

Zera Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Mantua 1778*

Chapter XXXII: Behar (Lev. 25:1–26:2)

Essay 1. The connection between *shemita* and Sinai

פְּסוּק "וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר", פֶּרַשׁ רַש"י, מָה עֲנִינן שְׁמִיטָה אֶצֶל הַר סִינַי? וְהֲלֹא כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת נֶאֱמָרוּ בְּסִינַי? אֵלֶּא מָה שְׁמִיטָה נֶאֱמָרוּ כְּלֹמֵתִיהָ וּפְרָטוֹתֶיהָ וְדִקְדוּקֶיהָ מִסִּינַי, אַף כָּל שְׂאֵר הַמִּצְוֹת נֶאֱמָרוּ כְּלֹמֵתֶיהָ וּפְרָטוֹתֶיהָ וְדִקְדוּקֶיהָ מִסִּינַי, כִּי שְׁנוּיָהּ בְּתוֹרַת פְּהָגִים.

There is a verse: “And the L-rd spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying: Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When you enter the Land that I assign to you, the Land shall observe a Sabbatical year of the L-rd.”¹

Rashi explained:

What has the subject of *shemita* [resting the soil in a Sabbatical year] to do with Mount Sinai [i.e., why did Scripture need to say where it was commanded]? Were not all commandments given on Sinai? Rather, just as *shemita* was said with its general rules, and its specific prescriptions, and its minute details at Sinai, so too, all the remaining commandments with their general rules, their specific prescriptions, and their minute details were said at Sinai. Thus is taught in *Torat Cohanim* [i.e., Sifra, Behar, Section 1:1].

It seems to me that the following is the explanation of this: Since we do not find [the law concerning] “resting the soil in the Sabbatical year” repeated in Deuteronomy at “the plains of Moab” [cf. Deut. 34:1; where Moses repeated many of the commandments contained in the other books of the Torah], we learn that all its general rules and specific prescriptions were said at Sinai. Scripture comes and teaches there every [Divine] command spoken to Moses, that all of them, their general rules and minute details were from Sinai, and they were repeated again in “the plains of Moab.”

- Rashi on Lev. 25:1

* English translation: Copyright © 2023 by Charles S. Stein. Additional essays are at <https://www.zstorah.com>

¹ Lev. 25:1–2.

מקשים העולם דאיפכא מיבעי ליה מה ענגן הר סיני אצל שמיטה, ועוד מהו שתזר לומר נהלא כל המצוות נאמרו מסיני שגראה שהם שמי קושיות. ומלבד מה שהרבה להקשות הרא"ם עוד הקשו המפרשים למה גילה הכתוב דבר זה בשמיטה יותר משאר המצוות, שגם אם מצוה אחרת לא הייתה נשנית בערבות מואב. ויאמר בה "בהר סיני" למדנו הדבר בעצמו.

The world asks why the opposite isn't stated: What has the subject of Mount Sinai to do with *shemita*? I.e., Rashi asks, "What has *shemita* to do with Mount Sinai," as though the Torah portion is otherwise discussing Sinai and suddenly interjects *shemita*. But instead, the Torah portion, Behar, is focusing on *shemita*, which is only to be practiced in the Land of Israel. It is the mention of Sinai that seems irrelevant.

Also, what is the reason that [Rashi] returned to say, "Were not all commandments said at Sinai," as this appears to be two different questions. I.e., if Rashi first asks about a connection between *shemita* and Sinai, why is he now bringing up all commandments?

Despite the many questions of the Re'em,² the commentators also questioned why Scripture revealed this with regard to *shemita* more than the remaining commandments, even if another commandment was not repeated in the plains of Moab. By [Scripture] stating "at Mount Sinai," we learned the matter itself.

I.e., many commandments were given at Sinai and repeated at Moab, and one might think that some details of a particular commandment were taught at Sinai and other details at Moab. But *shemita* was learned only at Sinai, so we understand that all of the details of *shemita* were taught at Sinai. But there were other commandments besides *shemita* that were mentioned at Sinai but not at Moab, so why was *shemita* mentioned?

ויש לומר שאין הכי נמי שההרגש הוא מה ענגן הר סיני אצל שמיטה, כלומר למה גילה הכתוב דבר זה בשמיטה דוקא בקושיות המפרשים הנ"ל, אמנם האמת היא שגם אם היה כותבו במצוה אחרת היה לנו זה ההרגש בעצמו, ומשום הכי אין להקשות עוד מה ענגן הר סיני אצל שמיטה אלא מהו שדוקא בשמיטה גילה הכתוב זה, והיינו ממש ההרגש מה ענגן שמיטה אצל הר סיני. ועוד הוסיף ונהלא כל המצוות וכו', כלומר ויותר טוב היה ליקח מצוה אחרת מאותן שהיו נוהגות שם במדבר ובהר סיני ולא השמיטה שאינה נוהגת בהר סיני כלל אלא בארץ דוקא. ומירץ מה שמיטה נאמרו כללותיה וכו', כלומר שהכללות והפרטים נדקדוקים של השמיטה הם דומה בדומה לכללות ופרטים נדקדוקים של הר סיני מה שאין כן שאר המצוות.

It can be said that it's indeed so that this initial perception is properly, "what has the subject of Mount Sinai to do with *shemita*," as if to say, why did Scripture reveal this specifically for *shemita*, as the questions of the commentators above. But indeed, the truth is that even if [Scripture] had written a different commandment, we would have this perception by itself, i.e., why is such-and-such a commandment being singled out here.

Because of this, we shouldn't question further "what has the subject of Mount Sinai to do with *shemita*," rather, we should ask, why is it that for *shemita*, Scripture specifically revealed this, and thus we especially have this perception, as Rashi stated, "what has the

² Rabbi Elijah Mizrahi (c. 1455 – c. 1526) ("Re'em"), Talmudist, posek, and mathematician, best known for *Sefer ha-Mizrahi*, a supercommentary on Rashi's commentary on the Torah.

subject of *shemita* to do with Mount Sinai.” I.e., Rashi didn’t err in his wording. He recognized that a number of commandments could have been mentioned, and one would still wonder how the chosen commandment was relevant to Sinai. So he is asking how *shemita* particularly relates to Sinai on some deeper, hidden level.

[Rashi] added, “**Were not all commandments given on Sinai,**” as if to say, **it would have been better to take a different commandment from those that applied there in the wilderness and at Mount Sinai and not *shemita*, which does not apply at Mount Sinai at all, rather specifically only in the Land of Israel.** Understood this way, Rashi’s second point is not really a separate question from his first point. Rather, it is connected, that there is something to learn from the connection between *shemita* and Sinai. But *shemita* is observed only in the Land of Israel, and not in the wilderness, so what is the connection?

