer.html) expresses the same idea.

The special nature of the Sefira - preparation for the bond between God and His people - is strongly hinted at by the [Korban](korbanot.html) Ha-[Omer](omer.html) itself. There are only [two](two.html) instances when an [offering](korbanot.html) of barley is brought: the [Omer](omer.html) [offering](korbanot.html) and the [Sotah](hair.html) [offering](korbanot.html) (brought by a woman whose fidelity to her husband is under suspicion). The period between the [exodus](exodus.html) and the Revelation at [Sinai](stages.html) is [one](one.html) of trial. The betrothed (Israel) is tested to verify the extent of her loyalty to the groom (God). Only once her unquestioning faithfulness has been proven can the union be finalized.

In a similar vein, we find only [two](two.html) places where the [name](name.html) of God is cast into water: At the [Sotah](hair.html) ceremony[[149]](#footnote-149) and at Mara. (After crossing the [Red Sea](stages.html), the [Jews](gen-jew.html) wandered for [three](three.html) days without water. When they came to Mara and found a well whose water was too bitter to drink, they complained to Moshe and he was instructed by [HaShem](hashem.html) to cast a piece of wood into the water to sweeten it - Shemot 15:22-25. According to the [Midrash](orallaw.html), the wood contained the [name](name.html) of God.) In both cases, the betrothed must prove herself and her faithfulness.

The allusion to the [Sotah](hair.html) ceremony makes it clear that Israel were not [redeemed](redemption.html) to be free from responsibility. Rather, we were taken out of bondage in order to assume the difficult task of being “a light unto the [Nations](nations.html).” Nevertheless, as our Sages state in Pirke Avot: “There is none as free as he who is totally involved with the Torah.”

This is the message of the [Omer](omer.html) - in order to be worthy of the gifts of [HaShem](hashem.html), both on a material (agricultural) plane and on a [spiritual](physical.html) plane (Matan Torah) - we must prepare ourselves correctly.

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## [Mashiach](mashiach.html) and yovel[[150]](#footnote-150)

Sources: Hilchot Melachim 11:1. [Shmita](shmita.html) V’yovel 10:8.12:16

Parshat Behar [teaches](teacher.html) about the special [laws](law.html) of [Shmita](shmita.html) (the 7th year) and yovel (the fiftiethyear).

In the [laws](law.html) discussing [Mashiach](mashiach.html), the Rambam tells us that [Mashiach](mashiach.html) will bring back the [laws](law.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel just as they were before. But before that, the [laws](law.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel do not fully apply.

This is because the posuk says that we need kol yoshveha -- all the Bnei Yisrael-- living in Eretz Yisrael. [Mashiach](mashiach.html) will lead all the Bnei Yisrael out of [galut](galuyot.html) and back to Eretz Yisrael. Then we will be able to keep all the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the Torah fully.

## Yovel and Geula [[151]](#footnote-151)

Sources: Rabbeinu Bachaye 25:47

After [seven](seven.html) [shmita](shmita.html) [cycles](cycles.html) of [seven](seven.html) years each, the fiftiethyear is declared yovel. yovel also hints to the geulah ([redemption](redemption.html)). In the fiftiethyear, the [shofar](shofar.html) is blown and all slaves are set free. In the same way, the Bnei Yisrael will be set free from our slavery in [galut](galuyot.html) ([exile](galuyot.html)).

There is a second way that yovel hints to the geulah. The word yovel is just like the word yovilu. The word yovilu is written in Tehillim (76:12): all the [nations](nations.html) “yovilu shai” -- will bring gifts to [HaShem](hashem.html) when the geulah comes.

**\* \* \***

PARSHA BEHAR

## Rabbi M.M. Schneerson

In the Sedra of Behar, instructions are given about the observance of [two](two.html) special kinds of sanctified year-the seventh year ([Shmita](shmita.html) or `release’) when the land was rested and lay fallow; and the fiftieth year (yovel or ‘Jubilee’) when the [Hebrew](hebrew.html) slaves were emancipated and most property reverted to its original owner. The [two](two.html) institutions were connected, the Jubilee being the completion of [seven](seven.html) [seven](seven.html) year [cycles](cycles.html). It was not, itself, counted as a year in the [seven](seven.html)-yearly reckoning. The Jubilee lapsed as a practical institution when some of the [Tribes](tribes.html) went into [exile](galuyot.html). But we can distinguish [three](three.html) periods in its history: (i) a [time](time.html) when the Jubilee was observed, (ii) a [time](time.html) during the second [Temple](temple.html) when it was not observed but was still counted for the purpose of fixing the [seven](seven.html)-year [cycle](cycles.html), and (iii) a [time](time.html) (like the present) when neither [Temple](temple.html) stood, and the [seven](seven.html)-year [cycle](cycles.html) was counted without reference to the Jubilee. The Sicha explores the [spiritual](physical.html) meaning of the seventh and fiftieth years, and thus gives an inward interpretation to the [three](three.html) periods, and the religious consciousness they represent.

1. THE JUBILEE

“And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the and unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and you shall return every man unto his possession, and you shall return every man unto his family.” 1 In this [connection](connection.html), the [Talmud](orallaw.html) states: “When the [tribes](tribes.html) of Reuben and Gad and the half-[tribe](tribes.html) of Manasseh went into [exile](galuyot.html), the Jubilees were abolished, as it is said, `And you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof-that is (only) at the [time](time.html) when all its inhabitants [dwell](dwelling.html) upon it, but not at the [time](time.html) when some of them are [exiled](galuyot.html).”2

Despite the fact that the Jubilee-as a [time](time.html) of emancipation of slaves and restitution of property-lapsed, the ([Babylonian](bavel.html)) [Talmud](orallaw.html) notes that even during the period of the second [Temple](temple.html), “They counted the Jubilees to keep the years of release holy.”(3) Every seventh year was a year of release (‘[Shmita](shmita.html)‘), a [sabbatical](shmita.html) year for the land when it was `released’ from cultivation and lay fallow. In this [cycle](cycles.html), according to the Rabbis,(4) the fiftieth year was not counted, so that they had to continue counting the Jubilees in order to be able to observe the [Shmita](shmita.html) years of release in their proper [time](time.html): to ensure that release was observed in the seventh year after the Jubilee rather than after the [forty](forty.html)-[ninth](nine.html) year.

Tosafot (5) raises an objection: the [Jerusalem](city.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html) states, “At a [time](time.html) when the Jubilee is not observed as a year of release, neither do you observe the seventh year as a release.”(6) If so, during the second [Temple](temple.html) period, when the Jubilee was not observed, merely counted, it should follow that the [seven](seven.html) year release of [Shmita](shmita.html) should also have lapsed.

