

5-25-24 Message to Lemba Jews Congregation in Mumbwa – *B'Har* (On the Mountain)
Torah Portion; Lev 25:1-26:2
Haftarah: Jer 16:19 – 17:14
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Titus 3:14

The Abundance of the Heart

Central question: Is the soil of your heart producing an abundant harvest of righteousness, for the blessing of others?

The parasha called *B'Har* takes its name from the first line of chapter 25. “The L-rd then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying...”

Lev 25:1-5

25 The Lord then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying, 2 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land which I shall give you, then the land shall have a sabbath to the Lord. 3 'Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, 4 but during the seventh year the land shall have a sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

25:1 נִדְבַר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר:
 And spake the Lord unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,
1696 3068 413 4872 2022 5514 559

2 דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם
 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them,
1696 413 1121 3478 559 413

כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם
 When ye come into the land which I give you,
3588 935 413 776 834 589 5414 3807a

וְשָׁבַתָּה הָאֶרֶץ שָׁבַת לַיהוָה:
 then shall keep the land a sabbath unto the Lord.
7673 776 7676 3068

3 שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע שְׂדֶךְ וּשְׁשָׁנִים וְשֵׁשׁ
 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years
8337 8141 2232 7704 8337 8141

תִּזְמַר תְּבֹאָתָהּ: אֶת-וְאִסַּפְתָּ בְּרִמָּה
 thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;
2168 3754 622 853 8393

Parasha *B'har* begins with instructions regarding the seventh “sabbatical year” when the land rests, as well as instructions regarding the fiftieth year after our people entered the Land, when the shofar’s sound declared that all slaves were free, all debts forgiven, and the land that was sold to those outside of the tribe’s lineage would return to that tribe’s ownership again. It’s like G-d presses a giant “reset” button, every 49 years.

That special year is called in Hebrew the year of *yuval*. Today in English, we call it the year of “jubilee.” Because of the destruction of the Second Temple, much of the record regarding the year of Yuval was lost. But Jews have been calculating the cycle even in the diaspora. The next Sabbatical year will be the year 5789 on the Jewish calendar. So Sept. 20, 2028–Sept. 9, 2029.

Most especially, in the year-long time of the 7th-year shabbat for the land, as well as during the *yuval*, we are not to sow our seed in the land of Israel, to till, to plant, or to harvest so as to sell our increase. The land will still produce, but that is set aside for a particular purpose.

During those Sabbaths for the land, whatever the land produces without our effort is not to be gathered in the normal fashion, but used solely for the benefit of a specific group of people.

Lev 25:6-7

'And all of you shall have the sabbath products of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens

with you. 7 'Even your cattle and the animals that are in your land shall have all its crops to eat.

Lev 25:11-12

11 'You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. 12 'For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field (gather no more than you need for that day).

The people heard this proclamation, and began to do some mental calculations. If we must now share what exists in our fields with others in the community, and if that field only produces enough for our family's needs, then how will we survive this year on much less?

G-d anticipated that question, and gave us the answer.

Lev 25:20-22

20 'But if you say, "What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?" 21 then I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring

forth the crop for three years. 22 'When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating the old until the ninth year when its crop comes in.

He promises not one, not two, but three times the normal production, so that we might have plenty of food to last until the next harvest comes in.

If you read the parasha closely, you will see that the regulation of the 7-year Shabbet for the Land, and the 49-year *yuval*, apply only in the Land of Israel, *after* we enter it and dwell in it.

We find that clear limitation in verse two. “When you come **into the land** which I shall give you, **then the land** shall have a sabbath to the Lord.”

True, this is command tied to the Land of Israel itself, but what about for us here in the *galut* (dispersion)? Does it also apply here?

I believe it is not mandatory, but rather voluntary. I liken it to the offering of thanksgiving. This offering is not made because of sin, or for purity, or the usual things. It is simply an expression of a joyful heart, saying “thanks” to G-d for all He has done.

It is clear that the L-rd honors those who recognize all He has done, by bringing a thanksgiving offering.

Ps 50:23

23 He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me;
And to him who orders his way aright I shall show the
salvation (Yeshua) of God.

If your heart is so overcome by joy in what G-d has done for you, and you believe that you should observe the command of the Sabbath of the lands upon which you grow your crops – even if they are far away from the Land of Israel, then please do. And do so with joy.

The Psalmist speaks longingly of a future day when the courts of the rebuilt Temple will be full of such offerings.

Ps 116:17-19

17 To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And call upon the name of the Lord.
18 I shall pay my vows to the Lord,
Oh may it be in the presence of all His people,

19 In the courts of the Lord's house,
In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord!

Those who calculate the timing of the year of Yuval might be wrong. I don't know. We will all know perfectly, when Yeshua returns to rule in His kingdom.

I believe that G-d is not nearly so concerned about whether I am perfect in my observance as He is about whether my heart is fully dedicated to Him, and I am doing the best that I can.

When we lived in Colorado, my wife Pam and I made the determination that when the year of Yuval came next, we would offer that particular thanksgiving offering to our King.

I am not a farmer, I am a gardener. My small garden was only about 30 feet by 12 feet. I have a number of different vegetables in my garden, but I want to talk today mainly about green bean plants.

