

The land shall observe a Shabbos rest for Hashem ... For six years you may sow your field ... but the seventh year shall be a complete rest for the land. (25:2,3,4)

The *parshah* commences with the laws of *Shemittah*, which require fields in *Eretz Yisrael* under Jewish ownership to lie fallow during the seventh (and fiftieth) year of the agricultural cycle. This is not the first time that the Torah introduces us to the laws of *Shemittah*. In *Parashas Mishpatim* (*Shemos* 23:10-12), the Torah teaches us concerning *Shemittah*, “Six years you shall work your field...In the seventh you shall let it rest.” The Torah then adds the laws of *Shabbos* which also revolve around a six-day work schedule, followed by a seventh-day rest period: “Six days shall you do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest.” *Rashi* wonders why the Torah juxtaposes the laws of *Shabbos* upon *Shemittah*. He explains that the Torah is teaching us that even during the *Shabbos* year/*Shemittah*, the weekly *Shabbos* – which attests to Creation – is not cancelled. One should not think that since the entire (seventh) year is called *Shabbos*, the *Shabbos* – which recalls Creation – does not apply.

On the surface, the laws of *Shabbos* do not contradict those of *Shemittah*. While *Shabbos* prohibitions do include some agricultural related labor, they cover the gamut of creative physical labor. *Shemittah*, however, applies only to agrarian labor, such as seeding, harvesting and a wide variety of agricultural activities – which also apply to *Shabbos*, but are only a minor aspect of the *lamed-tes melachos*, 39 forms of prohibited labor. Furthermore, *Shabbos* desecration carries a much graver punishment than desecration of the *Shemittah* prohibitions. *Shabbos* is more intensely holy than the *Shemittah* year. Why would anyone conjecture that *Shabbos* be rescinded during the *Shemittah* year?

The *Shem MiShmuel* points out that whenever the Torah mentions the laws of *Shabbos*, they are mentioned in the context of the six work days which precede it. The Torah includes many examples of this fact. The Torah seems to be conveying the message that the *Shabbos* rest day needs to be preceded by six work days. The logic that he postulates is practical. In order to appreciate and utilize *Shabbos* for our spiritual benefit, we must sever ourselves from our usual day-to-day activities. We need to establish a contrast between *Shabbos* and the workweek. *Shabbos* transports us into a different, more elevated, realm in which the worries concerning our livelihood and the physical realities of the work week do not exist. Only then can the sanctity of *Shabbos* permeate our minds and lives.

Shabbos is *mei'ein Olam Habba*, a taste of the World-to-Come. *Olam Habba* is far-removed from *Olam Hazeah*, this world, to the point that they are two absolutely different, unrelated entities. In order for one to enter into *Olam Habba*, he must be completely removed from this world. *Olam Hazeah* is physical in nature. By overcoming and transcending the physical influence of this world, we are able to enter into the spiritual sphere of *Olam Habba*. Likewise, *Shabbos*, which is a taste of *Olam Habba*, can be appropriately realized only upon divesting oneself from the six work days.

Understandably, the six workdays and *Shabbos* are inextricably bound to one another.

We now understand, explains that *Shem MiShmuel*, why one may consider a remote hypothesis to cancel *Shabbos* during the *Shemittah* year. *Shemittah* is the *Shabbos* of the land just as *Shabbos* is the Jew's rest day from his workweek. During *Shemittah*, the Torah prohibits most agricultural activities. As such, the work days during this year are incomplete, for only non-agrarian work is permitted. As mentioned previously, in order for the weekly *Shabbos* to achieve spiritual perfection/success, it is critical that it be preceded by six fully productive work days. During the six years prior to *Shemittah*, this can be achieved. In the *Shemittah* year, we encounter a problem, since the work days are deficient. People might consider cancelling *Shabbos* during the *Shemittah*, since it will not achieve its lofty goals. To circumvent this proposal, the Torah juxtaposes *Shemittah* upon *Shabbos*, to teach us that we should observe *Shabbos* fully during the *Shemittah*, just as we have observed it during the previous six years.

My nephew is *Rosh Kollel* and *Rav* of the *Gerrer* community in Dimona (*Eretz Yisrael*). He related the following story to me. This past week he was walking to the *bais hamedrash* when he chanced upon an older gentleman who stopped him and asked, "Do you believe in Hashem?" My nephew replied, "I hope so." The man immediately countered, "Not as much as I do!" He then proceeded to tell him the following story: "Many years ago, I was not observant. It is not as if I was against Torah and *mitzvos*; they were just not my priority. I had to earn a living, and I was working in construction. *Shabbos* was part of the work week. Construction did not come to a halt out of deference to *Shabbos*. This went on for some time, until our son became ill. After a number of treatments, his doctors despaired for his life. Everything looked extremely bleak. Our son was admitted to the hospital in Beer Sheva, and his health was deteriorating. That is when I decided that my wife and I should become *Shabbos* observant. We really could not ask for the Almighty's favor if we were refusing to do anything for Him. One morning, the hospital called to tell us that we should come down; the doctor wanted to speak to us. We immediately got in the car and drove to the hospital. As I walked from the parking lot, I screamed out to Hashem, 'I promised to observe *Shabbos*, and I am going to keep to my word. Please save our son!' As I was crying out loud, someone stopped and asked what was wrong, why I was screaming. I told him, 'I am speaking with Hashem, pleading with Him to spare our son. Please do not disturb me.' We arrived in the hospital. Our fears were, *baruch Hashem*, not realized. The doctor said that they had just taken a new set of scans. Everything was negative on the scans. Our son was fine, and we would be able to take him home in a few days. Now you know why I believe in Hashem more than you do. I spoke to Him, and He answered me! Can you top that?"

Does this mean that one who observes *Shabbos* is protected from illness? No. It does, however, mean that one who does not observe the *Shabbos*, one who refuses to attest to Hashem's creating the world and then resting on the seventh day, should feel a sense of hypocrisy concerning asking Hashem for favors.