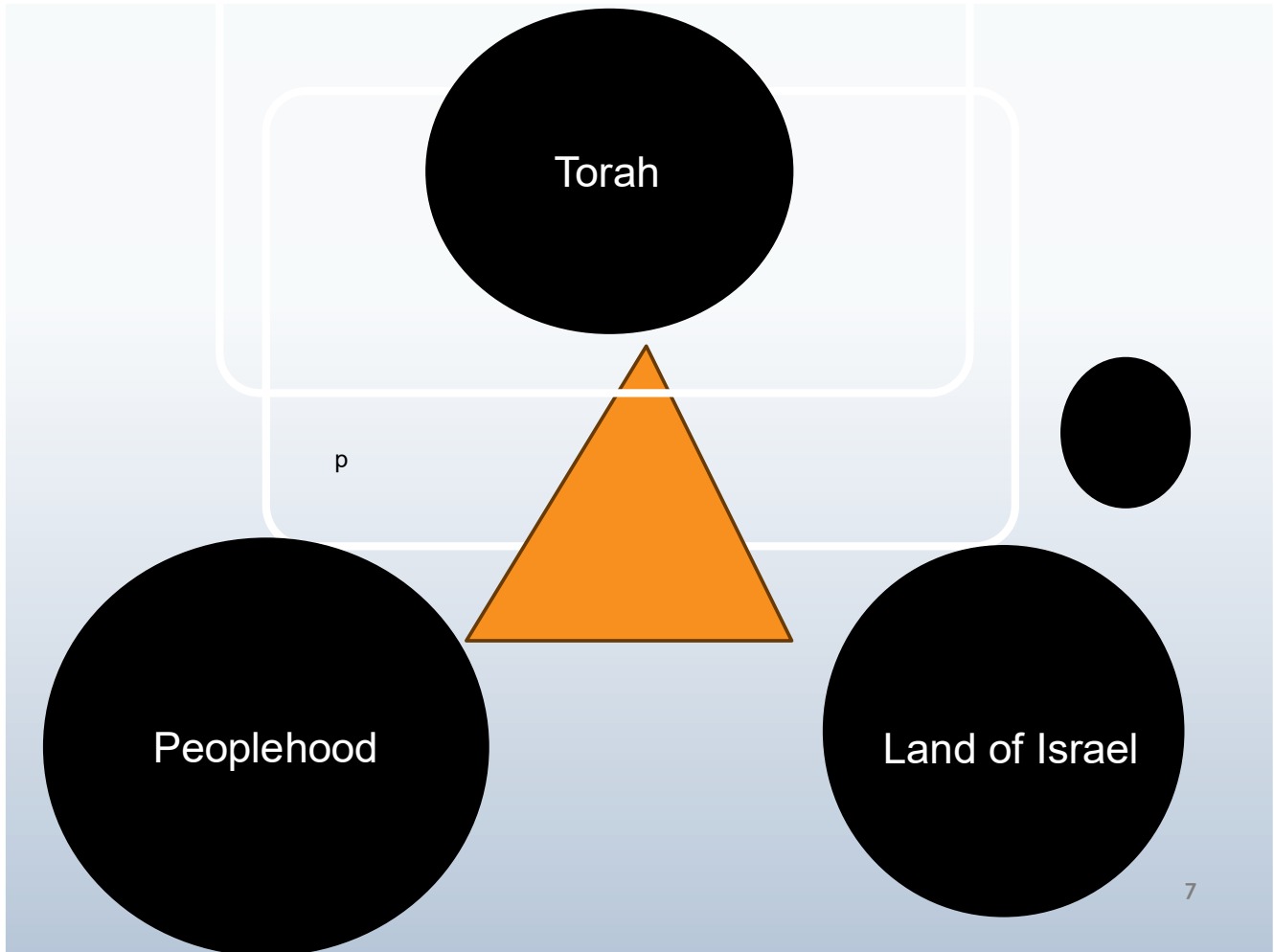


**Part One - Holiness and Being on a Journey – A purpose Driven Existence**



**Joshua 3**

3 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. ...

<sup>6</sup> Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them.

<sup>14</sup> So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. <sup>15</sup> Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, <sup>16</sup> the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

## **Historical Context and Purpose of 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaiah**

From Isaiah 43

<sup>16</sup> This is what the Lord says—

he who made a way through the sea,  
a path through the mighty waters,

<sup>17</sup> who drew out the chariots and horses,  
the army and reinforcements together,  
and they lay there, never to rise again,  
extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:

<sup>18</sup> “Forget the former things;  
do not dwell on the past.

