



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH
MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG
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Maintaining the Proper Perspective

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָּה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַה':

“Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: ‘When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land must rest a Sabbath for God.’” (Vayikra 25:2)

The opening pasuk of Parashat Behar uses two seemingly redundant verbs: *daber* (דבר) and *v’amarta* (ואמרת). Both mean “to speak,” and the Torah could have shortened the verse to *tomar el Bnei Yisrael*. Why the double expression?

Chazal famously distinguish between the two. *Daber* implies a firmer, more forceful tone, while *amirah* is gentler. This distinction emerges from the pasuk: כֹּה תֹאמַר

לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתִגִּיד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. “Beit Yaakov” is interpreted as the women — addressed softly — while “Bnei Yisrael” refers to the men, who may be spoken to more firmly.

The **Or HaChaim HaKadosh** utilizes this distinction to explain shmita. Shmita contains two primary demands on the farmer:

Ceasing to work the land.

This is extremely difficult. A farmer fears: *If I stop working, how will the land produce?* Because this command challenges human instinct and rationality, the Torah introduces it with the stronger *daber*.

DECLARING THE PRODUCE HEFKER — OPEN TO ALL.

While still a major demand, this element is easier to accept: the farmer also gains access to his neighbor’s fields. For this component, the Torah uses the gentler *v’amarta*.

The **Or HaChaim** then offers a second explanation. Shmita can be viewed in two very different ways:

One approach sees it as a royal decree — a law of the King that we obey even without understanding.

But there is another, far more uplifting perspective. It is viewed as a condition.

Imagine a friend gifts you the use of his home for an entire year, rent-free, but asks to use it himself for two weeks each summer. One response is frustration: *Some gift — where am I supposed to go for two weeks?* Another response is gratitude: *After giving me fifty weeks in your home, of course I’ll gladly step aside for two!*







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Hashem gave us Eretz Yisrael with a condition: six years are yours — but every seventh year, it returns to Me. The proper response is not resentment but profound appreciation for the six-year gift.

Rav Pam (on Parashat Bechukotai) makes a similar point when discussing *Ma'aser Behemah*. Why must each animal pass under the staff one by one, with every tenth designated as ma'aser? Why not simply count the herd and separate ten percent?

Rav Pam explains: if someone owns a thousand animals, setting aside a hundred at once feels overwhelming. But when the animals pass one by one — *one for me... two for me... three for me... nine for me... one for You* — it becomes far easier. Perspective transforms the experience.

And this, the Torah teaches, is the key not only to shmita but to all mitzvot—and all of life.

The difference between gratitude and resentment, between joy and burden, is often nothing more than the lens through which we choose to see.

Shmita invites us to step back and remember that everything — our land, our success, our efforts, our blessings—is ultimately a gift. When we cultivate an attitude of gratitude, mitzvot cease to feel like obligations and instead become opportunities. Life itself

becomes richer, lighter, more expansive.

If we train ourselves, like the farmer counting his animals, to say: *One for me... one for me... one for me... one for You*, then each moment becomes easier to give, each mitzvah easier to embrace, and each challenge easier to meet.

Shmita is not only a command — it is a mindset. A reminder that the world is full of gifts, that God's generosity surrounds us, and that our task is simply to notice, appreciate, and respond with open hands and open hearts.

May we learn to see our blessings with clarity, receive them with gratitude, and give back with joy. ■

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