

"Six years you shall sow your fields and prune your vineyards... but on the seventh year there shall be a solemn Shabbos for the earth." (25:3)

We may note the *Torah's* sudden change in focus. It begins by addressing its words towards the individual farmer, but closes with an admonition directed generally towards the entire Jewish people. We, as a nation, must see to it that the *Shmittah* mandate is observed. Indeed, we can derive multi-faceted lessons from *Shmittah*.

Horav Shimon Schwab, z.l., observes that *Shmittah* symbolizes *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice. It personifies the apex of a Jew's courageous dedication to Hashem's command. A man who owns a parcel of land becomes intimately attached to it. He toils in back-breaking work in order to eke out his living from it. Yet, suddenly he is asked to divest himself of this source of livelihood for an entire year, in order to allow all Jews and all animals to "trespass" on his pride and joy. Why? Because it is Hashem's command. This is true heroism!

Second, *Shmittah* attests to the entire Jewish People's belief that Hashem "owns" the land. We demonstrate publicly that we are surrendering our control and ownership of the land. We must even renounce whatever outstanding debts are owed us. Through *Shmittah* observance, we indicate our faith and trust in Hashem. We do not worry while the land lies fallow. Our trust is resolute, our faith unshaken.

Third, *Shmittah* is a testimonial to *Klal Yisrael's* uniqueness. Hashem has established a covenant with *Klal Yisrael*, elevating them to a unique stature. From the *Shmittah* experience, we perceive the exceptional relationship we are privileged to have with Hashem. Throughout every aspect of our laws, we sense the Divine providential protection accorded to us. How true are the words of the *pasuk*, "*Who can be compared to Your nation Yisrael, one people on the earth (DH1 17:21)?*" Our relationship with Hashem is like that of no other nation. We should remember that this holy alliance brings with it monumental obligations for trust and faith in Hashem.