

## This Week's Parshah - Parshas Behar

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of

Orah *bas Avrohom a"h*

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

### Plenty for Everyone

At one point in its treatment of the subject of *shemittah* – the mandated yearlong halt in agricultural work (at the end of a seven-year cycle) – the Torah addresses a particular concern:

“And should you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we cannot sow and cannot gather our crops?’ (The answer is:) I will command My blessing toward you in the sixth year, and it shall produce *three years’ worth* of crops” (*Vayikra 25:20-21*).

### A Question of a Question

The manner in which the Torah discusses this particular issue is somewhat atypical of its standard style. As we know, the Torah puts a premium on its word usage, avoiding any unnecessary passage, sentence, word or even letter. For brevity’s sake, it would have been more prudent – seemingly – for the verse to have gotten straight to the point. By merely stating that the sixth year will produce enough crops for three years, we would automatically have known that *shemittah* would in no way interfere with the food supply. Why, then, was it necessary for the Torah to go out of its way to record both the question in all of its fullness – *If you say: What shall we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we cannot sow*, etc. – as well as the complete answer? Doesn’t that sound somewhat “unnecessarily redundant,” as they say? This is certainly not the Torah’s usual manner.

The *Ba’alei Mussar* (ethical masters) perceive a great teaching underlying this curiosity in the verse. Of course, the intent was not merely to spell out an implied question one could obviously have figured out on his own. In actuality, the Torah here is addressing *two different classes of people* who occupy varying rungs on the ladder of Hashem’s service. This fact is reflected in the seemingly extraneous verse, as we shall soon see.

On the face of it, really, this wondrous promise (of the sixth year producing three times the standard amount of produce) would seem unnecessary. The verse immediately preceding those quoted above states the following: “The land shall give forth its fruit, and you shall eat, and be satiated” (*ibid. v. 19*). The satiation referred to in this *passuk*, explains Rashi, occurs *within* the consumer: “Blessing takes place even *inside* a person’s innards.”

The S’forno elaborates: This blessing of satiation (mentioned in verse 19) pertains to the food itself; that is, it possesses a quality of ultra-nutrition. In the parlance of Chazal, this phenomenon is characterized as follows: “One consumes a minimal amount; but – once ingested – the food’s potency increases inside the stomach.” In other words, eating a few crumbs, if you will, can be the equivalent of something like a full meal (in terms of satiating and nutritional power). As such, whatever is produced during the sixth year – however minimal – will be comfortably sufficient to tide everyone over for the seventh.

In light of this, the next verse seems even more puzzling: “And should you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year?’” Now, why *would* anyone say that? What happened to their store of super-satisfying-suppers? “I will command My blessing toward you in the sixth year, and it shall produce *three years’ worth* of crops”; why is that necessary, when they have an even more wondrous supply of the “big-things-in-small-package” rations?

## Men of Faith

The S'forno adds an incisive comment to verse 20: “And should you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year?’... The sixth year... shall produce *three years’ worth* of crops” – This is directed toward those people who have doubts about the promise stated in the earlier verse.

In other words – explains R' Eliyahu Lopian (*Lev Eliyahu, parshas Behar*) – the Torah here is establishing two separate forms of blessing to provide for the needs of the *shemittah* observers. One is the “small package” option, whereby a standard amount goes a long way; the other is an explosion of produce, whereby a single year produces a massive increase in volume. And the different blessings are intended for different people, *depending on their level of faith*.

The first form possesses significant advantages over its counterpart. While a mass production of crops is of obviously great benefit, consider what comes with it: this huge quantity of grain will have to be harvested, gathered, processed, etc. Triple the bounty also means triple the work. But when it is the crops' *quality* that is enhanced while the *quantity* remains standard – this is truly the greatest blessing. In this instance, the extra “profits” don't cut into the farmer's precious time, which can then be utilized for Torah study. As such, those whose *bitachon* (reliance on Hashem) is strong will merit the blessing of the “fruit of (super-) satiation” mentioned in the earlier verse.

True faith does demand such reliance, even in these most crucial matters of basic sustenance. The Mishnah in Sotah (9:12) discusses the general decline the world experienced after the destruction of the Temple:

מִשְׁתַּחֲרַב בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ ... פָּסְקוּ אַנְשֵׁי אֱמוּנָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר הוֹשִׁיעָה ה' כִּי גָמַר חֹסֵיד.

“Once the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed... (true) men of faith ceased to exist; as it says (*Tehillim 12:2*), ‘Save us, Hashem, for the pious are gone; for true believers have vanished from humankind.’”

The Gemara (*Sotah 48b*) clarifies what it takes to be classified as a true “man of faith”: “R' Eliezer the Great said: Whoever has bread in his basket (i.e., today's meal is provided for), yet he wonders: *What shall I eat tomorrow?* – the faith of such a person is considered deficient.”

This mirrors the second group the Torah addresses – the “what-will-we-eat-in-the-seventh-year” crowd. The Torah wasn't actually asking the question, but rather, was identifying a class of people whose faith is less solid – hence, they doubt the promise mentioned in the previous verse. As such, they are rendered ineligible for the greater blessing, which would have provided sufficient sustenance without detracting from their Torah-learning opportunities. Instead, they must settle for the somewhat “downgraded” blessing; they will receive plenty but will have to invest much time and effort to handle the triple output of produce.