

(Dvar Torah continued from the front page...)

but you must not put a sickle to your neighbor's grain (Deuteronomy 23:25-26).

The text outlines parameters for an on-the-job meal stipend. A person who is working a full day in the field has a right to eat from the food they are harvesting without it being deducted from their wages. Employers have an obligation to feed their workers while they are on the job, and the Mishnah even suggests that a worker may eat an amount of food equivalent or exceeding their entire wage! At the same time, simply working in a field does not give a worker the right to hoard property. Taking home food to eat outside of work hours no longer falls under the employer's obligation.

The Torah challenges notions of scarcity in two meaningful ways. First, in the just biblical society, all workers will have enough to sustain themselves. Because of this obligation though, an employer may not want to feed their laborers, concerned that the food allowance will undercut their bottom line. The text makes clear that hiring others comes with a responsibility for their welfare and suggests that when laborers and employers treat each other justly, both parties will come out of the interaction whole.

Laborers also have a justified fear of scarcity, so the permission does not give the laborer free reign over the field. Laborers are only permitted to eat as much as they need for that day working in the field. The commandment is reminiscent of the restriction God places on the Israelites regarding the manna, telling the Israelites to gather as much as they would need to eat for that day, but to not keep any overnight. In a just Biblical society, you will be cared for, but you will not be able to stockpile resources.

The laborer and employer have a mutual responsibility to each other to ensure both are supported. In our world, where conviction in the promises of institutions and each other is declining at a rapid rate, the Torah asks us to fight the urge to cheat and cultivate trust.

Each of us are confronted with moments of "not enough". A "not enough" moment might happen at the grocery store during the coronavirus pandemic, but it also might feel like not having enough success at work, not having enough friends, not having enough time. The Torah teaches that it is in these moments of fear that we re-center ourselves. We have enough. We are enough.

This Shabbat, may we notice the fear of scarcity that rests in all of us, and recommit to building societies of trust where all in society have enough sweet grapes and hearty grain to thrive.



Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center
Conservative Yeshiva

TORAH SPARKS

Ki Teitzei

August 29, 2020 | Elul 9 5780

Annual I (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19) **Etz Hayyim, p. 1112**
Triennial I (Deuteronomy 21:10-23:7) **Etz Hayyim, p. 1112**
Haftarah I (Isaiah 54:1-10) **Etz Hayyim, p. 1138**

Cultivating A Society of Enough

Tyler Dratch, Hebrew College Rabbinical Student, CY 2018-2019

An image of bare grocery store shelves is sticking in my mind as I reflect back on the rapid global shutdown back in March. Humans are driven by a variety of worries, but perhaps our fear of scarcity drives our behavior more than anything else. We worry about not having enough resources to survive despite our stocked refrigerators and closets full of clothing. Even living in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, with resources to nourish myself many times over, I too engaged in the dash to the store in those early days. Sure, I would not be able to control the coronavirus, but I would have enough canned soups for an indefinite lock down.

Parashah Ki Teitzei, legislates against this deep desire for hoarding:
When you enter another's vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as you want, until you are full, but you must not put any in your vessel. When you enter another's field of standing grain, you may pluck ears with your hand;

Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center

Agron Street 8 • P. O. Box 7456 • Jerusalem, Israel 94265
Tel: 972-2-625-6386 • israel@uscj.org • uscj.org • conservativeyeshiva.org

(Dvar Torah continued on the back page...)

D'var Haftarah: After Exile, What's Next?

Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, From the Archives

The interrelationship between tribulation and redemption has played a critical role in the history of the people of Israel and the formulation of the Jewish outlook on the significance of life. Many of the commandments found in the Torah presuppose an awareness of our past tribulations or the fact that God redeemed us from past tragedy. Whatever the didactic value of these life experiences has been on our people (and one can easily say that these experiences have molded the people of Israel into a unique religious community), the constant cycle of tragedy and redemption is bound to have become wearisome. Still, even during Biblical times, constantly having to contend with the onslaught of conquering nations, destruction, exile, redemption, return, rebuilding, and the reformulation of religious and national identity were monumental barriers to national wellbeing. They were more often than not a source of pain and shame, as this week's haftarah, the fifth of the seven special haftarot which follow Tisha b'Av (shiva d'nehamta – seven of consolation) indicates: "Fear not, you shall not be ashamed; Do not cringe, you shall not be disgraced; For you shall forget the reproach of your youth and remember no more the shame of your widowhood." (54:10)

This prophecy seems to contain the promise that those who return from exile after the destruction of the First Temple will no longer be vanquished, exiled, and insulted by their enemies. (A. Hacham, Isaiah, Daat Mikra, p. 579) This idea is elaborated in the following midrash: "The children of Israel say to the Holy One blessed be He: 'Master of the Universe, whenever we are enslaved, we are shamed and embarrassed, so You, God, redeem us and we will no longer be embarrassed, since when You redeem us, it will be forever'... The children of Israel retorted: 'Didn't you long ago redeem us by the hands of Moses, and by the hands of Joshua, and by the hands of judges and kings? Yet we are again in slavery and shame, as though we had never been redeemed.' God responded: 'Since these previous redemptions were carried out by flesh and blood, and you were led by mortals, here today and tomorrow in the grave, that is why your redemption was only temporary, but in the future when I (God) redeem you, your redemption will stand forever... God added: In the past you were able to suffer embarrassment and shame because you were young, but now that you have grown old, you no longer have the strength to withstand the shame of exile. Therefore, 'Fear not, you shall not be ashamed... For you shall forget the reproach of your youth...'" (Adapted and abridged from Midrash Tehillim 31:2 Buber ed. p. 237)

This midrash expresses the idea that human patience can also wear thin and urges upon God to help us bring about the ultimate redemption – one that will be eternal, so that we may build God's kingdom on earth.

At the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, we offer students of all backgrounds an opportunity to engage with Jewish texts in a dynamic, inclusive, and collaborative environment. We welcome your support at www.fuchsbergcenter.org.

In Whose Interest is Interest?

Vered-Hollander-Goldfarb, CY Faculty

Text: Devarim 23:20-21 (20) You shall not exact interest from your brother, interest of silver, interest of food; interest of anything that will bear interest. (21) From the stranger you may/should exact interest, but from your brother you shall not exact interest; so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that your hand reaches on the land to which you are coming to take hold of it.

- Why should interest be forbidden?
- What forms can interest take? Why is there a need to specify and generalize the list of prohibited form of interest?
- Why does the Torah create a different lending system for the stranger and for someone from within "your brothers"?
- For observing this Mitzvah we are told that we will be awarded 'a blessing'. Where will that Blessing manifest itself? In what other Mitzvot might you expect to find a promise of a blessing?

Commentary: Ramban (Nachmanides) Devarim 23:20 This, too, is an expanded Mitzvah (a Mitzvah that appeared earlier and is now augmented), adding here a warning to the borrower as well, which does not happen in any other monetary laws, for if one is willing to damage his property he may, but because the commonality of this transgression, the borrower is warned as well.

- The monetary laws are usually speaking to the stronger party (the giver), but here Ramban detects a change. Why does the Torah usually not address the weaker, poorer person in its prohibitions of this nature? Why change it here?
- Why should interest be an item that is not forbidden universally?

And it is explained here that it is permissible to charge interest from the stranger, [permission] that is not mentioned in theft and robbery [of a Non-Jew], and they say (Bava Kama 113b) it is forbidden. But interest, which is done by the will of both sides, is not forbidden per se, [rather] only because of brotherhood and kindness...

- This Mitzvah seems to distinguish between our treatment of Jews and Non-Jews when it comes to interest. According to Ramban, what would the basic law be, and what is the exception? Why?

And therefore it says "so that the LORD your God will bless you" ... He prescribed a blessing only... in [mitzvot of] Tzedakah and kindness.

- Why do you think, according to what Ramban has said, that these kinds of Mitzvot would receive a promise of a blessing?
- Can one be commanded to act in kindness? Is that kindness?