



## SH'MITA

We do mitzvot because God commanded us to whether we understand the reason for them or not, but trying to understand the "reasons" behind the mitzva adds another dimension to its observance. Lots of commentators try to find a reason for the mitzva of SHMITA taught in this week's portion. For many people the word SHMITA brings up associations of a year of "complications". That is not how we should look at it though. It is much more than that. The mitzva itself has two parts - SHMITA of the land - not working it and letting it rest for a whole year V'SHAVTA HAARETZ (Vayikra 25:4), and SHMITA of money - annulling all debts. This is not an easy mitzva and is a challenge in many ways. This can be seen from the fact that the Torah even promises two things if we keep this mitzva: 1) that the produce of the sixth year will be three times as much as usual in order to sustain the sixth year, seventh year (when we don't work) and the eighth year (till there is produce), and 2) that even if we lend money right before SHMITA and the debt will be annulled - God will bless us with sustenance, KI BIGLAL HADAVAR HAZHEH Y'VARECH'CHA HASHEM ELOKECHA" (D'varim 15:10) And

this week's Perek in Pirkei Avot (5:12) teaches us that Galut comes from not keeping Shmita properly. So let us concentrate on what God wants us to learn from this unique mitzva. What is the lesson?

Ramban and the Abarbanel see it as a way to instill in us the knowledge that God created the world. Just as the days of the week when we work hard are followed by Shabbat, a day when we must cease from work, remind us that God is the Creator, so too the mitzva of SHMITA, when we leave the land fallow for a whole year.

Sefer HaChinuch sees this mitzva as a way to educate us to have faith in God, EMUNAH. He is the only one who provides for us - it's not our work, or any other powers around. Only God. He is "The Boss" of the world. How else could we not work for a whole year and expect to be able to survive? It is only because God is there to protect and provide for us.

The Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim gives another reason for this mitzva. It teaches us the midot of caring and providing for others, as the verse says, V'ACHLU EVYONEI AMECHA" (Sh'mot 23:10). You shouldn't think that you are giving from what belongs to you - during SHMITA the fields are left hefker, for all. This should bring us to the realization that everything belongs to God, and the poor man has just as much right to the produce from your field, as you do. Everyone must provide for others, less fortunate than themselves, and make sure that they are taken care of, because that is

what God wants from us - to be caring people, concerned one for the other, just as He is always caring for us..

The Abarbanel says, that Shmita also teaches us that the land of Israel is special - SEGULA NIFLAA, it is chosen by God - we must appreciate that we are able to live on this Holy land.

Let us be able to incorporate the many lessons from the mitzva of SHMITA into our lives, and - may the learning from this column be lilui nishmat Yaakov Refael ben Eliyahu Yerachmiel z'l - whose untimely death brought tears to many eyes, caring and concern to many hearts and a lesson in Emunah and humbleness to us all.

**SINCE WE TALKED** about SHMITA and the special blessing in the produce of our land especially during the sixth year, and since some people like to barbecue while sitting around the LAG BaOMER bonfire - here is a simple recipe for vegetable kabobs that can be grilled on Lag BaOmer or can be made to serve at the Shabbat meal. Use any assortment of vegetables that you like and that you have. Don't forget the cherry tomatoes, an Israeli invention..

## **GRILLED VEGETABLE KABOB**

zucchini, cut into 5 cm chunks

sweet potato, cut into 5 cm chunks

fresh mushrooms, cleaned

red and green bell peppers, cut into 5 cm chunks

medium red and white onions, cut into wedges

whole cherry tomatoes

teriyaki sauce

Toss cleaned vegetables in teriyaki sauce. Thread vegetables onto skewers alternating between the different ones. Place on grill over medium-hot heat. Grill 20 minutes or until tender. ♪