

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה

מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר רבינוביץ זצ"ל

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Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe Rabinowitz zt"l

## פרשת בהר

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לעילוי נשמת  
ר' יצחק יונה בן ר' מאיר ז"ל אוסטרוב  
לכבוד היארציית י"ב אייר  
ואשתו  
שרה טשערנא בת ר' דוד ראובן ע"ה  
לכבוד היארציית י"ד אייר

## פרשת בהר

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָּה הָאָרֶץ שִׁבְתָּ לָּהּ: (ויקרא כ"ה א')

*And Hashem spoke to Moshe at Har Sinai saying: "Speak to Bnei Yisroel and say to them, 'When you come to the Land which I am giving you, the Land should rest a Shabbos for Hashem.'"*

### **The Great Madreigah of Those Who Observed Shemittah and Yovel**

Chazal tell us that the *mitzvah* of *Shemittah* reveals for us the great *madreigos* of *emunah* and *bitachon* which Klal Yisroel would reach, each time they went through a *Shemittah* year. For an entire year, each individual of the nation, whose economy was completely agriculturally based, had to totally abandon their fields. There would be no wheat crop, no potatoes, no tomatoes, no corn etc.

For one who must let his field remain untilled, the natural reaction would be to at least lock up the field and try to salvage any wild crops that the fields did happen to produce. However, even in this area, they were given a challenge. Not only were they to have their fields lay untouched, but they were also required to allow full access to all who wanted to enter and take whatever wild growths that they did find. In their orchards as well, the trees would be left completely unguarded. Forget about the grapes, the olives, the apples and the bananas; just leave them be for anyone who wishes to come and take his fill. There was to be absolutely no revenue for the entire year of *Shemittah*.

*Chaim works hard at his business from which he has a parnassah each year. Boruch Hashem, he is able to cover his expenses and pay his bills, and for that he is thankful. He would have liked to be able to put away money in savings, but with his large family ka"h and the high costs of living, he has never been able to see that as a reality. He manages to break even each year, and he is satisfied with his lot.*

*It happens one time that Chaim's rav approaches him and informs him that in his opinion, Chaim should close his business for a full year. For the duration of that year, he can spend his days learning, while his wife will occupy herself with Tehillim and chessed. Additionally, all the merchandise of the business should lay open throughout the year for the public to come help themselves.*

*The look that Chaim gives his rav is a combination of bewilderment and exasperation.*

*"Rabbi, you obviously don't understand how I run my life. This business is how I pay my expenses, my bills, my tuition, and everything else in between. Just how exactly am I supposed to buy groceries during that year? Or pay for heat? Or fill my car with gas? Or pay my mortgage?"*

*"I'm sorry, Rabbi, but it's not going to work. If you think I should learn some more, I can try to stay in the Bais Medrash for an extra half-hour at nights. But to simply abandon the business for a full year straight? You gotta be kidding."*

*The rav, though, is not finished.*

*"And in a few years down the line, I'm going to ask you to do the same thing, only for two years straight!"*

*Chaim decides that the rav must have gone out of his mind.*

The above *mashal* is an accurate representation of what occurred each *Shemita* for the people of Eretz Yisroel. The entire country had to abandon their primary source of *parnassah* for a whole year, and at the time of the *Yovel*, for two consecutive years.

### **How Were Klal Yisroel Able to Withstand the *Nisayon* for So Long?**

How was it possible for them to hold out for this long time? Generally, even a person who does stand strong in a *nisayon*, has a certain breaking point from which he can no longer hold out.

*When a person feels a sharp pain, generally speaking, the pain comes in increments. There is a wave of pain for a few moments, and then it subsides for a bit. Afterward, there is a new, fresh wave of pain. This is the body's way of coping with the hurt. If it would hurt continually without letup, the person would pass out from the agony.*

Similarly, a person can hold strong for a time, after which he needs a break.

