



# Likkutei Sichos

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## He Keeps His Word

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\*and *siyum* for tractate *Sheviis*

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## 1.

### MITZVAH OF THE LAND OR THE PERSON?

Regarding the *mitzvah* of the land resting on *sheviis* {lit., the seventh year}, Rambam says:<sup>1</sup>

It is a positive *mitzvah* to refrain from working the land and from caring for trees in the seventh year, as it says, “the land shall rest, a Shabbos for Hashem,”<sup>2</sup> and, “you shall desist from plowing and harvesting.”<sup>3</sup>

There is a well-known inquiry<sup>4</sup> whether the *mitzvah* is that the **land** should rest, or the person must refrain from working the land. The verses in our *parshah* imply the former:<sup>5</sup> “The **land** shall rest, a Shabbos for Hashem... the **land** shall have complete rest {שבת שבתון}... it shall be a year of rest {שנת שבתון} for the **land**.” Rambam uses similar wording (elsewhere),<sup>6</sup> and says that the *mitzvah* is “that the **land** should rest from work in the seventh year.” Conversely, the verse, “you shall **desist** from plowing and harvesting” and Rambam’s wording above — “**refrain** from working the land and caring for trees” — imply that the obligation is addressed to the person.

[Regarding the prohibitions that “**you** shall not **sow your field** or prune **your vineyard**,”<sup>7</sup> they illustrate that the prohibition is addressed to the person: “not to work the land on this year....”]<sup>8</sup>

One practical difference: If this obligation appertains to the land, then it is irrelevant who violates this *mitzvah* and works the land. Even if a gentile would do so, the Jewish landowner would be liable for the violation of a positive *mitzvah*. If, however, the obligation appertains to the person, then if a gentile works the land, the landowner would not be liable.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Shemitah VeYovel*,” ch. 1, par. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Vayikra* 25:2.

<sup>3</sup> *Shemos* 34:21.

<sup>4</sup> See *Minchas Chinuch*, *mitzvah* 112, et al.

<sup>5</sup> *Vayikra* 25:4,5.

<sup>6</sup> In his count of *mitzvos* (the 1<sup>st</sup> *mitzvah*) in the heading of *Hilchos Shemitah VeYovel*.

<sup>7</sup> *Vayikra* 25:4.

<sup>8</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, heading of *Hilchos Shemitah VeYovel*, the second *mitzvah*.

## 2.

### SHEMITAH EFFECTED BY THE FARMER OR BY THE “KING”?

A similar inquiry and dispute applies to another positive *mitzvah* of *sheviis*: “In the seventh year you shall let it go and abandon it.”<sup>9</sup> Is the **landowner** obligated to let go of [**renounce**] the fruits that his land produces on the seventh year, as Rambam says (in *Sefer HaMitzvos*),<sup>10</sup> “He commanded us to renounce everything that grows,” and (in *Mishneh Torah*),<sup>11</sup> “to renounce everything that comes out of the ground in the seventh year”? Or is *shemita* analogous to “expropriation by the king”<sup>12</sup> — the Torah causes the fruits of the seventh year to be disowned without the landowner’s involvement?

There would be a practical difference in a case in which the landowner explicitly does not render his field ownerless (he locks his field or his vineyard): If the landowner must renounce his produce, then (although he violates a positive *mitzvah*) the produce is forbidden to others, and taking it is considered theft. If, however, *shemita* is “expropriation by the king,” others can take and gain rights to the produce even against the landowner’s consent.<sup>13</sup>

Another practical difference between these two approaches: Since the produce that grows during *sheviis* is ownerless, a person is not obligated to separate *maaser*<sup>14</sup> from them. Therefore, if the obligation appertains to the person — he must {actively} forfeit his produce — then if he **does not** forfeit it (he locks his field, etc.), he must separate *maaser*. If, however, they are made ownerless as an “expropriation by the king,” his refusal to renounce them is insignificant, and the produce is exempt from the *maaser* obligation.

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<sup>9</sup> *Shemos* 23:11.

<sup>10</sup> *Sefer HaMitzvos*, positive *mitzvah* 134.