Rashi’s opinion is that the seventh year was observed during the Second [Temple](temple.html), only as a Rabbinic [law](law.html). In other words, the [Jerusalem](city.html) and [Babylonian](bavel.html) Talmuds are not in disagreement, the [Jerusalem](city.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html) asserting that the [sabbatical](shmita.html) year was not (while the Jubilee was in abeyance) a requirement of Torah [law](law.html), the [Babylonian](bavel.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html) mentioning that it was nonetheless continued, by Rabbinic decree.

But according to Tosafot, the [two](two.html) Talmuds conflict, the [Babylonian](bavel.html) asserting that the seventh year was obligatory under Torah [law](law.html), independently of the Jubilee, in disagreement with the [Jerusalem](city.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html).

2. THE SPIRIT AND THE [LAW](law.html)

The legal decisions of the early Rabbis, the Tannaim and the Amoraim, were not made merely as a result of a this-worldly reasoning. They were men of great [spiritual](physical.html) [insight](insights.html), who saw matters in a [spiritual](physical.html) light and then translated their vision into intellectual and legal terms. Since their souls differed in the visionary heights they were able to reach, so also their practical decisions differed, and this was the source of their legal disagreements.

Seen in this way, we might say that the disagreement (according to Tosafot) between the [Jerusalem](city.html) and Talmuds as to whether the [Shmita](shmita.html) year of release was required by Torah [law](law.html) during the second [Temple](temple.html) period, has its origin in the different levels of spirituality these [two](two.html) works represent. The [Babylonian](bavel.html) is the lower level. “ `He hath made me to [dwell](dwelling.html) in dark places’-this, said Rabbi Jeremiah, refers to the [Babylonian](bavel.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html).”

At the higher level of the [Jerusalem](city.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html), it required the sanctity of the Jubilee to complete the sanctity of the [shmita](shmita.html) year. At the lower, [Babylonian](bavel.html), level, the seventh year was complete in itself even without the Jubilee.

3. THE LAPSING OF THE JUBILEE

When the Second [Temple](temple.html) was destroyed, the year of release was counted in a [new](new.html) Way.

While the [Temple](temple.html) stood, the fiftieth year was not counted as part of the [seven](seven.html)-year [cycle](cycles.html). But “during those [seventy](seventy.html) years between the destruction of the [First](one.html) [Temple](temple.html) and the building of the Second, and also after the destruction of the Second, they did not count the Jubilee year, but only (unbroken) [seven](seven.html)-year [cycles](cycles.html).”‘

Why, then, is there a difference between the way we count the year of release now, and in the Second [Temple](temple.html), when the Jubilee had ceased to be observed?

Using our previous concept, we might say that while the [Temple](temple.html) existed, the level of spirituality was so high [Shmita](shmita.html) year of release needed the higher sanctity of the Jubilee for its completion-at [one](one.html) period, the actual observance of the Jubilee at another, at least the counting of it. But when the [Temple](temple.html) was destroyed, [spiritual](physical.html) achievement sank to the point where the year of release no longer had any [connection](connection.html) with the Jubilee.

4. THE INNER MEANING OF THE SEVENTH AND FIFTIETH YEARS

To understand all this, we must discover the equivalents of the seventh and fiftieth years in the religious life of man. The seventh year, the [time](time.html) of release, represents the “acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of [heaven](heaven.html)“. This is when man suppresses his ego in obedience to G-d (bittul ha-yesh).’ His ego still exists, and continually [needs](needs.html) to be silenced. That is why, as every seventh year approached, its claim would be heard: `What shall we [eat](eating.html) on the seventh year? Behold, we may not sow, nor [gather](gather.html) in our increase.” Even though on each previous occasion it had seen for itself the fulfillment of G-d’s promise, “I will [command](cmds613.html) My blessing upon you in the [sixth](six.html) year, and it shall bring forth produce for the [three](three.html) years,” it always renewed its anxieties.

The Jubilee, on the other [hand](fourteen.html), represents the complete abnegation of [one](one.html)‘s being to G-d (bittul bi-metziut). There is no longer a contending ego. Instead of serving G-d through an effort of willpower, [one](one.html) serves through understanding, an understanding so complete that it breaks through the curtain of self-deception that separates man from G-d. It is the `year of [freedom](freedom.html)‘, meaning, [freedom](freedom.html) from concealment and from the ego that holds man in its chains.

5. [TWO](two.html) KINDS OF OBEDIENCE

Each of these levels has a certain [merit](merit.html) vis-à-vis the other.(16) Bittul bi-metziut, or the obedience that comes from understanding, has the advantage of being extensive. It encompasses the whole man in its orientation towards G-d.

Bittul ha-yesh, or the obedience that comes from an effort of will, has the advantage of being intensive. It is an intense [spiritual](physical.html) struggle within the soul of man.

To give an analogy: there are [two](two.html) kinds of relationship between a servant and his master. There is the `simple’ servant, whose real [desire](needs.html) is to be free, but who serves because he accepts the burden of his situation. And there is the `faithful’ servant, who serves his master out of love and a genuine [desire](needs.html) to obey. Whereas the obedience of the latter is more complete, since his whole nature affirms his service, the obedience of the former is more intense because it is a result of a deliberate subjugation of part of his character. It cost him more in terms of inward effort.

6. THE [THREE](three.html) AGES

We can now see the full significance of the [three](three.html) periods in [Jewish](gen-jew.html) history with respect to the Jubilee and the year of release.

When the [first](one.html) [Temple](temple.html) stood, both were observed, that is, [Jewish](gen-jew.html) spirituality combined obedience through love and understanding with obedience through effort and subjugation. Love lay even in their subjugation; their effort was also with understanding. The love which transcends the self, returned to fill the self.

At the [time](time.html) of the Second [Temple](temple.html), the Jubilee was no longer observed but it was still counted. Love and understanding still counted, still left their traces, in the service of effort and will.

But when the Second [Temple](temple.html) was destroyed, all that was left was the year of release, the intense struggle to conquer the ego, and obey for obedience’s sake. No trace of the Jubilee, of inward unanimity, remained.

7. A DISAGREEMENT EXPLAINED

So now we no longer see the things of the spirit with the clear light of understanding. We are forced to act against our reason, in a gesture of reluctant obedience. True inwardness is beyond us. And yet, the ultimate inwardness never departs. The essence of the soul is always present. In the current [spiritual](physical.html) darkness of [exile](galuyot.html), it still works its subconscious, subliminal influence.

