

Shemitah: Radical Perspectives

Part 1: the Individual

1. Gittin 36a

הלל התקין פרוסבול מפני תיקון עולם
תנו התם פרוסבול אינו משמט זה אהד מן הדברים שהתקין הלל הזקן שראו את העם שנמנעו מלהלוות זה את זה ועברו
על מה שכתוב בתורה השמר לה פן יהיה דבר עם לבבך בליעל וגו' עמד והתקין פרוסבול §

The mishna taught that **Hillel the Elder instituted the prosbol (a document that prevents the Sabbatical Year from abrogating an outstanding debt) for the betterment of the world. We learned** in a mishna **there** (*Shevi'it* 10:3): If one writes a *prosbol*, the Sabbatical Year **does not abrogate** debt. **This is one of the matters that Hillel the Elder instituted because he saw that** the people of the nation were refraining from lending to one another around the time of the Sabbatical Year, as they were concerned that the debtor would not repay the loan, **and they violated that which is written in the Torah: “Beware that there be not a base thought in your heart, saying: The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and your eye be evil against your needy brother, and you give him nothing”** (Deuteronomy 15:9). **He arose and instituted the *prosbol*** so that it would also be possible to collect those debts in order to ensure that people would continue to give loans.

2. Bava Batra 10a

רב פפא הנה סליק בדרגא אישתמיט פרעיה בעי למיפל אמר השתא (פן) [פן] איחייב מאן דסיגי לך כמחלי שבתות
אמר ליה חייא בר רב מדפתי לרב פפא שפא עמי בא לידיך ולא פרנסתו ובעובדי עבודה זרה

The Gemara relates: **Rav Pappa was once climbing up a ladder when his foot slipped and he almost fell. He said: Now, is the one who hates us**, a euphemism for himself, **liable like Shabbat desecrators and idol worshippers**, who are subject to death by stoning, which is similar to death by falling, the punishment that Rav Pappa narrowly escaped?
Ḥiyya bar Rav of Difti said to Rav Pappa: Perhaps a poor person once approached you and you did not sustain him, and therefore you were given a glimpse of the punishment that you actually deserve.

דמנא רבי יהושע בן קרחה אומר כל המעלים עיניו מן הצדקה כאילו עובד עבודה זרה כתיב הכא השמר לה פן יהיה
דבר עם לבבך בליעל וכתוב התם יצאו אנשים בני בליעל מה להלן עבודה זרה אף כאן עבודה זרה

As it is taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korḥa says: Anyone who turns his eyes away from one seeking charity it is as if he worships idols. From where is this derived? **It is written here: “Beware that there be not a base thought in your heart...and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing”** (Deuteronomy 15:9). **And it is written there: “Certain base men have gone out...and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods”** (Deuteronomy 13:14). **Just as there, the base men sin with idolatry, so too here, idolatry.**

3. Gittin 36a (continued)

ומי איכא מידי דמדאורייתא משמטא לשביעית והתקין הלל דלא משמטא?? אָמַר אַבְיִי בְּשִׁבְעִית בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה וְרַבִּי הִיא ...

The Gemara asks about the *prosbol* itself: **But is there anything** like this, **where by Torah law the Sabbatical Year cancels** the debt **but Hillel instituted that it does not cancel** the debt?

Abaye said: The *baraita* is referring **to the Sabbatical Year in the present**, and **it is** in accordance with the opinion of **Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi** that both the Jubilee year and the shemita were no longer Biblically mandated at that time

וּמִיֵּינוּ רַבְנֵי דְתַשְׁמֵט זְכַר לְשִׁבְעִית רָאָה הֲלֵל שְׁנִמְנְעוּ הָעָם מִלְּהִלוּת זָה אֶת זָה עִמַּד וְהִתְקִין פְּרוֹסְבוֹל

And the Sages instituted that despite this, the Sabbatical Year still **will abrogate** debt in the present, in **remembrance of the** Torah-mandated **Sabbatical Year**. **Hillel saw that** the people of **the nation refrained from lending to each other** so **he arose and instituted** the *prosbol*. According to this explanation, the ordinance of **Hillel** did not conflict with a Torah law; rather, he added an ordinance to counter the effect of a rabbinic law..

4. Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot) Chapter 5: 10

אַרְבַּע מִדּוֹת בְּאָדָם. הָאוֹמֵר שְׁלִי שְׁלִי וְשִׁלְךָ שְׁלְךָ, זוֹ מִדָּה בִּינוּנִית. וַיֵּשׂ אוֹמְרִים, זוֹ מִדַּת סְדוֹם.

שְׁלִי שְׁלְךָ וְשִׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, עִם הָאָרֶץ. שְׁלִי שְׁלְךָ וְשִׁלְךָ שְׁלְךָ, חֲסִיד. שְׁלִי שְׁלִי וְשִׁלְךָ שְׁלִי, רָשָׁע:

There are four types of character in human beings:

One that says: “mine is mine, and yours is yours”: this is a commonplace type (or: the middle road) ; and some say this is a sodom-type of character (or: the quality of Sodom)

[One that says:] “mine is yours and yours is mine”: is an unlearned person;

[One that says:] “mine is yours and yours is yours” is a pious person.

[One that says:] “mine is mine, and yours is mine” is a wicked person.

