

# Torah comment

## 'Parshat Behar' details laws of 'shemitta' – Jewish sabbatical year

Jewish religious authorities today allow temporary sale of land

This week's double Torah portion consisting of "Behar" and "Bechukotai" formally conclude the book of Vayikra, Leviticus. In the first of the parshas, "Behar", we are taught the laws of "shemitta" – The sabbatical year. That is, every seventh year is a year of rest for the land (cf. every seventh day is "Shabbat"). Additionally, every fiftieth year was known as the "yovel" – jubilee year, which was similar to a regular shemitta year, but in addition to the prohibition on working the land, Hebrew slaves were set free, all land deals became void and were returned to their original owners.

An additional prohibition in "Parsha Behar" is the prohibition on taking interest from a fellow Jew.

Shemitta – a modern-day approach: No doubt, one can imagine the financial and economic hardships that shemitta may produce. Farmers would be out of their source of livelihood and fruits and vegetables would be both scarce and at a high premium!

As such, some authorities have introduced a "heter mechira" – a sale which allows the fields to be "sold" to non-Jews, and in that way, Jews would then be permitted to work the fields and



### Torah Thoughts

By RABBI ARI ENKIN



A wheatfield ready for harvesting: The Torah decrees every seventh year as a year of rest for the land, where trespassers can eat whatever remains from the previous year's growth.

sell their produce. This is similar to the "sale" of chametz prior to Pesach in which the chametz is "sold" to a non-Jew, notwithstanding that it remains one's longterm property, be used after Pesach. A true legal fiction. The validity of the heter mechira is subject to much debate, and hinges upon whether or not the mitzvah of shemitta is biblical or rabbinical in our day and age.

The mitzva of shemitta is certainly one that can set the bar concerning having faith in God for observing mitzvot. God asks farmers to divest themselves from their source of income for an entire year and allow anyone to trespass the field, eating whatever may have remained from the previous year's growth! Those who observe this mitzvah are truly partners with God in mastery over the land. God promises plenty to those who make the effort to keep this mitzvah.

Dvar Torah – Taking

When was the last time you spoke with your friends and family about God? It was once truth that we did not talk about personal matters like sex in public. But today, we talk about everything but God. We talk about everything except what life is all about.

On Sunday evening, May 28 at 7:00 PM, the Winnipeg Council of Rabbis will help guide us in study and discussion about the nature of God. It is customary in the days before Shavuot to engage in study. This year, your spiritual teachers will attempt to focus your attention on the kind of God that you believe in. Is God good, kind, all-knowing? How can we talk about God? Can we really know anything about God?

### Interest:

"You shall not take any interest from him." Why is it prohibited to lend money to a fellow Jew and charge interest? Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin explains that the most important thing we have in life is time. Time is what puts everything into perspective. In truth, we should be sad at every passing moment, for each one brings us closer to "the day of reckoning." But someone who lends money and charges interest has the exact opposite feeling. Every second that passes brings him great joy, because he is making more interest on his money.

The second parsha, "Bechukotai", heavily emphasizes the results of observance or rejection of the Torah and its mitzvot. We are told that proper observance of the mitzvot will lead to peace and prosperity and all forms of material success. A gloomy picture is painted if we choose not to observe the Torah.

But wait a sec! The Talmud (Kiddushin 39b) teaches that there is no reward for doing a mitzva in this world, and that it all comes in the next world! So what is the parsha talking about when it discusses rewards and punishments? Commentaries suggest that the parsha refers to collective, not individual, rewards and punishments. This seems to "fit in", seeing that the parsha uses the plural in describing rewards and punishments.

The writer, former scholar-in-residence at the Rady Jewish Community Centre and Winnipeg Hillel/JSA director, is an Orthodox rabbi now living in Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel.

## SYNAGOGUE SERVICE TIMES

**CHAVURAT TEFILA SYNAGOGUE**  
Friday, May 19, Candle: 8:58, Mincha: 7:30, Shacharit: 9:30, Shabbat ends: 10:02. Sunday morning services: 9:00. Weekday morning services: 8:00, May 21-25 evenings: 9:00.  
The Chavurat Tefila Synagogue on the corner of Hartford and McGregor offers traditional Orthodox services in an informal setting. We welcome anyone who has yahrzeit or is saying kaddish to join us for our twice-daily minyanim.