*Shloimy needs to lose weight. He comes to a chasunah, and during the smorgasbord, it is absolute torture. He sees that kishka with the kugel...and, oy, he just can't take it.*

*However, when the chuppah begins a few minutes later, Shloimy can breathe easier. Sure, the meal will be served about a half-hour later, and then he will be challenged again. But now, he has a breather, where he can rest a bit from the struggle.*

### **אין אדם מעמיד עצמו על ממונו / A Person Cannot Hold Himself in Check Regarding his Property.**

This reality is even reflected in the *halachos* of the Torah as well:

For instance, there is a *halacha* in the Torah of a *בא במחתרת* / *one who comes through a tunnel*. This means that if a person catches a robber who had dug a tunnel into his house, the homeowner is permitted, and should, kill the intruder. This is because the Torah understood that this intruder is prepared to kill the victim should the need arise, and therefore, the victim should defend himself by killing the intruder first. The question, though, is, why can't the victim just allow the intruder to proceed with the robbery unopposed, thereby eliminating the need for bloodshed entirely? Rav Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg would add to this question by pointing out that a person is obligated to forfeit all of his money rather than transgress any prohibition in the Torah. If so, how is it permitted for the victim to commit the act of murder; should he not give up his possessions to the robber rather than murdering him?

And the answer to this question, Rav Sheinberg would explain, is as Chazal teach us, *חזקה אין* (סנהדרין ע"ב) / *The assumption is that a person cannot hold himself in check regarding his property.*

*A person can watch as the robber takes the cash, the silverware set, the computer... but when he reaches the silver becher which has been in the family for generations, and was used by the Baal Shem Tov himself, that's just too much.*

*He will burst out at the ganav, "Hey, you can take everything, but not that becher!"*

*The ganav, of course, realizes that that becher is worth a nice fortune, and he will not take no for an answer. This will soon lead into a situation of murder. For this reason, the Torah permits the victim to take the life of the intruder immediately.*

In this case of the intruder, the Torah clearly recognizes the limits of a person, and the *halacha* is formulated based on those limits. How is it that when it comes to *Shemita*, the farmers are required to hold themselves for an entire year as they see their fields neglected and overgrown with weeds etc., and any chance wild crop all being taken by the neighbors? Is this not beyond their limits of endurance?

Indeed, the Medrash describe such people as no less than *malachim*. In most *nisyonos*, the Medrash states, the duration of the test is for a short time, perhaps a few minutes, a few hours [as we noted above], while those who guard the *Shemita* must withstand the tremendous test of *Shemita* for the duration of the entire year, and for two full years when the *Yovel* followed the *Shemita*.

What is the key to their overcoming the *nisayon*?

### **Emunah and Bitachon in Hashem**

The primary answer is that the *mitzvah* of *Shemita* necessarily entailed a high level of *Emunah* and *Bitachon* in Hashem. A farmer would need to constantly engrain into himself that his *parnassah* was completely in the Hands of HaKadosh Boruch Hu, and that it was not his own farming that held him afloat during the rest of the years.

In truth, the Torah promises that the crops of the sixth year would provide sufficient sustenance for the sixth and seventh year; and at the *Yovel* year, for the following year as well. Thus, anyone who was going to keep the *Shemita*, seemingly already had his antidote before the test even started. This certainly did not eliminate the challenge entirely, but perhaps it was made significantly easier as a result of this. However, according to the Ohr Hachaim, it would seem that this was not the case. The Ohr Hachaim explains that the *brachah* that was implanted into the produce of the sixth year did not cause there to be a larger quantity of crops produced during that year, because the *passuk* specifically states (פסוק י"ט) *ונתנה הארץ פריה/And the Land will give forth its fruit* – implying the precise amount of produce that is inherent in the land's nature. What, then, is the *brachah* referred to in the Torah? This means that the produce will last for the three years, even as it ostensibly had only enough to last for one year. Only as the year progressed, the miracle became apparent when their food supply was not diminishing. If so, the test lasted with all its severity, for a much lengthier period of time. When it was time to begin planting for the seventh year, it truly seemed that there would not be enough produce to last them through the next year.

What a strong *bitachon* in Hashem they needed to have in order to survive through that year! And when they did survive the year, what better people they emerged, so beloved in Hashem's Eyes, and on such *madreigos* of self-control and submission to *ratzon Hashem*!

### **Bitachon in our Own Lives**

The lesson of *bitachon* certainly applies to all of us. Although we do not have the command to abandon our *parnassah* for a year, we do have obligations of *tzedakah* and *chesed*, as well as to spend money for our own performance of *mitzvos*. We must train ourselves to part with our money easily for these matters, because Hashem is the One who controls how much money we will ultimately possess. Fulfilling Hashem's will with our money, therefore, can only stand to gain for us rather than cause us loss.