And this is the ultimate source of the disagreement between the [Jerusalem](city.html) and [Babylonian](bavel.html) Talmuds as to whether the year of release is a matter of Torah or of Rabbinic [Law](law.html) in our [time](time.html); that is to say, whether it still] exists in its own right, or merely as a Rabbinic remembrance of times past, (17) when the Jubilee was celebrated.

To the [Babylonian](bavel.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html), the product of [exile](galuyot.html), the observance of the seventh year and its corresponding service of “acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of [Heaven](heaven.html)“ seemed like an act in itself, with no [connection](connection.html) to that higher state of the Jubilee and the service which came through love and understanding.

The [Jerusalem](city.html) [Talmud](orallaw.html), with its higher [spiritual](physical.html) awareness, still felt the Jubilee and its service as a continuing, if subliminal, presence. So they saw the year of release as still connected with, and observed in remembrance of, the [time](time.html) when it belonged together with the Jubilee, when the [first](one.html) [Temple](temple.html) stood. Similarly, it is also a preparation for the [time](time.html) where that former state will return, with the building of the [third](three.html) [Temple](temple.html), when the [Messiah](mashiach.html) comes.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot Vol. VII Pp. 170-174).

1. Vayikra 25, 10.

2. Arachin, 32b; Rambam, Hilchot [Shmita](shmita.html) Veyovel 10, 8.

3. Arachin, ibid; Rambam, ibid 3.

4. Arachin, 33a.

5. Arachin, ibid.

6. Sheviit 1, 2; Gittin 4, 3.

7. Gittin, 36a.

8. Cf.Biurei Hazohar, Vayishlach, 20b.

9. Cf. lntroduction to Tanya, Part, 1. [Zohar](orallaw.html), Part nl, 245a.

10. Sanhedrin, 24a.

11. Rambam, ibid, 5.

12. Cf. Taamei Hamitzvot Lehaarizal, Behar; quoted in

Derech Mitzvotecha,35b.

13. Cf.Likkutei Torah, Behar, 42d.

14. Vayikra 25,2O.

15. ibid, 21.

16. Cf., for more extensive treatment of the theme,

Likkutei Sichot, Vol. IX, pp. 72ff.

17. Gittin, 36b.

\* \* \*

From: http://keitzmeguleh.blogspot.com/2008/10/yovel-and-geulah.html

**Chapter 1**

## The Rambam on Counting Yovel

The following is an excerpt from chapter 10 of the Mishneh Torah Hilchot Shmitah v’Yovel chapter 10.

1. It is a positive [commandment](cmds613.html) to count years, 7 by 7, and to sanctify the 50th year, as it is written “And you shall count for yourselfs 7 sabbaths of years... and you shall sanctify the 50th year” (Leviticus 25:8). And these [two](two.html) [commandments](cmds613.html) are the responsibility of the Great Court(the Sanhedrin) alone. And from when did they start to count? They started 14 years after entering the land, as it is written “For 6 years you shall plant your fields, and for 6 years you shall prune your vineyeard” (Leviticus 25:3), when every person should [know](daat.html) their land. And they spent 7 years conquering the land, and 7 years in division.

2. We see from this that in the year 2503 from the [Rosh Hashana](teruah.html)h after the [birth](thebirth.html) of [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon, which is the 2nd year of [creation](bara.html), they began to count. And they did the year 2510 from [creation](bara.html), which is the 21st year from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael, Shmitah. And they counted 7 Shmitah years and sanctified the 50th year, which was the 64th year from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael.

3. Am Yisrael counted 17 Yovels, from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael to the [time](time.html) they left, and the year they left, in which the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed, was the year after Shmitah, and year 36 of the Yovel, for the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) stood 410 years.

4. And due to the destruction of the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), this count ceased, for the land was nullified. And the land remained destroyed, 70 years; and the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was built, and stood 420 years. And in the 7th year from its construction, Ezra came up to Eretz Yisrael, and that is the Bi’ah Shniyah, and from this year a [new](new.html) count began. And they made the 13th year of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) Shmitah, and they counted 7 Shmitah years and sanctified the 50th year, even though there was no Yovel during the [time](time.html) of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), they would count it in order to sanctify the Shmitah years.

5. We see from this that the year that the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed, whose start is from Tishrei after the destruction by 2 months, for it is from Tishrei that we count Shmitah and Yovel, that year was the year after Shmitah, and year 15 of the 9th Yovel.

6. And according to this calculation, this year, which is 1107 of the Destruction, which is 1487 to the count of Shtarot, which is 4936 to [Creation](bara.html), is a Shmitah year, and it is year 21 from the Yovel.

7. However, all of the Geonim said that it is a tradition in their [hands](fourteen.html), from [one](one.html) [generation](toldot.html) to the next, that they only counted Shmitah during the 70 years between the Destruction of the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) and the Building of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), without Yovel, and thus it is since it was destroyed this last [time](time.html), we don’t count the 50th year, but rather just every 7 years alone, from the the beginning of the year of the Destruction. And thus is the conclusion from the [Talmud](orallaw.html) Avodah Zarah, according to this calculation, which is a tradition.

8. And the year of Shmitah is well [known](daat.html) by the Geonim and the people of Eretz Yisrael, and all of them counted only from the years of the Destruction, and removing the remainders of 7. And according to this calculation, this year which is 1107 to the Destruction, is the year after Shmitah. And this is what we rely on, and according to this calculation we [teach](teacher.html) for the matter of Maaser, and Shmitah, and Shmitat Kesafim, for the tradition and the deed are great pillars for instruction, and upon them it is proper to depend.

**Chapter 2**

**Explanation of the Rambam**

1. It is a positive [commandment](cmds613.html) to count years, 7 by 7, and to sanctify the 50th year, as it is written “And you shall count for yourself 7 sabbaths of years... and you shall sanctify the 50th year” (Leviticus 25:8). And these [two](two.html) [commandments](cmds613.html) are the responsibility of the Great Court (the Sanhedrin) alone. And from when did they start to count? They started 14 years after entering the land, as it is written “For 6 years you shall plant your fields, and for 6 years you shall prune your vineyeard” (Leviticus 25:3), when every person should [know](daat.html) their land. And they spent 7 years conquering the land, and 7 years in division.

The [Exodus](exodus.html) took place in the year 2448, according to the count brought in [Midrash](orallaw.html) [Seder](haggada.html) Olam Rabba. The 40 years in the desert finished in 2488. After this there were 7 years in which Yehoshua bin-Nun led B’nei Yisrael in conquering the land, ending in 2495. A further 7 years went in to dividing the land amongst the 12 [tribes](tribes.html). This ends in the year 2502.

