



TORAS HASHEM

פרשת בהר-בחוקתי



The Torah introduces the topic of *Shemita*, the Sabbatical Year, by informing us that this *mitzvah* was given to Moshe by Hashem at Har Sinai. Rashi, as well as other *meforshei Hatorah*, is bothered by the specific reference [here](#) to Har Sinai, since all the mitzvos were given at Har Sinai:

“מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני?”

What is the connection between *shemita* and *Har Sinai*?

Rashi answers that the *mitzvah* of *shemita* is to serve as a “בנין אב”- a general rule: Just as Hashem gave over the details of this *mitzvah* to Moshe at Har Sinai, so too were all the other mitzvos given.

The question which remains unanswered, however, is why was *shemita* chosen as the model for all other mitzvos? The Chasam Sofer answers that *shemita* is the surest example of a *mitzvah* given to us by Hashem, since no one can deny its Divine origin. Who else but the Creator Himself, could guarantee that the harvest before the *shemita* year would be so bountiful that it would be able to carry over for the following three years, until the next harvest.

Thus, Hashem is saying that when one abandons his field in Eretz Yisroel once in seven years, this declaration of faith (“כי לי כל הארץ” - that the Land is Mine) does not go unnoticed. The *mitzvah* of *shemita* drives home our fundamental belief that Torah is מסיני. Our Torah is not only Hashem’s plan for the world, but it is also the personal guide for each and every one of us. Our ancestors realizing this, lived and died by the Torah. Throughout the millennium we have vigorously resisted any attempt by secular forces to reform Torah and to deny its Divine authorship.

Throughout each day we show our love for, and our acceptance of, the *dvar Hashem* contained in Torah. We place special value on our *sifrei kodesh*; we place them on top of other books, we kiss them, and we stand up for those who teach them. The *Gemara* (Makos 22b) bemoans the fact that some people are so foolish that, “they stand for a *sefer Torah* but not for a *talmid chochom*.” Through *kavod hatorah* we demonstrate and recognize the G-dliness of our Torah. Thus, the concept of a Supreme Authority and authority in general, is supported through the respect we show towards our *Torah* and towards our leaders.

Sometimes, our noblest efforts can fall short of our sacred goals. Here is a case in point. My first full time teaching position was in the Ezra Academy of Queens. This was and still is, a school for boys and girls who are not yet observant, but who show signs of wanting to become religious. I had many questions about the goals of the school and the best way to go about achieving them. At a Torah Umesorah convention in the mid 1970’s, I was impressed by one speaker whom I did not know personally, Harav Yaakov Weinberg, זצ”ל. I approached him privately, discussing numerous issues and challenges that I found in teaching. He responded saying that he could not give me any clear answers since he was not familiar with the school. He first wanted to come visit and see for himself before giving me any direction. I knew then that I had come to the right person seeing the length that Rabbi Weinberg would go before answering my questions.

A short time later, when Rav Weinberg came to New York, I picked him up from the airport and brought him to Richmond Hill, Queens, where the school was located. He wanted to observe some classes, speak directly to the students, and then he would meet the staff. After he observed some classes, I arranged for an assembly so that we could proceed with the next step. Of course, I “primed” the students so that they would act accordingly and give the proper respect. When Rav Weinberg walked into the room, all the students remembered to stand up respectfully. The first question the Rosh Hayeshiva asked the students was, “Why did you stand up?” To my bitter disappointment, one student raised his hand and said, “Because Rabbi Hexter told us to.” Being thoroughly embarrassed, I smiled at Rav Weinberg, who went on to speak about the significance of Torah and the *dvar Hashem* which commands respect.

Before he left, he met with the staff and gave us tremendous *chizuk*, seeing first hand what kind of students we were catering to. He continued to be an invaluable resource to me in my beginning years of *chinuch*.

Hashem gave us the Torah at Har Sinai; Through Shemita, this truth no one can deny.

Point of Discussion
Why is the concept of “authority” frequently challenged in today’s world?