Part 2: God's Land, God's World

5. Leviticus Rabbah Chapter 26

ויאמר ה' אל משה אמר אל הפהנים, זה שאמר הכתוב ([תהלים יט, ג](#)): (יום ליום יביע אמר, תנא באחד בתקופת ניסן ובאחד בתקופת תשרי היום והלילה שוין, מכאן ואילך היום לילה מן הלילה והלילה מן היום ופארעין זה לזה בפיוסין, הכל בלי שטר ובלי גזר דין, הוי: יום ליום וגו', אבל למטה כמה שטרות וכמה גזר דין, ([תהלים יט, ה](#)): (בכל הארץ יצא קום,

"Day unto day utters speech..their voice is unheard..." (Psalms 19:3)

On the first day of the 'tekufa' of Tishrei and the first day of the 'tekufa' of Nissan (the vernal and autumnal equinoxes), the day and night are equal. From then onwards the day borrows from the night and the night from the day, and they repay each other amicably, everything being done without legal document or judicial verdict...Here below, however, what a multitude of legal documents and what a multitude of judicial verdicts are required, "Their line goes out through all the earth."

6. Exodus Rabbah Chapter 31

בוא וראה כל בריותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא לזין זה מזה,

היום לילה מן הלילה והלילה מן היום, ואינן דנין זה עם זה כבריות, שנאמר ([תהלים יט, ג](#)): (יום ליום יביע אמר. הלילה לילה מן הפוכבים והפוכבים מן הלילה, האור לילה מן השמש והשמש מן האור, החכמה לילה מן הבינה והבינה מן החכמה, השמים לזין מן הארץ והארץ מהשמים, החסד לילה מן הצדקה והצדקה מן החסד התורה לילה מן המצוות והמצוות מן התורה, בריותיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא לזין זה מזה ועושים שלום זה עם זה בלא דברים, בשר ודם לילה מחברו ומבקש לבלעו ברבית ובגזל...

Come and see how all God's creations borrow from one another, day borrows from night and night from day. But they do not go to law with each other like mortals do...The moon borrows from the stars and the stars from the moon....wisdom and understanding...righteousness and lovingkindness...Torah and mitzvot...God's creatures borrow from each other and make peace with each other without words. Human beings borrow from each other and attempt to swallow each other up...

7. Sifra to Leviticus

[ח] "והארץ לא תמכר לצמתת" -- לחולטנית. "כי לי הארץ" -- אל תרע עיניך בה. "כי גרים ותושבים אתם" -- אל תעשו עצמכם עיקר. וכן הוא אומר ([דברי הימים א כט, טו](#)): (כי גרים אנחנו לפניך ותושבים ככל אבותינו". וכן דוד אומר) ([תהלים לט, יג](#)): (כי גר אנכי עמך תו "אתם עמדי" -- דיו לעבד שיהיה כרבו. כשתהיה שלי הרי הוא שלכם ([Vayikra 25:23](#)) (8).

"And the land shall not be sold litzmituth, for Mine is the land; for strangers and settlers are you with Me."

"litzmituth": in perpetuity. "for Mine is the land": Do not take it amiss, then, (that I forbid this to you for is is not yours). "for strangers and settlers are you": Do not make yourselves foremost. And thus is it written ([I Chronicles 29:15](#)) "For we are strangers with You and sojourners, as all of our fathers." And thus did David say ([Tehillim 39:13](#)) "For a stranger am I with You, a sojourner, as all of my fathers." "are you with Me": It suffices the servant that he emulate his master. "When you are Mine, it (Eretz Yisrael) will be yours."

If you go in My ways you will be settled and if not you will just be temporary dwellers before me...Do not think that once you entered the land it is totally yours especially after many generations...rather it is always God's and in every generation he gives it to us on condition that we keep His commandments as Joshua instructed. And even David said: although I am King I am still a sojourner...When you go in My ways the Shechina will dwell in the land and you will be with Me... (based on commentary by Rabbi Kasher)

8. Brakhot 35a

תנו רבנן: אסור לו לאדם שיהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה. וכל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה מעל.

The Sages taught in a Tosefta: One is forbidden to derive benefit from this world, which is the property of God, without reciting a blessing beforehand. And anyone who derives benefit from this world without a blessing, it is as if he is guilty of misuse of a consecrated object.

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: כל הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה כאילו נהנה מקדשי שמים, שנאמר: "לה' הארץ ומלוואה".

רבי לוי רמי: פתיב "לה' הארץ ומלוואה", וכתיב "השמים שמים לה' והארץ נתן לבני אדם!" לא קשיא כאן קודם ברכה, כאן לאחר ברכה

Similarly, **Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: One who derives benefit from this world without a blessing, it is as if he enjoyed objects consecrated to the heavens, as it is stated: "The earth and all it contains is the Lord's, the world and all those who live in it" (Psalms 24:1).** Rabbi Levi expressed this concept differently.

Rabbi Levi raised a contradiction: It is written: "The earth and all it contains is the Lord's," and it is written elsewhere: "The heavens are the Lord's and the earth He has given over to mankind" (Psalms 115:16). There is clearly a contradiction with regard to whom the earth belongs. He himself resolves the contradiction: This is **not difficult. Here**, the verse that says that the earth is the Lord's refers to the situation **before a blessing** is recited, . and **here**, where it says that He gave the earth to mankind refers to **after a blessing** is recited.