

“When you come into the land... the land shall observe a Shabbos rest to Hashem.” (25:2)

The *pasuk* seems to imply that *Shemittah* is to commence immediately upon the arrival of *Klal Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Torah, however, continues, “Six years you may sow your field,” indicating that *Shemittah* does not begin right away. Why is the Torah so ambiguous in conveying to us when the laws of *Shemittah* are to take effect?

The *Meshech Chochmah* explains that while Hashem gave us *Eretz Yisrael* as a gift, certain criteria that are critical to the land’s maintenance must be met in order for the gift to endure. *M’zekeinim Esbonan* gives the following analogy to elucidate this idea. Reuven looks over a prospective parcel of land. He is satisfied with the product and the price, and he is about to close the deal. Shimon, the seller, is pleased, but first asks Reuven to sit down. He must discuss with him certain aspects of the agreement for the sale of the land.

“First of all,” Shimon states, “you are limited in the hours that you may work the land. After 8:00PM, no work is permitted. You cannot drive across the field with heavy vehicles, and pesticides are forbidden. You also must use the finest seed and fertilizer. If you agree to these conditions, the sale can become final.”

“I do not think you understand,” Reuven interjected. “I am purchasing the field. When it becomes mine, I can and will do whatever I please. There are no conditions to a sale.”

Shimon quickly responds, “My intention is not to limit your ownership of the field. It should and will be yours unconditionally. The conditions that I have detailed are for your good. If you want the land to produce its maximum, then you must adhere to the aforementioned conditions. Everything that I mentioned was for your good.”

The same idea applies to *Shemittah*. Immediately, when we enter *Eretz Yisrael*, we must realize that in order for the land to attain its potential, its sanctity must be maintained. If we decide to do otherwise – it will just not be *Eretz Yisrael*.