<sup>19</sup> See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness  
and streams in the wasteland.

<sup>20</sup> The wild animals honor me,  
the jackals and the owls,

because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland,  
to give drink to my people, my chosen,

<sup>21</sup> the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

## **From Rabbi Shai Held**

The Exodus is not an episode lost in the mists of a long-ago past; it is, rather, a recurrent possibility. For Isaiah, crucially, the Exodus is not an episode lost in the mists of a long-ago past; it is, rather, a recurrent possibility. It has happened before, and it—or its equivalent—will happen again.<sup>14</sup> If anything, what will yet come to pass will far transcend what transpired in the past. The prophet proclaims: “Thus said the Lord, Who made a road through the sea and a path through mighty waters, Who destroyed chariots and horses... Do not remember what happened of old, or ponder what happened of yore! I am about to do something new... I will make a road through the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (43:16-19). In the past God made a road through the sea; in the future God will make one through the wilderness. But what matters most is that just as despotic Egypt was defeated, so, too will oppressive Babylon be subdued. Here again, critically, creation language is employed: God refers to the people as “am zu yatzarti li,” “this people I created for Myself” (43:21).<sup>15</sup>

## **Part 2 The 33<sup>rd</sup> Day of the Journey -Lag BaOmer**

What Really Could this be about?

The Bar Kochba Revolt – 132 – 135.

Ends with the Fall of Betar

Hadrianic Decrees

### **Was Bar Kochba the Messiah?**

"It was taught: Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai used to interpret the verse "The path of a star comes from Jacob" (Numbers 24:17) as "The path of Bar Koziba comes from Jacob." Rabbi Akiva, when he would see Bar Koziba, would say: "This is the King Messiah." Rabbi Yochanan ben Torta said to him: "Akiva, grass will grow on your cheeks and the son of David still will not have come." —Jerusalem Talmud, Ta'anit 4:5.

## Why the 33<sup>rd</sup> day?

- A. Associated with the yahrzeit (Yiddish for *anniversary of death*) of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.
- B. One tradition holds that this is a period of mourning, in remembrance of 24,000 students of the famed Sage Rabbi Akiva who died in a plague during the first 32 days of the Omer—a plague brought on by their dishonoring of one another, which stopped on the thirty-third day.
- C. **Lag BaOmer Traditions**
  - Haircuts resume. Upsherin
  - Weddings and celebrations return.
  - Bonfires everywhere.
  - Meron Celebration

## Part 3 – The Purpose

### First 2 verses

1 God spoke to Moses  
at Mount Sinai, saying,

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר:

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל־  
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָּה הָאָרֶץ שִׁבְתָּ לַיהוָה:

2 “Speak to the Israelites. You must say to them: ‘When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land must rest an agricultural Sabbath in honor of God.

### Last Verse of Leviticus

זֶה הַמִּצְוֹת אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־  
שֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהַר סִינַי:

**34** - These are the commandments that God commanded Moses to tell the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai.

## **Rashi on Leviticus 25: - 1 בְּהַר סִינַי 1**

[AND THE LORD SPOKE UNTO MOSES] ON THE MOUNT SINAI — What has the matter of the Sabbatical year to do with Mount Sinai that Scripture felt compelled to expressly state where it was commanded? Were not all commandments given on Sinai? But this statement is intended to suggest the following comparison: How is it in the case of the law of Shemittah? Its general rules, [its specific prescriptions] and minute details were ordained on Mount Sinai! So, also, were all commandments with their general rules and their minute details ordained on Mount Sinai. Thus is taught in Torath Cohanim (Sifra, Behar, Section 1 1). It seems to me that the following is the explanation of this: Since we do not find in Deuteronomy that the law concerning “the rest of the soil in the Sabbatical year” was repeated in “the fields of Moab” (cf. Deuteronomy 34:1; the place where Moses repeated many of the commandments contained in the other books of the Pentateuch), we may infer that all its general rules and specific prescriptions must have been promulgated on Sinai. The express mention of בְּהַר סִינַי here appears therefore to be unnecessary but Scripture by mentioning it intends to teach regarding every Divine command (lit., Divine utterance) that was spoken to Moses that in every case they, their general rules and minute details originated at Sinai and that they were only repeated again in “the fields of Moab”.

