

# SICHA SUMMARY

## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 27

### *Behar, Sicha 2*

#### The Context:

Parshas Behar opens with the command to let the land lie fallow during the Shemittah year. It then moves on to the laws of the Yovel (Jubilee) year, and then to some laws of price fraud. The Torah then reverts back to discussing the Shemittah year and addresses a practical concern a Jewish farmer will have:

“And when you will say, “What will we eat in the seventh year? We will not sow, and we will not gather in our produce!” [Know then, that] I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield produce for three years.” (*Vayikra 25:20-21*)

#### The Questions:

1. The obvious question would be why does the Torah wait to raise this question after the laws of Shemittah, Yovel, and price fraud, and not place it immediately after the laws of Shemittah, where it belongs. We would expect Rashi to address this issue in the straightforward reading of the verses,

yet he does not. This indicates that the explanation is either self-evident, or that Rashi has provided us with the tools for understanding this narrative with a previous comment.

2. The verse introduces the question as if it is a given that it will be asked, “when you will say.” Why would the Torah be so vigorously supportive of an attitude that questions G-d’s ability to provide?

#### The Explanation:

In the narrative of the Exodus, the Torah foretells another question:

“And it will come to pass if your son asks you in the future, saying, “What is this?” you shall say to him, “With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”” (*Shemos 13:14*). Rashi comments:

“This is [the question of] the simple child, [referred to in the Haggadah,] who does not know how to pose his question in depth, and asks a general question: “What is this?” Elsewhere the Torah says: “What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments, etc.?” (*Devarim 6:20*). This is the question of the wise son. The Torah spoke regarding four sons: the wicked one

(*Shemos 12:26*), the one who does not understand to ask (*Shemos 13:8*), the one who asks [a] general [question], and the one who asks in a wise manner.”

This comment is out of character for Rashi. Why would it be necessary to know about the Torah’s addressing four kinds of children in the context of this one verse? Why is that relevant to understanding the plain meaning of this question? Earlier in the same chapter the Torah says, “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, “Because of this, G-d did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt.” (*Shemos 13:8*) Rashi says this references the wicked son and the one who does not know how to ask, yet Rashi does not mention the other two sons in that context. Why does he do so here, on the question of the simple child?

The context of the questions of the wicked son and the one who does not know how to ask is the Pesach seder and all its attendant rituals. Therefore, we might have thought that the Torah commands us to answer children who ask about the Exodus, because of its central role in the narrative and theology of the Jewish people. Therefore, when we look at these verses in isolation, there is no need to speak of other children, only the children who ask about the Exodus are answered.

The context of the simple child’s question, however, is not the Exodus perse, but the command to redeem the firstborn donkey. The wise son’s question also does not appear directly in the context of the Exodus, but is rather a general question aimed at the broader idea of mitzvah observance,

“what are these testimonies, statutes, and laws?”

If the Torah commands us to answer these questions about the firstborn donkey, then it follows that we must be commanded to answer not just crucial questions, but any question about Torah observance. Certainly, the reader will assume, there are wiser students than the simple son who will have more detailed questions about mitzvah observance, are we to answer him as well? Rashi therefore adds that Torah indeed addresses the full spectrum of children, from wicked to wise. It was the question of the simple son, out of context of the Exodus, that requires the comment that the Torah uniquely responds to the four sons, no matter what the subject of their inquiry is.

This leads us to the conclusion that any question voiced by the Torah must be the voice of one of the four children. Which child asks the question about the perils of Shemitah observance? If the question appeared immediately after the command to not work the land, then it would be perceived as a challenge of the wicked son. The question which is posed after all the laws of Shemitah and Yovel, and after the Torah promises that “the land will then yield its fruit and you will eat to satiety, and live upon it securely,” is asked by the wise son, who wants to know how exactly will G-d nourish the Jewish people during the moratorium on agricultural labor. He is not challenging the observance, but asking in what way “will we eat in the seventh year?” To this the Torah answers that G-d will

miraculously cause the land to yield three years worth of produce in the sixth year.

### **The Deeper Dimension:**

Chassidus explains that Shemitah corresponds to the spiritual work of suspending the ego (*bittul hayesh*), therefore the question “what will eat,” which is ego’s concern, is asked forever, as the ego resurfaces after each Shemitah.

But according to the above, that the question is asked by the wise son, there must be a deeper, positive rendering of the question. The miracle of Shemitah does not just transcend nature, it contradicts it. In the seven year cycle, the land is most “exhausted” and has fewer yields in the sixth year. After its rest in the seventh, it can return to growing crops. The fact that G-d makes the field give forth three years of yield in the sixth year is thus a paradox and an inversion of nature itself. The wise son, who processes reality through natural intelligence, cannot fathom this paradox, so

he asks, in wonderment, how is this rupture of nature possible.

It is also known that the six years of the Shemitah cycle allude to the six thousand years of history leading to the Messianic era in the “seventh millenium/year.” Seemingly, in the sixth and final year we must prepare the “crop” that will nourish us in the seventh year. That is, our spiritual work in this era must elicit the Divine revelations the world will experience in the Messianic era. Yet how can we be expected to bring forth this yield when our field in this sixth year is exhausted? We do not have the spiritual wherewithal to bring the Messianic era. G-d answers that because we endure the self-sacrifice of dedicating ourselves to G-d in an impossible age, therefore He upends the expected and empowers our limited effort to bring forth “yield for three years,” to bring the revelations of the Messianic era.

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