



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 24 | Vayelech | Sichah 1

## Harvesting Holiness

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Translated by Rabbi Zusya Kreitenberg

**General Editor:** Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | **Senior Editor:** Rabbi Lazer Danzinger

**Content Editor:** Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

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## 1.

### A PERPLEXING RASHI

The Torah's discussion of the mitzvah of *Hakhel*<sup>1</sup> begins with the verse,<sup>2</sup> “At the end of {שבע} seven years, at an appointed time, the year of *shemita*, on the Festival of Sukkos.” Rashi quotes the clause, “At the end of seven years,” and comments:<sup>3</sup>

In the first year of the *shemita*<sup>4</sup> cycle, which is the eighth year. Why, then, is it called the year of *shemita*? Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to it regarding the harvest of the seventh year, which extends into the year following the seventh.

Simply understood,<sup>5</sup> Rashi addresses the following question: The verse says, “At the end of seven years,” suggesting the end of the **seventh** year. Similarly, the wording, “**at an appointed time**, the year of *shemita*,” also suggests that the verse refers to the *shemita* year. Yet, subsequently, the verse concludes, “on the festival of Sukkot,” which does **not** occur in (at the end of) the seventh year.

Therefore, Rashi clarifies that “at the end of seven years,” in our verse means “the first year of the *shemita* cycle, which is the eighth year.” Meaning, although “שבע {at the end}” indeed means “end” — as Rashi translates at the beginning of *parshas Mikeitz*,<sup>6</sup> “Every term ‘שבע’ means ‘the end’”<sup>7</sup> — yet, in our verse, it means **after** the end<sup>8</sup> — **after** the seven years conclude, “which is the eighth year.”

However, since the continuation of the verse, “at an appointed time, the year of *shemita*,” implies that it occurs **in** the *shemita* year, Rashi continues, “Why, then, is it called the year of *shemita*?” and answers, “Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to it....”

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<sup>1</sup> {A scriptural commandment mandating the assembly of all the Jewish people, men, women, and children, every seven years following the year of *shemita* (see *Devarim* 31:10-13). A stage is erected in the Temple, upon which the king reads aloud selected sections of the Torah with the goal of inspiring the Jewish people to fear Hashem, accept Hashem's mitzvos, and unify them.}

<sup>2</sup> *Devarim* 31:10.

<sup>3</sup> {Rashi on *Devarim* 31:10.}

<sup>4</sup> {Also known as the “Sabbatical year,” it is a scriptural commandment observed every seventh year in the land of Israel. There are numerous laws associated with *shemita*, among them, agricultural work is prohibited and all produce is considered ownerless and accessible to all (*Vayikra* 25:1-7).}

<sup>5</sup> See *Devek Tov, Be'er Yitzchok* {on Rashi}.

<sup>6</sup> {Rashi on *Bereishis* 41:1.}

<sup>7</sup> See *Re'em* on *Devarim* 31:10.

<sup>8</sup> See *Ramban* on *Devarim* 15:1 where this is discussed at length.

However, according to this understanding, Rashi's remarks are problematic:

- a) Rashi should have also quoted the phrase “on the Festival of Sukkos” (or at least alluded to it with “etc.”) since this phrase raises the difficulty in the verse.
- b) If Rashi is coming to introduce a novel interpretation, viz., that “at the end of seven years” means **after** the end of the seven years (and not the tail end of the seventh year) as we would have understood it, Rashi only needed to say, “which is the eighth year.” Why did he need to preface with the phrase, “in the first year of the *shemidah* cycle,” which plays no role in clarifying the word “אֶחָד {at the end},” and, seemingly, does not offer any insight into the verse?

As we find in the Mishnah and Gemara,<sup>9</sup> the time of *Hakhel* is called the “eighth year.” These sources do not, however, refer to it as “the first year of the *shemidah* cycle.”

## 2.

### AN ATTEMPTED ANSWER

Seemingly, we could have answered (at least the second question mentioned above) that Rashi is introducing a new interpretation of both “אֶחָד” and “seven years” (and automatically, this would also negate another possible interpretation of the verse):

Initially, we may have thought that the word “אֶחָד” means “the end.” In other words, the (**entire**) seventh year, which marks “the end” of the seven-year **period**.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the “seven-year period” (that is — the entire seventh year), which is the “appointed time, **the year of *shemidah***,” they should “assemble...,” during the Festival of Sukkos in the seventh year.