[Rashi’s] solution as to why *shemita* was said with its general rules, its specific prescriptions, and minute details at Sinai, was as if to say that **the general rules, the specific prescriptions, and the minute details of *shemita* are comparable to the general rules, the specific prescriptions, and the minute details of Mount Sinai itself. This is not true for the rest of the commandments.**

וְזֶה בִּיאוּרָם, הַגֵּה כְּשֶׁנִּזְכָּר בְּטַעַם הַשְּׂמִיטָה לָמָּה הִיא בִּשְׁנֵה הַשְּׂבִיעִית דְּנוֹקָא, הוּא דְּבַר נֶעְלָם וְנִסְתָּר מִגֵּגְד עֵינֵינוּ, וּבִפְרָט לְפִי פְּשׁוּטָן שֶׁל דְּבָרִים, וְהִגַּם שֶׁהַמְּפָרָשִׁים הֶעֱמִיקוּ וְהִרְחִיבוּ לְתַת רְמִזִּים הַרְבֵּה עִם כָּל זֶה עֲדִינּוּ לֹא הִסְפִּיקוּ. דְּאִיתָא בְּמִדְרָשׁ רַבָּה פְּרָשַׁת אָמַר "וּבַחֲדָשׁ הַשְּׂבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד לַחֲדָשׁ", כָּל הַשְּׂבִיעִין חֲבִיבִין לְעוֹלָם. לְמַעְלָה, הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב וְכוּ' דְּכַתִּיב "סִלּוּ לְרַכֵּב בְּעֶרְבוֹת". בְּאֶרְצוֹת, הַשְּׂבִיעִית חֲבִיבָה וְכוּ'. בְּדִירוֹת, הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב וְכוּ'. בְּאֲבוֹת הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב: אֲבָרָהָם, יִצְחָק וְעֵלְיָב, לֵוִי, קָהָת, עֲמָרָם, מֹשֶׁה. וְכַתִּיב "וּמִשָּׁה עָלָה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים". בְּבָנִים, הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב, "דְּוִיד הַשְּׂבִיעִי". בְּמַלְכִים, וְכוּ'. בִּשְׁנֵי הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב, דְּכַתִּיב "וְהַשְּׂבִיעִית תִּשְׁמָטָה וְנִטְשָׁתָה". בְּשְׂמִיטָה, הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב. בְּיָמִים, הַשְּׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב, שְׁנֵי אֲמָר "וַיִּבְרָךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי". בְּחֻדְשִׁים, שְׂבִיעִי חֲבִיב וְכוּ'.

We don't know why "sevens" are special, or why a particular mountain was chosen.

And in their explanation, here when we look closely at the reason of the *shemita* as to why it is in the seventh year, it is something that is hidden and concealed from our eyes, especially according to the simple understanding of things. That’s the case even though the commentators deepened and expanded their efforts to give many hints. Nevertheless, they still weren’t sufficient in completely explaining the reason.

For it is brought in Midrash Rabbah, parashat Emor on the verse, “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations. You shall observe it as a day when the horn is sounded.”³

All the sevenths are always beloved. Above, the seventh is beloved: Skies, skies of the skies, firmament, heavens, celestial realm, abode, and clouds, as it is written, “extol Him who rides the clouds, the L-rd is His name.”⁴ In the lands, the seventh is beloved: Earth, ground, globe, valley, wilderness, oblivion,

³ Num. 29:1.

⁴ Ps. 68:5.

and world, as it is written, “it is He who judges the world with righteousness, rules the peoples with equity.”⁵ **In the generations, the seventh is beloved:** Adam, Seth, Enos, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, and Enoch, as it is written, “And Enoch walked with G-d.”⁶ **In the forefathers, the seventh is beloved: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kehath, Amram, and Moses,** as it is written, “And Moses ascended to G-d.”⁷ **In sons, the seventh is beloved,** as it is stated, “David [was] the seventh.”⁸ **In kings, the seventh is beloved:** Saul, Ish-boshet, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, and Asa, as it is written, “And Asa called out to the Lord.”⁹ **In years, the seventh is beloved, as it is stated, “But in the seventh you shall let it rest and lie fallow.”**¹⁰ **In Sabbatical years, the seventh is beloved,** as it is stated, “And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year.”¹¹ **In days, the seventh is beloved, as it is stated, “And G-d blessed the seventh day.”**¹² **In months, the seventh is beloved,** as it is stated, “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, [you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts].”¹³

- Lev. Rabbah 29:11

והקשה שם היפה תאר דמה מעלה היא זו לשביעיות, וכי אילו לא הנה משה שביעי לא הנה אף על פי כן חביב יותר מהאבות. וכן ערבות אילו לא הנה שביעי לא הנה חביב יותר משאר הרקיעים וכן השאר. ותירץ שם דלולי השביעי חביב לא הנה עושה ה' את יום השבת בשביעי, שהנה יכול לעשות בתמשה ימים ולשבות בשישי, או הנה עושה מלאכתו בשבעה ימים וישבות בשמיני או ביותר מכאן. והנה נותן מעלות השבת שמצד השביתה ושאר הסגולות אשר בו לאותו יום שהנה שבת, וכן הנה יכול לעשות שישה רקיעים לבד ויהנה השישי שהוא יותר גדול החביב, או הנה יכול לעשות שמונה רקיעים ויהנה השמיני היותר חביב. וכן הנה יכול לעשות העולם פחות או יותר משבע אקלימים ולא היתה ארץ ישראל שביעית. וכן הנה יכול לברוא את חנוך בדור קודם לדורו או לאחרו לדור אחר. וכן משה וכן דוד וכו' עכ"ל ועיי"ש. ומכאן נראה שהמעלה של שנת השמיטה המגיע לה בהיותה שביעית שכל השביעין חביבין, נעלם ממנו למה דוקא הוא כה, אלא שפך היתה רצונו של הקב"ה מעת בריאת עולמו.

The *Yafeh To'ar*¹⁴ asks there what high standard there is to the sevens, and that if Moses had not been seventh in line from Abraham, would he not have been more beloved than the patriarchs? Likewise with the clouds: if they had not been seventh, would they not have been more beloved than the other firmaments? Likewise with the remainder of elements cited in the Midrash Rabbah.

His solution is that had the seventh not been beloved, G-d would not have made the Sabbath day on the seventh day of Creation, that He was able to do everything in five days and

⁵ Ps. 9:9.

⁶ Gen. 5:24.

⁷ Ex. 19:3.

⁸ I Chron. 2:15.

⁹ II Chron. 14:10.

¹⁰ Ex. 23:11.

¹¹ Lev. 25:10.

¹² Gen. 2:3

¹³ Lev. 23:24.

