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FREE TRANSLATION

By the Grace of G-d
In the Days of Selichoth
5725. Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Sons and Daughters of
Our People Israel, Everywhere
G-d bless you all!

Greeting and Blessing:

We are at the threshold of a Shemittah Year (the seventh and sanctified "Sabbatical" year in the cycle of years) - the year 5726; may it be a good one for all of us, amidst our people Israel.

One of the central teachings of Shemittah is conveyed in the order of the verses and words by which the Torah defines the institution of Shemittah, namely: "When you will come into the land...the earth shall rest a Sabbath unto G-d. Six years shalt thou plant thy field," etc. (Lev. 25:2-3).

The order in the text seems to be reversed, for the six work years precede the Sabbatical rest year, and not vice versa. Hence, the text should have first mentioned the six years of planting, and then decree the resting.

However, order in Torah is also Torah ("instruction"). The arrangement in the text mentioned above, relating to Shemittah, is significant and instructive in that it teaches the proper approach to life. It is expressed as follows:

When one "comes into a land" and desires to establish his way of life, which involves "working the soil," it is necessary to bear in mind that the first and foremost, as an idea and as a goal, is "Sabbath unto G-d;" not the "earthly" and material, but the spiritual and sacred. This approach will ensure one against being submerged by the material and mundane aspects of life. Moreover, bearing constantly in mind the above idea and goal, will transform the six drab working years; they will lose much of their drabness and become more refined and meaningful. Furthermore, the change and elevation of the six years will raise to a higher plane also the seventh year: from a "Shabbos unto G-d" to a "Shabbos Shabboson" unto G-d (v.4), with a dedication and solemnity of a higher order.

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Similarly, in the daily life there are those aspects which have to do with material preoccupation (to earn a livelihood, etc.) and "common" necessities, such as eating and drinking, etc. - all those aspects wherein there is "no preeminence in man over animal." But

there is also the area of "earthly rest" - of breaking away from the mundane leading into "Sabbath unto G-d" - turning to holiness and G-dliness, through setting aside times for prayer, Torah study, and the fulfillment of Mitzvot.

Here, too, the teaching of Shemittah is that it is necessary to begin the day with the idea and approach that, although it may be necessary later in the day to engage in "mundane" activities, the essence and purpose of these things are - to attain a "Sabbath unto G-d." In this way, even the mundane aspects will attain refinement and real content, while the aspects of holiness and G-dliness will be intensified and elevated to a higher order. This is the way to attain a complete and harmonious life.

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Standing on the threshold of the Shemittah Year, we pray that the Almighty help each and everyone, man and woman, to begin the year with the above-mentioned approach: That not the material, but the spiritual is the essence and goal in life; that "the earthly," the material has a raison d'etre only if it is permeated with the idea of "the earth shall rest a Sabbath unto G-d" - which is when the material serves and fulfills the higher aspirations of holiness and G-dliness. It is only then that all the days in the year, and all the activities of each day, will reflect "the preeminence of man over animal," and give evidence that man was created in the Divine "image and likeness," living accordingly; while those moments and periods which are characterized as "Shabbos" will in turn rise to the sublime heights of "Shabbos Shabboson."

Then will surely also be fulfilled the Divine blessing that goes with Shemittah - "And I will command My blessing upon you" (v.21) - in a supernatural way.

Rosh Hashanah is The Day to make the firm and lasting resolution to implement the above approach. It is the day when the first man was created in the Divine image and likeness; the day when he gained mastery over all of nature and elevated all creation to the recognition of the Sovereignty of the Creator with the call, "Come, let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before G-d our Maker" (Ps. 95:6);

The day when we pray for the realization of G-d's Kingdom on earth, "Reign, in Thy Glory, upon all the world...and let everyone who has a breath in his nostrils declare, 'G-d, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His Kingdom rules everything!'"

With the blessing of
Kesivo Vachasimo Toivo
For a Happy and pleasant year
Blessed with the joy of children
life and ample sustenance

/signed/ Menachem Schneerson