<sup>11</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*,” ch. 4, par. 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Bava Metzia* 39a.

<sup>13</sup> *Minchas Chinuch*, *mitzvah* 84.

<sup>14</sup> {Tithes, given to a *Levi*, eaten by the landowner in Yerushalayim, or given to the poor. For a detailed definition, see [www.chabad.org/986702](http://www.chabad.org/986702)}

### 3.

#### MAASER DURING SHEMITAH

One can say, however, that even if a person specifically refuses to renounce his produce of *sheviis*, there is no obligation to separate *maaser* from these fruits, even according to the opinion that the obligation is addressed to the person. Because one can posit that the reason that there is no obligation to separate *maaser* from produce of *sheviis* is not because of the actual renunciation, but rather, on account of the obligation to renounce them.

The explanation: During the first six years {of the *shemita* cycle}, there are distinctions regarding the obligation to separate *maaser*: In years one, two, four, and five, *maaser sheni*<sup>15</sup> is separated; in years three and six, *maaser ani*<sup>16</sup> is separated (instead of *maaser sheni*). Presumably, this is in order for there not to be all three *maaser* obligations in one year. Nevertheless, there is no source that says that if, for example, a person fails to separate *maaser sheni* in year one, he should separate *maaser ani*, for there is no obligation to give *maaser ani* from the **produce** of that year.

Similarly, regarding the seventh year: Since the Torah commanded us to renounce the grain and produce of the seventh year, there is no *maaser* obligation at all in **that year**, even if they were not actually forfeited.

### 4.

PROOF? NO PROOF!

Seemingly, we can prove that the renunciation of *shemita* produce is {akin to} an “expropriation by the king” from the exposition of the Midrash<sup>17</sup> on

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<sup>15</sup> {Which is given to a Levite.}

<sup>16</sup> {Which is given to the poor.}

<sup>17</sup> *Tanchumah, parshas Vayikra.*

the verse,<sup>18</sup> “those mighty in strength who perform His word, who give heed to the voice of His word”:

This refers to people who observe {the laws of} *sheviis*. So why are they called “mighty in strength”? When such a person sees his field made **ownerless**, his trees made **ownerless**, his fences **breached**, and sees his fruit trees eaten, he suppresses his inclination<sup>19</sup> and does not speak.

The wording, “**sees** his field made ownerless, his trees made ownerless” **implies** that they are made ownerless automatically, akin to “expropriation by the king,” and not by the landowner’s proactive renunciation.

We can, however, challenge this line of reasoning: The Midrash describes the **actual status** of the fields and trees — “his field made ownerless, his trees made ownerless...” — and does not address the reason they are ownerless. Additionally, {we can posit that} the Midrash maintains that they are only considered ownerless after the landowner proactively renounces them. The novelty that arises when “...a person sees” {his ownerless possessions}, even though he himself had renounced them, results from him seeing how things actually turned out, similar to the saying, “*Seeing* something is not like *hearing* about it.”<sup>20</sup>

## 5.

### WHO CANCELS DEBTS?

A source and proof to support the opinion that *shemita* of land is not considered “expropriation by the king,” but an obligation addressed to the landowner, is the comparison made between *shemita* of land and monetary *shemita* {the cancellation of monetary debts}:<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Tehillim* 103:20.

<sup>19</sup> {This accords with the *mishnah*, “Who is mighty? He who subdues his (evil) inclination.” (*Avos* 4:1.)}

<sup>20</sup> {In the original Hebrew, “*Eino domeh re’iah le’shemiah*”; alt. “*Eino domeh shemiah le’re’iah*.”}

<sup>21</sup> {The obligation to release monetary debts in the *shemita* year.}

“This is the matter of the *shemita*, he shall release<sup>22</sup> — the verse speaks of two *shemita*s: the *shemita* of land and monetary *shemita*. When the *shemita* of land applies....<sup>23</sup>

[Although this is only the opinion of Rebbi and not of the Sages, their dispute only pertains to Rebbi’s opinion that “**when** the *shemita* of land applies {when the *Yovel* year is observed — the release of monetary debts applies}.” They both agree that the *shemita* of land and monetary *shemita* are comparable.]