¹⁴ Rabbi Samuel ben Isaac Ashkenazi Jaffe (d. late 16th century), rabbi of the Ashkenazi community of Constantinople. *Yafeh To'ar* was his commentary to the Midrash Rabbah: Genesis (Venice, 1597–1606); Exodus (Venice, 1597); and Leviticus (Constantinople, 1648).

to rest on the sixth day, or to do all of His work in seven days and to rest on the eighth day, or more than that. He could have given the merits of the Sabbath, as far as resting and the remainder of the virtues it has, to whichever day He had rested. Similarly, He was able to make six firmaments only, and it would be the sixth being greater would be the most beloved, or He could have made eight firmaments and the eighth would be the most beloved. Similarly, He was able to make the world with fewer or more than seven climates, and the Land of Israel would not have been the seventh. Similarly, He was able to create Enoch prior to his generation or after it, in a different generation. Similarly with Moses, and similarly with David, etc., and see there in the *Yafeh To'ar*.

From this, it seems that the virtue of the *shemithah* year was due to it being the seventh, as all sevens are beloved. The reason was lost as to exactly why this was so, other than this was the will of the Holy One, Blessed be He, at the time of the Creation of His world.

וְהָיָה נְמִי נֶעְלָם מִמֶּנּוּ הַטַּעַם שֶׁהִשְׁרָה הַקַּב"ה שְׁכִינְתּוֹ עַל הַר סִינַי וְלֹא עַל הַר אֶחָד, דָּאֵי מִטַּעַם שֶׁהָיָה יוֹתֵר נְמוּדָּה מִשְׁאָר הָרִים כְּדִכְתִּיב "לָמָּה תִרְצָדּוֹן הָרִים גְּבֻנָּיִם" וְכוּ', מִכָּל מְקוֹם קֹשֶׁה לָמָּה לֹא עָשָׂה הַר אֶחָד נְמוּדָּה וְלָמָּה דִּנְקָא הָיָה זֶה. וְאִם מִטַּעַם דָּאִיתָא בְּבְרָאשִׁית רַבָּה עַל פְּסוּק "בְּרַכְתָּ אֲבִיךָ גְּבֻרִי" שֶׁבְּחַר הַקַּב"ה בְּהַר סִינַי לְפִי שֶׁעַל כָּל הָהָרִים עָבְדוּ עֲבוּדָה זָרָה וְעַל הַר הַזֶּה לֹא עָבְדוּ שׁוּם עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, הִינּוּ הֵךְ שֶׁהֵם לֹא הָיוּ עוֹבְדִים עֲבוּדָה זָרָה אֲלָא עַל הָהָרִים הַרְמִים וְזֶה הָיָה נְמוּדָּה. וְעוֹד שֶׁמִּתְחַלֵּל בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם הוֹכֵן הַר זֶה לְמַתָּן תּוֹרָה וְלְהַשְׁרָאָת שְׁכִינָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ ו"ל מוֹכְנִים הָיוּ זֶה עִם זֶה מִלְּשַׁת נְמִי בְּרָאשִׁית וְאוֹתוֹ יוֹם שֶׁבָּא מִלְּשַׁת אֵל הַר הָאֵלֵהִים נִתְרַגַּשׁ הָהָר לְמוֹל מִלְּשַׁת וְהָיָה שְׁמֵהוּם זֶה עִם זֶה עַכ"ל. וְאִם כֵּן הַכְּלָלוֹת שֶׁל הַשְּׂמִיטָה בְּהִיוֹתָהּ בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׂבִיעִית הוּא דוֹמָה לְהַר סִינַי שֶׁהִשְׁרָה שָׁם שְׁכִינְתּוֹ וְאִין אֲנִי יוֹדְעִים לָמָּה הָיָה דִּנְקָא הַשְּׂבִיעִין חֲבִיבִין וְלָמָּה דִּנְקָא הוֹכֵן הָהָר הַזֶּה לְהַשְׁרָאָת שְׁכִינָה וְלְהִיוֹת נְמוּדָּה מִכָּל הָהָרִים.

So too, lost from us is the reason that the Holy One, Blessed be He, spread His Shechinah over Mount Sinai and not over another mountain. For if is for the reason that it was lower than other mountains, as is written, “Why so hostile, O high-peaked mountains, toward the mountain G-d desired as His dwelling,”¹⁵ as we learned from the Gemara,¹⁶ in any case, it is difficult to understand why He didn’t make another mountain low, and why particularly it was this mountain that He selected.

A reason is brought in Gen. Rabbah (99:1) on the verse, “The blessings of your father surpass the blessings of my ancestors,” that the Holy One, Blessed be He, chose Mount Sinai because on all the other mountains, people worshipped idolatry, but on this mountain, they did not worship idolatry. But this was because they worshipped idolatry on high mountains only, and this mountain was low.

Furthermore, from the beginning of the Creation of the world, this mountain was prepared for the giving of the Torah and the spreading out of the Shechinah. As the [rabbi] of blessed memory said, they were prepared for each other from the six days of Creation, and the same day that Moses came to the mountain of G-d, the mountain became emotional in front of Moses, and they were happy with each other.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ps. 68:17.

¹⁶ Megillah 29a.

¹⁷ Zohar II:21a.

If so, the general rules of *shemittah* being in the seventh year is similar to Mount Sinai, that [G-d] spread out his Shechinah there, and we don't know why exactly the seventh items were beloved and why this mountain specifically was prepared for the spreading out of the Shechinah and to be lower than all of the mountains.

וּפְרָטוּתֶיהָ שֶׁל הַשְּׁמִיטָה הֵינּוּ שְׁנָאֶסֶר לָנוּ עֲבוּדַת הַקְּרָקַע בְּמָה שְׁמוֹעֵי לְהַצְמִיחַ וְלַגְדֹּל גִּידוּלֵינוּ, וְכָתְבוּ הַמְּפָרְשִׁים לְפִי שֶׁהוּא אֲדוֹן הָאָדוֹנִים וְיֵשׁ יְכוּלֵת בְּיָדוֹ לְבַטֵּל כָּל הַכֹּחַ וְהַמְּשָׁלָה שֶׁל הַתְּחִינּוּתִים, שֶׁזֶה הַכֹּחַ שֶׁמְצַמֵּחַ הַשְּׂדוֹת וְהַכְּרָמִים אֵינּוּ יְכוּלִים לְהַצְמִיחַ בְּאוֹתָהּ הַשָּׁנָה כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִנֵּה רוֹצֵה, עַל דֶּרֶךְ יוֹתֵר מִמָּה שֶׁהֵעֱגֵל רוֹצֵה לִינֵק פְּרָה רוֹצֵה לְהִינִיק, וְהָאָדָם דֵּי לוֹ לְהַסְתַּפֵּק בְּמָה שְׂצוּמָם מֵאֵלָיו וְאֵינּוּ יְכוּלִים לְהַשְׁתַּדֵּל לְהַרְבּוֹת כָּלֵל בִּיגִיעַ כִּפְיוֹ. וְכֵן הִנֵּה בְּהֵר סִינֵי שֶׁהָיוּ נִגְבְּלִים כָּל הָעָם נִגְדָה הָהָר שֶׁאֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁיָרַד ה' לְעֵינַי כָּל הָעָם וְכָל הָעָם הָיוּ רוֹאִים אוֹתוֹ, לֹא הָיוּ רִשָּׁאִים לְהִתְקַרֵּב יוֹתֵר כְּדֵי לִיקְנוֹת יוֹתֵר מֵאוּרוֹ הַגָּדוֹל.

