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Dvar Torah Parshat Behar

Parshat Behar begins with the Mitzvah of Shemita, while emphasizing that this commandment was told to Moshe on Har Sinai. Rashi famously asks what is the connection between Shemita and Har Sinai? He answers that just like all the details of Shemita were taught at Har Sinai, so too all the details of all the Mitzvot were taught at Har Sinai. R' Rudinsky asks why was Shemita chosen to be the paradigm example? Further, he notes that the Mitzvah of Shemita is given before the commandment to work the land for 6 years, which is seemingly out of order.

To answer these questions R' Rudinsky examines another commandment in this week's Parsha; the commandment not to take interest, Ribit. He quotes the Kli Yakar who says that it is understandable why the Torah forbids taking interest from one that can't afford to pay it, but if one profits from the loan and can afford to pay the interest why is it prohibited? He explains that in every business deal both parties aren't sure if they will earn money. Therefore, they must always look to Hashem 'for help in business. This wouldn't be the case for one who loans with interest. He knows that he will be receiving a set payment and he will be okay. R' Rudinsky explains that the Torah connects interest, cheating in business, and Shemita because they all revolve around the same thing: belief in Hashem. It's the person who doesn't think Hashem has given him enough that feels the need to loan with interest. It's the person who feels as if he needs more than he was given that feels the need to resort to lending with interest.

He goes on further to say that this is why the Shemita year is listed before the 6 working years. The point of Shemita is to instill within us that all of our success is due to Hashem. We must realize that the success of the 6 working years is from Hashem, as well. There is no better way to do this than by seeing Hashem take care of us during Shemita. This is why this Mitzvah was chosen as the example for Har Sinai. It's a key foundation for receiving the Torah. We need to have faith that Hashem takes care of us and knows what is best for us.

Shabbat Shalom!
Rabbi Adam Hertzberg