2. We see from this that in the year 2503 from the [Rosh Hashana](teruah.html)h after the [birth](thebirth.html) of [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon, which is the 2nd year of [creation](bara.html), they began to count. And they did the year 2510 from [creation](bara.html), which is the 21st year from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael, Shmitah. And they counted 7 Shmitah years and sanctified the 50th year, which was the 64th year from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael.

The Rambam here tells us that they started in the year 2503, but counting from year [number](nchart.html) 2. Really, then, the count started in year 2504. This is implied by the fact that the 1st Shmitah is recorded as the year 2510. The [first](one.html) Yovel was, therefore, in 2553.

Background: [Midrash](orallaw.html) [Seder](haggada.html) Olam Rabba assumes that [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon was born in year 1. The Rambam, however, states that we count starting from the “Year of Chaos”. If [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon was born on the 1st of Tishrei, that means that the other 5 days of [creation](bara.html) were in [Elul](elul.html), and since we don’t have a year 0, we shift the [creation](bara.html) of [Adam](adam.html) HaRishon to year 2. Then, in order to simplify our [calendrical](calendar.html) calculations, we calculate backwards to the prior hypothetical Tishrei, and that is the 1st Molad, on which all other calculations are based. This is called Molad BaHaRa”D. (BaHaRa”D is an acronym for the 2nd day of the week, the 5th hour, and 204 chalakim)

In Tractate Arachin, there is a disagreement on how to count the Yovel [Cycle](cycles.html).

* Rabbanan say that the 50th year does not count as part of a Shmitah [Cycle](cycles.html). (Arachin 33A)
* Rebbi Yehudah says that the 50th year is also the 1st year of the next Shmitah [cycle](cycles.html). (Arachin 12B)

The Rambam brings as the halachah the opinion of Rabbanan, that we count 7 Shmitah [Cycles](cycles.html), and then have a Yovel Year. The following year is [number](nchart.html) 1 of the followign Shmitah and Yovel [Cycles](cycles.html).

3. Am Yisrael counted 17 Yovels, from the [time](time.html) they entered Eretz Yisrael to the [time](time.html) they left, and the year they left, in which the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed, was the year after Shmitah, and year 36 of the Yovel, for the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) stood 410 years.

The 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), which stood from 2929 to 3339. Continuing these 50 year [cycles](cycles.html) onward from 2504, we see that 3339 was the 36th year of the 17th Yovel [cycle](cycles.html). That is to say that 16 Yovel [cycles](cycles.html) were completed, and the Destruction was during the 17th [cycle](cycles.html).

4. And due to the destruction of the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), this count ceased, for the land was nullified. And the land remained destroyed, 70 years; and the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was built, and stood 420 years. And in the 7th year from its construction, Ezra came up to Eretz Yisrael, and that is the Bi’ah Shniyah, and from this year a [new](new.html) count began. And they made the 13th year of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) Shmitah, and they counted 7 Shmitah years and sanctified the 50th year, even though there was no Yovel during the [time](time.html) of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), they would count it in order to sanctify the Shmitah years.

The Rambam’s opinion is that during the 70 years of the [Babylonian](bavel.html) [Exile](galuyot.html), Shmitah and Yovel were not counted, due to the nullification of the initial holiness of the land imparted in the [time](time.html) of Yehoshua bin-Nun. As the [Gemara](orallaw.html) [teaches](teacher.html), the holiness imparted by Yehoshua was for its [time](time.html), but the 2nd holiness, imparted in the [time](time.html) of Ezra, is eternal, even to our days.

This is an interesting idea. We have seemingly separate issues: The counting of Shmitah and Yovel, and the holiness of the Land ofIsrael. According to the Rambam, the counting of Shmitah and Yovel is dependent on the holiness being in force.

5. We see from this that the year that the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed, whose start is from Tishrei after the destruction by 2 months, for it is from Tishrei that we count Shmitah and Yovel, that year was the year after Shmitah, and year 15 of the 9th Yovel.

There is a very old tradition brought down that both of the Templeswere destroyed in the year after Shmitah. In order to make this work, the Rambam asserts that in the case of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), we are referring to the year after the destruction. It should be noted that the Tosefot on Arachin says that the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) stood 421 years; this makes the calculation work.

6. And according to this calculation, this year, which is 1107 of the Destruction, which is 1487 to the count of Shtarot, which is 4936 to [Creation](bara.html), is a Shmitah year, and it is year 21 from the Yovel.

Following the idea in Halachah 4, the holiness of the land is still in force, and therefore we should still count Yovel [cycles](cycles.html). These [numbers](nchart.html) are the result.

7. However, all of the Geonim said that it is a tradition in their [hands](fourteen.html), from [one](one.html) [generation](toldot.html) to the next, that they only counted Shmitah during the 70 years between the Destruction of the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) and the Building of the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), without Yovel, and thus it is since it was destroyed this last [time](time.html), we don’t count the 50th year, but rather just every 7 years alone, from the the beginning of the year of the Destruction. And thus is the conclusion from the [Talmud](orallaw.html) Avodah Zarah, according to this calculation, which is a tradition.

The Rambam here brings a tradition which nullifies his own conclusion. During the [time](time.html) of the [Babylonian](bavel.html) [Exile](galuyot.html), the counting did continue, but only Shmitah [cycles](cycles.html). Thus it is also during the [Exile](galuyot.html) of [Edom](edom.html) in our days, we continue with only the Shmitah [cycles](cycles.html). This calculation, that 3829, the year of the Destruction, was a Shmitah year, leads to the year 5768 also being a Shmitah year, as we practice now as halachah.

8. And the year of Shmitah is well [known](daat.html) by the Geonim and the people of Eretz Yisrael, and all of them counted only from the years of the Destruction, and removing the remainders of 7. And according to this calculation, this year which is 1107 to the Destruction, is the year after Shmitah. And this is what we rely on, and according to this calculation we [teach](teacher.html) for the matter of Maaser, and Shmitah, and Cancellation of Debts, for tradition and deed are major pillars for instruction, and it is proper to depend upon them.

The Rambam here stresses the need to follow this tradition from the Geonim, despite the logic for this decision not being evident to us. We submit to their superior judgement.

**Chapter 3**

**Arriving at a Combined Approach**

As mentioned before, there are [two](two.html) opinions on how to count Yovel.

* Rabbanan say that the 50th year does not count as part of a Shmitah [Cycle](cycles.html). (Arachin 33A) The result is that the year after Yovel is the [first](one.html) year of the following [cycle](cycles.html).
* Rebbi Yehudah says that the 50th year is also the 1st year of the next Shmitah [cycle](cycles.html). (Arachin 12B) The result is that the year after Yovel is second year of the following [cycle](cycles.html).

