**[Emptiness and Fullness – Behar and Lag B'Omer](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/parshat-behar)**

וַיְדַבֵּ֤ר יְהוָה֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה בְּהַ֥ר סִינַ֖י לֵאמֹֽר׃
דַּבֵּ֞ר אֶל־בְּנֵ֤י יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ וְאָמַרְתָּ֣ אֲלֵהֶ֔ם כִּ֤י תָבֹ֙אוּ֙ אֶל־הָאָ֔רֶץ אֲשֶׁ֥ר אֲנִ֖י נֹתֵ֣ן לָכֶ֑ם וְשָׁבְתָ֣ה הָאָ֔רֶץ שַׁבָּ֖ת לַיהוָֽה׃
שֵׁ֤שׁ שָׁנִים֙ תִּזְרַ֣ע שָׂדֶ֔ךָ וְשֵׁ֥שׁ שָׁנִ֖ים תִּזְמֹ֣רכַּרְמֶ֑ךָ וְאָסַפְתָּ֖ אֶת־תְּבוּאָתָֽהּ׃
*The Divine spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai saying, “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall rest – a Shabbat for the Divine. Six years you shall sow your fields and six years you shall prune your vinyards and gather in your yields…’”* (Leviticus 25)

This week was the festival of *Lag b’Omer,* which means the “thirty-third day of the*Omer,*” the practice of counting the days between *Pesakh* and *Shavuot. Lag* is *lamed* ל *– gimel* ג, thirty-three. (Hebrew letters have numberical values; *lamed* ל is thirty, *gimel* ג is three.)

These two letters, *lamed* ל *– gimel* ג, also have meanings:

*Lamed* ל means “learn.” To learn means to go from a state of less knowledge to more knowledge; it is forward moving in time, filling a lack, going from incomplete to more complete without end, never reaching completion (since there is always more to learn).

*Gimel* ג has the opposite connotation. *Gamal* means to “pay back,” in the sense of being already complete to overflowing. A *gamal* is also a camel, which carries its water in its hump as it traverses the desert; again, a symbol of being already complete-within-oneself.

These two opposite meanings – the never-complete of *lamed* ל and the already-complete of *gimel* ג – point to two dimensions of our experience, right now. On the level of form, we are ever-incomplete. Our bodies need constant nourishment and excercise, and our minds must actively learn new things to stay sharp. In terms of spiritual practice, this is the ongoing practice of studying texts and contemplating meanings with the thinking mind. There is a hint in the *Parshah:*

*Six years you shall sow* (tizra) *your fields…*

*Tizra* תִּזְרַ֣ע, “sowing” or “seeding” is the work we must do on the “fields” of our minds. This is *lamed* ל, “learning.”

But on the level of consciousness, the open space of awareness within which all forms come and go, there is a completeness to this moment; there is a wholeness when we “arrive” into the present. This is *gimel* ג.

But to experience this *fullness,* we paradoxically need more *emptiness;* we need to “prune” away excess thought, so that we can sense the underlying Presence beneath our thoughts:

 …*six years you shall prune* (tizmor) *your vinyards…*

*Tizmor* תִּזְמֹ֣ר, “pruning,” is the work we must do on “grapevine tendrils” of thought; this is meditation.

“Sowing” and “pruning,” learning and meditation, thinking and not-thinking, are the substance of daily spiritual practice aimed at bringing about inner transformation.

*Six years you shall sow your fields and six years you shall prune your vinyards…*

“Six Years” is *sheish shanim* שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים. *Shanim,* “years,” also can mean “change.” “Six” also means change, as in the “six days of creation.” The Hebrew letter that represents the number six is *vav* ו which, as a prefix, means “and” – again, implying adding, transforming, doing the dual spiritual work of “sowing” and “pruning.”

But there is also a level at which all work stops.

It stops not because the “sowing” and “pruning” are no longer happening, but because at this deep level, there is the recognition that is not “me” who does the work; there is the recognition that everything comes from and returns to the same Reality; we can’t “take credit” for any of it.

This level is represented by *Lag B’Omer.* In terms of the *sefirot, Lag B’Omer* is *Hod Sheb’Hod,* or “Humility of Humility.” The essence of humility is not some kind of self-deprication or belittlement; it is the recognition that the “me” comes from beyond “me”; existance is a gift, everything I have and am is a gift. This is also freedom: we have nothing to lose or gain, because ultimately there is only Reality, there is only the Divine.