For both shemittah and Sinai, man must accept imposed limitations.

The specific prescriptions of the *shemittah* were that we were forbidden to work the soil in a way that is useful for the sprouting and growing of crops. But the commentators wrote that He is the L-rd of the lords and has the ability in His hand to cancel all the power and agency of the terrestrial beings. That is, the force that ordinarily makes the fields and vineyards grow is in that *shemittah* year not able to grow as it would like, as Rabbi Akiva said, “more than the calf wants to nurse, the cow wants to nurse.”¹⁸ Man must be content with what grows on its own, and is not able to endeavor to increase this at all by the labor of his hands.

So it was at Mount Sinai, that all the people were bound against the mountain, that even though G-d descended before the eyes of all the people, and all the people would have seen Him, they were not allowed to come any closer to enjoy more of His great light.

וּמִטַּעַם זֶה נִיתְּנָה הַתּוֹרָה עַל הַר סִינֵי בְּאֵשׁ שְׁכָמוֹ שֶׁהָאֵשׁ מְסַחֵם וּמְאִיר אֶף מִי שֶׁמִּתְקַרֵּב אֲצֵלוֹ יוֹתֵר וְשׂוֹרֵף, כִּי הַתּוֹרָה כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד צָרִיךְ לִיְזַהֵר שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה לוֹ עֵסֶק בְּנִסְתָּרוֹת אִם אֵינּוּ רְאוּיֵי לְכַד. אֲלֵא יִהְיֶה שְׂמִם בְּחִלְקוֹ שֶׁנִּתְּנָה לוֹ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכִדְכֵתִיב "וְאֵל-תִּתְחַכֵּם יוֹתֵר", וְכֵן שֶׁלְמָה מִתְחַלְּהָ אָמַר "וְאַם הִגְבַּר לְאִיתֵיאל" וְאֶחָד כִּי "כִּי בְעַר אֲנֹכִי" וְכוּ'.

For this reason, the Torah was given on Mount Sinai with fire, that just as the fire warms and illuminates, but those who come too close to it are burned, so too the Torah. That is, each and every person should be careful not to engage in hidden secrets if he is not worthy of it.¹⁹ Rather, he should be happy with the portion that was given to him from Heaven, and as it is written, “don't act the wise man to excess, or you may be dumfounded.”²⁰

Also, why does it initially say, “the words of the man concerning, ‘G-d is with me; yea, G-d is with me, and I will prevail,’ ”²¹ but afterward it says, “I am brutish, less than a man; I lack common sense”?²²

¹⁸ Pesachim 112a.

¹⁹ Chagigah 13a: “It is written in the book of Ben Sira: Seek not things concealed from you, nor search those hidden from you. Reflect on that which is permitted to you; you have no business with secret matters.”

²⁰ Eccl. 7:16.

²¹ Prov. 30:1, per Rashi's interpretation.

²² Prov. 30:2.

ועוד יש פרטים אחרים בשמיטה דומים להר סיני, שאם ישמרו השמיטה לא יהיו גולים מארצם כמו שהיו השבועים שנה של גלות בבל נגד שבועים שמיטות שבטלו. וכשקרבנו להר סיני קנו החירות כדכתיב "חרות על-הלחתי" חירות משעבוד מלכיות, שאף על פי שכבר יצאו לחירות מיום טוב הראשון של פסח שיצאו ממצרים, עם כל זה לא היו בני חורין גמורים שעדיין לא נטהרה פנסת ישראל לגמרי מטומאתה שקבלה ממצרים, והיתה צריכה למנות שבועה נקיים, והם שבוע שבועות של ספירת העומר פנדע אצלנו, וכן כתב האלשיך, וביים התמישים שנתקרבו אצל הר סיני אז נטהרו לגמרי.

Sinai provided freedom from foreign servitude, which is also attained through shemithah.

Also, there are other details in the *shemithah* similar to Mount Sinai, that if they would have kept the *shemithah*, they would not have been exiled from their Land, as they were for the seventy years of exile in Babylon. This corresponded to seventy *shemithah* and Jubilee years that they had nullified, per Rashi on Lev. 26:35.

When they approached Mount Sinai, they acquired freedom, as it is written, “ ‘engraved [חרות] [*charut*] upon the tablets,”²³ don’t read ‘*charut*,’ rather ‘*cheirut*’ [חירות] [freedom], freedom from the Angel of death, and from foreign servitude.”²⁴ For even though they had already exited to freedom from the first day of the holiday of Passover, when they exited from Egypt, nevertheless they weren’t completely free men. For the nation of Israel had not yet been purified completely from its spiritual impurity that it had received from Egypt, and it needed to count seven clean [periods of time], analogous to the seven clean days that a married woman counts every month following her menstrual period,²⁵ and these were the seven weeks of *Sefirat HaOmer* [the counting of the Omer], as is known among us,²⁶ and thus wrote the Alshich²⁷ on Lev. 23:9. On the fiftieth day, when they approached Mount Sinai, then they were purified completely.

וכנגד זה כתב לנו "בהר סיני" אצל השמיטה, והיובל שהם תמישים שנה נגד אותם התמישים יום ואז קנו החירות עולם והחירות עליון ונטהרו מזוהמתם, כמו שאמרו ו"ל ישראל שעמדו על סיני, פסקה זוהמתו, לפי שעקר זוהמתא באה מחטא הקדום שעשה פרויד ופגם בעולם העליון. ובמעמד הר סיני כתיב "ויחן-שם ישראל" ואמרו ו"ל בלב אחד פאיש אחד, ונה היה ייחוד גדול ונעצום מששים רבוא שהיו שם ומכל הנשמות העתידות לבא, ולכן במצות היובל כתיב "דרור בארץ לכל-ישביה", שקשאין כל יושביה עליה אין היובל נוהג, שאינו כמו שהנה במעמד הר סיני לפי שאין שם ייחוד גמור, אמנם השמיטה נוהגת אף על פי שאין כל יושביה עליה לפי שהזוהמתא לא תזרה למקומה ואדרבא פסקה לגמרי מישראל. ועוד שהשמיטה היא הכנה לקדושת היובל דמהרה יבנה בית המקדש ויתקבצו הגליות ויהיו כולים לקדש היובל "כי לישועתך קוינו כל היום".

Corresponding to this, Scripture wrote for us “at Mount Sinai” at Lev. 25:1 adjacent to the verse discussing the observance of the *shemithah*—and the jubilee, which are fifty years against those fifty days—and then they acquired eternal freedom and the highest freedom and were cleansed of their pollution. This is as [the rabbis] of blessed memory said in the Gemara, where Rabbi Yochanan said: “When the serpent came upon Eve [seducing her to have sexual relations], he infected her with [moral] contamination [and this contamination remained in all human beings]. When the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai their contamination ceased,

²³ Ex. 32:16.