Regarding the cancellation of monetary debts, the *mishnah* in tractate *Sheviis* says:<sup>24</sup>

One who returns a debt on *sheviis*<sup>25</sup> (after *shemita* has begun), the creditor must say to the borrower: “I release it {your debt}.” But the borrower should say: “Even so {I will repay it}.” The creditor may then accept payment, because the verse says: “This is the matter {*devar*, lit., ‘word’} of the *shemita*.”<sup>26</sup>

If *shemita* is an “expropriation by the king” and the debt is automatically canceled, the wording of the *mishnah*, “One who returns a **debt**,” and, “I release it,” is not understandable. The commentators point out that the borrower’s response, “even so,” is that he wishes to “repay” the debt.

Furthermore, since the Torah says that *sheviis* cancels the debt, seemingly, it should be forbidden for the borrower to do something contrary — repaying the money as a **debt**. Yet the (second) *mishnah*<sup>27</sup> even says that (not only is this permissible, but) “the Sages are pleased with him!”

All the above implies that the cancellation of monetary debts {monetary *shemita*} during *sheviis* is not defined as an “**expropriation by the king**” by which the debt is **completely** canceled automatically. Rather: a) The creditor has a **personal** obligation to cancel the debt, and b) the obligation is not to

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<sup>22</sup> *Devarim* 15:2.

<sup>23</sup> *Gittin* 36a.

<sup>24</sup> *Sheviis*, ch. 10, par. 8.

<sup>25</sup> In the era when {law of} *sheviis* {the seventh year} was in effect, and the seventh year passed {triggering the release of debts} — as explained by Rashi in *Gittin* 36a.

<sup>26</sup> {I.e., as long as the creditor verbalizes the release, he has fulfilled his *shemita* obligation.}

<sup>27</sup> *Sheviis*, Ch. 10, par. 9.

remove entirely and cancel the debt, but to let go of (or **release** — משמט) the debt: He does not demand that the money be repaid (“do not **pressure**”).<sup>28</sup>

[In this light, we understand Rambam’s wording: “**It is a positive mitzvah for the lender to cancel a debt** on *Sheviis*, as the verse says...”<sup>29</sup> Simply, this can only apply if we maintain that the obligation is addressed to the creditor and is not automatically canceled as an “expropriation by the king.”]

This explains Rambam’s wording:<sup>30</sup>

The lender must say to the **one who is making restitution**, “I am releasing {the debt} and you can already take leave **of me**. If the borrower says, “Nevertheless, I want you to accept it,” he should accept it. For the Torah says, “Do not pressure,” and he was not pressured {to repay}.

The obligation and *mitzvah* that pertains to the lender (“I am releasing”) is limited to him complying with the directive, “do not pressure” {the borrower}. This {directive not to pressure the borrower} is not a distinct prohibition regarding the cancellation of monetary debts, but it is (also) a part of the fulfillment (of the positive *mitzvah*) of *shemita*. The words of the *Chinuch* also reflect this idea:<sup>31</sup> “To **abandon** one’s debts,” in other words, to not demand payment. This is also implied by the wording of the verse: “Every creditor shall relinquish his authority over what he has lent his fellow; he shall not pressure his fellow or his brother {to repay}... but over what you have with your brother, you shall relinquish your authority.”<sup>32</sup>

Since the injunction, “Do not pressure” obligates a lender to release his debt and not demand payment, then, obviously, the borrower’s indebtedness and personal obligation to repay the debt is automatically removed (as they are interdependent). As Rambam says, “**I am releasing** {the debt} and you can already **take leave of me**” — the borrower is released from his indebtedness to the **lender**. This all pertains to the (personal obligation regarding the)

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<sup>28</sup> {*Devarim* 15:2.}

<sup>29</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*,” ch. 9, par. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Shemita VeYovel*,” ch. 9, par. 28.

<sup>31</sup> *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Mitzvah* 477.

<sup>32</sup> {*Devarim* 15:2-3.}

relationship between the lender and the borrower, however, the borrower's possessions are still encumbered, for the debt itself has not been ended.

