



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT" L

*It is an honor to present this week's Torah Minute from our archives.
The following was penned by our founder, Rabbi Kalman Winter ZT" L, in 2011.*

As we begin Parshas Behar (25:1), we are introduced to the law of *shmittah*. The word *shmittah* literally means 'to refrain.' The Torah requires all Jewish landowners in the Land of Israel to refrain from harvesting their produce every seventh year. Furthermore, there is no cultivating or planting during this seventh year for the following year.

In this first verse, the Torah introduces *shmittah* by saying that this law was given at Sinai. The commentaries question: Were not all of the 613 commandments of the Torah given by G-d and Sinaitic? In what manner does this commandment of *shmittah* differentiate itself to be singularly designated as 'given at Sinai?'

The great commentator Chasam Sofer (1762-1839) remarks that, in verses 20 and 21 of this chapter, the Torah records that one might ask, "From where shall we eat during this time?" The produce of the seventh year is to be available to all. One is not permitted to exercise ownership over his produce. The following year's produce will not materialize, for he is enjoined to leave his land fallow in the seventh year, without cultivation. In response to the individual's concern, the Torah assures him, "I will command My blessing on the sixth year that it will produce sufficient bounty for three consecutive years": the sixth year, the seventh year, and the following (eighth) year. Such explicit guarantees for an entire nation to reap a harvest for three years can only emanate from Above. Only One Who is All-Powerful can commit, by His word and trust, to such miraculous assurances. Only G-d, the Author of Torah, could say such a thing. Hence, we understand why specifically this commandment of *shmittah* is associated with Sinai, for this G-d given commandment can only have been given by the Almighty. So, too, all the commandments of the Torah were given at Sinai.

Our faith is that the Torah is G-d given and irrevocable. Our attitudes, compliance and adherence to all the laws and details of the Torah are undoubtedly predicated on this understanding and commitment. The Torah is not limited by time, space, culture, or geography. It is not subject to revision or amendments. Our Holy Torah is not akin to shifting sands in the desert, moving with every turbulence. It is only in the knowledge and security of a timeless Torah, G-d given for the ages, that we can hope to find the true meaning of life's purpose, with confidence that our path is true and our way is just.

*Have a wonderful Shabbos,
Rabbi Menachem Winter*

TABLE TALK

POINTS TO PONDER

When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall observe a Shabbos rest for Hashem. For six years you may sow your field... but the seventh year shall be a complete rest for the land, a Shabbos for Hashem... (25:2-5)

From the wording of the posuk, it seems that as soon as Bnei Yisrael enter the land, they will observe a year of Sh'mita, even before they worked their fields for six years. This cannot be, since they would have no food to eat, since they would not have been recipients of the blessing of the sixth year. Why does the Torah make it seem that Bnei Yisrael observed Sh'mita when they entered the land?

PARSHA RIDDLE

A child is considered Jewish if his mother is Jewish. Is the nationality of a non-Jew determined by the mother or the father? Where do we know that from this parsha?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

V'hu / And he shall marry a woman... (21:13)

Which halacha is hinted to in this pasuk?

Answer: The gematria of "v'hu" is eighteen, hinting to the mishna that one should marry when they are eighteen.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Behar* (25:14), the Torah commands: "When you make a sale to your fellow or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow, do not aggrieve one another." While this translation is the plain meaning of the verse, which constitutes a prohibition against certain types of fraudulent or improper pricing (*ona'ah*), there is also a *midrashic* interpretation that punctuates it differently: "When you make a sale: to your fellow. Or make a purchase: from the hand of your fellow." According to this reading, the Torah is instructing us to prefer Jews to non-Jews when buying or selling real or personal property (*Sifra*). This extends to hiring employees (*Ahavas Chesed* 1:5:6, *Shut. Mishpetei Uziel* 3:44).

Some early authorities rule that this injunction applies even where the Jewish seller is more expensive than the non-Jewish one (*Shut. Tashbatz* 3:151, *Shut. Rema* #10), although other later decisors find this stance problematic (*Shut. Chikrei Lev Choshen Mishpat* 1:139, *Shut. Toafos Re'em* (Taubes) *Orach Chaim* #22, *Mishpat Shalom* beginning of #189). Many adopt a compromise position and distinguish between minor and major price differentials (*Ahavas Chesed* *ibid.* *Nesiv Ha'Chesed* #12), although the precise definition of "major" is unclear. One suggestion is that the Jewish seller should be preferred unless he is charging a sixth more than the non-Jew. Another is that a subjective standard applies, and we consider the economic impact on the purchaser relative to his financial means (see *Shut. Minchas Yitzchak* 3:129:3-5, *Shut. Shraga Ha'Meir* 5:31:2).

Beyond the question of price differential, it is also unclear what sorts of other concessions one is expected to make in order to buy Jewish. Some maintain that the obligation holds even when it entails "inconvenience" (*tircha* - *Shut. Maharam Shik choshen mishpat* #31), although this, too, presumably has some limit (see *Shut. Teshuvos Ve'Hanhagos* 1:805 and 2:724).

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

WHO AM I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I am calculated by seven.
2. Blow a Shofar.
3. I am "Forever".
4. I am referenced on the liberty bell.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I am for Sh'mita.
2. I was for mitzvos.
3. I caused hatred.
4. I was humble.

Last Week's Answers:

#1 A Kohen (You must honor me; I cannot bury you; you give me but not a tenth; I atone for you.)

#2 Korban (Defect-free; I make peace; with my mother for a week; I am not a cold son.)

All children 13 and under who answer a "Who Am I?" correctly will be entered into a raffle to



The next raffle is June 21st.

Congratulations to Akiva Biberfeld and others for answering last week's questions correctly!

Visit gwckollel.org to submit your answers.

Answer as many as you can - each correct answer will entitle you to another raffle ticket and increase your chances of winning.

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