

## Shemitta & the Biblical Meaning of 7 - Class #13

for Torah in Motion - by Menachem Leibtag

### Is there a Jewish 'New' Year- in light of shemitta

#### INTRO-

This week, as we 'secular New Year' has just begun, we dedicate a special shiur to the concept of a 'Jewish New Year', and how it relates to the Biblical theme of '7'.

AND more important, in this week's Sedra [BO] - we find Parshat ha'Chodesh - which appears to be the source for when we should begin our Calendar Year!  
[what a coincidence!]

#### I. Review from our earlier classes -

- Rhythm in nature / 'seven' & nature - Breishit chapter 1

Re: how both 24 hour day 365 day year relates to the sun  
& the cycles of nature that it creates  
& how it affects our daily lives

Then, how the laws of shabbat & shemitta create a new rhythm in our lives, that makes us constantly aware of the relationship between God and the phenomena of nature

#### II. Considerations re: a calendar year

- A. When should it begin /end - i.e. at what point it increments
- B. What do we count to? [Kings, Creation, Historic events]
- C. The 'social' need for a Calendar Year [economic /legal needs]
- D. How it relates to the natural cycle of the moon/ i.e. months  
Or any other sub-division of the year/ natural or artificial

#### III. The first mention of a 'halachik year' in Shmot 23:10 -11 /

Note, no detail re: when year begins [note Pharoah's dream]

י וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים, תִּזְרַע אֶת-אֲרָצְךָ; וְאָסַפְתָּ, אֶת-תְּבוּאָתָהּ. <sup>10</sup> And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and gather in the increase thereof;

י א וְהַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּשְׁמַטְנָהּ וְנִטְשָׁתָהּ, וְאָכְלוּ אֲבִינֵי עֲמֻדָה, וְיִתְרָם, תֹּאכַל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה; כֵּן-תַּעֲשֶׂה לְכַרְמְךָ, לְזִיתְךָ. <sup>11</sup> but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

יב שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְעֹשֶׂיךָ, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִשָּׁבֵת... <sup>12</sup> Six days thou shalt do thy work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest...

## Concept of Calendar Year in Devarim chaps. 14->16

**כב עֵשֶׂר תַעֲשֶׂר, אֵת כָּל-תְּבוּאֹת זֶרְעֶךָ, הַיֵּצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה, שָׁנָה שָׁנָה...**

22 Thou shalt surely tithe all the increase of thy seed, that which is brought forth in the field year by year.

**כח מְקַצֵּה שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים, תּוֹצִיא אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂר תְּבוּאֹתֶיךָ, בַּשָּׁנָה, הַהוּא; וְהִנַּחְתָּ, בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ....**

28 At the end of every three years, even in the same year, thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase, and shall lay it up within thy gates.

### Deuteronomy Chapter 15 דְּבָרִים

**א מְקַץ שִׁבְעֵ-שָׁנִים, תַעֲשֶׂה שְׁמִטָּה.**

1 At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

**ב וְזֶה, דְּבַר הַשְּׁמִטָּה--שְׁמוֹט כָּל-בַּעַל מַשֶּׁה יָדוּ, אֲשֶׁר יִשֶׂה בְרֵעֵהוּ: לֹא-יִגֹּשׁ אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת-אָחִיו, כִּי-קָרָא שְׁמִטָּה...**

2 And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbour; he shall not exact it of his neighbour and his brother; because the LORD'S release hath been proclaimed.

### Devarim chapter 16:

**א שְׁמֹר אֶת-חֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב** וְעָשִׂיתָ פֶסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי בַחֲדָשׁ הָאָבִיב הוֹצִיאָךָ....

**ט** שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעַת תִּסְפָּר-לָךְ מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בַּקֶּמָה תַחֲלֵל לְסַפֵּר שִׁבְעָה שָׁבָעוֹת....

