

# SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

*Review Questions*

## Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

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## Parshas Behar

פרשת בהר

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3 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Shemittah: Six Years In, One Year Above! · Behar, p. 273, §§1-8

Sicha 2: Strong as a Mountain, Humble as Sinai! · Behar, p. 276, §§9-17

Sicha 3: Just Because Hashem Wants It! · Behar, p. 280, §§18-19

## TEACHER'S EDITION

*Answers are printed in italics on the answer lines, with the section (§) of the sicha.*

★ easy   ★★ medium   ★★★ harder

Each sicha has questions, a true chassidishe story, and a lesson for you.

# Shemittah: Six Years In, One Year Above!

## ושבתה הארץ שבת להוי'

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Behar, p. 273 (Hebrew edition pp. 260–263), sections 1–8. Compiled from the sichos of Shabbos Parshas Behar 5718 (1958) and Shabbos Mevarchim Iyar 5716 (1956).

The point: Rashi asks: “What does shemittah have to do with Har Sinai?” and answers: just as all the details of shemittah were given at Sinai, so were the details of every mitzvah. But why teach this from shemittah? It appeared already in Mishpatim, but so did other mitzvos; and a mitzvah that teaches about all the others should be a “general” mitzvah, while shemittah seems narrow (only when the Yovel applies, today mostly d’rabanan, only in Eretz Yisroel). So shemittah must be general in some way. Also, why say “six years you shall sow your field”? It isn’t a command! It must be part of the mitzvah: it prepares for the seventh year, and it is the purpose of the seventh year.

Shemittah’s inner meaning: once in seven years a Jew separates from the work that brings his bread and trusts Hashem completely, above nature. Most of the time we must work in the world (Elokim = hateva) and refine it by Torah, but sometimes we must rise above it, and the two depend on each other: proper work (keeping all the halachos in your field) prepares for rising above, and only someone who rises above can make the world itself a vessel for G-dliness (yichuda ila’ah and yichuda tata’ah). Shabbos and the weekdays work the same way. But shemittah is even higher than Shabbos: other weekday work is permitted, so a person is inside the world and still “the land rests a Shabbos for Hashem”. That is why Rashi says “like Shabbos Bereishis”. This is the inner content of every mitzvah: the mesirus nefesh of Torah and tefillah, drawn into all the details and limits of a mitzvah (“bli gvul b’gvul”); in shemittah it is openly seen.

### QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What does Rashi say about “What does shemittah have to do with Har Sinai”?

*Just as shemittah’s general rules and details were all said at Sinai, so the general rules and*

*details of all the mitzvos were said at Sinai. (§1)*

2. ★★ Why is it hard to understand that this lesson is taught specifically from shemittah?

*It could have been taught from any mitzvah whose details are listed. And a mitzvah that teaches*

*about all the others should be a “general” mitzvah, but shemittah seems narrow: only when the*

*Yovel applies (today mostly d’rabanan), and only in Eretz Yisroel. (§1)*

3. ★★ What is the question on “six years you shall sow your field”, and what is the answer?

*It isn’t a command; who would think sowing is forbidden? So it must be part of the mitzvah of*

*shemittah: (1) it is the preparation for the seventh year, and (2) it is the purpose of the*

*seventh year. (§2)*

4. ★ What is the inner meaning of shemittah?

*Once in seven years a Jew separates from the work of the land that gives him his bread, and trusts completely in Hashem to provide for him above nature. (§3)*

5. ★★ Why isn't shemittah the way to live all the time?

*Most of the time a Jew must deal with the world and refine it according to Torah. The world was created with the Name Elokim (= hateva, nature) so that we would work with nature and purify it. (§3)*

6. ★★★ How do the six years and the seventh year depend on each other?

*Rising above the world comes from dealing with the world properly, by Torah (keeping kilayim and all the halachos in your field). And you can only refine the world if from time to time you rise completely above it; then when you come back you are not swept away, but make the world a vessel for G-dliness. (§4)*

7. ★★ How do Shabbos and the six weekdays show the same idea?

