

The *Haftorah* for *Parshas B'har* is read relatively infrequently, usually in leap years. The *Haftorah* is from the Book of Jeremiah, detailing the command to Jeremiah to purchase the land of his uncle, Chanamel. What is the connection between the *Parsha* and the *Haftorah*? While *B'har* deals with the laws of Sabbatical Year and Jubilee, it also discusses the laws of family homestead, and the opportunity and requirement for the rest of the tribe to redeem ancestral land that is sold by a tribesman out of destitution to a non-tribe member. The land reverts to the original owner at the Jubilee year. If an individual does not have the financial means to redeem his land, a relative may step in to assist. Jeremiah was commanded by Hashem to purchase his uncle's land in order to return it to his tribe and to prepare documents attesting to the ownership of the land. These documents were to be put away in earthen vessels for safekeeping. The obligation to redeem ancestral lands is a biblical obligation that Jeremiah was well aware of. Why did he wait for a command, indeed a prophecy from Hashem, before acting to assist his uncle? Why didn't he act on his own?

To answer this question, we must understand the context in which the episode unfolds. The destruction of the Temple and the resulting exile of the Jewish People from their land were fast approaching. Jeremiah was faced with a difficult quandary. He protested that the city and land are on the verge of being conquered by the *Kasdim* (Babylonians). As *Rambam* notes (*Hilchos Beis HaBechira* 6:16), the sanctity of the land during the first commonwealth was based on the physical conquest of the land by Joshua. Jeremiah realized that the pending conquest of the land of Israel by Nebuchadnezzar will nullify the קדושת הארץ, the original sanctity of the land (with the exception of Jerusalem and the Temple area, see *Rambam* noted above). Jeremiah thought that ארץ ישראל would cease to exist. The notion of ancestral lands was about to become moot with the impending exile. What utility is there to redeem land that was about to be lost in the impending destruction? He therefore did not act on his own, but rather waited for a command from Hashem.

The command he received was cryptic. Hashem said “Is anything hidden from Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27). Hashem told Jeremiah to write 2 documents. One was a plain document and the second was גט מקושר, a bound document that requires many folds to cover the text and whose writing must conform to specific laws and requirements. Jeremiah was given the message that *Hashem* interacts with the Jewish People in ways hinted at by these two different documents he was told to prepare.

Sometimes Hashem's approach is obvious. There are no enemies confronting us, there are no terrorists to threaten us, and we can clearly

see Hashem's direction and guardianship of the land. At such times when a future can be envisioned, it makes sense to apply the rules of assisting a destitute relative in redeeming his land. Hashem's interacts with us through a שטר גלוי, an open and accessible document.

However, many times Hashem interacts with the Jewish People from a hidden approach, in ways that we don't understand or cannot perceive His השגחה, supervision. It is an approach characterized as שטר חתום, wrapped up in a sealed and impenetrable document. At such times, the *Mitzvah* of redeeming ancestral lands becomes encased in a חוק, a law that is beyond our comprehension. The *Kasdim* are coming; it seems irrational to purchase the field. However, the שטר חתום is not to be understood in the context of the present, its intended impact will be applicable many years in the future. After 70 years the שטר חתום will end, Hashem's השגחה will once again take the form of a שטר גלוי, an open document, and the land will return back to his uncle's heirs. He commanded Baruch Ben Nariah to place the documents in an earthen vessel that will protect them for a long time. At that future time, the people will once again purchase property. A descendant of Chanamel will come along clutching the document that validates his claim to the land and the land will be returned to him. The שטר חתום will become clear, just as a חוק will become clear in the future. Jeremiah, what you are buying now is not worthless at all as it will have purpose in the future, 70 years from now.

The Torah tells us that during the Jubilee year, any land sold and purchased resets and reverts to the original owner. Imagine a grandfather sold land many years ago. His son had long forgotten that his ancestors once owned the land, let alone his children and descendants who never even suspected their family once owned the land. The Jubilee year arrives and *Beis Din* announces that property reverts to the original owners. At the Jubilee, the purchaser of the land steps forward and announces "this land I have been living on and cultivating for many years belongs to your ancestors and I must now return it". The land is given as a gift, there is no monetary transaction required to reacquire ownership. People who never knew of their ancestral property suddenly are presented with land. Ownership of the land reverts to the time of the original distribution that took place many years ago based on the 12 tribes and their descendants. The reset button is pressed and we start over, fresh, new, with a clean slate.

The concept of the Jubilee promise applies to the Jewish People as well. We have lost ארץ ישראל several times, to the Babylonians and the Romans. As a child, the Rav ZT"L studied סדר זרעים Imagine a child in White Russia studying about purchasing land in Israel and the associated

obligations of תרומות ומעשרות. What connection did he have with that land? What connection did he have with the land of עבר הירדן, the land of half of the tribe of Menashe, what is now the Golan Heights? Why spend time studying whether the inhabitants of the Golan Heights have an obligation to bring תרומות ומעשרות? The Rav said he had many חידושי תורה on סדר זרעים. He would ask the same question Jeremiah asked: the land is not ours, why am I learning סדר זרעים? I am so far away from it. And the answer is because we have a promise that the Jubilee will come and someday, we pray very soon, the Jewish People will return to our land, our birthright and our ancestral properties and homes. We will start a new, glorious chapter in our relationship with Hashem where the hidden document, שטר חתום, that we wrote with pain and blood over millennia of exile, pogroms and Holocaust, will yield to the revealed contract, שטר גלוי, that Hashem intended us to write heralding our return. The renewal represented by the Jubilee symbolizes our unswerving faith in the coming of the eschatological period, in-gathering of the exiles, reclaiming ארץ ישראל with the coming of משיח, may it be speedily in our days.

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