



# Rabbi Dovid Hodges

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FEDERATION

## IT'S IN YOUR INTEREST...

In January of 2017 Forbes ranked London as the 5<sup>th</sup> most expensive city to live in around the world. Average housing prices rose between 2006 to 2016 by 84% from £257,000 to £474,000. Many people today know first-hand the difficulty of getting on the property ladder, paying school fees or just making ends meet. It is not surprising that personal and household debt have risen for 2017 yet again.

In spite of the incredible opportunity this presents, the Torah commands in this week's parsha (Vayikra 25:36-37), 'You shall not take from him interest or increase, and you shall fear your G-d, and let your brother live with you. You shall not give him your money with interest, nor shall you give your food with increase.' Simply put, we are commanded not to take interest on loans. Interestingly, the next pasuk in the Torah connects this mitzvah to Yetzias Mitzrayim, 'I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be a G-d to you.' One should naturally ask, what is the connection between taking interest from a loan and the Yetzias Mitzrayim? Even more fascinating is that the Yalkut Shimoni writes from here we learn that anyone who believes in and keeps the mitzvah of not taking *ribbis* believes in Hashem and His Torah and anyone who denies this mitzvah and takes *ribbis* denies Hashem and His Torah.

The Malbim when explaining *makkos* and their purpose says that there were three groups of three *makkos* each serving a different purpose. The first group of *makkos*: blood, frogs and lice serve the purpose of teaching the world that Hashem

exists, as the pasuk says at the outset of the very first Makkah, 'So said Hashem, "With this you will know that I am Hashem.' The second group of *makkos*: wild animals, cattle disease and boils serve the purpose of world about *hashgachas* Hashem, that He is involved in and oversees the affairs of the world, as the pasuk says, 'And I will separate on that day the land of Goshen, upon which My people stand, that there will be no mixture of noxious creatures there, in order that you know that I am the Hashem in the midst of the earth.' The final group of *makkos*: hail, locusts and darkness, teaches the world that Hashem all powerful and unique, as the pasuk states, 'Because this time, I am sending all My plagues into your heart and into your servants and into your people, in order that you know that there is none like Me in the entire earth.'

By not charging interest on a loan a person is showing *emuna* in Hashem. They are showing they recognise that Hashem is all powerful and that He takes an active interest in how we behave in this world, especially in something as simple and inconspicuous as charging interest where only the two parties involved would know what has been agreed.

**Silver Kiddush cups found at the Hagolas Keilim Service on the 25th of March, at Beis Hamedrash Nishmas Yisroel, Brent Green, Hendon.**

If you are the owner or know who they belong to, please contact the Federation at 0208 202 2263 or email [Batsheva.pels@federation.org.uk](mailto:Batsheva.pels@federation.org.uk).

## SEDRA SUMMARY

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**BEHAR** On Har Sinai, Hashem communicates to Moshe the laws of the Shemitta every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all.

Seven Shmitta cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the Yovel year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners.

Behar also contains additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and interest.

**BECHUKOSAI** Hashem promises that if the Bnei Yisrael will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell secure in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh "rebuke," warning of the exile, persecution and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him.

Nevertheless, "Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; nor will I ever abhor them, to destroy them and to break My covenant with them; for I am Hashem their G-d."

The Parsha concludes with the rules on how to calculate the values of different types of pledges made to Hashem, and the mitzvah of tithing produce and livestock.

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2. Which acts does the Torah specify are forbidden in the seventh year?