*During the week we do the work of refining ("six days you shall work"), but on Shabbos "borer" is forbidden; "vayechal Elokim": the concealment of Elokim ends and Havayah, above nature, shines. (§5)*

8. ★★★ In what way is shemittah higher than Shabbos?

*On Shabbos all weekday work is forbidden, so a person is above the world with no connection to it. In shemittah other work is permitted, so he is inside the world, and still "the land rests a Shabbos for Hashem": he draws Hashem's Name, above the world, into the world itself. (§6)*

9. ★★ Why does Rashi add "for Hashem, as it says about Shabbos Bereishis"?

*Since other work is allowed, someone might think the ban on plowing and sowing is just part of refining the world. Rashi teaches that it is a true rest "for Hashem", above the world, like Shabbos Bereishis, and the permission for other work is only an advantage. (§7)*

10. ★★★ So why is shemittah a “general” mitzvah?

*Every mitzvah has this inside it: Torah, mitzvos and tefillah are mesirus nefesh, as if the soul left the body, yet we keep each mitzvah with all its limits and details. That is “bli gvul b’gvul”. In other mitzvos this is hidden; in shemittah it is seen openly. (§8)*

11. ★ Your turn: what is one way you can have “a Shabbos for Hashem” in the middle of a regular day?

*Open answer. For example: a few minutes with no phone or games to learn or say Tehillim; trusting Hashem instead of worrying about a test after you studied. (§3)*

#### A CHASSIDISHE STORY

### The Farmer’s Eighth Shemittah

Zev Steiglitz grew up on a farm. His father, a Vizhnitzer chassid, came to Eretz Yisroel from Romania in 1951. In 1957 the family moved to Kfar Gideon in the Jezreel Valley. They lived for five years without electricity, and by age ten Zev was milking the cows.

For forty years Zev has farmed the fields he got from his father: onions, vegetables and fruit. “Farming isn’t easy,” he says. “A farmer is completely dependent on the weather, and there are huge risks. He has to daven at every stage. To succeed, you have to connect with G-d every day.”

In 2014 Zev was getting ready for his eighth shemittah. He keeps it with no tricks. Once Rosh Hashanah comes, he does absolutely nothing in his fields or greenhouses. During that year he runs a vegetable store selling permitted produce. He also has a goat named “Gemachit”: parents bring children with mouth sores from all over, and Zev gives the goat milk free, because he loves children.

“Shemittah is a hard mitzvah to keep, because you can see the loss so clearly,” Zev says. “But after eight times, I am convinced it brings brachah, as the Torah says: ‘I will command My blessing for you.’”

Source: Tzippy Koltenyuk, “On the Seventh Year, Zev Rests: The Story of the Farmer...”, Chabad.org News (2014)

Think: How does Zev’s life show both “six years you shall sow” and “a Shabbos for Hashem”?

*For six years he works hard in the fields, but connects with Hashem every day and keeps all the halachos. In the seventh year he stops completely and trusts Hashem above nature, and he sees the brachah.*

## THE LESSON FOR YOU

Work hard in the world, by the Torah's rules. Then, from time to time, rise above it and trust Hashem completely. That is what makes your "regular" days holy too.

For example: You studied hard for a test. Now don't panic: daven, give a coin to tzedakah and trust Hashem. Or on Shabbos, really rest from your weekday stuff, and see how the week goes better.

# Strong as a Mountain, Humble as Sinai!

## הר סיני – דמכין מכל טוריא

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Behar, p. 276 (Hebrew edition pp. 263–266), sections 9–17. §§9–15 compiled from the sichos of Shabbos Behar 5718 and Shabbos Mevarchim Iyar 5716; §§16–17 from the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar 5718 (1958).