וְשָׁבְתָ֣ה הָאָ֔רֶץ שַׁבָּ֖ת לַיהוָֽה – *The land will rest a Shabbat for the Divine…*

You can “let the land rest a Shabbat for the Divine” any time – try it! Before you learn, before you meditate, before you do the dishes, whatever ­– take a moment to recognize Reality, to simply stop, to let the “me” dissolve and let this moment be One…

***More on Parshat Behar...***

[**The Bird and The Lizard – Parshat Behar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/the-bird-and-the-lizard-parshat-behar)

A friend of mine went to let out his dog, when he noticed a cute little baby dove huddled on the ground. Above was the nest that it must have fallen from. He kept his dog in the house while he went out and lifted the baby bird back into its nest. He wasn’t *sure* if this was the right thing to do, but it seemed the right thing in the moment, and it was a warm and gratifying feeling to save that baby bird.

Not long after, he was moving some furniture in his workplace. As he lifted a desk, be was taken aback by a huge, dead, rotting lizard with maggots crawling in it! It was disgusting sight, and he had to deal with it and clean it up.

He told me this story because it seemed to him almost like a symbolic dream, and he was wondering what it meant. Why such a gratifying, life-affirming, cuddly experience followed by such a disgusting horrific, death centered experience? What was the meaning of it?

Sometimes we are given situations that require immediate action. These are the real-time “commandments” – the *mitzvot*we don’t learn from books, but that appear to us and demand a response without hesitation. Sometimes the action required is to save a cute little bird, sometimes to clean up a rotting lizard corpse. Sometimes it is to feed a hungry baby, sometimes it is to yank a child out of the street when a car is coming, and sometimes it is to bury a loved one who has died unexpectedly. In other words, when it comes to being present to what is needed in the moment, it may be bitter or it may be sweet. There is a full spectrum of human experience, and if we want to be available to the “commandment” of the moment, we have to be open to both – we can’t avoid any of it.

Of course, most of the time, there isn’t some unexpected urgent thing to deal with, *barukh Hashem.*Still, when it comes to being spiritually awake, when it comes to connecting with the Divine as the Reality of this moment, there is an ever-present urgency. There is only one place and one time to wake up and be free, and that is here, right now. As Hillel says, אִם לֹא עַכְשָׁיו, אֵימָתָי – *If not now, when?*

And yet, paradoxically, to wake up is to fully accept; it is to embrace the Reality of this moment, not resist it. This has almost the opposite quality of urgency. It is more like patience; it is more like planting a seed and simply watching it grow, rather than jumping in and taking some action.

לֹא הַבַּיְשָׁן לָמֵד, וְלֹא הַקַּפְּדָן מְלַמֵּד
*…a timid person can’t learn, and an impatient person can’t teach…*
-Pirkei Avot 2:6

Full Presence means the unity of these two seemingly opposite qualities. On one hand, don’t be timid – jump fully into the present, now! On the other hand, jumping fully into the Now means allowing it to be as it is, not to be impatient about how you think it should be or how you want it to be.

אֵ֣ת סְפִ֤יחַ קְצִֽירְךָ֙ לֹ֣א תִקְצ֔וֹר וְאֶת־עִנְּבֵ֥י נְזִירֶ֖ךָ לֹ֣א תִבְצֹ֑ר שְׁנַ֥ת שַׁבָּת֖וֹן יִהְיֶ֥ה לָאָֽרֶץ׃ וְ֠הָיְתָה שַׁבַּ֨ת הָאָ֤רֶץ לָכֶם֙ לְאָכְלָ֔ה

*You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your untrimmed vines; it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. But you may eat whatever the land during its Sabbath will produce…*

The *parshah*talks about the practice of the *shmita,* the cycle in which every seven years, the land is given a *Shabbat,* a year of rest from farming. During this year, the Israelites were forbidden to work the land, to prune their vines, or manipulate their crops in any way. But, they could pick and eat whatever was there; they had to survive on whatever the land naturally gave them, without interference.

This is a perfect metaphor for Presence: accept fully what this moment gives you, both the nourishing food and the thistles and thorns. Even as we work externally to bring about certain results, as we must do, on an inner level there can be a Sabbath of the land; we can accept both the bird and the lizard with that quality of patience, allowing the process to unfold as it must.

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak once saw a man running. “Why are you in such a hurry?”

“I am running after my livelihood!” replied the man.

“You think your livelihood is in front of you and you must catch up to it, but how do you know it’s not behind you, and all you have to do is stop and let it catch up to you?”

