



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Jonny and Joy Berkovitz on the birth of a granddaughter to Avishai and Sorelle Berkovits
 Mazel Tov to Nissim Black and his parents, Shimon and Lauri, on the occasion of his Bar Mitzva this Shabbos. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after Davening in the Shul hall
 Mazel Tov to Sidney and Rebecca Shields on the recent wedding of their granddaughter, Esther Malka Shields to Zvi Guttentag in Gateshead

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to Vivienne Fagleman for the Yahrtzeit of her father on Friday, 28th Iyyar

Lag B'Omer Event

A huge thank you to all those that helped with the organising of the Shuls annual Lag b'Omer BBQ event.

A special Thank You goes you to Eliezer and Sarah Issler for opening their home to host, to Marcel Marks and Eli Ritvo for manning the grill, Avrohom Lehman for his Divrei Torah, and to Chizky Salomon & Michoel Issler for supplying the delicious food.

To all the members that stepped forward to help set up, collect and drop off items both in advance of, and after the event, thank you! Your help is much appreciated.

Most importantly thank you to all the Shul members that attended and made the evening the wonderful success that it was.

We look forward celebrating more such events together as a Kehilla.

Shemita + Har Sinai + Lashon Racha = Unity

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The pasuk in Parshas Behar says, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Har Sinai, saying" (Vayikra 25:1). In perhaps the most famous comment in all of his Chumash commentary, Rashi asks why the Torah specifically mentions that the halachos of shemita were given on Har Sinai. Rashi articulates it: Mah inyan shemita eitzel Har Sinai? Weren't all the mitzvos given at Sinai?

(I am told that there was an American television program that was playing in Israel with Hebrew subtitles. One of the actors in the television show said "What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?" The subtitle was "Mah inyan shemita eitzel Har Sinai?" When I say this is a famous Rashi – it is a famous Rashi!)

Rashi answers that just like both the generalities and the details of the halachos of shemita were said at Har Sinai, so too, both the generalities and details of all the other mitzvos were said at Har Sinai as well. Shemita is the paradigm. Just like the Torah elaborates about this mitzva in all its details, the same is true for every mitzva. Even though by other mitzvos, the Torah may not explicitly elaborate on the details, they were all given over to Moshe on Har Sinai.

I want to offer perhaps a different answer to Rashi's question of "Mah inyan shemita eitzel Har Sinai?" in the name of the Sefas Emes: I will refer to that as our first question.

The Medrash Rabba in Vayikra (33:1) quotes a later pasuk in our parsha: "When you sell an item to your friend or you purchase from the hand of your fellow man, one man should not cheat his brother." (Vayikra 25:14) The problem is that the Medrash quotes its citation of this pasuk with the preface: "Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe (b'Har

Sinai leimor)" (And Hashem spoke to Moshe). However, there is no such pasuk preceding the prohibition of cheating your fellow man in matters of purchase or sale!

Why is the Medrash connecting the first pasuk in our parsha with a pasuk thirteen pesukim later dealing with cheating? Apparently, the Medrash is trying to attach the first pasuk of the parsha (Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe...) with the subsequent halacha of "When you sell an item to your friend..." Why? That is our second question.

The third question is about the basic words of the Medrash. On the words "If you sell something, don't cheat your friend" the Medrash comments "About this it is written 'Death and life are in the hands of the tongue...'" (Mishlei 18:21) This famous pasuk teaches that the power of speech can mean the difference between life and death. And then the Medrash cites three examples involving the power of speech:

(1) If you blow on a coal, it becomes a raging fire which can be destructive. If you spit on the same piece of coal, it gets extinguished and it won't be destructive. Thus life and death are controlled by one's mouth!

(2) Fruit that is tevel (from which the required priestly and levitical tithes have not been taken): If someone does not proclaim the required portion to be teruma and/or maaser, he will be deserving of death for eating that tevel. If, however, someone verbalizes the separation of teruma and/or maaser from the fruit, it can now be eaten with no problem. Again, the difference between life and death depends on whether you say something or you don't say something.

(3) Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said to his trusted servant, Tevi: Go buy me the best thing in the market. Tevi brought his master tongue. Later, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel told Tevi: Go buy me the worst thing in the market. Again, Tevi brought his master tongue. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel asked his servant – which is it? Is tongue the best thing in the market or is it the worst thing in the market? Tevi responded, it can be the best thing in the world or the worst thing in the world. "Death and life are in the hands of the tongue." If used improperly – to speak lashon hara, that is death at the hands of the tongue. If the same tongue is used to say good about a person or to help a person, that is the best thing in the world.

Then the Medrash says that Rebbi made a festive meal for his students. He brought before them two types of tongue – soft tongue and hard tongue. The students all took the soft pieces of tongue

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.51pm-8.00pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.12am
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
Mincha	6.00pm / 8.50pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.55pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

and did not touch the tough pieces. Rebbi told his students: Pay attention to what you have done: Just as you chose for yourselves the soft tongue and did not touch the hard tongue, so too you should treat each other: Speak to one another only with a soft tongue (lashon racha). Be kind, be nice, be complimentary. Don't be tough.

That is why Moshe warns: "When you transact a sale with your fellow or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow, do not aggrieve one another." (Vayikra 25:14) The parsha of 'cheating' in the Torah is actually teaching us, according to the Medrash: Talk nicely, talk kindly, talk with a soft tongue.

If I had asked you "What is the take away lesson of the parsha of ona'ah (cheating) in the Torah?" would you think that it has anything to do with lashon hara? Probably not. And yet, the Medrash links the parsha of cheating a person in business with the parsha of lashon hara! What is the connection between the two? That is our third question.

