For six years you may sow your field and for six years you may prune your vineyard; and you may gather in its crop.

Vayikra 25:3

Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: 'When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall observe a Sabbath rest for God.'

Vayikra 25:2

It is He who leads all world events, and it is under His supervision that the weary can rest from their toiling.

The Land Remembers

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschuetz, wrote (Urim v’Tumim C.M. 67:1) about the great significance of the mitzvah of Shemittah: In our dear and cherished land, we have witnessed how the yield of the sixth year of the Shemittah cycle has produced enough bounty to last three years. And when the Yovel year followed the Shemittah, that sixth year produced enough to last four years. This phenomenon always occurred during that sixth year, not a year earlier nor a year later. By witnessing this miraculous pattern, everyone recognized and knew that it was no coincidence, and that it was not a quirk of nature or some agricultural phase. The entire nation knew that God was with them, and that He came to bless His people who are consecrated by means of His mitzvos.

The mitzvah of Shemittah has enormous implications. By observing its precepts, the farmers realized that our days on this earth are as a shadow upon the wall. We reside in the land as visitors, for everything belongs to God. Man’s purpose is not fulfilled and his goals are not achieved when he accumulates material goods and piles up storehouses of possessions. Everyone witnesses how, as they celebrated a sabbatical from their labor, the land continued to function under the careful and watchful eye of God. It is He who leads all world events, and it is under His supervision that the weary can rest from their toiling to draw forth bread from the ground. The wealthy and the poor, and the strong and the weak, they all can utilize the opportunity of the Shemittah year to develop an appreciation of God’s blessings and His bounty.

The Shemittah year afforded everyone the ability to discard his gold and silver icons. A person could now assign the pursuit of wealth its true value, one which ultimately pales and cannot be taken along as one faces his final judgment.

It is appropriate for each and every person to now focus upon this mitzvah and its relevance. Its observance is more directly applied as we dwell upon our land, but we can each contemplate its message and arrive at the proper conclusions. Our Holy Land remembers the days when the entire nation resided within its borders, and it awaits our imminent return. In the meantime, let the message of the Shemittah not be lost.

The Special Blessing of the Sixth Year

Why does the Torah see fit to preface the command to let the land lie fallow in the seventh year by emphasizing that one works the land for six years? In the case of Shabbos, when it says that for six days you will do all of your work and on the seventh day you will rest, the Torah is driving home the point that not only do you rest from work on Shabbos, but you must also totally direct your thoughts away from any labor as if whatever you were doing before Shabbos was completely finished and there is nothing more to do (שָׁבָ參考ם). We cannot say that this is the Torah’s intention concerning Shemittah.

In Darash Moshe, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, suggests that perhaps we can say the
And I will release the pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

Vayikra 26:25

And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim freedom throughout the land for all its inhabitants; it is a yovel year for you, and you shall return, each man to his ancestral heritage, and you shall return, each man to his family.

Vayikra 25:10

For six years we should work the land as usual, and there will be a hidden blessing in the produce of the sixth year.

RETURNING HOME

In Meshech Chochmah, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk points out that families can become scattered across the land and even throughout the world as time passes and each member of the family seeks his sustenance in different places. As each person fails to find adequate opportunities locally, he turns to the four corners of the world in search of economic successes.

The Torah informs us that there is a benefit when the members of a family are able to look towards the family homestead for their welfare and to receive nurture from the place where their fathers were raised. If the extended family members can dispose of the assets they might have acquired in remote places and “return to their original inheritance”, then “the family will reunite and come together”.

SUBTLE SINS

Rashi explains that the verse here foretells that the Jewish people under siege will be given into the hands of their oppressors. This will occur, he explains, because the halachah forbids the remains of a person who died to be held over in Yerushalayim overnight. When the people of the city open the gates to remove the body of anyone who had died of the pestilence mentioned in the verse, the enemy will have its chance to enter.

