

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Behar

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Compiled from the works of  
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi  
Parshas Behar**

**Likkutei Sichos Volume 1, Pages 273 – 281**

**Rashi in His Own Words**

ויקרא כ"ה, א': וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר:

רש"י ד"ה בהר סיני: מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני, והלא כל המצוות נאמרו מסיני, אלא מה שמיטה נאמרו כללותיה ופרטותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני, אף כולן נאמרו כללותיהן ודקדוקיהן מסיני, כך שנויה בתורת כהנים ...

**Vayikroh 25:1:** The Lord spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying.

**Rashi Heading: on Mount Sinai:** What does the subject of Shmittah (the "release" of fields in the seventh year) do with Mount Sinai? Hashem stated all of the commandments at Sinai. However, regarding Shmittah, (we find that) its general principles and its finer details were all stated from Sinai. Likewise, Hashem stated all of them (all Mitzvos), their general principles, and their finer details from Sinai. This is what is taught in Toras Kohanim.

**Synopsis**

This week's Torah portion, Behar, begins by teaching us the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year laws. Both of these would take effect upon the entrance of the Jewish nation into Israel. The Parshah begins by saying Hashem told Moshe these laws at Har Sinai. The fact is that the entire Torah, including all of its laws, was given at Sinai. Why does the Torah need to specify this here? Rashi explains that we received the general concept of Shemittah at Sinai and all of its details. From this, we can understand that the same is true regarding all Mitzvos. G-d did not merely give us general rules; instead, He gave us all the detailed laws.

However, this isn't easy to understand. The Torah wishes to teach us that Hashem gave us all the details of all commandments at Sinai. Why use a Mitzvah, such as Shmittah, with a limited scope to teach us such a broad concept? In a certain respect, we must say that both Shmittah and Yovel are general Mitzvos.

Indeed, Shmittah is representative of all Mitzvos. While fulfilling each Mitzvoh with all of its details, we must be above this world, and at the same time, we must be within the world. Hashem gave us the Mitzvos to fulfill with physical objects in a material world. Yet, we must also strive to go beyond the world, at least at certain times.

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One of these times is the Shmittah year. The Torah commands us to work the land for six years and only rely on Hashem in the seventh year. Most of the time, we must operate within the world; however, we must sometimes strive to transcend the world. Therefore, this is the Torah's Mitzvah to teach us that Hashem gave us everything at Sinai.

### Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Behar, begins by teaching us the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years<sup>1</sup>, which would take effect upon entering Israel. We must count six years when the land may be worked, planted, and harvested. The land may not be plowed, cultivated, or harvested during the seventh year, called the Sabbatical year or Shmittah. Furthermore, after seven cycles of seven years (forty-nine years) comes the Jubilee year, known in Hebrew as the Yovel year. During the Yovel year, working the land is also prohibited.

The Torah begins this discussion by telling us that<sup>2</sup> "the Lord spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying." Rashi is bothered by the fact that Hashem gave us not only *these* commandments but all of them at Mount Sinai. Therefore, Rashi explains, citing the Toras Kohanim, that the Torah mentions Har Sinai here to teach us something unique about all Mitzvos. Just as Hashem gave us the laws of Yovel and Shmittah at Sinai with all their details, the same is true of all other commandments. He taught us all Mitzvos and all of their details at Sinai.

### Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

According to Rashi, the Torah uses this opportunity to teach us a fundamental and general lesson. This being the case, we need to understand why the Torah teaches us this principle while discussing Shemittah, a Mitzvah with such a limited scope. It is limited in time. According to many opinions, it does not apply today. The majority of those Halachic codifiers who believe that it *does* apply today say that it has a rabbinic status<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, Shemittah occurs only once every seven years and Yovel every 50 years. Both Shemittah and Yovel are also limited in space. Even when it is applicable, it only applies in Israel. Why would the Torah use such a limited Mitzvah to teach us a concept that applies to the entire Torah?

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1. See footnote 1.

2. Vayikroh 25:1.

3. Yerushalmi Chapter Hasholai'ach, as cited by both Rashi and Tosfos in Talmud Gittin 36, a.

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This being the case, we must say that despite these seeming limitations, Shemittah is a general Mitzvah, at least in certain respects. How can this be?

### **The Explanation**

The Torah says, "You may sow your field for six years, and for six years, you may prune your vineyard and gather in its produce." Why does the Torah need to tell us this? There is no obligation to plant and prune during the six years; the only obligation is *not* to do so during the Sabbatical year! From this, we understand that working the land during the six years and not working it during the seventh is a part of the commandment.

