



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

A DIFFERENT LOOK AT MA INYAN SH'MITA...

Parshat Emor starts with G-d speaking to Moshe AT HAR SINAI, and stating the mitzva and prohibitions of the Sh'mita year.

With the unusual AT HAR SINAI inserted into the most common pasuk in the Torah - VAYDABEIR HASHEM EL MOSHE LEIMOR occurs 69 times - Rashi asks the well-known question: What does the topic of Sh'mita have to do with Har Sinai?

He answers that it comes to teach us that just as the laws of Sh'mita with all its details were given at Sinai, so too were all mitzvot given at Sinai (by G-d to Moshe during the 40 days and 40 nights after the day of Matan Torah) with their details - not just chapter-headings.

What's to say that it isn't just Sh'mita that was given with details, since the laws of Sh'mita are prefaced with B'HAR SINAI. Why does Rashi say that we learn from here that all mitzvot were given that way?

To answer, we must point out the 8th of the Thirteen Principles of Rabbi Yishmael - R. Yishmael says: The Torah is expounded by thirteen hermeneutical

principles (fancy word for the various methods that the Gemara links some of the Oral Torah teachings to the Written Word).

The 8th one states: Anything which was subsumed in a general category, and departed from that category to teach (something) – not in order to teach about itself did it depart, but in order to teach about the entire category did it depart.

Rashi's answer to his question of MA INYAN SH'MITA EITZEL HAR SINAI only makes sense in light of this Talmudic Rule.

And this raises to whole issue of our belief, confidence, trust (there are a few other appropriate words here) in the Oral Law and Tradition, and its being the inseparable partner of the Written Torah - and that which explains and clarifies what the Written Word means.

There's more to say about this, but I want to get to the point expressed in the title of this PTDT.

Bottom line - EMUNAT CHACHAMIM - we believe with such a complete belief that makes it more than belief - we know, we know that the Oral Law is true, as we know that the Written Word is true. That both came from G-d - He dictated the Written Torah to Moshe and explained to him what it means, and He charged Moshe with the task of writing the Torah and teaching it to all of Israel. And through all the generations since,

until today and beyond.

There is a second question that follows in the wake of what we learn from the SINAI-SH'MITA connection. Why was Sh'mita specifically chosen to 'go out from the KLAL, the general category of all mitzvot, in order to teach us about all mitzvot? It could have been a different mitzva; why Sh'mita?

I am not claiming that what I am about to write - and what you are about to read - is the real answer to the question. But it is my reaction to the question.

I see it like this:

If you have to ask, then there is a problem.

The Torah was given on Mount Sinai, which is not located in Eretz Yisrael. One reason given for that is to make sure Jews - wherever they live - are aware that they must study and obey the Torah.

But we must always remember that G-d's Plan for us was to take us out of Mitzrayim, bring us to Eretz Yisrael, and on the way to give us the Torah to be the Guide for our lives in Eretz Yisrael.

Juxtaposing Sh'mita to Har Sinai makes that point. Yes, we came out of Egypt and seven weeks later we stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. The next step was supposed to be a short journey to the Land of Israel. We messed that up - and not just with the Meraglim fiasco but repeatedly throughout Jewish History.

But what was always supposed to be - and still is - the package deal expressed in Vayikra 25:38 - ANI HASHEM ELOKEI-CHEM... I am HaShem your G-d who took you out of Egypt in order to give you the Land of Canaan (Eretz Yisrael) to be your G-d.

And why specifically Sh'mita and not another mitzva associated with the Land? Because, as we will read next Shabbat, the main key to our remaining in the Land is the proper observance of Sh'mita.

Of course, we are commanded to keep all of the mitzvot, but Sh'mita is singled out as the mitzva whose observance keeps us in the Land and whose violation causes the Land to spit us out.

MA INYAN SH'MITA EITZEL HAR SINAI?
That should be obvious. **PTDT**