Or Hahar points out that we see from here that the people who lived at the time of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash were very observant of mitzvos. A cursory reading of the events preceding the Churban seems to indicate that the people at that time were quite evil, but we see here that they exercised tremendous self-sacrifice to fulfill even a custom which was d’rabbanan (see Bava Kama 82b). Rather, their sins were very subtle in nature. Due to their being people of great stature, and owing to the fact that they lived at the time when the Beis HaMikdash was functioning, the expectations for them to be perfectly righteous were demanding. Even simple faults are recorded as being tragic flaws. When these occurred, God brought upon them destruction and exile. We see from here that a person can be very alert and involved in Torah to the degree of great personal sacrifice, yet may be failing terribly in his responsibilities to the extent that he is deserving of punishment.
Why should the Jewish people be punished with exile? To answer this question we must first understand the true significance of residing in the Land of Israel. If the goal of the Jewish people is to bring ethical monotheism to the world, would their mission not be more effectively fulfilled when they are scattered among the nations? There is, however, a unique reason for the Jewish people to live in the Land of Israel. They need to dwell together in the Land so that there will be a nation in the world upon whom Hashem’s honor rests - a nation for whom divine providence is revealed in its history and circumstances; a nation that will be a source for all peoples to absorb knowledge of Hashem and His ways. Their goal is to demonstrate that divine morality can fill an entire nation - a morality that enlightens not only the private lives of individuals, but also guides the public paths of nations.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchok HaKohen Kook explains. For the Jewish people to fulfill their national destiny, Hashem’s seal must be placed on the people as a whole. The nation must recognize its special mission as Hashem’s people living in His land. When the Jewish people as a whole abandoned Hashem, even though many individuals still kept some of the mitzvos, the nation had lost its distinctive mark. The land was no longer recognizable as Hashem’s land, and the nation was no longer recognizable as Hashem’s nation. They saw themselves as a people like all others. At that point, the Jewish people required exile. They needed to wander among the nations, stripped of all national assets. During this exile, they discovered that they are different and distinct from all other peoples. They realized that the essence of their nationhood contains a special quality, and that special quality is God’s Name that is associated with them.

We find in the Talmud (Shabbos 41a) a startling opinion regarding the nature of exile. When fourth century scholar Rabbi Zeira wished to ascend to the Land of Israel, he needed to evade his teacher, Rabbi Yehuda, for Rabbi Yehuda taught that anyone leaving Babylonia for the Land of Israel transgresses the positive command (Yirmiyahu 27:22), “They will be carried to Babylon, and there they shall stay, until the day that I remember them.” Why did Rabbi Yehuda think that moving to the Land of Israel was so improper?

Babylonia at that time was the world center of Torah study. Great academies were established in Neharde’a, Sura and later at Pumbedisa. Jewish life in Babylonia was centered around the holiness of Torah. This great revival of Torah learning instilled a profound recognition of the true essence of the Jewish people. As such, Babylonia was the key to the redemption of Israel and their return to their land. Only when the Jewish people fully assimilate this lesson will the exile have fulfilled its purpose, and the Jewish people will be able to return to their land. Rabbi Yehuda felt that individuals, even if they have already prepared themselves sufficiently for the holiness of the Land of Israel, should nonetheless remain in Babylonia. Why? The object of exile is not to correct the individual, but to correct the nation. The true significance of the Jewish people living in the Land of Israel – as an entire nation bearing the banner of the Rock of Israel – must not be obscured by the return of righteous individuals to the Land. For Rabbi Yehuda, each individual Jew is like a Temple vessel. A vessel cannot fulfill its true purpose by itself, without the overall framework of a functioning Temple. So, too, an individual can only join in the renascence of Israel in their Holy Land when the entire nation has been restored in its Land, via divine redemption.

SHEMITTA - A YEAR FOR TORAH STUDY

Rashi explains that God will exact punishment on the Land of Israel so that His anger over the lack of observance of the laws of shemittah will be appeased. Furthermore, Rashi explains in the following verse that the Jewish people never properly observed shemittah in 430 of the years during which they lived in Eretz Yisrael.

Both of these statements of Rashi seem to be quite difficult. First, our parasha begins by stating “Then the land will enjoy its shemittah years during all the years of its desolation, while you are in the land of your foes; then the land will rest and it will enjoy its shemittah years.”