**CONGREGATION ETZ CHAYIM**  
Friday, May 19 - morning service 7:30 a.m., evening service 6:00 p.m., candle lighting 8:55 p.m. Saturday, May 20 - Behar-Bechukotai - morning service 9:00 a.m., evening service 8:50 p.m. Shabbat ends 10:02 p.m.  
Sunday, May 21-Monday, May 22 - morning service 9:00 a.m., evening service 8:30 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 23-Thursday, May 25 - morning service 7:30 a.m., evening service 8:30 p.m.  
Thursday, May 25 - Women's League Torah Fund Evening.

**CONGREGATION SHAAREY ZEDEK**  
website www.shaareszedek.mb.ca  
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Weekday Morning Minyan 7:30 a.m.; Morning Service on Shabbat, Sundays & Holidays 9:00 a.m.; Daily Evening Minyan 6:00 p.m. Sat-Thur; 5:30 p.m. Fri.  
Friday, May 19: Morning Minyan 7:30 a.m.; Evening Minyan 5:30 p.m. (Tonight Omer 37); Kabbalat Shabbat Service 6:00 p.m.; Light Shabbat Candles 8:55 p.m.  
Shabbat, May 20: Morning Service 9:00 a.m.; Asher Billinkoff Bar Mitzvah (Parshat Behar/Bechukotai); Pre-Junior Congregation 10:30 a.m.; Torat Chayim Torah Study 12:30 p.m.; Evening Minyan 6:00 p.m. (Tonight Omer 38); Jordana & Sarah Sommer B'not Mitzvah 8:30 p.m. (Parshat Bemidbar); Shabbat ends 10:02 p.m.  
Monday, May 22 (Victoria Day): Morning Minyan 9:00 a.m.; Evening Minyan 6:00 p.m. (Tonight Omer 40).

**HERZLIA - ADAS YESHURON CONGREGATION**  
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Sunday Shacharit: 9:00 a.m.  
Weekday Mincha: 7:30 p.m. Weekday Shacharit: 7:00 a.m. Monday, May 22 Shacharit: 9:00 a.m. (Victoria Day)

**TALMUD TORAH - BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE**  
Located at 1525 Main Street. Candle lighting time for Friday, May 19 at 8:55 p.m. Mincha/Kabbalat Shabbat at 8:55 p.m.  
Saturday morning service at 9:15 a.m. Sedra of the week - Behar-Bechukotai. Mincha service at 9:00 p.m. Shabbat ends at 10:02 p.m.  
Daily Mincha/Maariv services at 9:00 p.m. Traditional Orthodox services are conducted, and everyone is invited to attend.

**TEMPLE SHALOM**  
Temple Shalom, Winnipeg's only Reform Congregation, 1077 Grant Avenue, will be holding: on Friday, May 19th, a special alternative musical Shabbat Service, "Friday Night Live," with Cantor Len Udow, Janet Pelletier-Goetze and David Pelletier featuring new music and vocal arrangements. All are welcome!

# Community news

## 3 generations of women parade down runway

'Intergeneration Fashion Show' a sellout event

By REBECA KUROPATWA

Combined Jewish Appeal Women's Campaign and the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg's Young Adult Division (YAD) teamed up to present a glamorous fashion show at Shaarey Zedek Synagogue April 30.

A surprise performance that kicked things off was a vignette, written by Kayla Gordon and Rick Chafe, performed by actress and director, Maria Bernstein.

Lisa Kroft, one of the event's co-chairs, says, "Glenna Kay and I felt that this vignette would make for a very powerful performance."

It was about an Argentinian woman who has moved to Winnipeg, and the strong support she received from the federation.

Over 230 tickets to the Spring into Summer 2006: Intergenerational Fashion Show were sold, and the event completely sold out.

Kay and Kroft were the event co-chairs. Stephanie Jacobs-



Fashion Show Committee members. Photo by Rebeca Kuropatwa.



Children model fashions on the runway. Photo by Rebeca Kuropatwa.

Lockhart was the show's coordinator, as she is experienced in making fashion shows a success. Kroft says they wanted "to have a program that would involve a lot of people in the community – grandmothers, mothers, daughters. The highlight of the night was seeing women and children from the community walking together. It was a real family experience." Kroft says, "Glenna (Kay) and I formed a committee in the fall,

and asked Stephanie (Jacobs-Lockhart) to be the fashion show coordinator, and she really brought the show together." The fashion show models comprised three generations of local ladies. Shawna and Jessica Cogan, Minnie Bell, Debby Brown, and Danita Aziza were just a few of the women who modelled the Swank Boutique and Mutch-Mor designer clothing. Kroft says: "We wanted to include women who have given their time to the Jewish community."

Shawna Cogan, one of the models in the show, adds: "It was very well organized, and fun to be a part of." Minnie Bell, another fashion show model, says, "The coordination of the

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