

Shemitta & the Biblical Meaning of 7

for Torah in Motion - by Menachem Leibtag

Class # 3 The Number 7 / From Creation to Revelation

INTRO-

Last week, we undertook a careful study of the structure and format of the six days of Creation, in an attempt to show how it highlights the theme and meaning of God creating Man in His image - "b'tzelem Elokim" - and then to show how it may explain many of the laws of shabbat.

In today's class we continue our study to explain how and why the number 7 emerges both in the Flood story and at Har Sinai- and how it explains the first shabbat that Am Yisrael experienced.

A. Seven preceding 40

In the Flood story, Breishit chapter 7

א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לְנוֹחַ, בֵּא-אִתָּהּ וְכָל-
בְּיֹתֶךָ אֶל-הַתֵּבָה: כִּי-אֶתְּךָ רָאִיתִי
צַדִּיק לְפָנַי, בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה.

1 And the LORD said unto Noah: 'Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.

ב מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה, תִּקַּח-לָךְ
שִׁבְעָה שִׁבְעָה--אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ; וּמִן-
הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא טְהוֹרָה הוּא, שְׁנַיִם--
אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ.

2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, each with his mate; and of the beasts that are not clean two [and two], each with his mate;

ג גַּם מֵעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם שִׁבְעָה שִׁבְעָה,
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, לְחַיּוֹת זָרַע, עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-
הָאָרֶץ.

3 of the fowl also of the air, seven and seven, male and female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

ד כִּי לַיָּמִים עוֹד שִׁבְעָה, אֲנֹכִי מִמַּטֵּיר
עַל-הָאָרֶץ, אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, וְאַרְבָּעִים
לַיְלָה; וּמַחִיתִי, אֶת-כָּל-הַיְּקוּם אֲשֶׁר
עָשִׂיתִי, מֵעַל, פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I blot out from off the face of the earth.'

ה וַיַּעַשׂ, נֹחַ, כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוְּהוּ, ה'.

5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

At Har Sinai, Shmot chapter 24

יב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, עֲלֵה אֵלַי
הַהָרָה--וְהִיָּה-שָׁם; וְאֶתְּנָה לְךָ אֶת-לְחֹת
הָאֲבֹן, וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה, אֲשֶׁר כָּתַבְתִּי,
לְהוֹרֹתָם.

12 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Come up to Me into the mount and be there; and I will give thee the tables of stone, and the law and the commandment, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them.'

יג וַיָּקָם מֹשֶׁה, וַיְהוֹשֶׁעַ מִשְׁרָתוֹ...

13 And Moses rose up, and Joshua his minister....

טו וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-הָהָר; וַיִּכַס הָעָנָן, אֶת-הָהָר.

15 And Moses went up into the mount, and the cloud covered the mount.

טז וַיִּשְׁכַּן כְּבוֹד-יְהוָה עַל-הַר סִינַי, וַיִּכַסְהוּ הָעָנָן שִׁשַּׁת יָמִים; וַיִּקְרָא אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, מִתּוֹךְ הָעָנָן.

16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days; and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

יז וּמְרֵאָה כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, כְּאֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת בְּרֹאשׁ הָהָר, לְעֵינַי, בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

17 And the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

יח וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הָעָנָן, וַיַּעַל אֶל-הָהָר וַיְהִי מֹשֶׁה, בְּהָר, אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה.

18 And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the mount; and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

Note the other parallels between Flood story and Har Sinai

B. . Manna - as preparation for Mount Sinai /Shmot chapter 16

א וַיִּסְעוּ, מֵאֵילָם, וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-מִדְבַּר-סִין, אֲשֶׁר בֵּין-אֵילָם וּבֵין סִינַי--בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁנִי, לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

1 And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

ב וַיִּלִּינוּ (וַיִּלּוֹנוּ) כָּל-עֵדֶת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַל-מֹשֶׁה וְעַל-אַהֲרֹן--בַּמִּדְבָּר.

2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness;

ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִי-יִתֵּן מוֹתֵנוּ בְּיַד-יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, בְּשִׁבְתֵּנוּ עַל-סִיר הַבָּשָׂר, בְּאֹכְלֵנוּ לֶחֶם לְשֹׁבַע: כִּי-הוֹצֵאתֶם אֹתָנוּ אֶל-הַמִּדְבָּר הַזֶּה, לְהָמִית אֶת-כָּל-הַקָּהָל הַזֶּה בָּרָעַב. {ס}

3 and the children of Israel said unto them: 'Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.' {S}

ד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, הֲנִנִי מִמָּטִיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן-הַשָּׁמַיִם; וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַלְקָטוּ דָבָר-יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ, לְמַעַן אֲנִסְנוּ הַיֵּלֶךְ בְּתוֹרַתִי אִם-לֹא.