The conclusion in the [Gemara](orallaw.html) is that the halachah is according to Rabbanan, and that is the counting system used by the Rambam, cited above.

* According to Rabbanan, the 46th, 47th, and 48th Yovel years from the [time](time.html) of Ezra would be in 5715, 5765, and 5815 respectively.
* According to Rebbe Yehudah, the 46th, 47th, and 48th Yovel years from the [time](time.html) of Ezra would be in 5670, 5719, and 5768 respectively.

There is a problem with both of these systems: They contradict our halachic practice. Per Rabbanan, Shmitah was in the year 5764. Per Rebbi Yehudah, it was in 5767, and our accepted halachah is that Shmitah was last in 5768.

It would appear that there is a [secret](sod.html) behind the disagreement between Rabbanan and Rebbi Yehudah which is hinted at in the tradition of the Geonim. The tradition that we have states that after the destruction of each [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), instead of counting according to Rabbanan, we count just Shmitah [cycles](cycles.html) of 7 years. Perhaps that is not entirely precise.

I propose the following:

During the [time](time.html) of [Exile](galuyot.html), both [Babylon](bavel.html) and [Edom](edom.html), the halachah is like Rebbi Yehudah.

That is to say:

* From 2504 until 3339, the counting is like Rabbanan, with 50 year [cycles](cycles.html).
* From 3340 until 3415, the counting continues, but it is now according to Rebbi Yehudah, with 49 year [cycles](cycles.html).
* From 3416 until 3829, the count restarts/resets, and the counting proceeds according to Rabbanan.
* From 3830 until the Yovel will be reinstated, the counting continues, again according to Rebbi Yehudah, with 49 year [cycles](cycles.html).

This is hinted at in Sefer Yehezkel:

***Yehezkel (Ezekiel) 40:1*** *In the 25th year of our* [*exile*](galuyot.html)*, on* [*Rosh Hashana*](teruah.html)*h, on the 10th of the month, in the 14th year after the* [*city*](city.html) *was hit, in the midst of this day, the* [*Hand*](fourteen.html) *of* [*Hashem*](hashem.html) *was upon me, and brought me there.*

What year has the [Rosh Hashana](teruah.html)h on [Yom Kippur](kippur.html)? That is Yovel. And thus it is, since the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed in the 36thyear of the Yovel, the following Yovel would be in the 14th year after the destruction of the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html).

Per the Rambam, cited above, the purpose of the Yovel count (when the [commandment](cmds613.html) of Yovel is not in force) is in order to ensure that Shmitah is observed in the proper years. However, if we use the counting system of Rebbi Yehudah, it is now no longer necessary to count Yovel for that purpose.

If we examine the Yovel years that occur from the [time](time.html) of Ezra, where the count restarted in the year 3416, we find a startling result:

* The 46th Yovel took place in the year 5678 (1917/1918CE), the year of the Balfour Declaration.
* The 47th Yovel took place in the year 5727 (1966/1967CE), the year of the [Six](six.html)-Day War and the Unification of [Jerusalem](city.html).

The [events](feasts.html) of those Yovel years have obvious ramifications for the [Redemption](redemption.html) of the [Land of Israel](city.html), which is [one](one.html) of the ideas of Yovel itself.

The 48th Yovel will take place in the year 5776, after the next Shmitah year. If we count the Yovel years starting in the [time](time.html) of Yehoshua bin-Nun, 5776 will be the 66th Yovel.

**Chapter 4**

**A Yovel of Yovels**

By the [commandment](cmds613.html) of Counting the [Omer](omer.html), we see [two](two.html) seemingly contradicting [commands](cmds613.html):

1. We are commanded to count 50 days.
2. We are commanded to count 7 complete weeks.

For halachah, we count 49 days, and [Shavuot](shavuot.html) is celebrated on the 50th day, without any counting. There is an idea of 49 days of our efforts from below, and then [Hashem](hashem.html) completes the 50 days for us from above.

If we consider from the [time](time.html) of Ezra that there are to be 49 Yovel [Cycles](cycles.html) of our own efforts, we stand today 7 years ahead of the beginning of the 49th [cycle](cycles.html). The 49th [cycle](cycles.html) is destined to be the completion of the efforts of the [nation](nations.html) of Israel.

If we look at the original count as being 50 year [cycles](cycles.html), and that our goal, even then, was to arrive at a Yovel of Yovel years, then we see an act of kindness from [Hashem](hashem.html): Switching to 49 year [cycles](cycles.html) shortens the [time](time.html) of [Galut](galuyot.html) by decades. In our case, we are set to arrive at the 48th Yovel a total of 39 years earlier than we would in a 50 year [cycle](cycles.html) count. That is because the [first](one.html) 9 Yovel years are identical in the 2 sets, so 48 – 9 = 39 years. [Hashem](hashem.html) has mercy on us, and the end comes towards us (Tehillim 102:14 per Kol HaTor)

Looking at the Yovel [cycles](cycles.html) as parallel to the [Omer](omer.html) period, we also find parallels. To [name](name.html) a few:

* 3416-3765 is the period corresponding to the Yovel “week” of Chesed, in which the [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) stood. The Chesed she’be’Chesed (the 1st “day”), 3416-3455, included the founding of the Great Assembly (HaKnesset HaGedolah), the last remnants of prophecy until the days of Moshiach.
* 3816-3865 is the period corresponding to Gevurah she’bi’Gevurah (the 8th Yovel [cycle](cycles.html)), in which the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed. The 8th day of the [Omer](omer.html) is the day after Isru Chag, full [mourning](mourning.html) customs begin at this point.
* 4992-5041 is the period corresponding to Hod she’be’Hod, which is Lag BaOmer, in which we celebrate the revelation of the [Zohar](orallaw.html). This Yovel [cycle](cycles.html) brought the publication of the [Zohar](orallaw.html).
* 5482-*present* is the period corresponding to the Yovel “week” of Yesod, and the Geulah is rooted in the sefirah of Yesod, per Kabbalah.

**Chapter 5**

**Yovel** [**Number**](nchart.html) **“Yovel”**

In the book Imrei Binah, the years 5719 and 5768 are mentioned in relation to the Geulah, because they are the 2 Yovel years which encase the 48th Yovel [cycle](cycles.html).

Why is the 48th Yovel significant? It is because the Gematria of the word Yovel is 48. Therefore, the 47th Yovel, which is the 1st year of the 48th [cycle](cycles.html), marks the beginning of Am Yisrael’s movement towards the Geulah, whereas the end of the [cycle](cycles.html), on the 48th Yovel itself, will bring Am Yisrael’s return to its land, with the arrival of Moshiach.

