

Behar

At the outset of the Sidra "Behar" the Torah indicates that the laws of "*Shemittah*" were told to Moshe Rabbenu on *Har Sinai*. "Were not all the Mitzvos taught to him on the mountain of Sinai?" asks the Midrash. And the answer given is that "Just as illustrated with the Mitzvah of *Shemittah* recorded here, where all the rules—general and particular—were clarified in detail (and this was on Sinai) so it is with all the Mitzvos: they too were given in all their detail to Moshe Rabbenu on the mountain of Sinai."

We may ponder what special element is contained in the Mitzvah of *Shemittah* which propelled it into the position of serving as an example for all other Mitzvos? Why did the Torah choose to use this Mitzvah as proof that all the Mitzvos, in every detail, were taught to Moshe by Hashem on *Har Sinai*?

There seems to be room for an assumption that the Mitzvah of *Shemittah* reflects the symbolism of all mitzvos—at least in that dimension of their relationship to *Har Sinai*.

In order to answer these questions, we should first appreciate that there are two general accomplishments of the performance of Mitzvos. One is the injection of *Kedushah*, spirituality, into the article or item that is used in the performance of the Mitzvah. The other is the elevation of the article into the realm of a *Kedushah* dimension. And these two achievements can occur, at times, individually.¹

For example, in using a fruit of the citrus species to perform the Mitzvah of *Esrog*—within the *Arba Minim*—we inject *Kedushah* into this citrus fruit. (It can also be said that we elevate this agricultural product into a spiritual realm) However, in the observance of a *Mitzvat Lo Taaseh*—i.e. not to eat a fish which is unKosher—we cannot claim to be injecting *Kedushah*—into this fish, just because it is not being eaten—for

it lacks the qualifications which would classify it as being Kosher. We can, however, present a case for saying that in some way this *Trefah* fish is elevated into a spiritual realm, since it was consciously not eaten by a Jew, who chose not to consume it because of religious restrictions.

For six years of the Shemittah cycle, we inject a spiritual *Kedushah* into the material produce of our agricultural endeavors; on the seventh year (after the initial six year input) the land is elevated into a spiritual sphere by not being cultivated.

So that in reality the Mitzvah of Shemittah reflects all the other Mitzvos, in the context of these two distinct spiritual movements.

And *Har Sinai* is central in this general symbolism. In the Hagaddah we say, that "If we were brought to *Har Sinai* without receiving the Torah—*Dayenu*—that alone would have been enough." Why? Because at Sinai our Sages teach us "*Poskoh Zoohamoson*"—they shed their baseness and in fact the baseness of all humans.²

That baseness is the negative element that humans acquired at the eating of the forbidden fruit in Gan Eden. And the subsequent punishment for this act was that man would have to toil to produce his bread.

Having reached this level of spirituality at Sinai, the children of Israel were ready to hear the spiritual message of Shemittah. For six years we toil to produce and to inject spirituality into the agricultural products and on the seventh year we elevate all that is around us, by not actively toiling and producing.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Likutei Torah, Shmos 6d
2. Shabbos 146a