²⁴ Zohar Chadash, Midrash Ruth 394.

²⁵ Lev. 15:28.

²⁶ Zohar III:97b.

²⁷ Rabbi Moshe Alshich (1508–1593), prominent rabbi, preacher, and biblical commentator. Born in 1508 in the Ottoman Empire, he later moved to Safed where he became a student of Rabbi Joseph Caro.

[whereas with regard to] gentiles, who did not stand at Mount Sinai, their contamination never ceased.”²⁸ That complete freedom came at Mount Sinai was **because the root of the pollution came from the ancient sin** between the serpent and Eve, **which created division and a defect in the Supernal world.**

There is a verse, “Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness; Israel encamped there in front of the mountain.”²⁹ The first three verbs, “journeyed,” “entered,” and the first occurrence of “encamped” are in the plural form, but **standing at Mount Sinai, it is written, “Israel encamped there,”** in the singular form. [The rabbis] of blessed memory said, **“with one heart, like one man.”**³⁰ This was a unification as a **“great and populous [nation]”**³¹ of the more than 600,000 who were there and all the [Jewish] souls who will come in the future.

Therefore, regarding the commandments of the jubilee, it is written, “and you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim liberty in the Land for all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to your holding and each of you shall return to your family.”³²

That is, **when all her inhabitants are not there, the jubilee is not observed,**³³ for the jubilee **is not like when they were standing at Mount Sinai, because for the jubilee they didn’t always have a complete unification there.**

Indeed, the *shemita* is practiced even though not all the inhabitants are there, because the contamination had not returned to its place, and to the contrary it had completely ceased from Israel. Also, the *shemita* is preparation for the holiness of the jubilee, that the Temple will quickly be built and the diaspora will be gathered and they will be able to sanctify the jubilee, “for we hope for Your salvation all day long.”³⁴

וּבְדִרְךָ זֶה יִיבֹן הַכְּתוּב "וְהָאָרֶץ תַּעֲזֹב מֵהֶם וְתָרַץ אֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ בְּהַשְׁמָה מֵהֶם וְהֵם יָרְצוּ אֶת-עֲוֹנָם", וְעוֹד כְּתִיב "אִז תִּרְצָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ כֹּל יְמֵי הַשְׁמָה" וְכו' "אִז תִּשְׁבֹּת הָאָרֶץ וְהָרַצְתָּ אֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתֶיהָ: כָּל-יְמֵי הַשְׁמָה תִּשְׁבֹּת אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁבְתָה בְּשַׁבְּתֹתֶיכֶם בְּשַׁבְּתֹתֶיכֶם עָלֶיהָ".

In this way we will understand the Scripture: “For the Land shall be forsaken of them, making up for its Sabbatical years by being desolate of them, while they atone for their iniquity.”³⁵ Also, it is written, **“Then shall the Land make up for its Sabbatical years throughout the time that it is desolate and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the Land rest and make up for its Sabbatical years. Throughout the time that it is desolate, it shall observe the rest that it did not observe in your Sabbatical years while you were dwelling upon it.”**³⁶

²⁸ Yevamot 103b; Shabbat 145b-146a; Avodah Zarah 22b.

²⁹ Ex. 19:2.

³⁰ Rashi on Ex. 19:2, “As one man and with one mind, but all their other encampments were made in a murmuring spirit and in a spirit of dissension.” [Based on Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 19:2.]

³¹ Gen. 18:18.

³² Lev. 25:10.

³³ Arachin 32b: “As it is taught [in a *Baraita*]: From [the time] that the tribe of Reuben and the tribe of Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh were exiled, [the counting of] Jubilee [years was] nullified, as it is stated: ‘And you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; [it shall be a Jubilee for you]’ (Lev. 25:10), [indicating that the commandments of the Jubilee Year apply only] when all its inhabitants are in [the Land of Israel], and not when some of them have been exiled.”

³⁴ Amidah prayer, based on Gen. 49:18, “For Your salvation I hope, L-rd.”

³⁵ Lev. 26:43.

³⁶ Lev. 26:34–35.

וקושה ונהלא אם יגלו ישראל מארצם תהיה הארץ מסורה ביד האויבים והם יעבדו הקרקע בשמיטין וביובלות ואיך תהיה לארץ מנוחה ושבת פדכתיב "אז תשבת הארץ". ויש לומר דאמרין בגיטין פרק ה' ששים רבוא עיירות שהיו לו לנבאי המלך בהר המלך, וכל אחת ואחת היו בה פיוצאי מצרים חוץ משלשה שהיו בהן כפלים פיוצאי מצרים. ואמר ליה ההוא מינא לר' חנינא שקרי משקריתו. ואמר עולא לדידי חזי לי ההוא אתרא נאפילו שיתין רבוותא קני לא מחזיק. ופירש רש"י ההוא אתרא הר המלך, משקריתו, דאמריתו ששים רבוא עיירות היו בהר המלך והוא אינו מחזיק אפילו ששים רבוא קנים עכ"ל. אמר ליה כתיב בה ארץ צבי מה צבי זה אין עורו מחזיק את בשרו אף ארץ ישראל בזמן שישושים עליה רוחא אין יושבין עליה גמרא ע"כ בגמרא. ואם כן פשאי ישראל בארץ נקראת שביטה לארץ, שהרי לא נשאר ממנה אלא חלק "מעט מזער" והשאר נעלמת ונתפסית, וזו היא השביטה גמורה שיש לה, ועוד שאף החלק הקטן הנשאר אינו מוציא כל כך פירות כמו שהיה מוציא בזמן שהיו ישראל עליה.

A difficulty is that if Israel is exiled from their Land, then the Land will be delivered into the hands of the enemies, and they will work the soil during *shemithah* and the jubilees, and how will the Land have rest and peace, as it is written, "then shall the Land rest."

It can be said that it's said in tractate Gittin, chapter 5:

[Concerning the verse:] "The Lord has swallowed up without pity all the habitations of Jacob,"³⁷ [it is related that] when Ravin came [from the Land of Israel to Babylonia] he [said that] Rabbi Yochanan says: This [is referring to the] **six hundred thousand cities [that] King Yannai had in the King's Mountain. . . . and each of them [had a population as great] as [the number of] those who left Egypt, except for three [of those cities, the population of which] was double [the number of] those who left Egypt.**

...

A certain heretic said to Rabbi Chanina: You're telling a falsehood . . .

Ulla said: I myself saw that place, and it could not hold even six hundred thousand reeds [all the more so, not that number of people].