Vayikra 26:34
laws”...then you will have much blessing. Some verses later (26:27), the Torah says “ואם לא תኦעין ילא – “and if, despite this, you do not listen to Me”...then the Jewish people will be punished. It seems that the reason for any of the sufferings mentioned in the נאום come upon the Jewish people is for lack of keeping God’s laws, and more specifically, according to Rashi (on 26:14), it is for not toiling in Torah. Why, then, does Rashi in this verse mention the lack of fulfillment of the mitzvah of shemittah? What does that have to do with learning Torah? Secondly, it seems to be somewhat difficult to believe that such an obvious mitzvah as shemittah would be violated for such an extended period of time.

The answer to both of these questions is based on the approach that Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky takes to the parashios of Behar and Bechukosai. The parsha of Behar primarily discusses the laws pertaining to shemittah and yovel: The land must lie fallow, ancestral lands must be returned to their original owners and slaves are to be set free. Parashas Bechukosai then starts by talking about the study of Torah. Rabbi Kamenetzky explains that this mitzvah of studying Torah is part of the mitzvah of shemittah. When the Torah told us that we must not work the land during the shemittah year, it referred to this year as a יָסֶף – a Shabbos for God – and a year which is dedicated for God is one during which time is being spent toiling in Torah and spiritual growth. The shemittah year is not merely a vacation from work, but it is a year dedicated to the service of God. This is the aspect of keeping the shemittah year to which Rashi was referring when he said that there was never a shemittah year that was properly observed.

We must keep this idea in mind – that when we take a vacation, or even when we have a vacation from work on the seventh day of each week, we too must have a יָסֶף – a Shabbos for God.

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SINFUL THOUGHTS

Sefer HaKsav V’HaKabalah teaches that the translation of the word “אֲרָמִי” does not necessarily refer to the sins of one’s ancestors, as Rashi explains. Rather, it could come from the root לֶאָמ, meaning desires or wants. The verse would therefore be saying that the punishments recorded in this extended rebuke are due to the nation’s following the sins which they craved to commit. This means that the people will be held fully responsible even for the sins they planned on perpetrating, even if they failed to materialize for whatever reason. Simply because they plotted to commit these sins will be reason enough to hold them culpable, as our sages taught (Yoma 29a), “Thoughts of sin are worse than sin itself.” When one sins in action, his physical body is affected. However, when a person allows his mind to contemplate and plot the various aspects of sin, his spiritual self becomes immersed in devious plotting, and his very soul becomes corrupted.

On the other hand, the Gemara (Kiddushin 40a) also tells us that “sinful thoughts are not considered as action”. This implies that there is no punishment for thoughts alone. This, however, is speaking of a case where the sin remains only as a thought, and never is put into action. Here, the thought enters one’s mind for a moment, and it then dissipates. This plan never entered the heart and mind of the person to be actualized. However, a plan that develops into action, but only fails at the last moment due to some technical glitch, is certainly calculated as part of a sinful endeavor. This is what is referred to in our verse, where the consequences of such thoughts can result in catastrophe.

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Halachic Corner

Pirkei Avos Chapter 5

According to the Gaon of Vilna

Krias Shma - Sat. 9:08 10:21 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05
Tefilla - Sat. 8:32 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05
Sunrise Sat. 8:32 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05
Sunset Sat. 8:32 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05

According to the Magen Avraham

Krias Shma - Sat. 9:08 10:21 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05
Tefilla - Sat. 8:32 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05
Sunrise Sat. 8:32 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05
Sunset Sat. 8:32 9:57 8:04 5:30 8:05

When a person, after death, arrives at his final judgment, among the questions asked of him is whether he dealt in an honest fashion in his business transactions (Shabbos 31a). Since this, in fact, is the first question in this crucial interrogation, we see that honesty is of the utmost importance. The Shulchan Aruch places Hilchos
Halachic Corner is dedicated by Benyomin Freeman in memory of his father Gedalia Freeman, z"l. May his memory be for a blessing.

