

A BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO ASK AND A BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO DON'T

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshios Behar & Bechukosai

A Blessing for Those Who Ask and a Blessing for Those Who Don't

By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Weekly Portion Torah CDs: # 900, Oy! My Tefillin Are Pasul. Good Shabbos!

The Mishna states "Exile comes to the world because of Idoltary, Immorality and Incest, Murder, and the (violation of) the Sabbatical of the Land (Shmitas haAretz)" [Avos 5:11]. The Ramban in this week's parsha asks why lax observance of Shmitah triggers exile. Although it is true that there are multiple negative prohibitions associated with the laws of Shmitah, it remains a non-capital offense. The other three sins mentioned are "Cardinal sins" for which one is required to be killed rather than violate them. They are all capital offenses.

The Ramban says that the answer involves "secrets of the Torah." It is a difficult to understand fully the meaning of what the Ramban answers. However, at least part of the gist of what he answers is the following: Shmitah represents one of the fundamental ideas of Judaism -- the fact that the Almighty created the world, runs the world, and owns the world.

The Ramban, in effect, says that what Shabbos is to the days of the week, Shmitah is to the years. Just like we rest on Shabbos to proclaim and affirm that "In six days G-d created the Heavens and the Earth and on the seventh day He completed his work and He rested," so too on a macro scale, keeping the Shmitah is all about this concept of Emunah [Belief] in G-d's creation. On a macro scale, by working for six years and resting on the seventh, a person testifies, "I believe with complete faith that the Almighty is the owner of the world and He is the One who provides sustenance." Resting on

Shmitah allows the farmer to put his money where his mouth is, so to speak. A person's statement of belief in G-d thus goes out of the realm of lip service and becomes concrete action, through discipline and self-sacrifice. I demonstrate my conviction that somehow G-d will provide sustenance during this year when I obey his commandment and abstain from farming my land.

We do not live in an agrarian economy so it is hard to relate to the sacrifice implicit in Shmitah observance. But just think about it: If the Halacha was that you work for six years and each seventh year you need to tell your employer "I am taking a Sabbatical," how would that go over? We are not talking about a paid Sabbatical. You would need to ask yourself, "How am I going to pay the mortgage? How am I going to pay tuition? Where is my health insurance going to come from? I am not going to be working! I am not going to receive my regular paycheck!" That is what Shmitah is. It is literally putting one's faith on the line saying, "I believe that the parnassah [sustenance] will somehow come."

The pasuk states: "The land will give its fruit and you will eat to satisfaction; and you will dwell securely upon it." [Vayikra 25:19] Rashi interprets the phrase "you will eat to satisfaction" as "Even within the innards, there will be in it a blessing (i.e. – one will feel satisfied after having eaten a small quantity)."

"How am I going to exist without an income?" The Ribono shel Olam says, "Do not worry. It is going to last." "How will it last?" "You are going to be able to live on less." "How is it going to happen?" "Do not ask any questions. It can happen."

This is the promise of "V'Achaltem l'Sovah" (you will eat to satisfaction): You will have the same amount of income but somehow it will "expand within your innards". Unbeknownst to you, away from your eye, it will miraculously be able to last.

The Torah continues: "And if you will ask 'What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We will not sow and we will not gather our crop!' I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three years." [Vayikra 25:20-21] The Torah promises that in the sixth year, there will be a bountiful crop and the harvest will last for 3 years! It will provide for the sixth year, the seventh year, and the eighth year until you will once again be able to harvest the crop of the eighth year's planting.

The Sforno explains -- these pasukim address two types of individuals. At first, pasuk 19 addresses the type of individual willing to rest on Shmitah who does not ask any questions. He will survive by the miraculous blessing of "you will eat to satisfaction" – i.e. – he will feel satisfied after having eaten a small quantity.

Consider the following true story. The year 5719 (1958-1959) was a Shmitah year in Eretz Yisrael [the land of Israel]. Keeping Shmitah in those years was even more difficult than it is now. There were farms in Eretz Yisrael that kept the Shmitah that year. How did the people who observed Shmitah obtain food? They imported various kinds of vegetables from Chutz L'Eretz [outside the land of

Israel]. There was only one thing they could not import. For some reason, they could not obtain onions. Lo and behold, an Egyptian freighter captain made a mistake. He made a wrong turn and his ship somehow wound up approaching the coast of Eretz Yisrael. When the crew saw what was happening, they boarded the lifeboats and literally abandoned the ship. Wow! -- An Egyptian freighter now sat off the coast of Israel. The Israeli coast guard boarded the ship. What did they find? They found onions. As a result, those who observed Shmitah had onions in 5719. "You will eat to satisfaction!" The Almighty provides.

The Sforno explains that a second group of people will ask the question: "What will we eat in the seventh year?" Those people, who do not have faith that somehow the little they have will last, possess a lesser level of Emunah and spirituality than the first group. Nevertheless, for such individuals, as well, the Almighty provides. He says "Okay. I am going to make it happen in front of your eyes." In the sixth year there will be triple the crop!

