



TableTalk: Behar

Why are there special laws only in for the land of Israel? And have you ever heard of positive peer pressure?

In last week's *parsha*, we learned about the ability we have to sanctify time by observing Shabbat and the Jewish holidays throughout the year. These days are special and set aside as times to think about how God created the world (Shabbat) and how God has saved us (national/historical reasons for holidays) as well as continues to provide daily (more agricultural aspects of the holidays).

In this week's Torah reading, Parshat Behar, we talk about sanctifying a place – namely, the Land of Israel. This Land is different and therefore once every 7 years we stop working the land and give it a rest. And every 49 years, we celebrate *Yovel* – a year in which not only is the land left fallow, but all slaves are set free and all land goes back to original owners if there have been recent purchases.

Why is this Land so special? There are 26 mitzvot which can be performed only in Israel. What is so different about this land which leads God to command special mitzvot for/in it?

Discuss your own ideas.

When the Yovel year begins, year 50 - after 7 shmittah cycles – a shofar is blown on Yom Kippur, and that is when all the slaves that work for Jewish families are set free. Why is there a shofar sounded throughout the land? Why not just tell everyone to do it on a certain day?

The Sefer haChinuch explains that since sending a slave free is a very hard thing to do; most people need some encouragement. If everyone, at the sound of the shofar, sets their slaves free at once, it will be so much easier to do. Knowing you're not alone is very strengthening. The shofar sound will get everyone all pumped up to do what has to be done! This is a great example of positive peer pressure. In Parshat Ki-Tisa, we discussed the effects of negative peer pressure with the Golden Calf. Here, we see the Torah teaching us about positive peer pressure, and how the right environment can encourage us to do the right thing.

Where/when have you experienced positive peer pressure? Do you seek out a group of friends that you know will help you to do the right thing? Give an example to illustrate your experience or understanding of positive peer pressure.