[Zera Shimshon interrupts the Gemara, to add that **Rashi explains** the Aramaic text "**a falsehood**": **That you said there were six hundred thousand cities in the King's Mountain, and it wouldn't even hold six hundred thousand reeds.**]

Rabbi Chanina said to [the heretic]: With regard to [the Land of Israel] it is written: "Land of the deer."³⁸ Just as the skin of a deer cannot hold its flesh, [for after the animal is skinned, its hide shrinks,] so too, [with regard to] the Land of Israel, when it is settled, it expands, but when it is not settled, it contracts.

- Gittin 57a

If so, when Israel is not in the Land, it is called a rest for the Land, because only a "trifle part"³⁹ of it remains, and the rest disappears and is covered, and this is the complete rest that she has. Furthermore, even the small part of the Land that remains will not produce as much fruit as was produced in the time that Israel was in it.

³⁷ Lam. 2:2

³⁸ Cf. Jer. 3:19, "I gave you a desirable land, the fairest [צבי] [*tzvi*] heritage of all the nations." *Tzvi* typically means "a deer," though here it is typically translated to mean "fairest."

³⁹ Isaiah 10:25, 16:14, 29:17.

ועוד יש פרט אחר בשביעית דומה להר סיני שהרי בשביעית באה הברכה בתבואה של השישית ועושה "את-התבואה לשלש השנים" והאדם אינו טורח כלום. וכן יהיה לעתיד לבא כדאמרינן בפירק י"ג דכתובות לא פהעולם הזה העולם הבא, העולם הזה. יש בו צער לדרוד ולבצור, העולם הבא אדם מביא ענבה אחת בקרון או בספינה וכו'.

Observing shemita and learning Torah can each provide freedom from toil.

Also, there is another detail in the seventh year that is similar to Mount Sinai. That is, in the seventh year, the blessing comes with the grain of the sixth year and makes “the grain for the three years,”⁴⁰ and the man does not have to exert himself at all. That is, as Scripture explains: “And should you ask, ‘What are we to eat in the seventh year, if we may neither sow nor gather in our crops?’ I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it shall yield a crop sufficient for three years. When you sow in the eighth year, you will still be eating old grain of that crop; you will be eating the old until the ninth year, until its crops come in.”⁴¹

So it will be in the age to come, as it says in the 13th chapter of Ketubot:

The World-to-Come is not like this world. [In] this world **there is suffering** [involved] **in picking** [grapes] **and** [in] **pressing** [them. By contrast, in the] **World-to-Come** [one will] **bring one grape in a wagon or on a boat** and set it down in a corner of his house and supply from it enough [to fill] about [the amount of] a large jug, and with its wood, one will kindle [a fire] under a cooked dish. And every grape you have will produce no less [than] thirty full jugs of wine.

- Ketubot 111b

וכן הנה תחלת הבריאה על דרך זו, לולי חטא אדם כמו שכתב מהרש"א בפירק י"א דסנהדרין (דף צ"ט) על ההיא ד"אדם לעמל יולד", שהמלאכה תהיה נעשית מאליה כדאמרינן בברכות בתסידים הראשונים שהיתה תורתם אומנותם, ומלאכתם נעשית מאליה לולי חטא אדם הראשון שנגמר לו "בזעת אפיה תאכל לחם" עכ"ל ועיי"ש. ובפירק ו' דברכות בזמן שישאל עושים רצונו של מקום מלאכתו נעשית על ידי אחרים שנגמר "ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם", ובזמן שאין עושים רצונו של מקום מלאכתו נעשית על ידי עצמן דכתיב "ואספת דגגה" וכו'.

So it was at the beginning of Creation in this way: Had it not been for Adam’s sin, as the Maharsha⁴² wrote on the 11th chapter of tractate Sanhedrin (page 99b), on the fact that “man is born to do mischief.”⁴³

That the work will be done by itself, as it is said in tractate Berachot (page 32b), the early [generations of] pious [men] would devote nine hours a day to prayer, and asks “how is their Torah preserved,” i.e., with so little time remaining to learn Torah, and also asks, “how was their work accomplished,” before answering, that “because they were pious, [they merited that] their Torah is preserved and their work is blessed.” That is because “their study of the Torah was their craftsmanship.”⁴⁴

What was the case for the early pious men could have been the case for all men. That is, **their work [would have been] done by itself, were it not for the sin of the first Adam, who was**

⁴⁰ Lev. 25:21.

⁴¹ Lev. 25:20–22.

⁴² Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (“the Maharsha”) (1555–1631), *Chiddushei Agadot*.

⁴³ Job 5:7.

⁴⁴ Midrash Aggadah, Leviticus 5:1; Kuzari 3:65.

as a result of his sin told, ‘By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat,’⁴⁵ and see there.

Also, in the 6th chapter of tractate Berachot (35b), “In a time that Israel is doing the will of the Omnipresent, their work is done by others, as it is said, “and strangers shall stand and pasture your flocks.”⁴⁶ In a time that Israel is not doing the will of the Omnipresent, their work is done by themselves, as it is written, “you shall gather in your new grain.”⁴⁷

וְהִקְשׁוּ שָׁם בְּתוֹסְפוֹת וְהָא קָרָא ד' וְאָסַפְתָּ דְגָנְךָ" בְּעוֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם קָא מִיָּרִי, וְתִירְצוּ דְמִיָּרִי וְדָאֵי בְּעוֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם אֲבָל אֵין עוֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ כֹּל כֶּה שְׂאֵינִם צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִים. וּפִירֵשׁ הָרִי"ף שֶׁם שְׂכָשְׁוּ אֶל עוֹשִׂים רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם כְּתִיב "וְנִתְמַי מִטְרָאֲרֻצְכֶם" בְּלִשׁוֹן רַבִּים שֶׁהַעוֹלָם גִּידוֹן אַחַר רֹבּוֹ "וְנִתְּנוּ זֶרַע לְזֶרַע וְלֶחֶם לְאֹכֵל", וְיִקְרָא אֶל הַדָּגָן לְהַרְבּוֹתוֹ, וְאִם יֵשׁ יְחִיד שֶׁלֹּא עָשָׂה רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם לְמַעַנּוֹ לֹא תַעֲזֹב הָאֲרֶז וְלֹא יִתְכַּן שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה הַדָּגָן בְּעַתּוֹ, אֲבָל אוֹתוֹ הַיְחִיד אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂיִזְכֶּה לְדָגָן בְּכֻלָּל הַמְרֻבִּים מִכָּל מְקוֹם יֵאָסוּף הוּא עַל יְדוֹ וְהֵינּוּ "וְאָסַפְתָּ דְגָנְךָ" בְּלִשׁוֹן יְחִיד, אֲבָל קָרָא ד' וְעָמְדוּ זָרִים וְרָעוּ צִאֲנָכֶם" נִקְטָב בְּלִשׁוֹן רַבִּים ע"ל.