We now stand after this 48th Yovel [cycle](cycles.html), and we can see that the [events](feasts.html) did not materialize as the text has said explicitly.

With the combined counting system mentioned above, the beginning of the 48th [cycle](cycles.html) is the year 5727, the year of the [Six](six.html)-Day War, with obvious implications.

The year 5719 is given dual significance by Imrei Binah:

* It is the beginning of the 48th Yovel [cycle](cycles.html) (3416 + 47 \* 49)
* It is the end of the 301st lunar [cycles](cycles.html) of 19 years (301 \* 19 = 5719).

The year 5727 has a similar nature:

* It is the beginning of the 48th Yovel [cycle](cycles.html) (3416 + [8 \* 50] + [39 \* 49] = 5727)
* It is the year in which [Pesach](passover.html) falls latest in the solar year (hinted at in the Baraita in Brachot 59b), which is currently the 8th year of the lunar [cycle](cycles.html) of 19 years (8 + 301\*19 = 5727)

This calculation for 5727 is stated in [Zohar](orallaw.html) Chadash in Ma’amar Darach Kokhav miYaakov:

At the [time](time.html) of the [End of Days](lastdays.html), according to the hour of the day, at the [time](time.html) that the [sun](hachama.html) shines, from the 6th Day, at the [time](time.html) that is ready according to the count of years, of Yovel and Shmitah together, which is **רע”ד** (Raa’d, 274 in Gematria) from the 6th Day...

This is at 60 years of the 6th millenium...

Shmitah and Yovel fell together in 5727. The reason that 5727 is called Shmitah, or rather why the latest year of the 19 year [cycle](cycles.html) is called Shmitah, I will not explain now. But notice that the [Zohar](orallaw.html) gives a confirmation: It is 274 years from the end of the 6th day, or 6001 - 274 = 5727. It is 6001 and not 6000, for the [Zohar](orallaw.html) counts using the system of [Seder](haggada.html) Olam Rabba, which is [one](one.html) year lower than our count. This can be shown also from the Introduction to the Tikkunei [Zohar](orallaw.html) 4a, wherein the author implies that that the 2nd [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html) was destroyed in the year 3828, which accords to the [Seder](haggada.html) Olam Rabba.

The end of this same passage of the [Zohar](orallaw.html) Chadash makes it clear that it is describing the [events](feasts.html) surrounding year 60, which as [Zohar](orallaw.html) Vayera 119 tells us, is the Pekidah, a rocky beginning to the Geulah.

If the [Zohar](orallaw.html) defines 5727 as year 60, let us try to complete the picture.

Imrei Binah says that the following Yovel, Yovel [number](nchart.html) 48, brings the arrival of Moshiach. The [Zohar](orallaw.html) in Vayera says that in year 66, Moshiach will be revealed in the Galil.

This next Yovel, in 5776, is also the 66th Yovel counting from Yehoshua’s [time](time.html). That is to say, counting the 16 Yovels before the destruction of the 1st [Beit HaMikdash](mikdash.html), the 2 during [Galut](galuyot.html) [Bavel](bavel.html), and then the 48 more Yovel years from Ezra until 5776, for a total of 66 Yovel years.

We must remember that the revelation of Moshiach, per the [Zohar](orallaw.html), is in 66, whereas the Zechirah, which brings the Geulah, is after another half [time](time.html). This too is hinted at in Imrei Binah, where the author refers to the Dome of the Rock as the desolate abomination. A total of 1335 years after its construction brings us to 5783-5786.

Nonetheless, it is no wonder that the Yovel year brings such advancement in the Geulah process, for this is already [taught](teacher.html) in Kabbalah that the Geulah comes from the side of the Upper Yovel.

**\* \* \***

The Ramban, commenting on Shemot ([Exodus](exodus.html)) 21:2, says:

**2. IF YOU BUY A HERREW SERVANT.** G-d began the [first](one.html) ordinance with the subject of a [Hebrew](hebrew.html) servant, because the [liberation](freedom.html) of the servant in the seventh year contains a remembrance of the [departure from Egypt](thebirth.html) which is mentioned in the [first](one.html) [commandment](cmds613.html), just as He said on it, *And you will remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Eternal your G-d* [*redeemed*](redemption.html) *you; therefore I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *you this thing today*.[[152]](#footnote-152) It also contains a remembrance of the [creation](bara.html), just as the [Sabbath](sabbath.html) does, for the seventh year signals to a servant a complete rest from the work of his master, just as the seventh day of the week does. There is in addition a ‘seventh’ amongst the years, which is the jubilee, for [seven](seven.html) is the chosen of the days [to be the [Sabbath](sabbath.html)], and of the years [to be the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year] , and of the [[seven](seven.html)] Sabbaticals [to be the jubilee]; **and they all point to** [**one**](one.html) **subject, namely, the** [**secret**](sod.html) **of the days of the** [**world**](worlds.html) - from ***Bereshit (in the beginning) till vayechulu (and they were finished).[[153]](#footnote-153)*** **Therefore this** [**commandment**](cmds613.html) **deserved to be mentioned** [**first**](one.html)**, because of its extreme importance, alluding as it does to great things in the process of** [**creation**](bara.html).

Ramban’s reticent and challenging language is illuminated in an essay by l. Weinstock[[154]](#footnote-154) where he traces the development of this Cabalistic doctrine: The universe is subject to [cycles](cycles.html) of [seven](seven.html) thousand years; after each [six](six.html) thousand years of growth and activity the seventh thousand is [one](one.html) of “rest” - destruction. This process repeats itself [seven](seven.html) times - representing a total of [forty](forty.html)-[nine](nine.html) thousand years, the fiftieth thousand being the jubilee when all existence returns to its beginnings. This phenomenon applies to the planet on which we live as well as to the [worlds](worlds.html) above us. [One](one.html) can thus get a glimpse into the meaning of Ramban’s words before us, that this [commandment](cmds613.html) “alludes to great things in the process of [creation](bara.html).”

Rabbenu Bahya[[155]](#footnote-155) accepted the notion of [cycles](cycles.html) according to which the history of the [world](worlds.html) proceeds in a series of 6,000 years followed by a 1000-year [Sabbath](sabbath.html) and then another series and so on, until the great Jubilee at the end of 49,000 years.

