

## REDEMPTION = WHO NEEDS ANSWERS WHEN THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS?

### **BEGIN WITH A GRIN**

*Someone walks into a restaurant and asks the waiter, “I keep shemitta l'chumra, l'mehadrin min ha'mehadrin. Forget about the heter mechirah. I also observe kedushas sheviis with the produce of non-Jews and, being a patriot, I refuse to even consider partaking of produce from abroad. What can I order?”*

*The waiter thinks for a moment and says, “A taxi ...”*

### **QUESTION OF THE MISSING QUESTION**

This week's parsha is Behar. It begins with two similar mitzvos, however, one we frequently hear about, read and learn extensively, while the other disappears and is hardly mentioned (certainly not in daily life). The two mitzvos are: the mitzva of the shemitta year and the mitzva of the yovel (jubilee) year.

We live and breathe shemitta (mainly in Eretz Yisrael). How can we not? The prices of fruits and vegetables are astronomical, there's the need to be careful with kedushas sheviis (for fruits and grains), the prohibition of “sefichei sheviis” (no herbs and vegetables may be eaten) and of produce that was improperly guarded, and more which don't allow us to forget that this year, 5782, is a shemitta year. Even outside of Eretz Yisrael, we often hear warnings from kashrus organizations about some product or fruit, produced in Eretz Yisrael, which has the sanctity of shemitta and one needs to be careful with it.

When was the last time you heard about the mitzva of yovel? When was the last time you did something to commemorate the yovel year? (And I don't mean the yovel of the Rebbe's nesius!) We don't even know when the yovel year is because over thousands of years we did not count it. It disappeared from the Jewish calendar. We don't celebrate it, don't keep it, and don't even count it!

The question is, why not? Why didn't the Sages enact something to remember the yovel year? Why isn't it even counted?

In connection with the mitzva of shemitta there is a long, complex discussion which could fill books, as to whether, today, before the coming of Moshiach, this mitzva is biblical or rabbinic. It has to do with a dispute between the Bavli and Yerushalmi, continues through lengthy disputes among the Rishonim in explaining the issues, and lengthy pilpulim among the Acharonim about who holds what, how and why. But after all that, according to all of them, the mitzva of shemitta must be fulfilled! Why not yovel?

In order to answer this question, we will ask another question (as you know, a Jew answers a question with a question!). Later in the parsha, the Torah tells us what will happen in advance of the shemitta year. “And if you should say, 'What will we eat in the seventh year? We will not sow, and we will not gather in our produce!' Bnei Yisrael will complain (what else is new?) and fear a lack of food in the seventh year. What will we eat? G-d promises them, “I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield produce for three years.” Don't worry. You will have plenty. In the sixth year the earth will produce enough food for three years!

The question is, what about the yovel year? Why doesn't the Torah mention this Jewish complaint regarding the yovel year? After all, before the yovel year the produce of three years won't suffice; produce of four years is needed! (The sixth year, the shemitta year, the yovel year, the year following that.) Why doesn't the Torah mention anything about this? There's no response, no promise, nothing. Why?

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR THE TEST**

Chassidus has the answer. It has to do with the spiritual difference between the shemitta year and the yovel year which actually reflects the spiritual difference in the service of Hashem in exile and the era of the Geula.

The shemitta year represents the spiritual service of bittul ha'yesh (lit. nullification of the entity, i.e. one's sense of existing as a distinct entity from G-d), kabbolas ol malchus shamayim (accepting the "yoke of Heaven") through force. A person senses his existence, his wants, his interests (which sometimes oppose G-d's will) and he subordinates himself to G-d and His Torah. It is not easy to overcome the internal yetzer, the deceptive yetzer who on a regular basis throws intrusive thoughts our way as to what will be, what will happen? A yetzer that, even though he saw miracles upon miracles during the earlier shemitta years, continues to torment with such questions. Despite having experienced firsthand, time after time, divine providence guiding him every step of the way, he is still unsure.

The yovel, on the other hand, is called by the holy Zohar "the world of freedom." It is a time and situation in which the G-dly light openly shines and the person is "freed" from all the chains and limitations that confine and obstruct his service of Hashem. He is a free man, in his mind and emotions, in his thoughts and actions to serve Hashem with all his might without interference. A person like this has no questions, no problems! G-dliness is the prevailing reality, the only reality that exists ... Therefore, the Torah does not mention the complaint of "what will we eat" in connection with yovel because, when it is yovel, there are no questions! Nobody will ask because it doesn't bother anyone.

This is precisely the difference between the service of Hashem now and the service of Hashem in the era of Geula! This is also the reason that the Sages did not enact a remembrance to the mitzva of yovel!

Now we are still in middle of the struggle. Day in and day out, the yetzer hara comes with new/old questions of "what will be," "why this and why not that?" We can win this war with the yetzer hara with one thing – kabbolas ol malchus shomayim! Bittul which is beyond man's apprehension and which has unlimited force that comes through the power of Torah. "It's not me who said but the Torah which said and G-d who promised!" The mitzva of shemitta represents survival through the power of the promise of the Creator, by clinging to the mitzvos of the Torah. This is the avoda of exile, serving G-d in a way of "they are a stiff-necked people" in a good way! Not giving in and not listening to the blandishments and doubts of the yetzer!

In the era of the Geula, all of this will no longer be. We won't need it in Yemos HaMoshiach. Our minds will change along with our hearts and we will serve G-d from within. Our very beings will understand and sense that there is no other way. We will reach a state of "bittul b'metzius" (lit. nullification of existence, i.e. one's sense of having any existence outside of G-d) and we will align ourselves with the infinite G-dly power. There won't be answers because there won't be questions. Everything will be eminently clear and our existence will function precisely as the Torah demands and wants of us!

Therefore, the Sages did not enact a remembrance of the mitzva of yovel because now, before the Geula, it is impossible to expect a Jew to reach a state like this on his own. It is impossible to demand such a lofty level of service because this spiritual level is presently in concealment. The Sages do not have the power to enact a remembrance of this mitzva. The opposite is true. G-d put us in this state in which He wants us to withstand the challenges. He wants us to have questions (but) ... we should adhere to the answers. He wants it to be (a bit) hard and we should rise to the occasion. Therefore, the mitzva of shemitta – yes; the mitzva of yovel – not (yet)!

## **TO CONCLUDE WITH A STORY**

We will end with a story about genuine emuna, above intellect, with the power of the mitzva of shemitta. This happened in 5718 at the religious moshav Komemiyut in the south of Eretz Yisrael. In those days, there were very few Jews who observed shemitta. The residents of Komemiyut listened to their rav, Rabbi Mendelson z'l, and only performed permitted work. The rest of the time the farmers went to the moshav's shul and learned Torah.

A few months passed and swarms of locusts came to Israel and landed in the western Negev in the area of Komemiyut. They ate their fill and the damage was enormous. They flew from place to place, landed on the fields and consumed seeds, vegetables and leaves, destroying everything within hours.

It was erev Shabbos when the Rav was informed of the danger and he said confidently, "In the merit of the mitzva of shemitta that you are keeping this year with mesirus nefesh, no harm will befall you."

And that's what happened. The locusts destroyed many moshavim and kibbutzim but not Komemiyut. Komemiyut did not have a single grasshopper, just like the Jewish people in Egypt!

Good Shabbos!