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Questions for Thought and Study

1. How does Hashem emphasize the commandment of Shemittah in both a direct and logical way for Bnei Yisrael to accept it? (See Ohr HaChaim 25:2)
2. How is the blessing of a triple portion in the sixth year a different blessing for different people? (See Malbim 25:20)
3. After Hashem promises that there will be peace in Eretz Yisrael, why do we need to be blessed with “driving out our enemies” (רו"פ תַּאֲרוּפְּכָכָה תְּמוּנָה) after they are already gone? (See Sforno and Ohr HaChaim to 26:7)
4. How are the punishments of Hashem worse when they are “הכית” (done randomly)? (See Ohr HaChaim 26:24)
5. Why does the Torah mention the וְרוֹם הָאָדָם (covenant) in Pasuk 26:45 if the וְרָאֹתָא between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem is already mentioned in Pasuk 26:42? (See Ramban 26:24)
6. How does the Torah indicate that a field or a house is elevated when being donated to Hashem, which is not true regarding all donations? (See Ha’amek Davar 27:14)

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This Week Likutei Peshatim is Sponsored

• By Hebrew Theological College wishing mazal tov to Rabbi & Mrs. Shmuel Leib Schuman on the engagement of their son Zev to Kayla Jacobs; and to HTC Board of Governors member Michael Nussbaum and his wife Dvora on the engagement of their grandson, Ari Daniels, to Rebecca Baratz, and the engagement of their grandson, Rami Pinchot, to Ariella Atkin.

• Gourmet Torah at Shallots Bistro is not meeting in the restaurant, so we are bringing Torah to you. Please join Rabbi Michael Myers over Zoom on Thursday, May 21, at 12:30 PM. Topic: “Jerusalem Through the Ages - A Virtual Visual Tour”. Zoom info will be emailed and posted on HTC’s facebook page.

• Blitstein Institute for Women Summer Semester Registration has opened. Don’t miss this opportunity to have your daughters take outstanding courses that will enrich the lives of these young women and prepare them for graduate programs and lucrative careers. For more information, call Mrs. Beryl Mann at 773-973-0241 or email mann@htc.edu.

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• Yachad Chicago is now hiring! Join our expanding team as we launch brand new programs & services for individuals with special needs in the Chicago community. Yachad, an agency of the Orthodox Union, is dedicated to enhancing life opportunities of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their participation in the full spectrum of Jewish life. Open position: Yachad Chicago Regional Director. Be part of Yachad Chicago’s team & help make a difference in the Jewish community! For info & to submit a résumé: hermmann@ou.org.

• Celebrate Yom Yerushalayim in one week - Thursday night, May 21, with Mizrachi - Religious Zionists of Chicago, featuring an inspiring video's USA debut - Heart of a Nation - by the talented Mizrachi UK creators of Dreams of a Nation. Program details, including viewing link and times will be available at ym.rzc.us. Youth Art Contest winners announced. For sponsorship opportunities, please visit office@rzczc.us; or call 847-674-9733 x2.

• Deadline this Monday night. Calling all students – Elementary through High School: Enter the Mizrachi - Religious Zionists of Chicago Yom Yerushalayim 5780 Art Contest, sponsored in memory of Howard D. Geller z"l and Sheldon Robinson z"l. Three divisions: Grades 3-5; 6-8; 9-12. First place prizes range from $100 to $200. Deadline: Monday, May 18. Awards announced at the RZC Yom Yerushalayim Celebration Video webcast, Thursday night, May 21. For full contest rules and entry form, visit: artcontest.rzc.us.
Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov Elementary School is seeking general studies teachers for middle and junior high grades and primary grades teacher assistants for the 2020-2021 school year. Scheduled hours will be Monday-Thursday afternoons 12:15-4:00 PM and Friday afternoons 11:45-1:00 PM. Call 773-583-5329 x402 or email résumés to rwechsler@jdbyytt.org.

JDDB-YYTT is seeking a full-time administrative assistant for our very busy business office. Staff is currently working remotely. The ideal candidate will possess a passion for organization, ability to multitask, excellent verbal and written communication skills, and advanced computer skills, including complete familiarity with Microsoft Office.