The Tosafists ask there:

[Shouldn't] this verse, “you shall gather in your new grain,” be speaking of when they are doing the will of the Omnipresent, and later, we establish the case where Israel are not performing the will of the Omnipresent? [Actually,] it is speaking where they are performing the will of the Omnipresent, but not to the extent that they should, in which case they are not completely righteous.”

- Tosafot on Berachot 35b

The Rif explains there in his commentary on Ein Ya'akov⁴⁸ that when Israel do the will of the Omnipresent, it is written, “I will grant you rain for your Land”⁴⁹ in the plural tense, that the world is judged based on the majority, “seed for sowing and bread for eating,”⁵⁰ and He will call to the grain to accumulate.

Even if there is an individual who does not do the will of the Omnipresent, the Land will not be forsaken of the people⁵¹ because of him, and it is not possible that the grain will not appear at its time. But that same individual, even though he will merit grain, being included with the majority, nevertheless he will have to gather it by his own hand. That is why Scripture says “you shall gather in your new grain” in the singular tense. But the Scripture of “and strangers shall stand and pasture your flocks” is written in the plural tense. Thus, the majority who follow the will of G-d will not have to work, unlike the minority individuals who do not follow His will.

⁴⁵ Gen. 3:19.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 61:5.

⁴⁷ Deut. 11:14.

⁴⁸ This is not the earlier and more famous “Rif” [Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (1013-1103)], but rather Rabbi Josiah ben Joseph Pinto (c. 1565–c. 1648), Syrian rabbi and preacher, a disciple of Rabbi Chaim Vital. He wrote *Me'or Enayim* (Venice, 1643), a commentary on Rabbi Jacob ibn Habib's *Ein Yaakov*.

⁴⁹ Deut. 11:14.

⁵⁰ Isaiah 55:10.

⁵¹ Cf. Lev. 26:43: “For the land shall be forsaken of them, making up for its Sabbatical years by being desolate of them, while they atone for their iniquity; for the abundant reason that they rejected My rules and spurned My laws.”

ובשעמרו ישראל על הר סיני בלב אחד פאיש אחד היו פלם ראויים לקב לקיות בלי טורח ובלי עמל, ועל זה אמרו לא ניתנה תורה אלא לאוכלי המן. ודקדוקי שמיטה שאף מה שגדל בהיתר מעצמו כגון הספחים ופירות האילן יהיו הפקר.

When Israel stood at Mount Sinai with one heart as one man, they all deserved to live without trouble and without toil. About this, [the rabbis] say that the Torah was given only to those who ate the *manna*.⁵² The minute details of *shemita* are that anything that grows on its own, such as the shoots and the fruits of the trees, will be ownerless.

ואיתא בילקוט למה ניתנה התורה במדבר, לומר שהתורה היא מופקרת לכל. ולכן התורה כתבה לנו בהר סיני במצות השמיטה כדי שגלמוד שכל מה שצנה בהר סיני הוא דוגמא דשמיטה, דכשם ששביעית הפקר לכל היא כן התורה היא הפקר לכל.

Torah from Sinai and produce from shemita are both available to all.

It is brought in Yalkut Shimoni: “Why was the Torah given in the wilderness? To say that the Torah is available to everyone.”⁵³ Therefore, the Torah was written for us at Mount Sinai with the commandments of *shemita*, in order that we will learn that everything commanded at Mount Sinai is an example of *shemita*, that just as the produce of *shemita* is available to everyone, so too is the Torah available to everyone.

ומעתה אתי שפיר הלימוד מה שמיטה נאמרו כללותיה ופרטותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני כן כל המצות נאמרו כללותיהן ופרטותיהן מסיני, שהרי כל המצות ניתנו לצרף בהם את הפריות, כדאיתא בבראשית רבה על פסוק "היה דבריה אל-אברם במחזה" וכו', "כל-אמרת אלוה צרופה" וכי מאי איכפת ליה להקב"ה לשחוט מן העורף או מן הצואר וכו'. וכל המצות הן קיים דברו של הקב"ה, ולא נתגלו טעמם של מצות, כדאמרין ו"ל שתי מצות נתגלו טעמם ונכשל בהם גדול העולם שלמה המלך ע"ה.

Now it’s fine, this teaching of Rashi that, “just as *shemita* was said with its general rules, its specific prescriptions, and minute details at Sinai, so too, all the remaining commandments with their general rules, and their specific prescriptions, and their minute details were said at Sinai,” for all the commandments were given for human beings to attach themselves to them. This is as it is brought in Gen. Rabbah (44:1) on the verse, “The word of the L-rd came to Abram in a vision, ‘Fear not, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great.’”⁵⁴ The midrash states: “ ‘Every word of G-d is pure, a shield to those who take refuge in Him,”⁵⁵ for what difference does it make to the Holy One, Blessed be He, for a person to slaughter from the nape or from the throat,” referring to the laws of slaughter of a bird offering.⁵⁶

All of the commandments are the fulfillment of the word of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and the reasons for the commandment was not revealed, as [the rabbis] of blessed

⁵² Tanchuma, Beshalach 20: “The Torah wasn’t given to expound, only to those who ate *manna*.”

⁵³ Yalkut Shimoni, parashat Yitro, remez 275.

⁵⁴ Gen. 15:1.

⁵⁵ Prov. 30:5.

⁵⁶ Mishnah Chullin 1:4 explains that a valid offering can be prepared either by *shechita* (ordinary ritual slaughter using a knife) on the throat of a fowl, or by *melika* (breaking a bird’s spine with one’s fingernail) at the back of the neck. A fowl killed by *shechita* at the nape or by *melika* at the throat would be an invalid offering.

memory said, “the reasons for two commandments were revealed, and the greatest in the world, King Solomon, failed in them.”⁵⁷

וְנִהְיֶה כְּלֹוֹתֵיהֶן שֶׁל מִצְוֹת דּוֹמָה לְכָלֹוֹת שֶׁל הַשְּׁבִיעִיּוֹת שֶׁאֵין אָנוּ מְגִיעִים לְסוֹף הַטַּעַם, וּפְרָטוֹתֵיהֶן שֶׁכָּל הַמִּצְוֹת יֵשׁ לָהֶם מִתּוֹן שֶׁכָּר "עֲשֵׂה וְכַבֹּד וְחַיִּים", כְּדִכְתִּיב "מִכָּל־מִשְׁמֶר נָצַר לְבָבִי מִיִּמְנוּ תּוֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים". אֲלֵא שֶׁהָאֲדָם אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְתַבּוֹעַ שֶׁכָּר זֶה אֲלֵא מֵה שֶׁהַקֵּב"ה נֹתֵן לוֹ בְּחֶסֶדוֹ הַגָּדוֹל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁבְּשִׁבְעִיעִית אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לְטָרוֹחַ לְהַרְבּוֹת תְּבוּאָת שְׂדֵהוּ. וְעַל זֶה אָמְרוּ "אֵל תַּעֲשֶׂם עֲטָרָה לְהִתְגַּדֵּל בָּהֶם, וְלֹא קִרְדָּם לְחַפֵּר בָּהֶם." וְכַשֵּׁם שֶׁבְּשִׁבְעִיעִית קָנוּ הַחַירוֹת כִּי אֵין לָהֶן בְּוֹן חוֹרֵין אֲלֵא מִי שֶׁעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת וּמִלֵּאכְתוֹ מִתְבָּרְכֵת.

