

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas
Behar-Bechukosai

26 Iyar, 5781 – May 8, 2021

Compiled from the works of
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**An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Behar-Bechukosai
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: 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? Hashem gave us *all* of the commandments at Sinai? However, we find that regarding Shmittah, Hashem gave us its general principles and details from Sinai. So too, all of them (all Mitzvos), both their general principles and particular details, were stated from Sinai. This is what is taught in Toras Kohanim...

Synopsis

This week's Torah portion, Behar-Bechukosai, begins by teaching us the laws of the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year¹. 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, was 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; instead, we received 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 of the detailed laws.

However, this isn't easy to understand. If the Torah wants 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 to be fulfilled with physical objects in a material 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, the Torah uses this Mitzvah to teach us that Hashem gave us everything at Sinai.

Rashi's Explanation

This week's Torah portion, Behar-Bechukosai, begins by teaching us the laws of the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year², 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, one may not work, plant, or gather the ground's produce. 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 that³ "the Lord spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying." Rashi is bothered by the fact that Hashem gave us not just these Mitzvos, but all other commandments at Mount Sinai. Therefore, he explains, citing the Toras Kohanim, that the reason the Torah mentions Har Sinai here is to teach us something unique about Mitzvos. Just as Hashem gave us the laws of Yovel and Shmittah at Sinai with all of their details, the same is true of all other commandments. He taught us all Mitzvos, with all of their components, 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 it applies today say that it has a rabbinic status⁴.

Furthermore, Shemittah is limited in time. It occurs only once every seven years, and Yovel once every fifty 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?

2. See footnote 1.

3. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 25:1.

4. 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

A bit further, the Torah says that⁵ "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! We understand that both 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. The way to accomplish this is by working the ground 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 ground during the seventh year.

The entire concept of Shmittah is that we pay no attention to our earthly needs for one year out of seven. 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. He created 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 that⁶ "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 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 and throughout the six years, we work within the laws of nature. We 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, who G-d created, achieve this? The answer

5. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 25:3.

6. Our Parshah, Vayikroh 25:2.

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comes from Har Sinai. That is why the portion begins with the words, "And the Lord spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying."

The Midrash tells us⁷ that when G-d was about to give the Torah to the Jewish people, He gathered all of the mountains together. This was to decide (as so to speak) upon which mountain He should give us the Torah. Each peak claimed the honor, that G-d should give us the Torah there. Mount Tabor contended 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, more significant. Hashem asked the mountains why they were quarreling. "Being bigger does not matter. The mountain which I choose is Sinai, for it is the smallest of all.

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 Hashem does indeed intend to give us 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, 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 why we find throughout the works of the Sages that Hashem gave us the Torah from Sinai. For example, the Mishnah tells us that⁸ "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 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 we received the Torah 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. Instead, it says that "the Lord spoke to *Moshe* on Mount Sinai, saying."

What lesson must we learn from Moshe? The Torah tells us that⁹ "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

7. Midrash Tehillim 68:72.

8. Pirkei Avos Chapter 1, Mishnah 1.

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

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wilderness for forty years. He was the one and only individual who merited to receive the Torah for all generations. He certainly knew how great he was. How could he have also been humble?

This is what the Torah demands. 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)

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

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הרה"ת ר' מנחם מענדל וחי' מושקא שיחיו מאריס

לזכות

מרת אסתר שתחי' שרבני

נדפס ע"י בנה

ר' גרשון שי' בן טוב