JDDB-YYTT administrative assistant candidates should be able to manage areas of responsibility and assist others in a variety of projects. Graphic design experience a plus. If you would like to join the staff of a fast-paced school and assist in supporting a variety of school activities, please submit a résumé by email to hr@jdbyytt.org with “Administrative Assistant” in the subject line. Please include several references.

Congratulations to Sara Greenberg on starting a new business that offers arts and craft sessions through Zoom for children ages 5 and up to provide relief for parents. (For details, contact saratziona@gmail.com). -- The Greenbergs.

We at Hanna Sacks Bais Yaakov stand in awe at the outstanding fundraising job of our Tzedakah Committee under the direction of Miss Malkie Irons for Chicago Hatzalah. As a result of their efforts, Hanna Sacks surpassed the original goal & raised $27,000. We recognize Mrs. Chani Ben-Artzy for her relentless energy in helping the girls raise this incredible sum of money. May the zechus of facilitating others to give tzedakah to this outstanding organization serve as a protection for the Chicago community & Klal Yisroel.

Hatzalah Chicago would like to thank the community for all of their support. A special thank you to Hanna Sacks Bais Yaakov, Bais Yaakov High School, and Fasman Yeshiva High School for helping make this a successful fundraiser during these trying times. To make a donation go to www.HatzalahChicago.org. Your Hatzalah. Your Health.

The cRc proudly presents “Coming Together For Shavuos!” Prepare for Shavuos with online shiurim. Sign up to take part in community-wide learning of Tanach and Mishnayos. Celebrate our learning with a musical siyum featuring Eitan Katz. For more information and to sign up, please visit www.crcweb.org/shavuos. For questions, email office@crcweb.org.

Community Tuesdays, presented by JCC Chicago and My Go-To Place from CJE SeniorLife, is continuing on Zoom! Join us weekly for a new discussion topic, plus connect with friends in the community. Next week we will talk about “Food Safety and Nutrition” with staff from Northwestern University.

The cRc proudly presents "Likutei Peshatim". Please do not read Likutei Peshatim during the Torah reading or during the repetition of the Shmoneh Esrei. Please do not read Likutei Peshatim during the Torah reading or during the repetition of the Shmoneh Esrei. If you would like to join the staff of a fast-paced school and assist in supporting a variety of school activities, please submit a résumé by email to hr@jdbyytt.org with “Administrative Assistant” in the subject line. Please include several references.

Likutei Peshatim is endowed by Les & Ethel Sutker in loving memory of
Max and Mary Sutker and Louis and Lillian Klein. ה'י. May their memory be for a blessing.

Answers:
1. Bnei Yisrael are commanded to observe Shemittah because it is a mitzvah given by Hashem. This is indicated by the word וְהָיִיתָם ("and you shall be") in Pasuk 25:2. The repetitive term וַיִּשָּׁוּ הָאָרֶץ ("and [you] shall possess the land") indicated to Bnei Yisrael that logically they should observe Shemittah as a condition for receiving the land from Hashem.
2. For those who have complete faith in Hashem the blessing is miraculous (a ה'י), and the sixth crop is a normal crop but miraculously one feels satisfied from a smaller portion. For those who lacked complete faith, yet kept Shemittah, they would have an abundant crop that would last three years. This was a more "natural" appearing miracle.
3. This refers to chasing the enemies of Hashem even outside the borders of Israel.
4. Hashem initially punishes Bnei Yisrael because they lack complete faith, yet kept Shemittah. If Bnei Yisrael only see these punishments as "random" events, Hashem will then punish them randomly and repentance will be harder.
5. The first ה'י is while Bnei Yisrael are in Eretz Yisrael. The second ה'י is Hashem's covenant that He will protect us even in exile.
6. Regarding a field or a house, the term ה'י (established) is used to indicate the elevation of the item given to Hashem. Regarding an impure blemished animal, that is an affront to Hashem when donating it, and the term ה'י (so it will be) is used (27:12).