Thus, the general rules of the commandments are similar to the general rules of the Sabbatical years, that we do not arrive at the end of the reason. Regarding the specific prescriptions of all of the commandments, they have a reward of “wealth, honor, and life,”⁵⁸ as it is written, “More than all that you guard, guard your mind, for it is the source of life.”⁵⁹ Rather, a person cannot claim this reward, only what the Holy One, Blessed be He, gives to him in His great kindness, just as in a Sabbatical year one cannot toil to multiply the grain of his field. Regarding this, [the rabbis] said, “do not make them a crown for self-exaltation, nor a spade with which to dig.”⁶⁰ Just as with *shemita* they acquired the freedom, “for there is no free man but one that occupies himself with the study of the Torah,”⁶¹ and in commandments, and in His blessed work.

וְעוֹד דְּקִדּוּקֵיהֶן שֶׁאֵין בָּמָה שִׁזְזִים לוֹ מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם אֵין לוֹ לִיהְנוֹת לְהִנָּאֵת גּוֹפּוֹ אֲלֵא כְּדִי מְחַיֵּיתוֹ בְּלִבָּד, כְּאֵילוֹ הַעוֹשֵׂה שְׁנוֹתָן לוֹ הַמָּקוֹם אֵינוֹ שָׁלוֹ, וְכִי רַבִּינוּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ זָקַף בְּשַׁעַת מִיתָתוֹ עֲשֵׂה אֲצַבְעוֹתָיו וְכוּ' לֹא נִהְיֵיתִי אֲפִילוֹ בְּאֲצַבְע קְטָנָה וְכוּ'.

Also, their minute details [teach] that what is given to him from Heaven is not for him to enjoy for the pleasure of his body, but for his sustenance only, as if the wealth that the Omnipresent gives him is not his own. Thus, at the time of the death of our holy rabbi, Yehuda haNasi:

He raised his ten fingers toward Heaven [and] said: Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You that I toiled with my ten fingers in the Torah, and I have not derived any benefit [from the world] even with [my] small finger. May it be Your will that there be peace in my repose.

- Ketubot 104a

⁵⁷ Sanhedrin 21b: “Rabbi Yitchak says: Why were the rationales of Torah [commandments] not revealed? Because the rationales of two verses were revealed, [and] the greatest in the world, [King Solomon], failed in [those matters]. It is written [with regard to a king]: ‘He shall not add many wives for himself [that his heart should not turn away]’ (Deut. 17:17). Solomon said: I will add many, but I will not turn away [as he thought he would not stray]. And [later], it is written: ‘For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods’ (I Kings 11:4). And it is [also] written: ‘He shall not accumulate many horses for himself [nor return the people to Egypt for the sake of accumulating horses]’ (Deut. 17:16), and Solomon said: I will accumulate many, but I will not return. And it is written: ‘And a chariot [came up] and went out of Egypt for six [hundred shekels of silver]’ (I Kings 10:29) [teaching that Solomon failed in applying the rationale given for these commandments. This demonstrates the wisdom in the Torah’s usual silence as to the rationale for its commandments.]”

⁵⁸ Prov. 4:23.

⁵⁹ Prov. 22:4.

⁶⁰ Pirkei Avot 4:7, quoting Rabbi Tzadok.

⁶¹ Pirkei Avot 6:3, quoting Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.

ולפי שבמצות השמיטה נמצאו אלו העניינים בעצמם ובפרטות ובמראית העין מה שאין פן בשאר המצות, משום הכי כתב כאן בהר סיני כדי ללמד על השאר, ולכן לא נשנית בערבות מואב כדי ללמד על מצות אחרות שלא נשנו בערבות מואב כמו שכתב הרא"ם ו"ל.

According to the commandments of *shemita*, these subjects are found in fact, in detail, and in appearance, which is not the case in the other commandments. Because of this, [Scripture] wrote it here at Mount Sinai to teach about the rest. Therefore, it was not repeated at the plains of Moab, in order to teach about other commandments that were not repeated at the plains of Moab, as the Re'em of blessed memory wrote.

ובדרך זה יתורץ קושיות המפרשים למה מתחיל הכתוב בלשון רבים "כי תבאו אלה הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם" וכו', ואחר כך "שש שנים תזרע שדה" בלשון יחיד. ועוד שנתראה שהוא מוכרח ומצוה לזרוע ולזמור בשש השנים.

In this way, the difficulty of the commentators will be explained as to why the Scripture begins in the plural tense, "When you enter the Land that I give to you, the Land will rest, a Sabbath of the L-rd,"⁶² with both "enter" and "to you" being in the plural tense, but afterwards it says, "six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in the grain" in the singular tense, with "sow," "your field," "prune," and "your vineyard," and "gather" all being in the singular tense.

Also, it appears from Scripture that he will be compelled and commanded to sow and to prune for six years, whereas above we cited Berachot 35b that "In a time that Israel is doing the will of the Omnipresent, their work is done by others, as it is said, 'and strangers shall stand and pasture your flocks.' "

ולדרךנו אמי שפיר, שאם יהיו כלם צדיקים אז "ונשבתה הארץ" שמלאכתו נעשית מאליה ואין צורך לעבוד את הקרקע וכמו שיהיה לעתיד, ואז תשבות תמיד שלא יעשו בה ישראל מלאכה כלל. אמנם אם יהיה בהם איזה יחיד שאינו זוכה, אינו רשאי ליבטל מעבודת הקרקע שהרי אינו ראוי שיעשו לו נס, וגם אינו רשאי להטיל עצמו על הצבור אלא אדרבא הוא מוכרח לטרוח ולעמול, כמו שאמרנו בסמוך על "ואספת דגגך" שיש לו לעשות מלאכתו בשש השנים, ומכל מקום "ובשנה השביעית שבת שבתון יהיה לארץ" וכו'.

In our way, this is fine, that if everyone were righteous, then "the Land will rest," that their work would be done by itself, and there would be no need to work the soil and as it will be in the future, and then it will rest forever, that Israel will not need to work it at all.

Indeed, if there is any individual among them who is not righteous, he is not allowed to exempt himself from the work of the soil, because he is not worthy for them to perform a miracle for him. Also, he is not allowed to impose himself on the community, rather to the contrary, he is compelled to toil and to strive. This is as we said above on the text, "you shall gather in your new grain," that he must do his work in six years, and in any case, "but in the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, a Sabbath of the L-rd, you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard."⁶³

* * *

⁶² Lev. 25:2.

⁶³ Lev. 25:4.