The point: *Where does the strength to keep shemittah come from? From Har Sinai. At Matan Torah all the mountains came, each claiming the Torah should be given on it: Tavor was the tallest, Carmel helped at the splitting of the sea. Hashem answered: you are proud, like a “gibben”, blemished; Sinai is the lowest of the mountains. But if lowliness matters, why not a valley, and if height matters, why not the tallest? Because the purpose of Matan Torah is to unite opposites: physical things themselves become G-dliness, a mountain that is low. That is why we always say “from Sinai”: the whole point of the Torah is joining heaven and earth (before Matan Torah, “the heavens are Hashem’s and the earth He gave to man”). If even a lifeless mountain could join opposites, surely a person can, making a dwelling for Hashem below. To receive the Torah you need two things that seem opposite: firmness (“don’t be ashamed of those who mock”, the first halacha in Shulchan Aruch) and bittul (“my soul shall be like dust to all”, then “open my heart to Your Torah”). They don’t clash: the firmness doesn’t come from feeling important but from being given over to Hashem’s will. A mountain is a real advantage (the “growing” within the inanimate), and real humility knows its own qualities: Moshe knew he was great, yet felt that anyone given his gifts would do more. That is why Avos opens “Moshe kibel Torah miSinai”. Rav Yosef said “don’t say humility is gone, for I am here”: Rashi explains, “I am humble”. Knowing you are humble isn’t pride, because you know it is Hashem’s gift; that is why Rav Yosef was called “Sinai”. And “learn from your Creator, Who chose Sinai” speaks about the pride of holiness: the only vessel for Torah is bittul.*

### QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What did the mountains claim at Matan Torah, and what did Hashem answer them?

*Each wanted the Torah given on it: Tavor because it was tallest, Carmel because it helped at the splitting of the sea. Hashem said: you are proud, so you are like “gibbenim”, blemished; He chose Sinai, the lowest of the mountains. (§9)*

2. ★★ What is the question on choosing Sinai? What is the answer?

*If lowliness is important, the Torah should have been given in a valley; if height is important, on the tallest mountain. The answer: Matan Torah is about uniting opposites, making physical things themselves G-dly, so it was given on a mountain that is low. (§9)*

3. ★★ Why do Chazal always say “from Sinai” (“Moshe kibel Torah miSinai”, “halacha l’Moshe miSinai”), when the main thing is that Hashem said it?

*Because the purpose of the Torah is joining two opposites, heaven and earth, like Sinai, a low mountain. At Matan Torah the “decree” separating heaven and earth was canceled. (§10)*

4. ★★ What do we answer someone who says, “How can I join two opposites?”

*From Sinai you were given the power! If Hashem gave even a lifeless mountain the power to unite opposites, surely a person, the highest creation, can make a dwelling for Hashem in this lowest world. (§10)*

5. ★★ What two conditions are needed to receive the Torah?

*(1) Firmness and courage: “don’t be ashamed of those who mock”, the first halacha in Shulchan Aruch. (2) Bittul and humility: “my soul shall be like dust to all”, and only then “open my heart to Your Torah”. (§12)*

6. ★★★ Why don’t firmness and humility contradict each other?

*The firmness doesn’t come from feeling important. A person knows everyone is better than him (“lowest of the mountains”), yet he is so given over to doing Hashem’s will that he gets the greatest strength, and all obstacles fall away. (§12)*

7. ★★★ How do we know that being a “mountain” is a real advantage, and not just being puffed up?

*Otherwise the mountains would never have thought it was a reason to get the Torah, since “the Torah isn’t found among the haughty”. Chassidus explains that a mountain is the refined, “growing” part of the inanimate. Still, together with it there must be complete bittul. (§13)*

8. ★★ How could Moshe Rabbeinu, who knew his own greatness, be “the most humble of all men”?

*He knew his qualities, but felt they were gifts from Hashem, and that if another Jew had been given them he would have done even more. Because he felt no pride, he was a vessel for the Torah. (§13)*

9. ★ Why do we learn Pirkei Avos between Pesach and Shavuot, and why does it open with “Moshe kibel Torah miSinai”?

*To prepare for Matan Torah (derech eretz comes before Torah). The first preparation is that every Jew should take on the qualities of Moshe and Sinai: firmness and humility together. (§15)*

10. ★★★ Rav Yosef said, "Don't say humility is gone, for I am here." Isn't that the opposite of humility? How does Rashi explain it?