*I once had a certain Rosh Kollel stay at my home in Toronto, while he was collecting money for his kollel overseas. This man was an elderly talmid chacham, and it was a great zechus to host him.*

*At one point, he noticed that there was a picture on the wall of my rebbe, Rav Chaim Brim zt"l.*

*"You know Rav Brim?" he asked me excitedly.*

*"I'll tell you a story about Rav Brim," I responded.*

*I once happened to be at his house a day or two before the end of the month. Rav Brim saw me and exclaimed, "Moshe Eliezer, Ich ken nisht machen dem chodesh! Ich hub nisht mit vus tzu tzullen mein yungerleit! [I can't make it through though the month! I don't have the money to pay the yungerleit in the kollel!]*

*Unsure of what to do, I offered Rav Brim to help go around collecting, or perhaps to make some phone calls for him. When Rav Brim heard my offer, however, he started to laugh.*

"No," he told me, "that is not what we should do."

He thought for a few moments and finally said, "I know what I'll do. I'll take two more *yungerleit* into the *kollel*!"

I looked at him as if he had fallen from the moon.

"You can't cover your payroll, so you take in even more *yungerleit*?" I asked incredulously.

"Moshe Eliezer," he tells me, "you think it is the collecting that brings in the money? It is the learning that brings the money! If we are not having *hatzlacha*, it is because the learning in the *kollel* is too weak. We will take more *yungerleit* to strengthen the *limud haTorah*, and with that we will merit *hatzlacha* in the financial aspect as well!"

This Rosh *Kollel* enjoyed the story immensely. "It was *kedai* to come here just for that story!" he told me. "I am right now trying to take in more *yungerleit* to my *kollel*, and my supporters are giving me a hard time. This was the perfect story to tell them!"

### **Bitachon as a Goal for Itself**

Besides for *bitachon* enabling our performance of *mitzvos* with the money that we were granted, *bitachon* in Hashem is a goal in its own right as well. We must attribute all our previous success to HaKadosh Boruch Hu, and we must not worry ourselves unnecessarily about how we will survive in the future. We must simply do our obligation of *hishtadlus*, and rely on HaKadosh Boruch Hu to provide for us, regardless of whether we can see how this will come about.

Not only can we learn from the *mitzvah* of *Shemita* as performed when Klal Yisroel lived there during the times of the Bais Hamikdosh, but in our own times as well, there are many stories from each *Shemita* year, in which those communities which observed the *halachos* of *Shemita* merited *siyatta d'shmaya* in completely miraculous fashions. We must take a *chizuk* for this for our *bitachon* in our own lives.

### **Hashem Retains Ownership of the Land in Regard to Shemita**

In addition to *bitachon* helping the farmers in their *nisayon*, it would seem that there was another factor as well:

When the Torah presents the Bnei Yisroel with the *mitzvah* of *Shemita*, the Torah begins with a clause of introduction: *כי תבאו אל הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם / When you come to the Land which I am giving you*. The Ohr Hachaim focuses on the phrase 'which I am giving you'. Why did the Torah have to describe Eretz Yisroel in this way? In other places in the Torah, it simply says *When you come to the Land*. The Ohr Hachaim focuses further on the way the *parshah* itself begins. *וידבר ה' אל משה בהר סיני / And Hashem spoke to Moshe at Har Sinai saying*. As Rashi famously explains, the words 'at Har Sinai' teach us that the entire Torah was given at Har Sinai. However, the Ohr Hachaim asks, why did the Torah choose to impart this lesson to us specifically regarding the *mitzvah* of *Shemita*, more than any other *mitzvah*?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that these two points hint to two similar messages: When Hashem gave Eretz Yisroel to the Bnei Yisroel, it was not as a simple gift without any 'agendas'; there was rather a very clear-cut agenda. Eretz Yisroel is the optimal place for Klal Yisroel to fulfill the entire Torah, and Hashem gave us Eretz Yisroel with the specific intention that we observe the laws of the Torah while we are there. In this way, we are bringing Hashem's purpose in Creation to fruition.

For this reason, when Hashem mentioned the fact that He is giving us Eretz Yisroel, He made specific mention of Har Sinai, to insinuate that it is due to the Torah which we received at Har Sinai that we are being given Eretz Yisroel.

The Ohr Hachaim explains the extra words of the *passuk* 'which I am giving you' in a similar vein. The *mitzvah* of *Shemita* is not simply a *mitzvah* which we were told to observe after we were given Eretz Yisroel; rather it is part of the very contract. Hashem tells us, 'I am giving you Eretz Yisroel

for you to work the fields for six years, but for the seventh year, it is Shabbos for Hashem.' Hashem is thus telling them, '**I never gave the Land to you for the period of the seventh year.**'

This *passuk* then conveys to us a completely different approach to the *mitzvah* of *Shemita*. We are not to look at it as though we have our land, and we are commanded not to work it for the *Shemita* year. That is not the case at all. Rather, it is only our Land for six years; for the seventh year, it simply does not belong to us!