Rashi negates this understanding and clarifies that “at the end of seven years,” in this verse, is an exception to the rule. The verse does not mean “the end” but “**the beginning**.” “The first year of the *shemidah* cycle” — the beginning of the next seven

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<sup>9</sup> *Sotah* 41a.

<sup>10</sup> Similar to Rashi's commentary on *Shemos* 10:22.

years. (This aligns with what is found among many Torah commentators<sup>11</sup> regarding the meaning of “אֶחָד.”)

However, on this basis, further clarification is required on the flip side: Why does Rashi add, “Which is the eighth year” — that it is a **continuation** of the previous *shemita* cycle?

More importantly, if Rashi is introducing a novel idea, that the words “at the end of seven years” are interpreted differently than in other contexts, he should have (a) expressed this as a novel idea, as it deviates from the principle he declared, “Every term ‘אֶחָד’ means ‘the end,’” and he should have provided proof for his interpretation; and, (b) it should have been stated as a **translation** for the words, “at the end of seven years — the first year of the *shemita* cycle.”

Rashi’s wording, “**in** the first year of the *shemita* cycle,” implies that he is not translating the word “אֶחָד {at the end} (of seven years),” but rather, he is saying and specifying the time it occurs — “in the first year of the *shemita* cycle, which is the eighth year.”

We must also understand, in general: Why is the continuation of Rashi’s interpretation relevant — “{Why, then, is it called} (an appointed time) the year of *shemita*? Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to it regarding the harvest of the seventh year that extends into the year following the seventh”?

We already know that the prohibition of the seventh year’s harvest extends into the following year (according to one view) from earlier, in Rashi’s commentary on the verse,<sup>12</sup> “In plowing and harvesting you shall rest.” In any event, a discussion of the laws concerning the seventh year—that various seventh-year laws persist in the following year—is unrelated to the mitzvah of *Hakhel*.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibn Ezra* on *Devarim* 31:10 and on *Devarim* 15:1.

<sup>12</sup> Rashi on *Shemos* 34:21.

### 3.

#### CLARIFYING RASHI'S REMARKS

The explanation is as follows:

Rashi does not need to provide the translation of the word “מֵאֵלֶּיךָ” since he has already explained that “**every** ‘מֵאֵלֶּיךָ’ means ‘the end,’” as discussed above. Consequently, it is self-understood that in **every** context, מֵאֵלֶּיךָ should be interpreted the same way as in the verse,<sup>13</sup> “It was מֵאֵלֶּיךָ {at the end}.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, here, too, the term should be interpreted as meaning *the end of seven years*.<sup>15</sup>

In his commentary, however, Rashi intends to clarify a general question about the timing of the mitzvah of *Hakhel*.

[As discussed many times, Rashi often addresses a foundational idea at the beginning of the section, even if the question arises only in later verses. Since these are **the** verses of **this** section and this is a core concept (relevant to all the verses), he clarifies it promptly at the beginning.]

To preface: Also, when looking at Scripture through the lens of the *pshat*,<sup>16</sup> some mitzvos have reasons, and some do not. Mitzvos without reasons was called *chukim*.<sup>17</sup> Among the mitzvos with reasons (whether the Torah explains the reason or the reason is self-evident), there are mitzvos whose details also have reasons and mitzvos whose details do not (according to the *pshat*).

Regarding *Hakhel*, Scripture explicitly states the reason and purpose of the mitzvah,<sup>18</sup> “So that they hear, and so that they learn, and fear Hashem, your L-rd.” [The reasons for the details of the mitzvah are also understood; as the Torah says,<sup>19</sup> “When all Israel comes to appear before Hashem, your L-rd, in the place He will choose.” For

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<sup>13</sup> {*Bereishis* 41:1.}

<sup>14</sup> See also *Gur Aryeh* and *Dikdukei Rashi (Meira Dachya)* ad loc; and several commentaries on Rashi ad loc; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 5, p. 196 ff, and the footnotes there.

<sup>15</sup> See *Ramban* on *Devarim* 15:1; *Rabbeinu Bachaya* on *Devarim* 31:10.

