

PARASHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI

Leviticus 25:1–27:34

Parashat Behar-Bechukotai is one of seven designated Torah portions that, depending upon the number of Sabbaths in a year, is either read as two separate portions or combined to assure the reading of the entire Torah. While this volume will combine them, it will present an interpretation on each of their most important themes.

Parashat Behar presents laws regulating the sabbatical year and the jubilee year. The people are told that for six years they are to sow their fields and prune their vineyards, but, during the seventh year, the land is to be given a complete rest, a Sabbath. Every fiftieth year is to be a jubilee year in which land and vineyards must not be worked and in which liberty will be granted to all Israelites enslaved during the previous forty-nine years. The jubilee year also marks a return of any properties purchased during the previous forty-nine years to the original owner-families who had been given the land at the time the Israelites entered it.

Parashat Bechukotai is filled with God's promises to the people if they are loyal and faithfully follow all the commandments and with God's warnings if they disobey. Peace, security, and abundant crops are promised if they are faithful. Misery, suffering, and ruin will come if they spurn God's commandments. The portion also includes brief discussions of the payment of vows and gifts made to the sanctuary.
