

PARSHAS BEHAR BECHUKOSAI

By Rabbi Yaakov Feitman

Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi

In the beginning of Parshas Behar, the Torah tells us that the laws of Shemita were given on Har Sinai. Rashi very famously asks what does Shemita have to do with Sinai? He answers that we learn that just as the laws of Shemita were given completely at Sinai, so were all the other laws of the Torah. Many meforshim ask on Rashi that this still begs the question. Any halacha could have been chosen for this juxtaposition. Why Shemita particularly? Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l answers that Shemita is actually the most illogical Mitzvah in the Torah. No farmer would ever neglect his fields for an entire year unless the Torah commands him to do so. In the same vein, all the laws of the Torah are chukim – statutes from Hashem – even those which seem logical. We know that even the laws of robbery, murder and other seemingly logical Halachos are very different according to Torah law than secular. Therefore, Shemita was chosen to teach us this great lesson.

Another approach may be gleaned from the writings of my rebbe, Rav Hutner zt"l. He taught that according to the Ramban, the mitzvah to remember maamad Har Sinai is not about the particulars of the Torah. It is the event itself. Now, one wonders what exactly do we gain from the event itself? Actually the Hagadah shel Pesach proves that there must be something we gained. We recite in the Dayeinus that if we had only reached Har Sinai and not received the Torah that would have been sufficient. This indicates that there was some gain from just being at Har Sinai. Some say that this was the unity we achieved there, as it says *k'ish echad be'lev echad*, we were as one person with one heart. However, there was another great accomplishment there as well. Chazal tell us that there was absolute silence in the world when Hashem gave the Torah. This serenity is reflected in the quiet of Shemita when no work is done and the farmers and their families are free to contemplate their lives, closeness to Hashem and other purely spiritual matters. Thus, there is an intricate relationship between Shemita and Mattan Torah.

Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l adds that just as the Torah was given on the most modest of mountains, teaching us humility and to subjugate ourselves to Hashem, so Shemita teaches the same lesson. The farmer opens his doors, sends away the guards from his fields and allows all to enter and eat the fruits he so carefully cultivated. He learns to rely totally upon Hashem and upon no one else, not even himself. The Chovos Halevavos teaches this lesson over and over and we begin to understand that this is the essence of the Torah. For this reason, too, the Torah links Shemita to Mattan Torah and Har Sinai. We might add, after studying the Pachad Yitzchok (Shavuos 8) that the fiery mountain, the smoke, the powerful shofar all provided the opposite framework from the silence in the world. We learned that all the power is from Hashem. When Hashem speaks, all are silent and no one has anything to say or add. A Jew must oscillate between the quiet contemplation of Shemita and the powerful message of Mattan Torah. The message of both is the same. Despite occasional appearances, only Hashem controls the world. If we properly utilize the "off-times" such as Shabbos and Yom Tov, we will always listen exclusively to Hashem and obey His laws, to our great advantage.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS.

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5778

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BY RABBI YAAKOV FEITMAN, KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

We continue this week with questions and answers about the upcoming Yom Tov of Shavuos:

Question: Since we have three days of Shabbos and Yom Tov in potentially hot weather, is there any heter to take a shower on the second day of Yom Tov?

Answer: There is a major disagreement amongst Rishonim about washing the entire body on Yom Tov. Tosfos (Shabbos 39b) holds that there is an issur d'oreisa (Biblical prohibition) to heat up water to wash one's entire body. The Rambam (Hilchos Yom Tov 1:16) holds that it is a d'rabbanan. The issue today is whether or not washing up on Yom Tov is considered a davar hashaveh l'chol nefesh, whether everyone *needs* that Yom Tov shower. At first glance, it would seem clear that it should be, since most people these days bathe and shower often. However, contemporary Poskim (Rav Moshe Feinstein, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Dayan Fisher) have all forbidden Yom Tov showers. They contend that even in the time of the Gemara many people bathed every day and they were never matir showers on Yom Tov (see Pnai Yehoshua Shabbos 39b and Nodah B'Yehudah Tinyana 25) It seems very clear from the majority of Poskim that they were loathe to allow this since it would probably lead to other even greater issurim.

Question: If one was up all night and there is no one who slept to make the berachos, should one say *Elokei Neshamah and Hamaavir einy*?

Answer: It seems from the Mishnah Berurah 46:24) that in such a situation one may recite these berachos.

Question: How early may we make a bracha on our talis Shavuos morning?

Answer: 45 minutes before sunrise (see Shulchan Aruch 13).

Question: What are the berachos before and after cheesecake?

Answer: Even though cheesecake only has a thin crust, we make a mezonos (Mishnah Berurah 168:45; Shevet Halevi 4:23). However, there is a great machlokes about the Beracha acharona. It is best to eat a kazayis of actual cake, not cheesecake, to be able to make an al hamichya (see Avnei Nezer Orach Chaim 38).

Question: When should the women make the bracha on the yom Tov candles, before or after they light?

Answer: The Rama (263:5) cites both opinions as acceptable. In the introduction to the Derisha commentary on the Tur, he cites his mother's custom to make the bracha before. He quotes her as saying that only on Shabbos we make the bracha after since if made the bracha first we would not be allowed to light. However, on Yom Tov we should revert to making the bracha first, as we do on all mitzvos. However, the Mogen Avrohom (263:12) holds that women should do the same on Yom Tov as Shabbos. It is best to follow the Derisha to make the bracha first unless one has a custom to the contrary.

Question: On Motzoi Shabbos Shavuos, we say Vatodieinu. What if someone forgot? Should he daven over?

Answer: No, since he will in any case say havdalah on the Kos at Kiddush. However, if he remembered during Shemoneh Esray, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l rules that he should say it at that point (Shulchan Shlomo 2:126).

A GUTTEN SHABBOS