**​**[**Ascend- Parshat Behar- On the Mountain**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/ascend-parshat-behar-on-the-mountain)

***"When you come into the land that I give to you, the land will rest a Shabbat for the Divine..."***

The Torah reading *Parshat Behar* opens by talking about Shabbat not as a day of rest for people, but as a rest for the land. It says:

*Ki tavo’u el ha’aretz asher ani notein lakhem, v’shavta ha’aretz Shabbat laShem- When you come into the land that I give to you, the land will rest a Shabbat for the Divine.*

It then goes on to explain what it means for the land to rest:

*"Sheish shanim tizra sadekha v’sheish shanim tizmor karmekha v’asafta t’vuatah-
"Six years your will plant your field, prune your vineyard and gather in your produce.

"Uvashana hashvi’it Shabbat shabbaton yiyeh la’aretz-
But the seventh year should be a Sabbath of Sabbaths for the land… don’t plant your field or prune your vineyard..."*

Now the Torah doesn’t talk much about vegetables. When it refers to planting fields, it’s mostly talking about grain, and from the grain is made the ancient staple, bread. Pruning vineyards is a reference of course to grapes that are made into wine. Now wine and bread are not only basic foods, they’re also sacramental foods- forming the ritual part of sacred meals on Shabbat and festivals. In fact, the first mention of this is in *Bereishit* 14:18 when *Makitzedek,* the priest-king of *Shalem,* blesses *Avraham* and brings him bread and wine.

I heard once from a friend a special teaching that he heard from Rabbi Shlomo Carlbach of blessed memory. He pointed out that wine is something that gets better and better with age. You pay more for wine depending on how old it is. Bread, on the other hand, has to be fresh. No one wants a fifty year-old loaf of bread.

Similarly, there’s an aspect of the spiritual path that’s ancient and an aspect that’s fresh and new. For example, the Torah, and really the whole Jewish tradition, is ancient and there’s a special richness in that. And even though there are plenty of passages in the Torah that may seem wrong and even disturbing, that’s offset in a sense by the richness of being connected to a lineage that’s many thousands of years old. And yet, that richness doesn’t really come to life unless it’s combined with fresh, new insights and interpretations. No one wants to hear the same old canonized interpretations over and over again. For the tradition to really live, it also has to be like bread- we need *khidushim-*new insights.

On a deeper level, the very practice of Presence also contains these two aspects. On one hand, there is nothing more ancient than the present moment. There’s nothing that’s ever existed that didn’t exist in the space of its own present. That’s why one of the names of God is *Atik Yomin-* the Ancient of Days. And when you become fully present to the ancient space of this moment, there’s an intoxication, as you drink in the wine of the Being.

At the same time, in becoming present to That which is most ancient, there’s also a spontaneous letting go of mental and emotional baggage from the past so that everything in your experience becomes alive and new like a freshly baked challah.

So on this Shabbat *B’Har* and *B’khukotai-* the Sabbath of the Mountain and the Decree- may continue to ascend the mountain of transcendence and freedom through both the wine of tradition and the bread of immediacy, bringing that transcendence into the flow of actual life, doing our part to fulfill the decree of *tikum olam-* transforming this world into a celebration of creation and an expression of love.

​Good Shabbos!!

[**Lonely The Drive- Parshat Behar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/may-27th-2016)

 If you could choose exactly how much time to waste every day, how much would it be? Would you waste two hours per day? One hour per day? Or would you be conservative- maybe only waste twenty minutes? Five minutes?

And furthermore, what does it mean to “waste time” anyway?

​Is watching a movie wasting time? What about sitting around enjoying a cup of tea? Taking a walk for no particular reason?

Or, is “wasting time” about doing something that creates the *exact opposite*of what you want?

If enjoyment is what you want, maybe watching a movie is a good use of time, as long as it’s not in excess. If peace is what you want, maybe sipping tea and taking walks are a great way to spend time.

And, *if you want to be miserable,* maybe complaining and judging and gossiping and putting yourself and others down are just what the doctor ordered.

But who wants to be miserable?

And yet, many spend time complaining and judging and gossiping and putting self and others down. When was the last time you did one of those things?

There’s really only one reason you would do something that creates the opposite result of what you want, and that’s not being conscious of what you are doing. Consciousness is the key.

You want health, but an impulse arises to eat that unhealthy food. The impulse is bothering you, and you unconsciously assume that fulfilling the impulse will make you feel better and bring you peace. The problem is, fulfilling the impulse only gives you a temporary experience of relief, and you still haven’t come closer to the real peace you are seeking... plus you are working against your health.

The real peace you seek can only come from getting to know who you are beneath all the impulses. It comes from knowing that underneath all your restless energies, there is an awareness that knows the restlessness.