Considering this, we understand why most *halachic* authorities (aside from the lone opinion of *Yereim*)<sup>33</sup> maintain that the borrower has no **defined** *mitzvah* obligation to repay his debt to the lender (even before the lender declared, "I am releasing"). Nevertheless {if he insists}, it is considered that "he has repaid his debt" since the **debt** still exists! Only the personal obligation of the borrower has been removed. Put differently: When he borrowed the money, a portion of his possessions (that are of equal value to the loan) **are considered as** the possessions of the lender.

It is difficult to suggest that this is a matter of fulfilling the *mitzvah* to pay a debt, as some commentators<sup>34</sup> explain this *mishnah*. The proof is, as mentioned above, that there is only a single opinion that the borrower must repay the debt to the lender (if the lender does not nullify it). Furthermore, if it would be a ***mitzvah*** to repay the debt, even according to the opinion that maintains that there is only a rabbinic obligation to do so,<sup>35</sup> it would be an actual **obligation** and not merely a matter that "the Sages are pleased with him"!

## 6.

RELEASED OR NOT?

According to the above explanation regarding the cancellation of monetary debts, it stands to reason that the same applies to *shemita* of land, for they are both defined as ***shemita*** (in the seventh year). This suggestion is especially germane since both categories of *shemita* are included in the clause, "**This is the matter** of the *shemita*." [This accords with what Rambam quotes in *Sefer HaMitzvos* regarding the positive *mitzvah* of the cancellation of monetary debts: "*Tosefta's* wording: 'The verse speaks of two *shemita*s — *shemita* of land and

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<sup>33</sup> *Yereim*, sec. 278.

<sup>34</sup> *Mishnah Rishonah* on *Sheviis*, ch. 10, par. 9.

<sup>35</sup> See *Encyclopedia Talmudis*, vol. 9, p. 227 ff., and the sources cited there.



monetary *shemita*.’] The clause, “this is the matter of the *shemita*” simply means that this (matter that will be shortly explained) is the *mitzvah* of *shemita*. That is, there is a personal obligation to renounce ownership over one’s field.

The sole difference is: The *mitzvah* regarding the cancellation of monetary debts is merely that “every creditor shall relinquish his authority... he shall not pressure his fellow.” He may not demand payment; however, the possessions of the borrower are still encumbered to the lender for the debt, as discussed. Regarding *shemita* of land, however, the verse says, “In the seventh year you shall let it go and **abandon it**” — the fruit and grain are completely ownerless.

## 7.

### WHY ARE THEY PLEASED WITH HIM?

In light of all the above regarding the cancellation of monetary debts and the explanation of the clause, “A person who repays a debt after the seventh year, the Sages are pleased with him,” we can now understand the continuation of the *mishnah* at the conclusion of tractate *Sheviis*:

One who borrows from a convert whose sons had converted with him — {if the convert died,} the borrower does not {need to} repay the debt to his sons; but if he does repay it, the Sages are pleased with him. All movable property is acquired by *meshichah*;<sup>36</sup> but whoever keeps his word,<sup>37</sup> the Sages are pleased with him.

The connection between these two clauses and the first clause [“a person who repays a debt after the seventh year”] is not only because in all three clauses “the Sages are pleased with him,” but is also grounded in the reason as to **why** “the Sages are pleased with him.”

Just as “a person who repays a debt after the seventh year” is not personally obligated and encumbered to repay the debt — only his possessions

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<sup>36</sup> {A method of *halachic* acquisition in which the item is “drawn” or pulled toward the one acquiring it.}

<sup>37</sup> {In a case where the buyer gave money but did not do *meshichah*.}

are encumbered {to the lender} — similarly, repaying the debt is only an act for which “the Sages are pleased” {and is not obligatory}. The same applies to the other two clauses. There is no personal imposition on the borrower to the “children” of the convert, nor does the seller have any personal imposition on the buyer. Rather, only the borrower’s possessions are encumbered. Therefore, concerning these cases also, it is said only that “the Sages are pleased....”