*Rashi: "for I am humble". True humility means knowing your qualities, even that you are humble, and still being completely batel, because you know they are Hashem's gift and not yours. That may be why Rav Yosef was called "Sinai". (§16)*

11. ★★★ Rav Yosef said, "Learn from your Creator, Who chose Sinai." Why is this needed, when there is a clear posuk against pride?

*The posuk forbids ordinary, "kelipah" pride; for that we don't need Sinai. Here we learn about "holy" pride: even good qualities must be together with bittul, because the only vessel for Torah is bittul. (§17)*

#### A CHASSIDISHE STORY

### The Jewish Jordan

Tamir Goodman was so good at basketball that he was invited to the Michael Jordan Capital Classic, where he won Most Valuable Player, the first Jewish player ever to win it. Sports Illustrated, ESPN and 60 Minutes all wanted to interview him. Then the University of Maryland offered him a place on its famous team.

He turned it down, because they played on Shabbos. "I always knew my basketball came from G-d," he said, "and I knew that if you watch after Shabbos, Shabbos will watch after you."

Later he played in Israel for Maccabi Tel Aviv, the first player there not to play on Shabbos or Yom Tov. He played every game with his kippah on. Once, in a college tournament, he dove for the ball, collided with another player and fell. When he got up, thousands of people were standing and cheering. Watching the video, he saw why: his non-Jewish teammate had picked up his kippah and put it back on his head.

With all his talent, Tamir stayed humble. Basketball, he said, is only "a tool": "I always heard in my Chabad shul that we have to make a dwelling place for G-d, each in his own way." A lawyer once told him: "I never wore my kippah in court until I saw you play with yours."

Source: Elad Nehorai, "Most Valuable Basketball Player: Most Valuable Lesson" ([chabad.org](http://chabad.org))

Think: How did Tamir Goodman have both "the mountain" and "Sinai"?

*He was a real "mountain" (MVP, famous) and stood firm, unashamed, with his kippah and Shabbos. But he was humble: he knew his talent came from Hashem and was only a tool for making a dwelling for Hashem.*

## THE LESSON FOR YOU

Be strong and proud of your Yiddishkeit; don't be embarrassed by anyone who laughs. But stay humble: your talents are Hashem's gifts, given to you for a mission.

For example: At a game or in the street, keep your tzitzis out and your kippah on, with a smile. And if you're the best in your class at something, help the others instead of showing off.

# Just Because Hashem Wants It!

## אילו נצטוינו לחטוב עצים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Behar, p. 280 (Hebrew edition pp. 266-267), sections 18-19. From the sicha of the second day of Shavuos 5716 (1956).

The point: *Har Sinai holds another lesson. A Jew should keep mitzvos not for any personal interest: not for physical reward ("if you walk in My statutes, I will give your rains in their time"), not for Gan Eden, and not even for the special power each mitzvah has to purify the soul, but because it is Hashem's will, as we say: "even if we had been commanded to chop wood", something with no reward and no special power, we would do it with life and energy. Doing a mitzvah for its rewards or powers is the way of a "chitzon", someone external: he isn't given over to the thing itself, and while doing one thing he thinks about another. A "pnimi", as the Rebbe Rashab said, is someone who, when he does something, is completely in it and leaves no room for anything else. That is why the Torah was given on Har Sinai. The other mountains had real advantages, but they came to show them off and demand the Torah because of them, and that itself showed that they were not right for it: the Torah is given only where nothing on the side gets mixed in, Torah for its own sake. Sinai also had the advantage of a mountain, but it didn't show ("the lowest"), so it was a vessel for Torah. The Midrash says Carmel came from Aspamia, Tavor from Beis Elim, and Sinai from Har HaMoriah. Sinai's greatness comes from the Akeidah: Yitzchak gave himself up for Hashem's will with no side calculations. By reason he could have argued (he heard the command only through a prophet, while the ban on bloodshed was commanded to all), but knowing it was Hashem's will, he made no calculations at all. That is the vessel for Torah.*

### QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ For what reasons should a Jew NOT keep the mitzvos, according to this sicha?