<sup>16</sup> {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of Scripture.” When the plain meaning is understood clearly, Rashi does not comment.}

<sup>17</sup> {Lit., “statutes”; commandments that are suprarational.}

<sup>18</sup> *Devarim* 31:12.

<sup>19</sup> *Devarim* 31:11.

then, it is easier to assemble all the Jewish people.<sup>20</sup> Also, “the **place** He will choose”<sup>21</sup> is an ideal setting to achieve the goal, “So that they hear, and so that they learn, and fear....]”

Accordingly, the Torah’s statement that the (suitable) time is “**at the end**, עֲקֹב, of seven years” is problematic: To inspire action, especially to instill the fear of Hashem, which is the purpose of the mitzvah of *Hakhel*, *Hakhel* should not be celebrated **at the end** of a period but rather **at the beginning**.

Rashi clarifies that, indeed, עֲקֹב means “in the **first** year of the *shemita* cycle.”

However, this interpretation raises the question of why the verse says, “at the end of seven years,” emphasizing the conclusion of the seven years (and its continuation). Thus, Rashi says, “which is the **eighth** year,” pointing out that in our context, the idea that it is the eighth year, the year following the seventh, the year of *shemita*, is also relevant.

#### 4.

##### CLARIFYING FURTHER

The explanation:

Regarding the *shemita* year, when<sup>22</sup> “the land shall have a complete rest.... You shall not sow your field, nor shall you prune your vineyard. You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest, and you shall not pick the grapes you have set aside,” it is understood, even according to the *pshat* of Scripture, that during that time, when the Jewish people were free from working the land, which was their primary occupation,<sup>23</sup> they dedicated themselves (more so — and primarily) to Torah study, which nurtured the fear of Hashem and the observance of mitzvos.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> {As they were all in Jerusalem at that time for the festival pilgrimage.}

<sup>21</sup> {The *Beis HaMikdash*, where G-dliness was manifest.}

<sup>22</sup> *Vayikra* 25:4-5.

<sup>23</sup> As apparent in several instances in the straightforward understanding of Scripture; see beg. of *parshas Bechukosai*; et al.

<sup>24</sup> See *Seforno* on *Vayikra* 25:4; *Abarbanel* on *Devarim* 31:10 — according to his interpretation that *Hakhel* occurs at the beginning of the seventh year; *Ibn Ezra* on *Shemos* 20:8.

On this basis, the connection between the mitzvah of *Hakhel* (which occurs “in the first year of the *shemita* cycle”) and the (preceding) *shemita* year is understood. When, “For six years you shall sow your fields, and for six years you shall prune your vineyards,”<sup>25</sup> must commence in the **first** year of the *shemita* cycle, special inspiration is necessary that will endure for the next six years, ensuring that (also) then they will continue to “fear Hashem, your L-rd, and they will observe to do all the words of this Torah.”<sup>26</sup> —

This is achieved by reminding himself of the *shemita* year when the person devoted himself to Torah study and became infused with the fear of Hashem. The subject of the mitzvah of *Hakhel* is to carry and strengthen the inspiration of the *shemita* year into the next six years when involved in working the land.

Rashi alludes to this point by referring to the year — “which is the **eighth** year.” The first of the six years must be (not only the beginning of the new *shemita* cycle, “The first year of *shemita*”; it also must be) a **continuation** of the **previous** year. This is the **eighth** year, which comes after the seventh year.

## 5.

### RASHI'S CONCLUSION

Given the above, we will also understand the importance of the latter part of Rashi's words, “Why is it called the year of *shemita*? Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to it regarding the harvest of the seventh year.” As discussed, it is unclear why the verse (in the section about *Hakhel*) needs to teach us, “Because the laws of the seventh year still...” {However, the answer is that} Scripture calls the eighth year the year of *shemita*, not just as (a tangential) sign for the year under discussion (which is unrelated to the subject of the mitzvah of *Hakhel*) {Instead, there is another reason}:

To carry over the inspiration from the previous *shemita* year, the verse emphasizes that the eighth year is also considered “the year of *shemita*” because “the laws of the seventh year still apply.” Not only does the **beginning** of “the first year after *shemita*” contain a **reminder** and inspiration from the previous *shemita* year, but it also includes the **actual observance** of *shemita* (regarding “the harvest of the

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<sup>25</sup> *Vayikra* 25:3.

