

א ביסל תורה!

May 23, 2025

THE PARSHA NEWSLETTER
OF MAIMONIDES SCHOOL

כ"ה אייר תשפ"ה
בהר/בחקתי

שמיטה: a Test Within a Blessing

By Anton Druskin '28

שמיטה starts with a description of the year, "שנים תזרע שדך ושש שנים תזמך כרמך, ואספת את-תבואתה ובשנה השביעית שבת שבתון יהיה לך" "six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the yield. But in the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath of complete rest, a sabbath of Hashem: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard" (ויקרא כ"ה:ג). This initially seems like a very irrational commandment. How is one supposed to make a living if they are not allowed to take anything to sell? That would be like telling a construction worker that they cannot work every seventh year and have to live on what they earned during the previous six. This is a massive financial risk. Regardless, Hashem still commands us to do this.

One has to trust in Hashem that He will provide enough crop so that there will be sufficient for the whole year. In order to make this amount of trust in Hashem more reasonable for people, Hashem promises to give three times the crop in the sixth year. This seems like a miraculous blessing; however, at the same time, it is also a trial hidden in a different form. At first glance, one might think that this would encourage everyone to keep the שמיטה year, but it could

also do the opposite. When people see anything going in an upwards trend, they immediately assume it will keep doing so and want in.

An example of this is when people assumed that because tech stocks were going up, they would go up forever, and so they bought in. If somebody sees that their field is suddenly producing so much more, they would want to capitalize on the seemingly very fertile time period to gain as much profit as they can before the next drought. If the people do not see Hashem's hidden hand during those good times, they will think it is just luck and sin. Very similarly, פרשת בחקתי starts off by talking about the blessings that בני ישראל will get if we follow the תורה, and the curses that we will get if we do not. During those good times, we might mistakenly think that all the good results we get are from us and not Hashem, and this pride could lead us to sin.

This phenomenon happens all throughout Jewish history. Oftentimes, we only see when Hashem does big miracles but not the everyday blessings. An example of this is אחאב, the king of ישראל, in the end of מלכים א'. He clearly saw Hashem's hand in large miracles; however, when he won a war through Hashem, he did not notice. We can learn from this to always remember that in the end, everything we have is from Hashem, not from us, and that if we stray away from the תורה, we will be left with nothing.

Ideas in the תוכחה and ברכה

By Theo Fraenkel '28

בני Hashem starts off with פרשת בחקתי the good things that will happen if they follow the תורה and מצוות and the bad things that happen if they do not.

One of the blessings is וְהָשִׁיג לָכֶם וְיִשׂ אֶת-בְּצִיר וּבְצִיר יִשְׁנֶה אֶת-זֶרַע וְאֶכְלֶתֶם לְחֶמְקֶם לְשֹׁבַע וְיִשְׂבְּתֶם לְבָטָח “because of the abundant produce threshing will overtake the grape harvest and the grape harvest overtake the time to plant, and you will eat your bread for satiation and you will live securely in your land” (ויקרא כ"ו:ה). The blessing is that בני ישראל will always be busy harvesting produce because of how abundant the produce is. comments that this פסוק is telling us that keeping busy keeps us fulfilled and healthy. Due to the vast quantity of produce, life would be filled with tasks and there would be no time for the יצר הרע and sinning. However, when we are not occupied with work, we tend to get bored and look for stimulation that may not be entirely beneficial to us.

Another ברכה described in the פרשה is that of בני ישראל's ability to fend off armies. The פסוק states, וְרִדְפוּ מִקֶּם חֲמִשָּׁה מֵאָה וּמֵאָה מִקֶּם רִבְבָה יִרְדְּפוּ וְנָפְלוּ “five of you will pursue one hundred and one hundred of you will pursue ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword” (ויקרא כ"ו:ח). This seems to be a contradiction. Five people can fend off one

hundred, meaning בני ישראל need a ratio of 1:20 to beat an enemy. The second half of that פסוק states that one hundred can fend off ten thousand, meaning בני ישראל need a ratio of 1:10. and the ספרא explain that when Jews unite together to solve problems they are much more powerful and can achieve much greater things.

The תורה then introduces a list of curses that בני ישראל will receive if they do certain sins. The ספרא, here, understands this list as sins that begin a chain reaction with one sin leading to another, worse, sin. Based on this פסוק we learn that when we do not make time for תורה, we may end up not following מצוות. One will then come to disrespect people who are loyal to the תורה, disrespect the leaders that learn out the מצוות, stop people from keeping מצוות, deny that Hashem gave מצוות, and finally deny Hashem's existence. This ספרא shows us that although our actions may seem small and insignificant they can build to become a part of us. Although, of course, there are many factors, in actuality, skipping learning is like a mini act of denying Hashem, due to the fact that we are not making space for Him. Once we do this consistently enough we may altogether deny Him.

We should always prioritize Hashem in our lives, keep busy and stay united with עם ישראל.



Receive A BISL TORAH
on WhatsApp

A BISL TORAH

is published weekly
at Maimonides School,
Brookline, Massachusetts

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Avi Abbett '25
Eitan Orkaby '27

EDITORS

Theo Fraenkel '28
Eliana Goldenholz '26

FACULTY ADVISOR

Rabbi Yaakov Jaffe

FOUNDERS

Binyamin Orkaby '24
Ephraim Fischer '24