**יג** חֹג הַסִּפְתָּ תַעֲשֶׂה לָךְ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים **בְּאַסְפָּךָ מִגִּרְנֶךָ וּמִקֶּבֶךָ...**

**טז... שְׁלוֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה** יִרְאֶה כָל-זְכוּרֶךָ אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּמִקּוֹם אֲשֶׁר

בְּבָחַר בְּחַג הַמִּצּוֹת וּבְחַג הַשִּׁבְעוֹת וּבְחַג הַסִּפּוֹת

### Obviously, calendar year in Vayikra 23 & 25

Conclusion: must be agricultural !

### Note Devarim 11:10-12

כִּי הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּא-שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ--לֹא כְאָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הוּא, אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאָתָם מִשָּׁם: אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע אֶת-זֶרְעֶךָ, וְהִשְׁקִיתָ בְּרִגְלֶךָ כְּגֹן הַיָּרֵק. יֵא וְהָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אַתָּם עֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ--אָרֶץ הָרִים, וּבְקַעֲת; לְמִטְרַת הַשָּׁמַיִם, תִּשְׁתָּהּ-מִיָּם. יֵב אָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ דִּרְשׁ אֶתָּה: תִּמְיֵד, עֵינֶיךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּה--

**מִרְשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה, וְעַד אַחֲרִית שָׁנָה.** {ס}

יג וְהָיָה, אִם-שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹתַי...

#### IV. Rosh ha'Shana - in Yechezkel chapter 40

Relate to years in Yechezkel 1:1-3

יחזקאל מ

א בְּעֶשְׂרִים וְחֲמִשׁ שָׁנָה לְגָלוּתֵנוּ **בְּרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה**  
בְּעֶשְׂרִים לַחֹדֶשׁ - בְּאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר הִכְתָּה  
הָעִיר בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הִיָּתָה עָלַי יָד-יְהוָה וַיָּבֵא אֹתִי  
שָׁמָּה. ב. בְּמַרְאֹת אֱלֹהִים הֵבִיאֵנִי אֶל-אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְנַיֵּחַנִּי  
אֶל-הַר גְּבוּהַ מְאֹד וְעָלְיוּ כְּמִבְנֵה-עִיר מְנֻגָּב.

יחזקאל א

א וַיְהִי בַשְּׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה - בְּרַבִּיעֵי בַחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וַאֲנִי  
בְּתוֹךְ-הַגּוֹלָה עַל-נְהַר-כְּבָר נִפְתַּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲרָאָה מַרְאֹת  
אֱלֹהִים. ב. בַּחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ **הִיא הַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁית**  
**לְגָלוּת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹיָכִין**. ג. הִלָּה הָיָה דְבַר-

Explain logical reason why Rosh ha'Shana is in Tishrei

Relate to rainy season in the Land of Israel.

In contrast to Shmot chapter 12 - historical event!

שמות יב

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם  
לֵאמֹר. ב. הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשִׁית **חֲדָשִׁים רֵאשִׁוֹן**  
**הוּא לָכֶם לַחֲדָשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה**. ג. דַּבְּרוּ אֶל-כָּל-עַדְת  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ שֶׁה לְבַיִת-  
אֲבֹת שֶׁה לְבַיִת.

Relate Nature/ History to shem Elokim/ Havaya

& brit Milah vs/ Brit bein ha/Btrarim...

## V. Relating to the shemitta year

The mitzvah of Hakhel - to re-live Mt.Sinai / Devarim chapter 31

ט וַיִּכְתֹּב מֹשֶׁה, אֶת-הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת, וַיִּתְּנָהּ  
אֶל-הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּנֵי לֵוִי, הַנֹּשְׂאִים אֶת-אֲרוֹן  
בְּרִית ה'; וְאֶל-כָּל-זִקְנֵי, יִשְׂרָאֵל.