If that is the reality, can we feel any resentment for being told not to work it for that time? On the contrary, we are thankful for the gift we were given for all the other years!

*Chaim is looking to purchase a new car. His friend Shimon approaches him and tells him that he happens to have an extra car sitting in his driveway.*

*"It is in very nice condition, and I almost never use it," he tells Chaim. "Please, take the car and act like it's yours. I am so happy to do something for such a good friend!"*

*Before Chaim takes the car, however, Shimon informs him of one limitation:*

*"The only time I do need the car is on Wednesday mornings, from 9am to 11am. Otherwise, it's all yours."*

*How does Chaim react to this condition? Does he become angry at Shimon and scold him for trying to take back what no longer belongs to him? Certainly not! Chaim appreciates that he is being given a free car for the entire week, other than those two hours. He understands that those two hours were never included in the terms to begin with.*

Similarly, we were given Eretz Yisroel for the six years other than *Shemita*, whereas for the seventh year, it is simply not our land! If the reality were to be viewed in this manner, it would certainly be easier for a Jewish farmer to let his field lay unworked for the seventh year. After all, it is not his for that time!

### **Applying This Lesson to All Mitzvos**

Perhaps we can explain that it is for this reason that specifically regarding the *mitzvah* of *Shemita* that the Torah taught us the message of all the *mitzvos* having been given at Har Sinai.

The Torah is teaching us that this lesson is not limited to *Shemita* alone; it is rather applicable in all areas of our *mitzvos* and *Avodas Hashem*. When we are faced with temptation or desire to do what is against the will of Hashem, we should realize that we were only given the gifts that we have for permitted acts.

*When we are tempted to speak loshon hara, we should remind ourselves that our mouths were given to us for use for permitted speech. When it comes to forbidden speech, our mouth does not belong to us!*

*The same applies for our eyes and minds, when we are faced with a temptation to gaze at forbidden images or think improper thoughts.*

Regarding using our gifts for the performance of *mitzvos*, the same concept applies. We need to ingrain into ourselves that when the time comes for a *mitzvah*, our senses and limbs are not our own. We are granted use of our bodies then for one purpose only: to serve Hashem.

*How wrong it is when some people stay in the lobby of the shul at the beginning of davening, only to enter the Bais Medrash when the tzibbur is almost up to Shemoneh Esrai. At that point, they come in to quickly 'catch up'. It is those same people who are the first to rush out, without waiting for the final kaddish.*

*They have a whole day in which they can shmooz or 'have fun'. The time of davening, however, is not theirs for shmoozing! That time is reserved for davening to Hashem.*

Of course, we can add that the whole idea of 'giving up' these gifts for Hashem is merely a deception. After a person controls himself and does what is correct, his reward in the Next World is infinitely more enjoyable than any pleasure which he desired while on this world. Moreover, his feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment while on this world far outweighs the empty pleasure he feels when acting against the will of Hashem.

### **Hashem Was Only Able to Grant Us Eretz Yisroel Because We Received the Torah**

The Ohr Hachaim explains another reason why the Torah mentions Har Sinai specifically in this *mitzvah*: Because the Torah mentioned Hashem's giving of Eretz Yisroel to the Bnei Yisroel, (which was necessary in order to enable the Bnei Yisroel to successfully withstand the trial of *Shemithah*, as explained earlier), the Torah specifically needed to mention Har Sinai in conjunction with that gift. Why was this necessary?

The Ohr Hachaim explains that in truth, the Torah specifically forbids us from giving gifts to non-Jews. If so, how could Hashem give us the Land of Eretz Yisroel? After all, gifts are forbidden!

To answer this question, the *passuk* specifically mentions Har Sinai, alluding to the Torah which we received in that location. After we received the Torah, our status was transformed from that of *goyim* to that of *yidden*, and it therefore became permitted to give gifts to us. Based on our new status, Hashem was then 'able' to give us Eretz Yisroel.

### **A Gift Is Harmful to a Non-Jew, While Beneficial to a Jew**

What is it about the Nations of the world which makes it forbidden to give them gifts, whereas for Jewish people it is permitted? Additionally, how is this point specifically alluded to in the mention of 'Har Sinai' where we accepted the Torah? Could the *passuk* not have simply mentioned the fact that we are the Bnei Yisroel, as opposed to the Nations of the World?

