

Date: 27 Av 5785 (August 21, 2025)

Torah Portion: Re'eh

Topic: Out of Bounds

It is written (Proverbs 18:16): *"A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before the great."* Likewise, we read (Deuteronomy 12:20): *"When YHWH your Elohim enlarges your border..."* What is the connection between the territorial expansion of Yisrael and the wealth promised as a reward for acts of charity?

At a surface level, the expansion of one's borders can be understood metaphorically—as a reference to the accumulation of property. However, Shem MiShmuel offers a deeper interpretation, suggesting that the phrase "your boundary" refers to the actual geographic borders of the Promised Land.

Shem MiShmuel cites another verse (Proverbs 20:5): *"Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."* This verse teaches that wisdom, like underground water, lies dormant within the human heart. Just as accessing a subterranean spring requires removing the earth that conceals it, so too must a person remove internal obstructions to access their inner wisdom.

Yet there is more. Underground water is not only concealed by earth but is also restrained by it. Water, being fluid by nature, spreads when unimpeded. The same holds true for the innate wisdom of the heart—it naturally seeks to expand beyond its inner confines. Like a bubbling spring, it strives to illuminate the entire being, influencing one's actions so that the limbs instinctively incline toward what is good and noble. However, this wisdom is often constrained by the material nature of the body, which serves as a kind of "covering." To allow this wisdom to fully manifest, a person must remove this covering.

How, then, can one release these inner restraints? The verse in *Proverbs* provides the key: *"A man's gift makes room for him."* A gift, by definition, is given voluntarily—it is not owed. It may take the form of a donation to the poor or any act performed beyond one's obligations. These voluntary acts broaden the boundaries of holiness, allowing the heart's wisdom to overflow its natural limits. When this internal expansion occurs, it also manifests externally. Material prosperity, previously constrained by negative forces, begins to grow in tandem. This is affirmed by another teaching from *Proverbs* (24:4–5): *"Through wisdom a house is built... and through knowledge its chambers are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."*

This principle operates not only on an individual level but also nationally. The Midrash teaches that the Land of Yisrael will one day expand. The verse, *"When YHWH your Elohim enlarges your border,"* alludes to this future development. It also reveals the mechanism of this expansion. The preceding verse discusses supporting the Levite, while the verse before that urges generosity even after one has fulfilled the basic requirements of charity: *"You shall eat [the meat of your sacrifice]—you, your son, your daughter, your maidservant, and the Levite who is in your cities."* On this last phrase, Rashi comments: *"If you do not have anything to give the Levite from his portion—that is, from the standard tithes—then invite him to partake of your peace-offering."*

Thus, when individuals seek opportunities to give beyond their obligatory contributions, they begin to dissolve the material and spiritual boundaries that limit their wisdom, their wealth, and even their homeland—allowing all of these to grow beyond their previous confines.

Shalom.