There are two possible approaches to this idea. One is that our goal is for the land to rest during the seventh year. We can accomplish this by working the land during the first six years. The other approach is that our goal is to work the land throughout the six years of the Shemittah cycle. We can attain this goal by resting the land during the seventh year.

The entire concept of Shmittah is that for one year out of seven, we pay no attention to our earthly needs. We neither sow nor reap; instead, we place our faith totally in Hashem. It is not G-d's intention for the world to function in this manner regularly: Hashem created us to serve Him within this physical world. For six years, we must work in the world, abiding by the laws of nature through which Hashem created it. However, this prepares us for the seventh year. On the other hand, the seventh year makes it possible for us to serve Hashem the other six.

The same is true of Shabbos. The Torah tells us that<sup>4</sup> "the land shall rest a Shabbos to the Lord." Rashi explains that it is "for the sake of the Lord. This is just as stated in the Shabbos of Creation." We spend six days of the week working within this world to transform it into a dwelling place for Hashem. This prepares us for the seventh day. Likewise, Shabbos prepares us for the six weekdays. The same is true of the seven-year cycles.

On Shabbos, as during Shmittah, we transcend nature and rise above the limitations of time and space. During the week and the six years, we work within the laws of nature and use the world to elevate it.

### **A Deeper Explanation in Rashi**

How do we derive the power to transcend nature in this manner? G-d demands that we straddle between nature and the supernatural. How can human beings, whom G-d created, achieve this? The answer comes from Har Sinai. That is why the portion begins with the words, "And the Lord spoke

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4. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 25:2.

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to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying."

The Midrash tells us<sup>5</sup> when G-d was about to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He gathered all the mountains together. This was to decide (as so to speak) upon which mountain He should give the Torah. Each mountain claimed that He should give the Torah upon it. Mount Tabor claimed it was the tallest mountain; therefore, the Torah should be given upon its peak. Mount Carmel argued that it had helped bring about the splitting of the sea and was, hence, more significant. Hashem asked the mountains why they were quarreling. "Being bigger does not matter. The mountain I choose is Sinai, for it is the smallest of all peaks.

The obvious question is, if being the lowest is advantageous, why give the Torah on a mountain? Why not give it in a valley or on a plain? If Hashem is to give the Torah on a mountain, why not give it on the tallest mountain?

The answer is that "the smallest mountain" best expresses the idea of the Torah. The idea is to be small and involved with this physical world. Simultaneously, we must be a mountain united with G-d Almighty Himself.

This is also why we find throughout the works of the Sages that Hashem gave us the Torah from Sinai. For example, the Mishnah tells us,<sup>6</sup> "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai." Did he not receive the Torah from Hashem? However, the emphasis on Sinai teaches us *how* to receive the Torah. We must be the smallest and nullify ourselves to Hashem. At the same, each of us must be a mountain. We must be ready to carry out our Divine mission in this world, no matter what Hashem wants, or anyone else has to say.

Let us carry this lesson one step further. We did not merely say that *the Torah* was received from Sinai but that "*Moshe* received the Torah from Sinai." Likewise, our Parshah does not begin by simply saying that we received the law of the Sabbatical years from Sinai; instead, it says that "the Lord spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai."

What lesson must we learn from Moshe? The Torah says,<sup>7</sup> "Now this man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth." He was the humblest person in the history of the world. Yet he was also the most intelligent person and the leader of the Jews through the wilderness for forty years. He was the only individual who merited to receive the Torah

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5. Midrash Tehillim 68:72.

6. Pirkei Avos Chapter 1, Mishnah 1.

7. Parshas Beha'aloscho, Bamidbar 12:3.

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for all generations. He certainly knew how great he was. How could he have also been humble?

This is what the Torah demands. This is how we receive the Torah; we must be the smallest mountain. We must take pride in the mission Hashem gave us. We must never allow ourselves to be intimidated by anyone. At the same time, we must be aware that Hashem gave us whatever talents we have.

*(Compiled from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Behar 5718 and Shabbos Mevorchim Iyar 5716)*

**I hope you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.**

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May they merit to be a source of Chassidic pride  
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May she go from strength to strength  
in health, happiness, Torah, and mitzvot

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חיים ועדן עודד שיחיו  
מאריס**

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**נדפס ע"י הוריהם  
הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו**

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