<sup>26</sup> *Devarim* 31:12.

seventh year that extends into the year following the seventh”). Consequently, it allows more free time for Torah study, etc.

## 6.

### IN HALACHAH

Among the wondrous concepts in halachah that we can derive from Rashi’s commentary:

Regarding the mitzvah of *Hakhel* being “at the end of seven years, at an appointed time, the year of *shemita*,” the year after *shemita*, we can ponder whether this is merely meant to symbolize the year in which we must fulfill the mitzvah of *Hakhel* — in the eighth year, the year following *shemita*,<sup>27</sup> or if *Hakhel* depends on (the fulfillment of) the **mitzvah** of *shemita*.

The practical difference that arises<sup>28</sup> would apply in the time of the Second Temple, according to the opinions that the mitzvah of *shemita* was then only rabbinic. According to the first approach, it was only symbolic of when the mitzvah of *Hakhel* must be fulfilled, then it is understood that also during that period, they were obligated to observe the mitzvah of *Hakhel* by Scriptural law. Conversely, according to the second approach, they would be exempt by Scriptural law.

Based on this clarification of Rashi’s wording (and especially the wording at the end of his remarks, “Why, then, is it called the year of *shemita*? Because the laws of the seventh year still apply to it..”) that the eighth year is a **continuation** of the mitzvah of *shemita* in the seventh year, it follows that the mitzvah of *Hakhel* is contingent upon the fulfillment of the mitzvah of *shemita* by **Scriptural law**.

[However, one is not compelled to say this. It could be argued that if they merely fulfilled the mitzvah of *shemita* in the seventh year, if only by rabbinic law, since in practice they rested from working the land, then concerning the mitzvah of *Hakhel* by **Scriptural law**, it is considered a *shemita* year. After all, the farmers did not plow, etc.; thus, they were also obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of *Hakhel*.

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<sup>27</sup> As is the straightforward implication of Rashi’s wording, “all these **symbols**: at the end of the year of *shemita*...”

<sup>28</sup> For the following, see *Encyclopedia Talmudis*, “*Hakhel*,” and **the sources cited there**.



This is similar to the concept that something acquired by rabbinic law helps for matters governed by Scriptural law.]<sup>29</sup>

## 7.

### DELVING DEEPER

However, further clarification is warranted (to explain the more profound aspects):

The subject of the *shemita* year, as explicitly stated in the (Written) Torah, is (not that the Jewish people, during the year [when they are free from working the land], will engage more in studying Torah, etc., but rather) that “**the land** shall have a complete rest.... You shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard.”

The mitzvah of *shemita* also affects the subsequent “six years” when “you sow your field” and “you prune your vineyard.” By fulfilling the mitzvah of *shemita*, a Jew acknowledges and demonstrates in his actions that “nothing is exclusively in his own possession; rather, everything belongs to the Master of all.”<sup>30</sup> Hashem is the owner of his field and everything on earth (as explained at length by the commentators who explain the reasons for the mitzvos).<sup>31</sup> Therefore, his “sowing” and “pruning” during the “six years” are in line with Hashem’s will, the will of the world’s proprietor.

Since the Torah emphasizes that the mitzvah of *Hakhel* occurs “**at an appointed time, the year of *shemita***” — and as explained above, *Hakhel* carries (the inspiration of) the *shemita* year into the “eighth year” {and beyond} — we must conclude that **this** inspiration from *shemita* is also drawn into the six years through *Hakhel*’s inspiration. —

This requires further clarification: Where in *Hakhel* do we find the inspiration for **this** idea?

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<sup>29</sup> See the views regarding this: Tzemach Tzedek’s *Piskei Dinnim*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 448, par. 3; in the books cited in *Sedei Chemmed*, *Klalim*, *Maareches* “*Kuf*,” par. 18; et al.

<sup>30</sup> *Sefer HaChinuch*, “mitzvah 328”; see *Sefer HaChinuch*, “mitzvah 84.”

<sup>31</sup> See also *Ramban* on *Vayikra* 25:2; *Abarbanel*, beg. of *parshas Behar*.