[One](one.html) of the main concepts in *Sefer HaTemunah[[156]](#footnote-156)* is that of the [connection](connection.html) of the [Sabbatical](shmita.html) year ([Hebrew](hebrew.html): [*Shmita*](shmita.html)) with *sephirot* and the [creation](bara.html) of more than [one](one.html) [world](worlds.html). The author of *Sefer HaTemunah* believed that [worlds](worlds.html) are created and destroyed, supporting this theory with a quote from the [*Midrash*](orallaw.html), “God created universes and destroys them”.[[157]](#footnote-157) The [Talmud](orallaw.html)[[158]](#footnote-158) states that “[Six](six.html) thousand years shall the [world](worlds.html) exist, and [one](one.html) [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate”. *Sefer HaTemunah* asserts that this 7000-year [cycle](cycles.html) is equivalent to [one](one.html) [Sabbatical](shmita.html) cyle. Because there are [seven](seven.html) such [cycles](cycles.html) per Jubilee, the author concludes that the [world](worlds.html) will exist for 49,000 years.[[159]](#footnote-159)

**\* \* \***

Further reading:

Maimonides, “Yad Hachazaka”, [Talmud](orallaw.html) Torah, 3:10.

Maimonides, “[Laws](law.html) of [shmita](shmita.html) and yovel”, 13:13.

**\* \* \***

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1. Shemot (Exodus) 19:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Yehoshua (Joshua) 6:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ezra II, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lev. XXV, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Though the Jubilees had been abolished, years of release were still observed, consequently they had to count the Jubilees in order to be able to observe the years of release in their proper time. For the year of Jubilee was not included in the [seven](seven.html) years cycle. They therefore had to know when the year of Jubilee arrives to be able to fix the next year of release, which was to be the eighth year following the year of Jubilee. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the cycle of seven years. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Both as the year of release and the beginning of the next seven year cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Mechilta here on the Verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ecclesiastes 1:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. I Samuel 1:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Isaiah 63:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Mechilta here on the Verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The epithet for Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, the redactor of the Mishnah , or as he is often known Rabbenu Hakadosh, “Our holy teacher,” or simply “Rabbi.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In his commentary to Leviticus 25:40-41, Ibn Ezra wrote on the verses. ***He will serve with you unto the year of jubilee. Then will he go out from you ...*** : “This is what the Rabbis have received by tradition concerning the verse, ***and he will serve him ‘t’olam;”*** meaning that he is to serve him until the jubilee year.” Thus Ibn Ezra did understand the verses there and found in them Scriptural proof that ***olam*** means fifty years, whilst here he wrote that it means “time.” Apparently, “he forgot” - as Ramban puts it - “what he wrote with understanding elsewhere.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I.e. The year is reckoned to commence at different dates for different purposes, as the Mishnah goes on to specify. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The first month of the [Jewish calendar](calendar.html) (in Biblical times known as ‘the month of [Abib](feasts.html)‘, or the springing corn), commencing in the latter half of March or the earlier part of April. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. If a document is dated with a certain year in a king’s reign, the year is reckoned to have commenced in [Nisan](feasts.html), no matter in what month the king came to the throne. The [Gemara](orallaw.html) discusses what kinds of kings are meant — whether Israelitish or other. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The meaning of this is discussed infra in the Gemara. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The [sixth month](feasts.html) of the Jewish calendar. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For purposes of tithe it was necessary to specify the year in which cattle were born, because cattle born in one year could not be given as tithe for cattle born in another, v. Lev. XXVII, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. So that according to these authorities there were only three New Years. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. The seventh month. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The meaning of this is discussed infra in the Gemara. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. I.e., from the first of Tishri in these years ploughing and similar operations were forbidden. V. Lev. XXV, 4, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For reckoning the years of ‘uncircumcision’. V. Lev. XIX, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. I.e., those [gathered](gather.html) after this date could not be used as tithe for those gathered before. Cf. n. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The eleventh month. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For tithing the fruit. V. notes 6 and 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. But which are ushered in with a blast of the [shofar](shofar.html) on the Day of Atonement, in the daytime. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Lit. ‘depend on an act’. I.e., the New Years which begin with the advent of the day itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The prohibition of the new corn for personal consumption and for offerings respectively is raised only by the offering of the [Omer](omer.html) and the [two](two.html) loaves. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Lev. XXV, 9. Referring to the Jubilee. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid 10. These words are apparently superfluous, it having already been said, and thou shalt number forty-nine years. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Lev. XXV, 9. Referring to the Jubilee. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. In sign of their approaching [freedom](freedom.html). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Cf. infra 24a. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Lev. XXV, II. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid 10. These words are apparently superfluous, it having already been said, and thou shalt number forty-nine years. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. V. infra. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The word ‘it’ being specific. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Rashi 21:6 and Vayikra 25:8-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. From PARTNERS IN TIME [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Vayikra 25:55 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Bava Metzia 10b [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Shemot 21:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Succah 52a [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 12:5 [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Kiddushin 30b [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Avot 6:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Devarim 11:21 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Avot 6:2 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. They have no need of this lesson, seeing that they do not consider the year sanctified from its inception. (Cf. Tosafot. s.v. ibcru 8b). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Lit. ‘the year fifty and first’. So our texts, the meaning being, according to Rashi, that you are not to reckon the fiftieth year as fiftieth to the Jubilee and first to the next septennate. Tosafot, by a slight change of wording, renders: ‘You are to count the fiftieth year (as fiftieth to the Jubilee), but you are not to count the fiftieth year as one (to the following septennate)’, which is a smoother reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. As fiftieth to the Jubilee and first to the next septennate. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. .I.e., add a little from the ordinary week-day on to the holy day. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ex. XXXIV, 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Lev. XXV, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ploughing under trees in the sixth year which will benefit them in the seventh. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Stuff which grows of itself and reached a third of its growth in the seventh year. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. As there is no ploughing, which is considered a religious duty. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. R. Ishmael takes the words ‘in plowing time etc.’ to refer to the Sabbath, and learns from them that the ‘[Omer](omer.html) to be brought on the second day of [Passover](passover.html) may be reaped on [Sabbath](sabbath.html), v. Mak. 8b. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Lev. XXIII, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. And after dark would be on the tenth. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Lev. XXIII, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ran observes that since the former problem is left unsolved, a day’ would be the equivalent of ‘one day’ (since when in doubt the more stringent interpretation is adopted), and consequently a jubilee as one jubilee, and the problem cannot arise. Therefore he must have vowed ‘this (the) jubilee’. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. On the former supposition it is forbidden; on the latter it is permitted. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Lev. XXV, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. I.e., that year is the fiftieth, the jubilee, and it cannot be counted also as the first of the following fifty and seven year cycles. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ibid. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Since there is no sowing in the jubilee year. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. The forty-eighth year produce must suffice for itself, the forty-ninth, which is a Sabbatical year, the fiftieth, which is Jubilee, and until the harvesting of the fifty-first. This is a difficulty on any view, R. Judah’s included: he posits it merely to prove that the Biblical statements about the Sabbatical year do not in any case apply to the Jubilee period, even on the view of the Rabbis. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. I.e., the verse by which you desire to refute me. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. A Yovel of Yovels,