The Sefas Emes explains the connection between shemita, speaking nicely, avoiding ona'ah and Har Sinai. He writes the following principle in a couple of places in his Chumash commentary:

Why does the Torah place the parsha of cheating next to the parsha of shemita? The obvious answer is that when someone sells a piece of land, its value is determined based on the number of years remaining until the next yovel (as the land will automatically revert to its original owner when the jubilee year arrives). If there are three years until the next yovel, it is actually no more than a three-year lease. You cannot charge very much. If it is only the fifth year of a yovel cycle, the purchaser has another forty-five years to farm the land. In that case, the seller can receive a lot more money. So the Torah writes the parsha of cheating right next to the parsha of shemita and yovel because it is trying to emphasize that the "sale" must be transacted based on a fair price (in accordance with the number of years until the next yovel).

The Sefas Emes explains that there is another reason as well. Shemita is all about the achdus (unity) of Klal Yisrael – to make Klal Yisraelone again. One of the more divisive things that inhibits unity amongst people is money: You are rich. I am poor. People in different social-economic groups are often less unified. They live differently, behave differently, etc.

We see this difference in America. There is the "10%" and there is the "90%." It is a fact. However, shemita is the big equalizer. In an agrarian economy, which was the primary economic environment when the Torah was given, if no one is working and everyone is watching their fields lie fallow and they are therefore spending time in the Beis Medrash because there is nothing else to do, that is the big equalizer. The economic divisiveness caused by wealth and poverty is removed, and everyone is now the same.

Part of the reason for shemita is to bring Klal Yisrael together. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the parsha of "cheating" is adjacent to the parsha of shemita.

Another thing that divides people is when one Jew cheats another Jew. There are actually two pesukim related to ona'ah: One relates to ona'as mammon (monetary cheating) and the other to ona'as devorim (hurtful speech). The latter is also mentioned in this parsha. Ona'as devorim is when someone makes a snide, cutting remark – for example, to a ba'al teshuva, "Oh, now you are frum. I remember when you were eating lobster," or to a ger, "I remember your father. He had a big Christmas tree. Now you are so frum?"

The parshios of ona'as mammon and ona'as devorim appear together with shemita in Parshas Behar. This is why the Medrash speaks about lashon racha – soft tongue. The Medrash is teaching that just as cheating in business creates division, so too does hurtful speech. Therefore, it advises us to speak softly and kindly.

The Sefas Emes adds that the Gemara attributes the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash to sinas chinam and bitul shemitos. These are not unrelated aveiros, but two expressions of the same problem. Bitul shemita leads to social and economic division, while sinas

chinam and ona'ah deepen that division between people.

Finally, the Sefas Emes addresses Rashi's question about the connection between shemita and Har Sinai. The essence of Har Sinai was "And Israel encamped there opposite the mountain" (Shemos 19:2) "k'ish echad b'lev echad" (as one man, with one heart) (Mechilta) – with complete unity. Shemita helps restore that unity by removing social barriers, while the halachos of ona'ah and ona'as devorim ensure that interpersonal conduct does not undermine it.

Shemita, ona'ah, ona'as devorim, and Har Sinai are thus all part of a single theme: removing the forces that divide Klal Yisrael and reinforcing its unity.

A Separate Peace

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

"If you will walk in my statutes, and heed my commandments ..." (Leviticus 33:3).

This week the Torah bestows its promise of blessing and peace to those who follow in the path of Torah. Rashi is bothered by the seeming redundancy of walking in statutes, and heeding commands. He explains that "walk in my statutes" refers to arduous Torah study, and "heed my commandments" refers to keeping the mitzvos.

And then there is peace. Hashem promises that if we adhere to the directives, "I will bring peace to the land" (ibid v. 6) In the same verse, the Torah also tells us that "a sword will not pass through your land." If there is peace, then obviously a sword will not pass through. What is the meaning of the redundancy? Once again, Rashi explains that the "sword passing through" is referring to a sword that is not directed against our people; rather it is a sword that is passing through on the way to another country. Thus the two types of peace.

But maybe there is a different type of peace; one that does not refer to guns and ammunition, but rather to a peace that is on another level.

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein of B'nei Berak tells the story of Rav Eliezer Shach, the Ponovezer Rosh Yeshiva, of blessed memory.

Rav Shach once entered a shul and sat down in a seat towards the back, and, while waiting for the minyan to begin, Rav Shach began to study Torah. Suddenly a man approached him, hands on his hips, and began shouting at him.

"Don't you know that you are sitting in my seat?" the irate man yelled.

"Who are you to come here and just sit down, without asking anyone permission?"

Rav Shach quickly stood up and embraced the man. He hugged him lovingly as he begged the man for forgiveness. He agreed to the irate man's every point.

"I am so sorry for taking your seat even if it was for a few moments," he pleaded. Please forgive me. I must have absent-mindedly sat down there. Please forgive me.

The man was taken aback at the Rosh Yeshiva's humility, and immediately apologized for his rude behavior.

"After the davening, students of Rav Shach approached him and asked why he so readily accepted blame and begged forgiveness for what surely was not a misdeed. After all, why should he not be able to sit down in the seat. Rav Shach explained, "If Torah is all that one aspires to have, then everything else in this world, all the items one would normally squabble about has no significance. When one is immersed in Torah, a seat is meaningless, a place is meaningless. Surely a material object is not worth getting upset over, surely no less are they worth fighting over. Why shouldn't I apologize?"

The Torah tells us a secret to peace in our community. If we toil in Torah, there will be peace in the land. The Torah is telling us that if we immerse ourselves in Torah then all the temporal objects that are the fulcrum of most fights are meaningless.

We think of peace as a concept that occurs between nations. However, we often forget that what we need is peace within our own community. A separate peace.