We can posit that this is connected with the sections of the Torah that the king reads during *Hakhel*, as recorded in the Mishnah<sup>32</sup> (according to Rashi's version):<sup>33</sup> "From the beginning of,<sup>34</sup> 'These are the words,' until, 'Hear,'<sup>35</sup> and {the sections of} 'Hear,' 'It shall come to pass, if you adhere,'<sup>36</sup> 'You shall tithe,'<sup>37</sup> 'When you have made an end of the tithing,'<sup>38</sup> the blessings and curses,<sup>39</sup> and the section regarding a king, 'I will place a king over me.'"<sup>40</sup>

## 8.

### THREE ASPECTS OF SHEMITAH

The explanation: The mitzvah of *shemita*, in general, has three pieces:

- a) The **person** must rest <sup>41</sup> — the prohibition for a person to work the land;<sup>42</sup> {he should instead} devote himself entirely to study, etc., as explained above.
- b) The **land** must rest — "**The land shall observe a resting for Hashem**":<sup>43</sup> Since the land will cease from all labor, for in that year no agricultural work will be performed, the land itself observes "a resting for Hashem."
- c) The **fruits** that grow during the *shemita* year become **ownerless** and may be taken by anyone. The field owner cannot hold on to them as fruits that belong to him.

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<sup>32</sup> *Sotah* 41a.

<sup>33</sup> Rashi on *Sotah* 41a.

<sup>34</sup> {*Devarim* 1:1.}

<sup>35</sup> *Devarim* 6:4-9.

<sup>36</sup> *Devarim* 11:13-21.

<sup>37</sup> *Devarim* 14:22-27.

<sup>38</sup> *Devarim* 26:12-15.

<sup>39</sup> *Devarim* 28:1-69.

<sup>40</sup> *Devarim* 17:14-20.

<sup>41</sup> The positive commandment, "In plowing and harvesting you shall rest" — "to **rest** from performing agricultural work or work with trees" (*Mishneh Torah*, "*Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*," ch. 1, par. 1; and similar wording in *Sefer HaMitzvos* and in Rambam's enumeration of the mitzvos — "positive commandment 135").

<sup>42</sup> The negative commandments "You shall not sow your field...", "that one shall not perform the work of the land in this year" (*Mishneh Torah*, header of "*Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*," mitzvah 2." See *Sefer HaMitzvos* and Rambam's enumeration of the mitzvos, "negative commandment 220" ff.).

<sup>43</sup> *Vayikra* 25:2. "{The seventh year} shall be a Shabbos of rest for the land," "it shall be a year of rest for the land" (*Vayikra* 25:4-5). In Rambam's words (in his header for "*Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*," "mitzvah 1") "that the **land** shall rest in the seventh year." See the discussion regarding all the above in *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 286, and the sources cited there.

Regarding the overarching and primary purpose of the mitzvah of *shemita*, as explained above — to demonstrate how “everything belongs to the Master of all” — we can posit that each of these three pieces identified above conveys a distinct detail regarding Hashem’s “ownership,”<sup>44</sup> as further explained below.

## 9.

### THE RESTING OF A PERSON AND THE LAND

When a person takes a break from work, he exemplifies Hashem’s “ownership” and mastery over **humanity** — “I was created **to serve** my Creator”:<sup>45</sup>

When involved with worldly matters, a Jew is prone to forget the purpose for which he was created. He is **Hashem’s servant**. Thus, the person’s will and *avodah*<sup>46</sup> must be to become attached to Hashem.

Following every six years, Hashem designates one year in which a Jew must sequester himself from worldly matters and devote himself entirely to **spiritual avodah** (in which his connection with Hashem is overtly visible). This imbues a Jew with strength for later, when the following “six years you shall sow your fields...” arrives. He should feel that **this** worldly work is also a form of **Divine service**, “To serve my Creator” — he performs his work for the sake of Heaven,<sup>47</sup> to the extent that {he fulfills the directive:} “In all of your ways, know Him.”<sup>48</sup>

The resting of **the land** emphasizes Hashem’s ownership over the **land**, including its nature (and the laws of nature in general). As the verse says,<sup>49</sup> “If you will say, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold, we will not sow, and we will not gather our crop. I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield a crop sufficient for the next three years.’”