*Not for physical reward ("I will give your rains in their time"), not for Gan Eden, and not even*

*for the special power of each mitzvah to purify the soul. (§18)*

2. ★ Then why should we keep them? What does "even if we had been commanded to chop wood" mean?

*Because it is Hashem's will. Even if He had commanded something with no reward and no special*

*power, like chopping wood, we would do it with life and energy. (§18)*

3. ★★ What is a "chitzon", an external person?

*Someone who isn't given over to the thing itself: while doing one thing, he is thinking about*

*something else (like the reward). (§18)*

4. ★★ How did the Rebbe Rashab describe a "pnimi"?

*Someone who, when he does something, is completely in it, without thinking about or leaving room*

*for anything else at that time. (§18)*

5. ★★★ The other mountains had real advantages. Why did that make them NOT fit for the Torah?

*Because they came to show off their advantages and demanded the Torah because of them. The Torah is given only where nothing on the side gets mixed in: Torah for its own sake. Showing off proved they weren't right for it. (§18)*

6. ★★ Sinai is also a mountain with an advantage. Why was it a vessel for the Torah?

*Its advantage wasn't seen ("the lowest of the mountains"), and nothing on the side showed in it, so it was a vessel for Torah. (§18)*

7. ★★ Where, according to the Midrash, did Carmel, Tavor and Sinai come from?

*Carmel came from Aspamia, Tavor from Beis Elim, and Sinai from Har HaMoriah. (§19)*

8. ★★★ What is the greatness of Har HaMoriah, and what "calculation" could Yitzchak have made?

*The Akeidah: mesirus nefesh for Hashem's will with no side calculations. Yitzchak heard the command only through a prophet (Avraham), while the ban on bloodshed was a direct command, even to bnei Noach. But since he knew it was Hashem's will, he made no calculations and gave himself over completely. (§19)*

9. ★★ What is the "vessel for Torah" according to this sicha?

*Being completely given over to Hashem's will, inwardly and with mesirus nefesh, with no personal interests and no calculations, like Yitzchak at the Akeidah and like Sinai. (§19)*

10. ★ Your turn: think of a mitzvah you do for a prize (points, a treat). How can you do it "because Hashem wants"?

*Open answer. Example: davening on time even when there's no raffle, or helping at home when no one sees, just because it's Hashem's will. (§18)*

## A CHASSIDISHE STORY

**A Fan or a Player?**

On a chilly winter night in 1955, Shimshon Stock brought a friend and his son, who was about to become bar mitzvah, to see the Rebbe at 770.

The Rebbe greeted them warmly and blessed the boy to grow up to be a source of pride to the Jewish people and to his family. As they turned to leave, the Rebbe surprised them with a question to the boy: "Are you a baseball fan?"

"Yes." "Which team, the Yankees or the Dodgers?" "The Dodgers." "Does your father take you to games?" "Once in a while. We went a month ago." "How was the game?" "Disappointing," the boy admitted. "By the sixth inning the Dodgers were losing nine to two, so we left."

"Did the players also leave when you left?"

"Rabbi, the players can't leave in the middle of the game!"

"Why not?" asked the Rebbe. "Explain to me how this works."

"There are players and fans," the boy explained. "The fans can leave whenever they like; they're not part of the game. But the players have to stay and try to win until the game is over."

"That is the lesson I want to teach you in Yiddishkeit," the Rebbe said with a smile. "You can be either a fan or a player. Be a player."

Source: Dovid Zaklikowski, "Fans and Players: A Baseball Lesson from the Lubavitcher Rebbe" ([chabad.org](http://chabad.org))

Think: How is a "player" like a "pnimi" who serves Hashem "just because He wants it"?

*A fan watches from the outside and leaves when it isn't fun or isn't going his way. A player is*

*completely in the game, giving everything until the end. A pnimi does the mitzvah with his whole*

*self, not for what he gets out of it.*

## THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't do mitzvos only for the prize. Do them because Hashem wants, and be totally in it while you're doing it, like a player, not a fan.

For example: When you daven, don't think about recess; be in the davening. When you help your parents, do it the whole way, even when no one says thank you.