



1) Exodus 23: 10-12

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having been yourselves strangers in the Land of Egypt. Six years shall you sow your land and gather in your yield; but in the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow. Let the needy among your people eat of it; and what they leave, let the wild beasts eat. You shall do the same with your vineyards and your olive groves. Six days you shall do you work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor, in order that your ox and ass may rest and that your bondsman and stranger may be refreshed.

2. Leviticus 25: 2-7

When you enter into the land that I assign you, the land shall observe a Sabbath of the Lord. Six years you may sow your field and six years you may prune your vineyard, and gather in the yield, but in the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath of complete rest, a Sabbath of the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest, or gather the grapes of your untrimmed vines; it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. But you may eat whatever the land during its Sabbath will produce – you, your male, and female slaves, the hired and bound laborers who live with you and your cattle and the beasts in your field may eat of its yield.

3. Deuteronomy 15: 1-3, 7-10

Every seventh year, you shall practice remission of debts. This shall be the nature of the remission: every creditor shall remit the due that he claims from his fellow; he shall not exact payment from his fellow or kinsman, for the remission proclaimed is of the Lord. You may exact payment from the foreigner, but you must remit whatever is due you from the kinsman. ...If however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart or shut your hand against your needy kinsman. Rather, you must open your heart and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs. Beware, lest you harbor the base thought, the seventh year, the year of remission is approaching, so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing. He will cry out to the Lord against you and you will incur guilt. Give to him readily, and have no regrets when you do so, for in tum, the Lord your God will bless you in all your efforts and all your undertakings.

4. Rav Kook - Introduction to Shabbat Ha'aretz

What Shabbat does for the individual, *shmittah* does for the nation as a whole. The Jewish People has a special need for the divine creative force, planted eternally and remarkably within us, to reveal itself, from time to time, with full intensity. Our mundane social lives, with their toil, anxiety, anger and competition do not entirely suffocate this creative force. On the *shmittah*, our pure, inner spirit may be revealed as it truly is. The forcefulness that is inevitably a part of our regular, public lives lessens our moral refinement. There is always a tension between the ideal of listening to the voice inside us that calls us to be kind, truthful and merciful, and the conflict, compulsion and pressure to be unyielding that surround buying, selling and



acquiring things.¹ These aspects of the world of action distance us from the divine light and prevent its being discernible in the public life of the nation. This distancing also permeates the morality of individuals like poison. Stilling the tumult of social life from time to time in certain predictable ways, is meant to move this nation, when it is well-ordered, to rise towards an encounter with the heights of its inner moral and spiritual life.² We touch the divine qualities inside us that transcend all the stratagems of the social order, and that cultivate and elevate our social arrangements bringing them towards perfection.³

“Just as it was said about the Shabbat of creation” “it is a Sabbath for God”, so too, it was said about the Shabbat of *shmittah*, “it is a Sabbath for God.”⁴ The distinctive character of the people and the land dovetail with one another. Just as the people has a special aptitude for reaching spiritual heights from within the depths of everyday life, so too, the land – God’s land - forms the people who dwell there as an everlasting inheritance which comes through a covenant and promise, with faith in the Eternal One of Israel, and is founded on the divine nature immovably infused in this wonderful country, which is married to the people whom God chose. The soul of the people and the land intertwine, working from the basis of their being to bring into existence the intricate patterns of inner holiness that lie within them during the Sabbatical year. The people works with its soul force on the land, and the land works on the people, refining their character in line with the divine desire for life inherent in their makeup. The people and the land both need a year of Shabbat!

A year of peace and quiet, where there are no tyrants or task masters; “he shall not oppress his fellow or kinsman, for the remission proclaimed is of the Lord;”⁵ a year of equality and relaxation in which the soul may expand towards the uprightness of God, who sustains all life with lovingkindness; a year when there is no private property and no standing on one’s rights, and a Godly peace will pervade all that breathes. “It shall be a year of complete rest for the land, but you may eat whatever the land will produce during its Sabbath – you, your male and female slaves, the hired and bound laborers who live with you, and your cattle and the beasts in your land may eat all its yield.⁶ Pinicky claims to private property will not profane the holiness of the produce of the land during this year, and the urge to get rich, which is stimulated by trade will be forgotten; as it says ““for you to eat” – but not for your

¹There is a note of suspicion about commerce in this passage. For a discussion of Rav Kook’s relationship to socialist thought see: Shalom Rosenberg, “Introduction to the Thought of Rav Kook in *The World of Rav Kook’s Thought*, Benjamin Ish-Shalom and Shalom Rosenberg eds. 59-61. See also Introduction

² . Compare Rav Kook’s idea of “the continuous prayer of the soul”...the soul is always praying (that is to say yearning to unite with God;) when we consciously pray, we rise to an encounter with the soul that is praying constantly. (*Olot Re’eYah, 1:1*)

⁴Rashi’s commentary on *Leviticus, 25:2*

⁵*Deut. 15:2*. The verse quoted refers to the remission of debts in the *shmittah* and prohibits creditors from exacting payment from debtors.

⁶*Lev. 25:5-7*



trade.”⁷ A spirit of generosity will rest on all; God will bless the fruit of the land “for you to eat and not your loss.” Human beings will return to a state of natural health, so that they will not need for healing sicknesses, which mostly befall us when the balance of life is destroyed and our lives are distanced from the rhythms of nature; “– for you to eat” but not to make medicine and not to use as bandages.”⁸ A holy spirit will be poured out upon all life; “it will be a year of complete rest for the land – a Sabbath of the Lord.”⁹

⁷*Mishnah Shevi'it* 7:3; In this passage Rav Kook draws on a series of halachic *midrashim* based on a phrase from Leviticus 25:6 “for you to eat,” which is interpreted to exclude making use of food grown in Israel during the *shmittah* for purposes other than eating.

⁸*Talmud Bavli, Sukkah* 40a. See Introduction for further discussion of Rav Kook’s astonishing claim that *shmittah* will promote a natural state of human health that will make medicine unnecessary.

⁹Based on *Lev.* 25: 7 and 5