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<sup>44</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, p. 476 ff.

<sup>45</sup> End of *Kiddushin*.

<sup>46</sup> {Divine service.}

<sup>47</sup> *Avos* ch. 2, mishnah 12.

<sup>48</sup> *Mishlei* 3:6; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Deos*,” end of ch. 3; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 231. {The Rebbe often clarified a profound distinction between these two phrases: “{All your actions should be} for the sake of Heaven” implies that our mundane physical actions are directed towards a Divine goal, yet they lack an inherent connection to the Divine. In contrast, “In all your ways, know Him” reveals that these actions themselves can become a powerful means of connecting with Hashem, elevating us to unprecedented heights.}

<sup>49</sup> *Vayikra* 25:20-21.

According to the laws of nature, crop growth depends on earlier plowing and sowing. Hashem demonstrates in the year of *shemita* that the earth's ability to produce crops and fruits grow is “**not** with its strength or its virtue,”<sup>50</sup> which would be dependent on plowing and sowing. Rather, “He provides you the strength to attain wealth.”<sup>51</sup> When Hashem wills it, grain grows **beyond** the laws of nature. In fact, the grain grows to the extent that the sowing performed in a single year, the sixth year, yields enough (in a manner beyond nature) for three years — “And it will yield a crop sufficient for the **three** years.”

From this, a person also realizes and feels during the six years of plowing and sowing that the crops growing in his field is truly not a result of his plowing and sowing but rather is due to **Hashem's blessing**.

## 10.

### OWNERLESS FRUITS

The third piece of *shemita* — the **fruits** of the seventh year are ownerless — demonstrates how Hashem owns a person's **possessions**. Even after Hashem blesses a Jew with possessions, they **remain** under Hashem's ownership and domain.

One might think: True, only Hashem provides the blessing and the strength for the crop to grow (and this is not a function of **the person's** plowing and sowing or the “virtue” of the land). However, once Hashem has given **him** the blessing, once the crop grows, and the person possesses it, Hashem has thus {seemingly} **given over** the crop into his possession.

Indeed, since “I was (not) created (but)<sup>52</sup> to serve my Creator,” it is thus clear that everything a Jew possesses must be used “to serve my Creator” (through using them for holy matters, or “[All of your actions should be] for the sake of Heaven,” as explained above). Nevertheless, there may still be a feeling that the possessions belong to the **person**, and **he** decides to use them in line with Hashem's will.

The third piece of the seventh year teaches that a Jew has no (**personal**) **ownership** over his possessions. This is demonstrated by the fact that once every

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<sup>50</sup> *Sefer HaChinuch*, mitzvah 84.

<sup>51</sup> {*Devarim* 8:18.}

<sup>52</sup> Ver. of *Yalkut Shimoni*, sec. 276.

seven years, the Torah says that **all** fruits growing in a **person's** field are **ownerless for all**.

This serves as a reminder that even during the six years when a person may keep the fruits for himself, it is not because they belong to **him** (to do with them as **he** pleases). Instead, they are **Hashem's** possessions entrusted to the person (**as a deposit** (?) {perhaps}),<sup>53</sup> so that he can act as Hashem's emissary and use them according to Hashem's will.

## 11.

### THE CONNECTION OF HAKHEL AND SHEMITAH

On this basis, we can understand the connection between the mitzvah of *Hakhel* and the details of the mitzvah of *shemitah*:

The subject matter of the three pieces mentioned above —

[the person resting, the land resting, and the fruits of the seventh year being ownerless to all — which illustrate Hashem's "ownership" over the person, the land (the laws of nature), and the person's property] —

is the (part of) the content included among the sections of the Torah that the king reads at the *Hakhel*: The sections of "Hear," "It shall come to pass if you adhere," and "You shall tithe," "When you have made an end to your tithing":

The section of "Hear" discusses a Jew's **spiritual** *avodah* — accepting the yoke of Heaven,<sup>54</sup> learning Torah, and fulfilling mitzvos (such as tefillin and mezuzah). This aligns with the first pieces of *shemitah* mentioned above — the person rests from work to be free to devote himself to spiritual pursuits, as explained above.

