

**Wembley Synagogue**

בְּהַר

**Insights from the commentators into the Sidrot of Behar 5768****What's the Sidra about?**

**1st Aliya:** Parshat BeHar begins with the laws of Shemittah and Yovel. The land lay fallow every 7th year, and after the 49th year, (7x7) it lay fallow a second year for the 50th year as well.

**2nd, 3rd & 4th Aliyot** G-d promises (25:21-22) that He will provide for the nation, regardless of the land being fallow. No one will go hungry. The return at Yovel of all hereditary lands to their original owners is commanded.

**5th Aliya:** The difference between the sale of a property in a walled city vs. an unwalled city is established. Continuing the theme of providing and dependency, we are commanded to provide for our impoverished brethren. Just as G-d provides for us, we must provide for each other.

**6th & 7th Aliyot** The freeing of all Jewish slaves at the Yovel is detailed. The Torah discusses redeeming a Jewish slave from a non-Jewish owner, and the formula for how much to pay the non-Jewish master. (Source: Rav Aron Tendler)

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר And Hashem spoke to Moshe at Mount Sinai as to say (25:1)

This verse establishes the setting in which Moshe was told the commandments discussed in this parsha - Mount Sinai. These commandments begin with the laws of Shemittah -the Sabbatical year during which agriculture is restricted. Rashi comments that the Torah intentionally juxtaposed the laws of Shemittah and the fact that the commandments were told to Moshe upon Mount Sinai. This juxtaposition indicates that the Shemittah laws and their details are representative of all the other mitzvot with regard to Mount Sinai. Just as Shemittah and all its by-laws were revealed to Moshe upon Mount Sinai, so too all the Mitzvot with all their minutiae were revealed to Moshe upon Mount Sinai. It is thus inferred that the entire Torah is of divine origin-having been revealed to Moshe upon Mount Sinai - right down to the smallest detail. One question bears further explanation however. Why has the Mitzva of Shemittah been singled out to represent all other Mitzvot as the prime example of a Mitzva originating from Hashem's command to Moshe at Mount Sinai? What greater lesson can be learned from the Mitzva of Shemittah than from any other Mitzva?

Many of the mitzvot seem to provide side benefits which are not actually related to the Mitzva. For example, the prohibition of eating a swine's flesh may have prevented many cases of trichinosis, but the reasons for that Mitzva are rooted in spirituality, not biology. Similarly, one may feel that observing Shabbat provides him/her with a much needed break from weekly routine and affords him/her an opportunity to relax. The true essence of the Mitzva, though, has nothing to do with these mundane considerations. The real reason for performing these Mitzvot is that Hashem instructed us to do so through Moshe upon Mount Sinai. As such, even in situations where the mundane benefits of keeping the Mitzvot do not apply, the requirements to perform is not diminished in any way. In fact, the best way to observe the Mitzvot is to perform them as Hashem's directives to show how we wish to obey Hashem in whatever He commands us. The Mitzva of Shemittah is a Mitzva which exemplifies this point. There can be no earthly benefit to leaving all one's fields fallow and undeveloped for a full year. Crop rotation may call for a field to be left fallow, but leaving all fields fallow during the same year throughout the land is definitely not standard agricultural practice. Nor does it seem that the law that one may not gather crops during that year seem to have any economic benefit. The benefit of this Mitzva is purely in the fact that one is serving Hashem and performing His will. Thus, it is quite clear why Shemittah was chosen as being representative of all other Mitzvot with regard to having been given at Mount Sinai. Just as Shemittah will always be performed in the context of following Hashem's directives which emanated from Mount Sinai, so too, all Mitzvot should be treated as what they are - Hashem's directives that were given at Mount Sinai - and not merely as useful tips for the mundane world. (Source: Darash Moshe- R' Moshe Feinstein)

וּבַשְּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית שְׁבַת שְׂפָרוֹן יִהְיֶה לְאָרְצוֹ (25:5) R' Moshe ibn Chaviv z"l writes: The laws of shemittah, as well as the laws of terumah and ma'aser, did not take effect until 14 years after Bnei Yisrael entered Eretz Yisrael, specifically, after they completed their conquest of the Land. Why? The purpose of the agricultural laws is to remind us that G-d is the Master of the Land, not we. As long as Bnei Yisrael did not yet control the Land, they did not need that reminder. He adds: Why is shemittah only one year in seven? Why should we not be reminded more often that the Land is G-d's? There are two answers: First, G-d has mercy on us, so He lets us work our land for six years. In addition, it is not unusual for farmers to leave their fields fallow every third year or so in order to let the land rejuvenate. In order to make clear that this is not the purpose of shemittah, the Torah commanded that shemittah be observed only once every seven years. (Source: Derashot Maharam Chaviv)

וְלֹא תוֹנֵי אִישׁ אֶת-עֲמִיתוֹ And let each man not fool (אָת) his friend (25:17) The Chofetz Chayim said the following: "There is a saying, "Every fool is wise for his own purposes." However, I say. "Every wise man is a fool for his own needs." Even a wise man is prone to err in the judgment of his own character. People have a tendency to rationalise their own shortcomings, thereby distorting their perception of themselves. Thus, often they are like fools in situations which require one to have a clear perception of self. It is important to try not to fool yourself in such a manner. This is indicated by the above verse. The article "אָת" generally connotes that the subject is being discussed in addition to something else. In the case of this verse, the Chofetz Chayim states that the term "ess amiso" (his friend) indicates that one should refrain from fooling one's friend in addition to not fooling someone else - meaning himself. (Source: P'ninim MiShulchan Govoha)

וְכִי תֹאמְרוּ מַה-נֹּאכַל בַּשְּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית - If you will say, "What will we eat in the seventh year?" (25:20) R' Yisrael Isserlin z"l (author of Terumat Ha'deshen) asks: Why would people worry about what they will eat in the seventh (i.e., the shemittah) year? In the seventh year they will eat the produce of the sixth year. If they have anything to worry about at all, it should be the eighth year! He answers: It is human nature for people to hoard their belongings for the future. Thus, when they realise that there will be no harvest in the seventh year, they will hoard the produce of the sixth year to eat in the eighth year. Then they will worry, "What will we eat in the seventh year?"

וְכִי-יָמוּדָה אַחֶיךָ וּבָמָה יָדוּ עִמָּךָ וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בוֹ - If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him. (25:35) How often do people see someone who is "down and out," and we are distressed that we have not come to his aid before the situation deteriorated irreversibly? The Torah admonishes us to extend a helping hand to the Jew who begins to lose money, who is slowly falling into the abyss of poverty. Slow his decline and help him to regain his prosperity. It is much more difficult to rescue someone from bankruptcy than to help him before his fortune completely reverses. What is the reason that we wait? If it is so much better to help before the tragedy is complete, why do we not "get our act together" a little bit earlier? We rationalise. We figure that when our friend "really" needs us, when he is completely destitute, then our aid will be most appreciated. Just because he has lost his job, or his business is faltering we do not need to run to his house with our chequebook. The Torah does not seem to agree with this rationale. It is a greater act of kindness, to prevent poverty than to help an individual who is already poor. When we help someone before he has fallen, we maintain his dignity, something which is more vital than balancing his cheque account. In many circumstances, helping a Jew to preserve his dignity is like saving his life, which is unquestionably more important than serving his material needs. (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

**שבת שלום!**  
**Shabbat Shalom**



**Shabbat starts 8.00pm**



**Shabbat ends: 9.47pm**