

Points to Ponder
Behar/Bechukosai 5777

Hashem spoke to Moshe at Har Sinai (25:1) – Rashi famously asks why the section of Shmittah appears near the episode of Har Sinai and he explains that in the same way that the laws of Shmittah were given at Har Sinai, all of the Torah's laws with all of their details were also given at Sinai. The question follows – why is Shmittah the vehicle to teach this lesson? **Rav Noach Weinberg ztl.** explains that Shmittah is one Mitzva that clearly could not be made up by a group of people who were an agrarian society and were going to shut down the entire economy for a year in anticipation of a tri-part Beracha in a 6th year. That would have been an impossible sell to the nation and adherents of the Mitzvah. Only one author who could guarantee that if you follow this Mitzva you will be blessed – a True Hashem who gave this Mitzva and all of the others.

You shall not wrong one another (25:14) – The Gemara (Bava Metzia 60a) explains that this means that you shall not dress up an animal or an Eved to look different than he or she does in real life. The source is our Possuk of Al Tonu. **Rav Baruch Ber Leibowitz ztl.** extended the idea to include a shiur. It seemed that he had been invited to give a tryout lecture in a particular Yeshiva in Lithuania. He delivered the Shiur and afterward one of his close acquaintances asked him why he did not reuse a Shiur he had delivered a few weeks before which was already heralded as a one of a kind gem. Rav Baruch Ber answered that while the shiur referenced was indeed special – it was not indicative of a standard shiur. Rav Baruch Ber was worried lest the community assume that he was capable of delivering such a shiur regularly and he might violate Lo Tonu that he chose a different option.

Don't burden him with back-breaking labor (25:43) – The Torah teaches us about how to treat an Eved Ivri and then when discussing an Eved Canaanee the Torah repeats itself – not to overwork the Eved Ivree. Why? **Rav Betzalel Rudinsky Shlita** opines that after allowing one to work an Eved Caanani one might allow his power and permission to take him over. Therefore the Torah reminds us Lo Tirdeh Lo B'Perech – not to allow actions that the Torah demands to change us into people living with extreme Middos.

If you walk in my Chukim (26:3) – Rashi explains that this is a message to toil in Torah thought. Why is the study of Torah called “Walking”? Why not Tilmidu – that you study my Chukim? **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl.** suggested that when one studies Torah, the deeper he goes into it, the newer the old, previously studied sections become. That is why the Torah calls it walking – a person can constantly stride deeper and deeper in Torah gaining greater appreciation of its infinite wisdom. The more we apply ourselves, the deeper we will succeed in tapping into the resource that is Torah knowledge.

I will walk among you and be your God and you will be My People (26:12) – Why is it that the rewards are always stated in the plural (I will give Gishmeichem B'Itam) etc? **Abarbanel** notes this idea and offers seven different possibilities as to why. In the final response, he suggests that the ideal reward is a communal one. **Rav Kook ztl.** added that this does not mean that one does not receive a personal reward – just that it is not the primary reward in life. **Rav Yaakov Ariel Shlita** added that ideal reward comes collectively and that Eretz Yisrael is the grand uniter of reward combining the individual needs into a communal ideal above the total sum of the parts.

And I shall bring a sword onto you, send a pestilence and place you in the hands of the enemy (26:22) – If one is already dead, how is s/he to be handed in to the hands of the enemy? **Rashi** explains that this could happen when people die and then decide to bury their dead outside of Yirushalayim since it is

forbidden to leave a Mes in Yirushalayim overnight. **Rav Bernard Weinberger Shlita** notes that this is an incredible idea – we are talking about a time of Tochchacha wherein the people are punished due to their inability to listen to Dvar Hashem and still, the people remain committed to a strong Minhag about leaving a Meis in Yirushalayim. He adds that we should not be so cavalier about said Minhagim because he has seen the strong adherence to them bring people back to Yiddishkeit.

And if the field shall be sold to a different person it shall no longer be redeemed (27:20) - The Gemara in Chagigah tells the story of Acher – that everyone should return except Acher. Teshuva would not help for him. **Rav Schachter Shlita noted that he recalled Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** that Elisha Ben Avuya could not have been unable to do Teshuva. One of his proofs was from Sede Achuzah where ownership will not be limited to Yovel. There the Gemara tells us that the son can take over but if he does not redeem and the field is sold to someone else (Acher) the field can never be redeemed. Elisha Ben Avuya made a Psak for himself that he was not a son but rather an Acher. Rav Schachter Shlita suggested that this is why we do not make Derashos on our own – no matter how far away (Acher) a person thinks s/he is, Hashem considers us Banim LaMakom and able to do Teshuva.

Haftorah: The Mikveh of Yisrael is Hashem (Yirmiyahu 17:13) – Rabbi Akiva famously declared that the Jewish nation is praised because Hashem purifies them and they are purified before him. In the same way that a Mikvah purifies man, we are purified by Hashem (See Yoma 85b). Normally, when we think of Tikvah—or Kivui in general, it refers to some degree of hope and a sense of waiting and investing in a tomorrow. How did Rabbi Akiva come up with the Derasha to internalize the idea based on a Mikvah? **Rav Avigdor Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that this is simply proven from the Possuk's context – Osee Ozvu Mikor Mayim Chaim – that Hashem is the source of flowing water and thus, by stopping the flow, he is also Mikveh Yisrael.