

בס"ד

# THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

# Parshas Behar

20 Iyar, 5779 – May 25, 2019

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

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**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:** And 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) have to do with Mount Sinai? All of the commandments were stated at Sinai? However, just as regarding Shmittah, (we find that) its general principles and its finer details were all stated from Sinai, likewise, all of them, (all Mitzvos), both their general principles and their finer details were stated from Sinai. This is what is taught in Toras Kohanim...

**Synopsis**

This week's Torah portion, Behar, begins by teaching us the laws of the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year<sup>1</sup>. Both of these would take effect upon the entrance of the Jewish nation into Israel. The Parshah begins by saying that Hashem told Moshe these laws at Har Sinai. The fact is that the entire Torah, including all of its laws, were given at Sinai. Why does the Torah need to specify this here? Rashi explains, that we see that we did not just receive the general concept of Shemittah at Sinai; rather we received all of its details as well. From this we can understand that the same is true regarding all Mitzvos. G-d did not merely give us general rules, rather He gave us all of the detailed laws.

However, this is difficult to understand. If the Torah would like to teach us that all details of all commandments were given at Sinai, why use a Mitzvah, such a Shmittah, with such a limited scope, to teach us such a broad concept? We must say, that in a certain respect, 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. Mitzvos were given to us in order to be fulfilled with physical objects in a physical world. Yet we must also strive to go beyond the world; at least at certain times.

1. Our Parshah, Vayikroh, beginning with 25:1.

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One of these times is the Shmittah year. The Torah commands us to work the land for six years, and rely totally on Hashem in the seventh year. Most of the time, we must operate within the world. However, at times we must strive to transcend the world. Therefore, it is this Mitzvah which the Torah uses 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 year and the Jubilee year<sup>2</sup> which would take effect upon entering Israel. We must count six years, during which the land may be worked, planted and harvested. During the seventh year, called the Sabbatical year or Shmittah, the land may not be worked, planted or harvested. Furthermore, after seven cycles of seven years (49 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>3</sup> "the Lord spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying." Rashi is bothered by the fact that not only *these* Mitzvos, but rather all commandments were given to us at Mount Sinai. He therefore explains, citing the Toras Kohanim, that the reason the Torah mentions Har Sinai here, is in order to teach us something special about Mitzvos. Just as the laws of Yovel and Shmittah were given at Sinai with all of their details, the same is true of all other commandments. All Mitzvos, with all of their details, were taught to us at Sinai.

### **Difficulties in Understanding Rashi**

According to Rashi, the Torah is using this opportunity to teach us a very 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 are of the opinion that it *does* apply today, say that it has a rabbinic status<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Shemittah only occurs once every seven years, and Yovel once 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 in order to teach us a concept which applies to the entire Torah?

This being the case, we must say that despite these seeming limitations, Shemittah is nonetheless

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2. See footnote 1.

3. Vayikroh 25:1.

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

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a general Mitzvah, at least in certain respects. How can this be?

### **The Explanation**

A bit further, the Torah says that<sup>5</sup> "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 both working the land during the six years and not working it during the seventh are 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. The way to accomplish this, is 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, rather we place our faith totally in Hashem. It is not G-d's intention for the world to regularly function in this manner. We were created in order to serve Hashem 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>6</sup> "the land shall rest a Shabbos to the Lord." Rashi explains that it is "for the sake of the Lord, just as is stated of the Shabbos of Creation." We spend six days of the week working within this world, in order 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. We rise above the limitations of time and space. During the week, as well as throughout the six years, we work within the laws of nature. We use the world in order 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, who were created by G-d, achieve this? The answer comes from Har Sinai. That is why the portion begins with the words "And the Lord spoke to

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5. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 25:3.

6. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 25:2.

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Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying."

The Midrash tells us<sup>7</sup> that when G-d was about to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He gathered all of the mountains together. This was in order to decide (as so to speak) upon which mountain the Torah should be given. Each mountain claimed that the Torah should be given upon it. Mount Tabor claimed that it was the tallest mountain, and 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 therefore greater. Hashem asked the mountains why they were quarrelling. "Being bigger does not matter. The mountain which I choose is Sinai, for it is the smallest of all mountains.

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

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

This is also the reason that we find throughout the works of the Sages that the Torah was given from Sinai. For example, the Mishnah tells us that<sup>8</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. We must totally 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 it is that Hashem wants, and no matter what 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. We said that "*Moshe* received the Torah from Sinai." Likewise, our Parshah does not begin by merely saying that we received the law of the Sabbatical years from Sinai. Rather it says that "the Lord spoke to *Moshe* on Mount Sinai, saying."

What lesson must we learn from Moshe? The Torah tells us that<sup>9</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 one and only individual who merited to receive the Torah for all

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7. Midrash Tehillim 68:72.

8. Pirkei Avos Chapter 1, Mishnah 1.

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

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

This is what the Torah demands. This is the way to receive the Torah. We must be the smallest mountain. We must take pride in our G-d given mission. We must never allow ourselves to be intimidated by anyone. At the same time, we must be aware that whatever talents we have, were given to us by Hashem.

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

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Mr. **Sholom Moshe** ben Reb **Shlomo Meir** Hacoheh ע"ה **Cohen**

Passed away on Shabbos Parshas Beshalach, 13 Shevat, 5779

May His Soul be bound in the Eternal Bond of Life

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