    <https://sites.google.com/site/yovelgeulah/chapter-3> [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:15 [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Vayikra (Leviticus) 23:16 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Tehillim 102:14 per [Kol HaTor](http://www.yedidnefesh.com/kaballah/kol-hator/index.htm) chapter 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. This is apparently the approach of Judah Ben Samuel who was a legendary and prolific German rabbi of the 12th century who made some astonishing and specific predictions about the future of Jerusalem and Israel that came true. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. גילוי at <http://keitzmeguleh.blogspot.com> [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Amos 4:7 [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. I.e., not actual [famine](file:///G:\Word\Stars\famine.html), but the first signs thereof, no one being completely satisfied. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Lit., ‘men on whose behalf miracles occur.’ — Jast. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Lit., ‘plenty and no plenty’. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Either Heavenly voices announcing the advent of [Messiah](file:///G:\Word\Stars\mashiach.html), or the blasts of the great [Shofar](file:///G:\Word\Stars\shofar.html); cf. Isa. XXVII, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Though troubles and evil decrees have come in abundance, they were not in the order prescribed. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Most of this section is an excerpt from an article in “Israel Toray” magazine [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Vayikra (Leviticus) 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. **Mamlūk,** also spelled **Mameluke**, slave soldier, a member of one of the armies of slaves that won political control of several Muslim states during the Middle Ages. Under the Ayyūbid sultanate, Mamlūk generals used their power to establish a dynasty that ruled Egypt and Syria from 1250 to 1517. The name is derived from an Arabic word for slave. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Jerusalem, 1531-1572, Safed [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. 1591 Candia – 1655 Prague [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. “Mazref le-Chochma” [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. 1724-1806 [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. 1800-1865 [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. 1817-1891 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. 1925-1993 [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Vienna [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Mainz [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Speyer [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. According to Rav Yehuda HeHasid, 5727 (Six Day War) was a Yovel and the next Yovel is 5777. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Erachin 32b [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Ar. 12a [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *The Soncino Talmud* footnote [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot shmita Veyovel, 10:4,8 [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Of fifty years. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. [Messiah. The belief in his Davidic descent is already mentioned in the [Psalms](psalms1.html) of Solomon XVII, 21.] [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Of the last fifty years. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. I.e., if at the end of the jubilee, shall it be at the beginning of the fiftieth year or at the end thereof? [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. He will certainly not come before then, but may delay a long time afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Vayikra (Leviticus) 25:9 [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Sifra, Be-Har 2, 106c [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Rosh Hashanah 29a [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Encyclopedia Judaica on Sabbatical years. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Lev. XXV, 9. Referring to the Jubilee. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Ibid 10. These words are apparently superfluous, it having already been said, and thou shalt number forty-nine years. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. In sign of their approaching freedom. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Cf. infra 24a. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. from Mishna comments on RH 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. from [Mishna](orallaw.html) comments on RH 1:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. They have no need of this lesson, seeing that they do not consider the year sanctified from its inception. (Cf. Tosafot. s.v. ibcru 8b). [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Lit. ‘the year fifty and first’. So our texts, the meaning being, according to Rashi, that you are not to reckon the fiftieth year as fiftieth to the Jubilee and first to the next septennate. Tosafot, by a slight change of wording, renders: ‘You are to count the fiftieth year (as fiftieth to the Jubilee), but you are not to count the fiftieth year as one (to the following septennate)’, which is a smoother reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. As fiftieth to the Jubilee and first to the next septennate. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. I.e., add a little from the ordinary week-day on to the holy day. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Ex. XXXIV, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Lev. XXV, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Ploughing under trees in the sixth year which will benefit them in the seventh. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
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130. R. Ishmael takes the words ‘in plowing time etc.’ to refer to the [Sabbath](sabbath.html), and learns from them that the ‘[Omer](omer.html) to be brought on the second day of [Passover](passover.html) may be reaped on Sabbath, v. Mak. 8b. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Lev. XXIII, 32 [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. And after dark would be on the tenth. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Lev. XXIII, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. And thereby reintroduced into force the [laws](law.html) of the Years of Release and Jubilee. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Ezra IV, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ibid. VI, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ibid. VII, 8. R. Ashi holds that the statement ‘the same happened with the second [Temple](temple.html)‘ refers also to the termination of the jubilee and explains it by deducting [six](six.html) years from the total of 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Jos. XIV, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Ibid. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Allowing [forty](forty.html) years for the sojourn of Israel in the wilderness. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Vayikra (Leviticus) 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. See also 4:27, 8:18 [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Ohr Somayach - In-Depth Questions on the parsha and Rashi’s commentary. Parshat Behar For the week ending 13 Iyar 5755, 12 & 13 May 1995 [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Rosh HaShana 8a [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Tehillim (Psalms) 90:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. See Bechorot 52b [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. see Mesechet Rosh HaShana 10b-11a [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. The woman accused of adultery. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. BEHAR A selection from [Midrashim](orallaw.html) and [Talmud](orallaw.html) Published and (c) Copyrighted 1996 Prepared by the Students of Beit Chaya Mushka Seminary and edited by Rabbi Berl Bell [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. BEHAR A selection from [Midrashim](orallaw.html) and [Talmud](orallaw.html) Published and (c) Copyrighted 1996 Prepared by the Students of Beit Chaya Mushka Seminary and edited by Rabbi Berl Bell [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Deuteronomy 15:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Genesis 2:1. See Ramban Vol. I, pp. 61-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. B’maglei Haniglah V’hanistar, pp. 151-241 [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Bahya Ibn Asher was a 13th-century Spanish biblical exegete, kabbalist, and the author of a commentary to the Pentateuch written in the year 129I. Bahya was a disciple of Solomon Ibn Adret, whose kabbalistic ideas as well as those of Adret’s teacher, Nahmanides, are expressed more or less openly in his commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. *Sefer HaTemunah* was probably written anonymously in the 13th or 14th century, but it is pseudepigraphly attributed to Nehunya ben HaKanah and Rabbi Ishmael, tannaim of the 1st and 2nd centuries. According to *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library Catalog,* the work was composed in the 1270s. The first extant edition was published in the city of Korets in Poland in 1784. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Aryeh Kaplan, Yaakov Elman, Israel ben Gedaliah Lipschutz (January 1993). *Immortality, resurrection, and the age of the universe: a kabbalistic view*. Ktav Publishing House. pp. 6–9. ISBN 978-0-88125-345-0. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Sanhedrin 97a [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Ibid. 154 [↑](#footnote-ref-159)