

From the Kli Yakar Jacob Solomon

For six years you shall sow your field, prune your vineyard, and gather in the crops, but in the seventh year the land shall completely rest, as a Shabbat for G-d. You shall not sow your field, and you shall not prune your vineyard... (25:2-4)

The Torah also guarantees that the Sh'mita observance, against the rhythm of nature and indeed logic, will be a faith-supporting experience:

If you say: "What shall we eat in the seventh year?" ... I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield a crop sufficient for the three year period. You will sow in the eighth year... but you will eat from the old crop until the ninth year (25:20-22).

The Chatam Sofer comments that such a promise must come from G-d. (No human being would be foolhardy enough to make such a prediction.)

Indeed, Sh'mita demands singular acts of faith and trust: putting one's very livelihood on the line with the assurance of G-d's declaration that there will be His Blessing for sufficient food after a whole year's period of agricultural rest. That epitomizes the Israelites' accepting the Torah as an absolute act of faith and trust; when they declared na'aseh v'nishma "we will do and we will listen" (Sh'mot 24:8).

The K'li Yakar develops the faith-building nature of the mitzva of sh'mita. "For six years you shall sow your field... and gather in the crops." That in itself is a miracle. Normally, a field is sown for two years and then left fallow in the third year to prevent soil nutrient exhaustion. But the Torah implies that the soil of Eretz Israel will continue to yield for six consecutive years. And that miracle should strengthen faith for the next miracle, that there will be enough to eat during the period of Sh'mita and its aftermath.

The K'li Yakar also observes that in Eretz Yisrael the field is "your field" during the first six years only. However, in the seventh year it is no longer "your field", but it is in the state of "Shabbat to G-d". The land returns to G-d every seventh year, and all may access it free of charge as G-d's guests (implied in Rashi to 25:7).

A main reason is "For you are strangers and sojourners with Me" (25:23). The K'li Yakar distinguishes homiletically between a stranger and a sojourner. A stranger is a newcomer, not being there for any prolonged period of time. A sojourner is there as a fixture, as a regular.

A person's relationship with this world should be as a stranger. "A generation goes, a generation comes, but the world remains forever" (Kohelet 1:4). We are here on the planet for an extremely short time. G-d, the Creator

and Owner, is here forever. We are required to make the most of our time here. Nevertheless, our relationship with our worldly possessions of real estate is only temporary. Landowners need to be duly reminded every six years through the mitzva of sh'mita, when the land returns to the Owner.

In contrast, the eternal nature of the individual's soul is permanent. It is in that realm, as sojourners, that we are constantly connected to G-d. Only in the World to Come is a person permanently with G-d, which is acquired through mitzvot rather than through worldly possessions: "Do not fear when a man becomes rich... he can't take his wealth with him when he dies" (T'hilim 49:17-18). 📖