Consider. Who is better off -- the people who did not question (who somehow had to get by with a little) or the people who did ask the question (and got triple the crop!)? The answer is that the first group is better off. Triple the crop involves triple the irrigating, triple the harvesting, triple the threshing, triple the storing, triple everything. They must work like horses during the 6th year. The same number of laborers must process triple the amount of crops in a single year. However, that is the way they wanted it because they were people who did not have faith and had questions "How will we manage?"

G-d can always provide, but how He provides depends on our level of Emunah. A person may who earn X amount of dollars and another person may earn 2X or 3X dollars and yet they can be in the same financial condition. For the fellow who makes X, somehow everything works. The person who makes 3X starts his car in the morning, puts it into reverse and his transmission falls out. The repair costs \$1,200. He finally gets to work. He calls his wife. She went to the dentist. She needs a root canal and a crown \$800 (after dental insurance coverage). The person comes home. The roofer was there. He needs a new roof that will cost \$10,000. In one day, he is out \$12,000! The next-door neighbor is making one-third the salary: His car runs like a kitten, his wife has perfect teeth, and the roof is in perfect shape. This is the distinction between "and you will eat and be satisfied" (what you have will last) and between "I will send you my blessing on the third year and you will take in triple the crop" (you will make 3X salary, but it will be a much harder income).

Rav Pam, zt"l, used to say to his students: "Some bochrim desire a 'rich shidduch'". However, there are two types of 'rich shidduchim'. There is a shidduch where the father-in-law is loaded and the groom thinks "Aha! I am set for life!" However, there is another shidduch where the girl comes from a simple home with simple parents and with simple expectations. She can get by with next to nothing. The girl from the wealthy home is used to the good life. She expects that and she is going to want that. Her husband will need to come up with that for her. The simple girl from the simple home, who will be satisfied with an older beat up family car is a 'rich shidduch' as well, because one who does

not need much is taken care of much more easily than one who has great expectations.

It is an accepted "Segulah" [good luck charm] that being a Sandek (holding the baby during a Bris Milah) brings wealth. The Steipler Gaon was a Sandek almost every day of his later years. He lived a very modest life. He was not at all wealthy. Someone once asked him why he was not rich given this "Segulah" and the fact that he was a Sandek so often. The Steipler responded, "What are you talking about? I am very wealthy! I have everything I want. What does wealthy mean? I have everything I need under the sun!" For the Steipler, wealth meant that he had a roof over his head and a Gemara. What more could he need?

We might not be able to live like that. However, that does not mean that the Steipler didn't feel he was rich. He had everything he needed. "The blessing of G-d is what brings riches." [Mishlei 10:22] Real wealth is to be happy with one's lot in life. This is true wealth...the bracha of "food being blessed in our innards"...of sensing that we have everything we need. There is no greater wealth than this.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

This write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah CDs on the weekly Torah Portion. The halachic topics covered for the current week's portion in this series are:

- # 011 – Rationing Medical Care
- # 012 – Can Teachers Strike?
- # 054 – Life Insurance: The Torah Policy
- # 055 – Candle Lighting & Havdalah: How Early & How Late?
- # 097 – "Ribis" Problems of Interest for the Jew in a Mercantile Society
- # 098 – "Cheremei Tzibur": A Ban on Living in Germany?
- # 145 – Kidney Donations: Endangering Oneself to Save Another
- # 192 – Making Shabbos Early
- # 282 – The Physician's Obligation to Heal
- # 328 – Sh'mita and the Heter Mechira
- # 372 – Using Shuls As A Shortcut
- # 416 – Supporting Jewish Merchants
- # 460 – The Obligation of Checking One's Teffilin
- # 504 – Lag B'Omer
- # 548 – Marrying for Money
- # 592 – Ribis and the Non-Jew

- # 636 – The Kedusha of the Ezras Noshim
- # 680 - Is Ribis Ever Permitted?
- # 724 – The Chazzan Who Changes His Mind
- # 768 – Dos and Don'ts of Treating a Lender
- # 812 – How Much Is That Tiffany Necklace?
- # 856 – Distractions When Performing A Mitzvah
- # 900 – Oy! My Tefillin Are Pasul
- # 945 – Overcharing: How Much Is Too Much?
- # 987 – Limud HaTorah – Must You Understand What You Are Learning?
- # 988 – Bentching – Making Sure You Eat and Enjoy
- #1031 - Sh'mitta – How Did the Farmers Survive?
- #1032 - The Child Molester – What Must We Do?
- #1076 - Cheating in Business It May Be More Asur Than You Think
- #1118 - What Are You/Aren't You Allowed To Talk About on Shabbos?
- #1119 - Davening in a Rented Movie Theater–Is There A Problem?
- #1160 – The Mahram of Padua, The Ramo, and l'Havdil the Pope

CDs or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information.

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.