9 And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, that bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.

י וַיִּצַו מֹשֶׁה, אוֹתָם לֵאמֹר: **מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעַת  
שָׁנִים, בְּמֵעַד שָׁנַת הַשְּׁמִטָּה--בְּחַג  
הַסֻּכּוֹת.**

10 And Moses commanded them, saying: 'At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,

יא בָּבוֹא כָל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בַּמָּקוֹם, אֲשֶׁר  
יִבְחַר: תִּקְרָא אֶת-הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת, נֹגֵד כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל--  
בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם.

11 when all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

יב **יַבֵּהְלֵךְ אֶת-הָעָם, הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׂים  
וְהַטָּף, וְגֵרְךָ, אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ...**

12 Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and thy stranger ...

## VI. What should we count our years to:

### A. Creation ?

Note, we never find this till Middle Ages

### B. The Exodus / Matan Torah?

That's what Chumash does & Melachim I 6:1

### C. to Kings [ours or theirs?] / state of Israel?

That's what Tanach does in Shmuel/ Melachim

Ezra/ Nechemya/ Chagi/ Zecharya

### D. Our Exile?

That's what Yechezkel does

### E. The Greek Year/ Minyan shtarot:

See Avoda Zara 10a

[source sheet]

# PART TWO our custom - counting to Creation

## I. Clarifying concepts

- A. The calendar, a 'tool' or a 'truth'
- B. Tanach - 'chronicle' or 'composition'
- C. Midrash - 'omniscient' or 'exegesis'

## II. Dating systems (for years) - Biblical, and post Biblical

- A. Dating to the Exodus; to Jewish Kings; to foreign Kings
- B. The Hellenistic Date - Talmudic "minyan shtarot"
- C. Dating to Creation & Seder Olam

## III. Building time line - with Tanach as only source

- A. Difficulties: 'magic' numbers, & ambiguities
- B. Seder Olam, and its methodology [of exegesis]

## IV. Building a time line with external sources & the Bible

- A. 'Double dating' and 'shared' events
- B. 'Accepted' chronology - Lists of Kings / Mesopotamia & Egypt

## V. Review from our King Cyrus to Balfour series

- A. How the 'Greek Year'+1K- became the 'Jewish Year' (i.e. from the Exodus)  
Calculating years from the Exodus till the end of Tanach:

From /Till	Years	Sum	Source
Yetziat Mitzraim = The Exodus	1	1	Bamidbar 1:1
Building First Temple	480	480	I Kings 6:1 - explicit
Destruction First Temple	410	890	Calculated -from 19 kings
Start 2nd Temple Darius Year 2	70	960	Zecharya 1:12 - explicit
Last event in Tanach / 34 Artaxerxes	33	993	Nech 13:6, if Darius=Artaxerxes
Next year Alexander conquers Elam	1	994	Seder Olam (assumption)
Alexander conquers all of Persia "minyan shtarot" begins	6	1000	Chazal / tradition Avoda Zara 10a

Therefore: Jewish Year from Exodus = Greek Year + 1000

The Greek Year began in 312 BCE/ Therefore today's Greek Year equals:  
2022 +312 or 2334

Year from the Exodus, according to Seder Olam's assumptions  
(i.e. Greek Year + 1000)

1000 + 2334 = 3334 since the Exodus

**B. To calculate how many years since creation,- add 2448 to Yetziat Mitzraim**

From /Till	Years	Sum	Source
Creation	1	1	Breishit 1:1
Birth of Avraham	1948	1948	Br. Chaps. 5 & 11
Birth of Yitzchak	100	2048	Breishit 21:5
Exodus	400	<b>2448</b>	Breishit 15:13

Therefore in 2022 C.E. / Year since Creation would be  
3334  
+2448  
= **5782**

**C. This calculation is based on the following assumptions:**

1. Yetziat Mitzraim took place 400 years after the birth of Yitzchak  
[based on Breishit 15:13, but not according to Shmot 12:40 in pshat]
2. No GAP between Ezra chapter 6 & 7/ i.e. Daryevesh = Artachshashte
3. The year after Tanach ends Alexander the Great begins conquest of Elam....  
& hence only three Persian Kings: Koresh/ Achashverosh/ Darius=Artachshasta