The section "it shall come to pass if you adhere" discusses how, through following the directive to "adhere...", "I will give rain for your land at the proper time..., and you will gather your grain..." (And if, Heaven forbid, "you go astray...", then, "the land will not yield..."). This emphasizes that Hashem is the Master over the laws of nature and, consequently, the **physical** well-being of a Jew — "And you will gather

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<sup>53</sup> {The question mark appears here in the original.}

<sup>54</sup> {In the original Hebrew, "*kabalas ol malchus shamayim.*" } Rashi on *Sotah* 41a.

your grain” — depends (not on the person plowing and sowing his field, but) on “**you adhere to my mitzvos**” — following Hashem’s mitzvos.<sup>55</sup>

The sections “you shall tithe” and “when you have made an end to your tithing” underscore that a Jew’s possessions are considered a deposit from Hashem.<sup>56</sup> The person is not the owner. This is expressed in the **requirement** that a person give a portion of his possessions (to a fellow Jew) — “gifts to the poor” and “separating *terumah*<sup>57</sup> and tithes,”<sup>58</sup> resembling the fruits of the seventh year that are ownerless.

Therefore, the section of the Torah that the reading concludes with is the section of the king (and the king is the one who reads all of the sections mentioned above). Because the king fosters the true recognition in a person that the person, his possessions, and all of creation have no existence on their own but all belong to Hashem. In fact, the king’s primary role is to awaken (and instill) within the Jewish people the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven and fear of Hashem until they feel a genuine sense of *bittul*<sup>59</sup> (that leaves no room for any existence outside of Hashem), as the Tzemach Tzedek elucidates.<sup>60</sup>

## 12.

### A DEEP IMPACT

This is also the deeper explanation as to why the law that “the laws of the seventh year still apply to it” (the eighth year) pertains explicitly to the “harvest of the seventh year that extends into the year that follows it”:

The recognition (derived from the **land** resting) that Hashem is the owner of the land (and the laws of nature) continues into “the eighth year” **regardless**, since we still consume (and receive the food’s vitality) from the crop planted in the **sixth** year. As the verse says,<sup>61</sup> “You will sow in the eighth year, but you will eat from the old crop

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<sup>55</sup> In Rashi’s words (ibid.), “*It shall come to pass, if you adhere* – accepting the yoke of the mitzvos.”

<sup>56</sup> See *Sefer HaMaamrim* 5690, s.v., “*amar rav shmuel bar nachmaini*,” ch. 3; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 17, p. 229, **and the sources cited there**.

<sup>57</sup> {Lit. “an elevated portion” — a portion of the agricultural produce given to the *kohanim*; this portion must be guarded from contracting ritual impurity and eaten by a *kohen* in a state of purity.}

<sup>58</sup> Rashi on *Sotah* 41a.

<sup>59</sup> {Connotes submission to Hashem, self-effacement, humility, and the negation of ego.}

<sup>60</sup> *Derech Mitzvosecha*, “*Minui Melech*”; see ch. 3 there.

<sup>61</sup> *Vayikra* 25:22.

until **the ninth** year.” We **clearly** see Hashem’s blessing. (According to nature, this would be impossible in the eighth year).

The second element of the eighth year is necessary to ensure that we also recognize (in the eighth year itself) that a **person** and all possessions belong to Hashem: “The laws of the seventh year still apply to it **regarding the harvest** of the seventh year that extends into the year following the seventh”—also, in the eighth year, a person is not the owner of the crop (from **his** field). As a result, he feels and recognizes that it belongs to Hashem.

Consequently, when the time arrives that a person experiences something resembling the idea behind *shemita* — both by witnessing that Hashem sustains a person also during *shemita* and by sensing that he really has not autonomy, as he is prohibited from acting as the owner in his own field —

It is an opportune time for the king to read the *Hakhel* sections, and the reading to profoundly impact the nation over the next six years.

It even inspires fulfillment of the goal that “they shall learn to fear Hashem, your L-rd, all the days that you live on the land.”<sup>62</sup>

— From talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas (Nitzavim) Vayelech*, 5732 (1972), 5740 (1980), and *Simchas Beis HaShoevah*, 5713 (1952)

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<sup>62</sup> *Devarim* 31:13; see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 19, p. 369.