I take note of the most robust plants, and allow those seeds to mature, and I gather them at the end of the season. And then I plant the seeds from last year in small starter pots, then transplant them after the last snow to

the garden. In the spring of the year before the year of Yuval, I had many more starter plants than ever before.

After transplanting them, and checking to be certain that they were going to survive and produce, I decided to count the number of bean plants. I had to count them twice to be sure I hadn't miscounted, because the number was so large.

I had 330 bean plants. Some of them grew taller than knee-high. The average total production was something like 10 beans per plant. That means I gathered something like 3,300 individual bean pods.

During the days of most robust production, I was gathering two gallon-sized ziplock bags full of green beans *every day*.

The bean pods were developing so rapidly that I wasn't able to harvest them all before they simply were too large – and then could only be used for seeds.

If I missed a day of gathering, the number of “too big to harvest” pods would seem to double. But even when I didn't skip a day, things were still getting away from me.

One day I would judge a pod to be too small for harvest, and the next time I saw it, it was too large. So, the number of pods destined to become seed for next year grew at a surprising rate.

Soon, we filled up a large segment of our storage with green beans. And at the end of the season I brought in the seeds for processing. I wound up with a gallon-sized ziplock bag full of seed as well.

I haven't calculated whether what came in the year was twice or three times our normal harvest... but it was certainly much more than normal.

One thing was clear – we had much more in our storage than would be eaten by our family in the coming year, or before next year's crop is brought in. And we had many times more seeds than needed for planting the next year.

The other plants in the garden also produced abundantly. The corn was amazing. The yellow squash was abundant. But the peas grew to be over my head, and produced many multiples of what they had produced in any other previous year.

Because we had such an abundance, we are able to fill the storage of some families who need food, and we also gave seeds to other believers for their coming gardens as well.

It is in this way that G-d's abundance to us becomes a gift to many.

Why did our garden produce such an overabundance? Did it have something to do with the fact that Pam and I decided to set apart the Sabbatical year for the land?

I do know this. G-d is not manipulated. He doesn't owe me anything. But I also know enough about Him to say that He loves to bless those who love Him. I choose to attribute the abundance I experienced to His love.

Does the abundance from the garden convince me that I am His, and He is mine? It certainly doesn't hurt. But is it really necessary?

We know that we are created to do good deeds, and to be "fruitful".

Titus 3:14

And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds (mitzvot) to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Zambia is currently experiencing a drought. Food is now hard to find, and crops have failed. Is this bad weather condition in some way an indication that we as a nation are out of G-d's will? It might, but there is only one way to find out.

2 Chron 7:13-15

"If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, 14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

If we as a people turn our hearts totally to G-d, and we keep His ways, repenting from where we have failed to obey Him, there might just be a miracle from heaven come upon this land.

I wish to tell you about how G-d has blessed some land that we have in Texas. We have dedicated that land to G-d. We folllyowed G-d's ways on our land. Our animals had more babies, which were healthier. There was rain upon our land which did not fall on the land of neighbors. All was going well.

Two years ago, a fire started on a road that leads past our land. We had been in a drought for 6 months, much like Zambia. The trees on our land are very flammable. The winds were blowing hard. The fire started and went across our land burning about a fourth of it. The wind shifted twice more, and each time the fire went across a different part of our land. In the end 80% of the land was completely burned. We lost many very good animals.

We fought fire for 10 days without a pause. Then, on a Friday, we had enough of the fire stopped to simply have a Shabbes rest. My family sat around the dinner table and we were all very dirty, and smelled of smoke. We had a meal as a family. I asked if everyone in the family would tell of only one thing that they saw which showed that our G-d loved us, as we fought the fire. Each of us had something to add.

I don't believe that we sinned, so as to have G-d's favor removed from us. What I believe is that Satan tried to turn us away from G-d by burning our

land. He failed. We are restoring the land, and the rains have returned. What we have planted is doing very well. The animals which survived are doing well. After this year's group of babies were born, we are now back up to the numbers of animals lost.

We had a chance to turn our backs on G-d because of this loss. We did not. In fact, we praise Him more. He has not forsaken us, but has kept us safe all this time. We now have more and better animals than we had before, and that is all His doing.

What if our garden had produced poorly, and given us less than any other year? Would I still love Him? Would I be convinced that He loves me? Just how connected are good deeds and G-d's blessings?

I want you to understand that the *strongest evidence* of our connection with G-d, and His love for us is *not at all* connected with what we have in this world. I believe the proof of His love for us *is the condition of our own heart*.

The abundance *of our hearts* is the proof of the grace and favor of G-d, not so much as the abundance of our stuff.

We have a few years left to be engaged in turning away from evil, and repenting before G-d. We can become far more aligned with G-d's ways before the next Sabbatical year. If we do that, then it might be that G-d will give you an abundance in the year before so that you have more to eat than you can eat, and you can also feed others.

But more important than the product of the soil, is the product of your heart.

My prayer for you is that in the rich soil of the garden of your heart, an abundant crop of righteousness and strength will spring up.

So, that next time I come to see you, I will find you advanced in following the G-d of our fathers, and His ways.