



**PhiloTorah D'var Torah**

## **MA INYAN SH'MITA...**

Rashi's famous question on the opening pasuk in Parshat B'har -

What has the matter of Sh'mita to do with Mount Sinai that the Torah felt compelled to expressly state where it was commanded? Were not all commandments given on Sinai?

Rashi's answer is presented and explained in the Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary - see there.

But I have a sharp question on the question. What's the connection between Har Sinai and Sh'mita? That is what you're asking? How can you even ask that?!

Har Sinai represents the Torah. And Sh'mita represents Eretz Yisrael. That's the connection.

The Torah was purposely given outside of Eretz Yisrael, so that we will understand that it must be observed wherever we are in the world. But linking Sh'mita with Har Sinai reminds us that THE Place where Torah was always meant to be observed and lived, is Eretz Yisrael. There are numerous p'sukim in the Torah that drive that point home. My

personal favorite is in Parshat Eikev, D'varim 8:1 - Every commandment that I command you this day you shall keep to do, that you may live and multiply, and come and possess the land that HaShem swore to your forefathers. There are many other p'sukim that express the same idea and teach us what is R'TZON HASHEM, G-d's desire (for us).

This particular pasuk from Eikev is what - in Summer of 1969, on the afternoon of Shabbat Nachamu, led me to resolve that Israel was to be my future - no doubt about it. It took me 12 more years to realize that plan, but that Shabbat afternoon 57 years ago was a defining moment in my life and my response to MA INYAN SH'MITA EITZEL HAR SINAI.

People argue whether living in Israel is a mitzva in our time, or not. People debate if Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is a Mitzva Chiyuvit (obligatory) or a Mitzva Kiyumit (a mitzva if you do it but no sin if you don't). But it is patently obvious that Yishuv Eretz Yisrael is what G-d wants of His Chosen People. It is R'TZON HASHEM.

**PTDT**

**On the lighter side... In Israel, MA INYAN SH'MITA EITZEL HAR SINAI is slang for "What does one thing have to do with the other?" Same as "What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?" - as used in American-English. Looked up on the internet**

(and Chat-GPT) what expressions are used in other countries and languages.

In French: “What does that have to do with sauerkraut?”

In Italian: “What does it have to do with cabbage?”

In Polish: “What does a gingerbread have to do with a windmill?”

In British-English: “What’s that got to do with the price of fish?”

Most interesting is something on the Wikipedia entry for What does that have to do with...?

A related expression in Hebrew can be found in a commentary on the Biblical commandment of... Sh'mita. Leviticus 25:1 specifically states that God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai; while this was a common location for God to speak to Moses, the text's explicit reference to it is very rare. Accordingly, Rashi's commentary begins with the question "What does Shmita have to do with Mount Sinai?" MA INYAN SH'MITA... In modern Jewish discourse, this phrase is taken to question the connection between any two seemingly disparate points, as in the comparable English phrase.

Amazing, no?