4 Then said the LORD unto Moses: 'Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My law, or not.

ה וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי, וְהָכִינוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר-יָבִיאוּ; וְהָיָה מִשָּׁנָה, עַל אֲשֶׁר-יִלְקָטוּ יוֹם יוֹם.

5 And it shall come to pass on the sixth day that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.'

.... יד ותעל, שכבת הטל;
והינה על-פני המדבר, דק מחספס-
דק ככפר, על-הארץ.

14 And when the layer of dew was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness a fine, scale-like thing, fine as the hoar-frost on the ground.

טו ויראו בני-ישראל, ויאמרו איש אל-
אחיו מן הוא--כי לא ידעו, מה-הוא;
ויאמר משה, אלהם, הוא הלחם, אשר
נתן יהוה לכם לאכלה.

15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another: 'What is it?'--for they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them: 'It is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

טז זה הדבר, אשר צוה יהוה, לקטו
ממנו, איש לפי אכלו:
עמר לגלגלת, מספר נפשתיכם-
איש לאשר באהלו, תקחו.

16 This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded: Gather ye of it every man according to his eating; an omer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent.'

יז ויעשו-כו, בני ישראל; וילקטו, המרבה
והממעט.

17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less.

יח וימדו בעמר--ולא העדיף
המרבה, והממעט לא החסיר:
איש לפי-אכלו, לקטו.

18 And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

יט ויאמר משה, אלהם: איש, אל-יותר
ממנו עד-בקר.

19 And Moses said unto them: 'Let no man leave of it till the morning.'

כ ולא שמעו אל-משה, ויותרו אנשים
ממנו עד-בקר, וירם תולעים, ויבאש;
ויקצף עליהם, משה.

20 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and rotted; and Moses was wroth with them.

כא וילקטו אתו בבקר בבקר, איש כפי
אכלו; וחם השמש, ונמס.

21 And they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating; and as the sun waxed hot, it melted.

כב ויהי ביום הששי, לקטו לחם משנה--
שני העמר, לאחד; ויבאו כל-נשיאי
העדה, ויגידו למשה.

22 And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

כג ויאמר אלהם, הוא אשר דבר
יהוה-- שבתון שבת-קדש ליהוה,
מחר: את אשר-תאפו אפו, ואת אשר-
תבשלו בשלו, ואת כל-העדף, הנניחו לכם
למשמרת עד-הבקר.

23 And he said unto them: 'This is that which the LORD hath spoken: To-morrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto the LORD. Bake that which ye will bake, and seethe that which ye will seethe; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.'

כד ויניחו אתו עד-הבקר, כאשר צוה

24 And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did

מִשָּׁה ; וְלֹא הִבְאִישׁ , וְרִמָּה לֹא-הִיְתָה בּוֹ .

not rot, neither was there any worm therein.

כה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֲכָלְהוּ הַיּוֹם ,
כִּי-שַׁבַּת הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה : הַיּוֹם , לֹא
תִמְצָאֶהוּ בַשָּׂדֶה .

25 And Moses said: 'Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the LORD; to-day ye shall not find it in the field.

כו שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים , תִּלְקֹטְהוּ ; וּבַיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבַּת , לֹא יִהְיֶה-בּוֹ .

26 Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.'

כז וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי , יֵצְאוּ מִן-הָעָם
לִלְקוֹט ; וְלֹא , מִצְאוּ . { ס }

27 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. {S}

כח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה , אֶל-מֹשֶׁה : עַד-אָנָּה ,
מֵאַנְתָּם , לְשֹׁמֵר מִצְוֹתַי , וְתוֹרֹתַי .

28 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?

כט רְאוּ , כִּי-יְהוָה נָתַן לָכֶם הַשַּׁבַּת--עַל-כֵּן
הוּא נָתַן לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי , לֶחֶם יוֹמִים ;
שָׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחְתּוֹ , אֶל-יְצֵא אִישׁ מִמְּקוֹמוֹ--
בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי .

29 See that the LORD hath given you the sabbath; therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.'

ל וַיִּשְׁבְּתוּ הָעָם , בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי .

30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

לא וַיִּקְרְאוּ בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-שְׁמוֹ , מָן ;
וְהוּא , כְּזֶרַע גֹּד לָבֹן , וְטַעְמוֹ , כְּצַפִּיחַת
בַּדָּבָשׁ .

31 And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna; and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

לב וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה , זֶה הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
יְהוָה--מִלֵּא הָעֵמֶר מִמֶּנּוּ , לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת
לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם : לְמַעַן יֵרְאוּ אֶת-הַלֶּחֶם , אֲשֶׁר
הָאֲכַלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בַּמִּדְבָּר , בְּהוֹצִיאִי אֶתְכֶם ,
מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם .

32 And Moses said: 'This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded: Let an omerful of it be kept throughout your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.'

לג וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן , קַח צִנְצָנֶת
אֶחָת , וְתֵן-שָׁמָּה מִלֵּא-הָעֵמֶר , מָן ; וְהִנֵּחַ
אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה , לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם .

33 And Moses said unto Aaron: 'Take a jar, and put an omerful of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept throughout your generations.'

לד כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה , אֶל-מֹשֶׁה ; וַיִּנְיַחְהוּ
אַהֲרֹן לִפְנֵי הָעֵדוּת , לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת .

34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

לה וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל , אֲכָלוּ אֶת-הַמָּן אַרְבָּעִים
שָׁנָה--עַד-בְּאֵם , אֶל-אֶרֶץ נוֹשָׁבַת : אֶת-
הַמָּן , אֲכָלוּ--עַד-בְּאֵם , אֶל-קִצֵּה אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן .

35 And the children of Israel did eat the manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat the manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

לו וְהָעֵמֶר , עֶשְׂרִית הָאִיפָה הוּא . { פ }

36 an omer is one tenth an ephah.

C. The word "omer" in Vayikra chapter 23

ט וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

9 And the LORD spoke unto Moses saying:

י דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם, כִּי-
תָבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם,
וְקָצַרְתֶּם אֶת-קְצִירָהּ--וְהֵבֵאתֶם אֶת-

10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: When ye are come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest.

עֹמֶר רֵאשִׁית קְצִירְכֶם, אֶל-הַכֹּהֵן.

יא וְהִנִּיף אֶת-הָעֹמֶר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, לְרֹצְנֶכֶם;
מִמָּחֳרַת, הַשַּׁבָּת, יְנִיפֶנּוּ, הַכֹּהֵן.

11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you; on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

יב וַעֲשִׂיתֶם, בְּיוֹם הַנִּיפְכֶם אֶת-הָעֹמֶר,
כֶּבֶשׂ תְּמִים בֶּן-שָׁנָתוֹ לְעֹלָה, לִיהוָה.

12 And in the day when ye wave the sheaf, ye shall offer a he-lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt-offering unto the LORD.

יג וּמִנְחָתוֹ שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים סֹלֶת בְּלוּלָה בְּשֶׁמֶן,
אֲשֶׁה לִיהוָה--רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ; וְנִסְכָּה יַיִן, רְבִיעֵת
הַהֵין.

13 And the meal-offering thereof shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour; and the drink-offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin.

יד וְלֶחֶם וְקֹלִי וְכֶרֶם לֹא תֹאכְלוּ, עַד-עֵצָם
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה--עַד הֵבִיאְכֶם, אֶת-קֶרְבֶּן
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם, בְּכֹל
מִשְׁבְּתֵיכֶם. {ס}

14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor fresh ears, until this selfsame day, until ye have brought the offering of your God; it is a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. {S}

טו וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם, מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת,
מִיּוֹם הֵבִיאְכֶם, אֶת-עֹמֶר הַתְּנוּפָה:
שִׁבְעַת שַׁבָּתוֹת, תְּמִימַת תִּהְיֶינָה.

15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the day of rest, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the waving; seven weeks shall there be complete;

טז עַד מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת הַשְּׁבִיעִת, תִּסְפְּרוּ
חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם; וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה,
לִיהוָה.

16 even unto the morrow after the seventh week shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall present a new meal-offering unto the LORD.

יז מִמִּוֹשְׁבֵיכֶם תִּבְיֵאוּ לֶחֶם תְּנוּפָה, שְׁתֵּי
שְׁנֵי עֶשְׂרֹנִים--סֹלֶת תִּהְיֶינָה, חֲמִץ תִּאֲפִינָה:
בַּכּוֹרִים, לִיהוָה.

17 Ye shall bring out of your dwellings two wave-loaves of two tenth parts of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baked with leaven, for first-fruits unto the LORD.

יח וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עַל-הַלֶּחֶם, שִׁבְעַת כֶּבֶשִׂים
תְּמִימִם בְּנֵי שָׁנָה, וּפָר בֶּן-בֶּקָר אֶחָד, וְאֵילָם
שְׁנָיִם: יִהְיוּ לְעֹלָה, לִיהוָה, וּמִנְחָתָם
וְנִסְכֵיהֶם, אֲשֶׁה רֵיחַ-נִיחֹחַ לִיהוָה.

18 And ye shall present with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams; they shall be a burnt-offering unto the LORD, with their meal-offering, and their drink-offerings, even an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.