Based on a comment of the Maharsha (Sanhedrin 76b), it would seem that we can explain this point as follows: The reason why we cannot give a gift to a *goy* is because by doing so, one is not benefitting the *goy* but harming him. As the *passuk* says (קהלת ה' ט') *One who loves money will not be satisfied with money*. On the contrary, we can apply the *passuk* למען ספות הרוה את (דברים כ"ט י"ה) *in order to add more craving on the existing desire*. By giving the *goy* a gift, he is causing the *goy* to desire even more pleasures.

*A man receives a gold watch as a gift. Afterward, he feels that he also needs gold cufflinks and a gold tiepin to match. When he cannot get himself these items, he turns to robbing in order to satisfy his want.*

*Had he not received the watch, he would have been fine. Now that he did receive it, he finds himself in a whole lot of trouble.*

Why is one permitted to gift a gift to a *yid*? The answer can be found in a *mishnah* in Avos: כל מי שיש בידו שלשה דברים הללו, מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו, ושלשה דברים אחרים, מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. עין טובה, ורוה נמוכה, ונפש שפלה, מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. עין רעה, ורוה גבוהה, ונפש רחבה, מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע (אבות ה' י"ט) *Whoever has these three traits is a student of Avrohom Avinu: A good eye, a humble spirit, and a 'gentle' soul. Whoever has these three traits is a student of Bilam Harasha: An evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a greedy soul.*

A *yid* is taught and trained to follow in Avraham Avinu's footsteps. He does not desire what he does not have, and he is happy with others' fortune. When he receives a gift, he will be content with it, and not seek continuously to add to it. Even if he sees others who have more, he will rejoice for them, while remaining content with his own lot. This is in stark contrast to the students of Bilam, who are never satisfied with their own lot and always wish to increase their fortune. They will certainly not stand for having less their neighbor; when they see his fortune, they are consumed with envy.

### **The Torah Teaches Us the Positive Middos Which Enable Us to Receive Gifts**

The elevated *madreigah* of a *yid* is not one which comes to him easily. It requires year and of studying the *middos* of Avrohom Avinu in depth, and of toiling to train oneself in them. From where does one receive the education in training in these *middos*? From the Torah we received at Har Sinai! The Torah teaches us self-control and complete submission to the will of Hashem. This trains us to become superior people, who live our lives in an uplifted manner, following in the footsteps of Avrohom Avinu.

We can add to this that the *mitzvah* of *Shemita* is certainly a *mitzvah* that teaches one this trait of self-control. As described earlier, the landowner must watch as tree after tree is cleaned out by all the local townspeople wishing to eat their fill. He must leave his fields completely untouched for the entire year. Certainly, this *mitzvah* contributes to his living the life of elevation for which a *yid* strives.

In fact, the Sfas Emes in our *parshah* discusses the *mishnah* in Avos that we mentioned. The *mishnah* concludes that about the students of Avrohom Avinu the *passuk* states, *להנחיל לאוהבי יש* / *To bequeath to those who love me a possession*. The Sfas Emes quotes the Zohar which interprets the word *יש* as an acronym for *י-י-ובל ש-ביעית*. The talmidim of Avrohom Avinu are specifically represented in those who faithfully observe the laws of *Yovel* and *Shemita*.

We can now explain how the mention of Har Sinai explains why Hashem may give us the gift of Eretz Yisroel. At Har Sinai, we learn the many *mitzvos*, such as *Shemita* and *Yovel*, which teach us the *middos* which enable us to receive the gift of Eretz Yisroel.

### **In Conclusion**

Let us absorb these lessons that the Torah teaches us regarding the *mitzvah* of *Shemita*.

- We must trust that Hashem provides for us, and we must be willing to give our money for *tzedaka*, and for the various *mitzvos* of the Torah.
- Let us remember that Hashem only gave us the gifts that we have inasmuch as we use them in accordance with the dictates of the Torah. Regarding acting contrary to the Torah, our bodies and our possessions are simply not ours.
- And finally, let us learn the lessons of self-control and positive *middos* which are transmitted to us in the *mitzvos* of *Shemita* and *Yovel*, in order to become people of an elevated stature, who follow in the footsteps of Avrohom Avinu.

Bez"V we should be *zoche* to these *madreigos*.

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