That awareness is peace. Shift your home from the restlessness to that awareness, and peace is yours, because you rise above all the stories about how you need this or that to have peace. But to do that, you need to be willing to let go of the company of your own thoughts, and be truly alone.

This week’s reading begins-

*“Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe b’har Sinai-
"Hashem spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai…”*

After driving my son to school in the morning, I used to return home along Skyline up in the Oakland hills, from which I can catch a glimpse of the entire East Bay and San Francisco. Seeing these cities from above is an entirely different experience from being down in them. There is a sense of peace, of wonder, of floating above the seething urban chaos.

It’s the same spiritually. To hear the Voice of the Divine, you have to take some time to tune out the voices of the mundane- that is, the voices of your own mind. Sinai is totally within you and available, once the movement of the mind subsides. And from Sinai comes the “Voice of the Divine”- meaning, the inner wisdom of how to live- to live without wasting time.

A still mind is not a waste of time, *it is the end of time.*

As the end of time, it's also the fulfillment of time. Fulfillment is completely available to you, right now, to the degree that you can open to your inner Sinai.

The reading goes on to say-

*“Ki tavo el ha’arets… v’shavtah ha’arets Shabbat LaShem…
"When you come into the land… the land itself shall rest a Shabbat…”*

The “land” is life itself- messy, chaotic, beautiful life itself. But, when you stop wasting time, guess what- life doesn’t take so much energy! Life itself becomes a “Shabbat”- simple, clear, straightforward.

Do you want simplicity? Do you want clarity? Do you want peace? Do you want a life that is wholly Shabbat?

Make a commitment now:

“I will let go of all excess thought, moment by moment. I will refrain from creating negative narratives and stand alone in the Presence of God, without the noise of the mind.”

Can you make this commitment?

The Baal Shem Tov told:

"Once I dreamed that I traveled to *Gan Eden-* the Garden of Eden- and many people went with me, chattering excitedly. But the closer I came to the Garden, the more of them disappeared, and the more quiet it became.

"When I finally entered Paradise, there were only a few of them left, speaking softly, with few words. But when I stood beside the Tree of Life, I looked around- and I seemed to be alone."

On this *Shabbat Behar,* The Sabbath on the Mountain, may have the courage to walk the road of true aloneness- aloneness not in the sense of being without others, but in the sense of allowing the *mind to stand alone,* without the constant and relentless company of thought. May we be renewed in peace and clarity-

Good Shabbos!

[**Is Time Wasting? Parshat Behar**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/is-time-wasting-parshat-behar)

 Here’s a question for you-

If you could choose exactly how much time to waste every day, how much would it be? Would you waste two hours per day? One hour per day? Or would you be conservative- maybe only waste twenty minutes? Five minutes?

And furthermore, what does it mean to “waste time” anyway?

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The real peace you seek can only come from getting to know who you are beneath all the impulses. It comes from knowing that underneath all your restless energies, you *are*peace, and *you can know it for yourself.*

You can rise above any stories telling you that you need this or that to have peace. But to do that, you need to be *conscious.* You need to wake up from the dream of discontent that your impulses thrive on.

How do you do that?

This week’s reading begins- *“Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe b’har Sinai-*Hashem spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai…”

After driving my son to school in the morning, I often return home along Skyline up in the Oakland hills, from which I can catch a glimpse of the entire East Bay and San Francisco. Seeing these cities from above is an entirely different experience from being down in them. There is a sense of peace, of wonder, of floating above the seething urban chaos.

It’s the same spiritually.

In order to be conscious and free as you move through any disruptive and seductive energies in day-to-day life, you’ve got to get up on the mountain sometimes. To hear the Voice of the Divine, you have to take some time to tune out the voices of the mundane.

Where do those mundane voices come from? They come from your own mind!

Sinai is totally within you and available to you, once the movement of the mind subsides. From Sinai comes the “Voice of the Divine”- meaning, the inner wisdom of how to live-

-to live without wasting time.

A still mind is not a waste of time, it is the end of time.

As the end of time, it is also the fulfillment of time. Fulfillment is completely available to you, right now, to the degree that you can open to your inner Sinai.

The reading goes on to say- *“ki tavo el ha’arets… v’shavtah ha’arets Shabbat LaShem…*when you come into the land… the land itself shall rest a Shabbat…”

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Do you want simplicity? Do you want clarity? Do you want peace? Do you want a life that is wholly Shabbat?

Make a commitment now:

“I will let go of all excess thought, moment by moment. I will refrain from creating negative narratives and open to the reality of this moment, from this moment onward.”

Can you make this commitment?

I wish you renewing peace and clarity on this holy Shabbat, from the mountaintop~

Good Shabbos!