## **Conclusion – The Journey Towards Zion**

### **The Journey – Music and Lyrics by Daiane Warren**

All the times you thought you'd never make it through  
Felt just like the world just turned it's back on you  
Didn't stop you  
All the times you could've give in and you'd given up  
Times you didn't know if you were strong enough  
Still you got through

[Pre-Chorus]

Somehow it's all part of the plan  
The journey, The journey, The journey

[Chorus]

It's the journey. It's the getting there to where you're going to  
Going through hell but still you're gonna make it through  
It's the fire that they can't put out inside  
It's a hell of a ride

[Verse 2]

All the times they thought that they could hold you back  
But you've always known there was no chance of that  
You're made (You're made) too strong  
And when you're going with your heart you can go  
Farther than you'd ever thought possible  
Prove them all wrong

[Pre-Chorus]

[Chorus]

[Bridge]

Every step you take is the one more step along the way on the journey  
The journey; The journey, yeah

[Chorus]

## **Schmitta, Zionism and the Politics of Meaning**

### **Rabbi Menachem Creditor**

We are arriving at the closing movement of Sefer Vayikra, in the double portion Behar Bechukotai. “Behar” means at the mountain, “Bechukotai” in My statutes. And right at the opening, the Torah turns our attention to Shemittah, the practice of letting the land rest in the seventh year.

It is a striking mitzvah. Agricultural, yes. But also spiritual. It asks us to see the earth not as an object to be used without limit, but as a living partner in covenant. It asks restraint, humility, and trust. “The land shall observe a Shabbat for God.” Not just people, but land itself enters sacred time.

And then comes the famous question from the Midrash, carried forward by Rashi: “*Mah inyan Shemittah etzel Har Sinai?* What does Shemittah have to do with Mount Sinai?”

On its surface, the question feels almost playful, like an ancient way of saying, “What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?” At Sinai there is no land to farm. The Torah’s accounts of Sinai do not spell out these agricultural laws. So why locate Shemittah there?

Rashi’s answer opens something deeper. Sinai is not only the moment of a few commandments. It is the generative root of tradition itself. The principles and their unfolding details are all grounded there. What is not explicitly stated is still, in some essential way, already present. Torah is both given and continuously drawn out across generations.

In other words, continuity does not require sameness. Development does not mean rupture.

That insight matters right now. Deeply.

We are living in a time when people are quick to draw sharp distinctions and then to treat those distinctions as disconnections. I have found myself in many difficult conversations in which it is claimed that Zionism is merely a modern political invention, disconnected from Judaism, disconnected from the Jewish relationship to the Land of Israel.

There is a partial truth in that claim. Zionism did emerge in a modern political context. It used the tools of its time, diplomacy, organizing, international advocacy. It responded to conditions our ancestors at Sinai could not have imagined in their particulars.

But to stop there is to miss the deeper continuity.

Zionism is, in a profound sense, like Shemitah in Rashi's reading. Not explicitly articulated at Sinai in its later form, but emerging from the same covenantal core. It is a new expression of an ancient relationship. A modern articulation of a longing that runs through Torah, through prophets, through centuries of prayer and memory. A people bound to a land, yearning not only for return, but for dignity, for safety, for the chance to live fully as ourselves.

Our tradition has always evolved in this way. The figure of the rabbi is not in the Torah. It arises later, as a faithful response to new realities. So too with so much of Jewish life. We carry Sinai forward, not by freezing it in time, but by allowing its voice to echo into new circumstances.

To deny that continuity is not just an intellectual error. It severs a living chain.

Since October 7, many of us have felt both the fragility and the strength of that chain. The forms of our response may feel new. The technologies, the language, the global landscape are certainly new. But who we are in this moment is not new. The instinct to protect life, to seek home, to affirm dignity, these are as old as our story.

Shemitah reminds us to be rooted. To remember that growth requires pause, that power must be tempered by humility, that the land and the people are bound in sacred responsibility.

And perhaps it also reminds us that what appears new is often deeply old.

Zionism, at its core, is about Jewish dignity on earth. The claim that our lives matter, that our home matters, that we too are created in the image of God and deserve safety, belonging, and the chance to flourish.

Like every human project, it is imperfect. Like every chapter in our story, it calls for moral clarity and continued work. But it is not a break from who we have been. It is a continuation.

So as we close Vayikra, we might hold this gently but firmly: we come from somewhere. Our story is long. Our responses must meet the moment, but they must also remain rooted.

And from that place, with open hearts and steady courage, we keep writing the next chapter together.