Additionally, the clauses of a *mishnah* are normally (in most cases) recorded in order of lesser to greater novelty. Accordingly, we conclude that this *mishnah* follows this approach, and in each clause, “the Sages are pleased with him” more than in the previous clause.

## 8.

### THREE FACTORS RELATING TO A LOAN

We will explain this based on a nuance in the *mishnah*’s wording:

In the second clause, why must the *mishnah* say, “He does not {need to} repay the debt to his sons”? The *mishnah* could have just said, “One who borrows from a convert whose sons had converted with him, if he repays it to the sons, the Sages are pleased with him.” We would have inferred that there is no **obligation** to repay the debt to the sons.

The third clause says: “All movable property is acquired by *meshichah*; but whoever keeps his word, the Sages are pleased with him.” We must clarify — as the commentators ask: The *mishnah* intends to praise a person who “keeps his word,” and not to explain the laws of acquisition. However, keeping one’s word is not specifically related to the acquisition of movable property. Therefore, how is the preface, “All movable property is acquired by *meshichah*,” relevant?

The explanation: The simple understanding of the clause, “the Sages are pleased with him” is that “the Sages cherish him on account of this, and they

consider his conduct to be proper.”<sup>38</sup> This is not only because he has fulfilled a **secondary** *mitzvah*, or he has not violated an incidental prohibition (even though he is not obligated), but because he introduces “goodness” into the matter itself that he has done.

Regarding our discussion regarding loans: “The Sages are pleased with him” because he has done something positive (that he is not obligated to do); its goodness and value is expressed in the loan itself (and not in an incidental matter).

The act of a loan (and, similarly, an acquisition) is composed of: a) the lender; b) the borrower; and c) the money, which forges a fiscal relationship between the lender and the borrower.

Regarding “a person who repays a debt after the seventh year,” the clause, “the Sages are pleased with him” pertains to all three factors: The lender who is repaid the debt owing — since he has done a *mitzvah*, “you shall lend money”<sup>39</sup> — “the Sages are pleased,” because by having the debt repaid, we ensure the lender does not lose money on account of his *mitzvah*. Regarding the borrower — since the lender was “the reservoir from which water was drawn,” the borrower received a favor from the lender, “the Sages are pleased” on account of the borrower’s good-hearted feeling. [This is aside from the borrower’s personal benefit; in the future, he can turn to the lender again for another loan.]

Regarding the “object” of the loan — the debt itself: Since the borrower’s possessions are still encumbered (although there is no personal imposition on the borrower, as elaborated above) — “the Sages are pleased” when he repays the “debt.”

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<sup>38</sup> Wording of Rambam on *Sheviis* 10:9; see *Tzemach Tzedek* here at length.

<sup>39</sup> {*Shemos* 22:24.}

## 9.

### TWO FACTORS OF A SALE

The second clause says: “One who borrows from a convert whose sons had converted with him, he does not {need to} repay the debt to his sons; but if he repays it, the Sages are pleased with him.” Here, too, “the Sages are pleased with him” is not just on account of a tangential matter (so that the convert’s sons don’t revert to their old ways [or the like]), but on account of the benefit regarding the loan itself, albeit regarding only **two** factors: The borrower and the transactional debt incurred.<sup>40</sup>

With respect to the borrower: Since he benefited from the convert from whom he borrowed money intending to return it, although he is not legally bound to repay the debt after the death of the convert, but because he borrowed the money intending to return it, for the borrower, the **debt** persists. Therefore, it is virtuous for him to repay the debt.

Similarly, regarding the transactional debt: True, there is no **lender** to whom the borrower can repay the debt. However, the borrower’s possessions, equal to the value of the debt, are still encumbered on account of the debt (it is as if they don’t belong to the borrower). Consequently, it is reasonable for the borrower to repay the debt.

Since the money has some association to the “sons” only (so they don’t renege on their conversion), the borrower should return the money to them, and consequently, “the Sages are pleased with him.”

Conversely, regarding the lender, it is not possible to return the favor, for the lender (the convert) has died and his “sons” {in the case of a convert} do not inherit the legal place {and concomitant rights} of the lender.

Considering this, we understand why the *mishnah* says, “he does not {need to} repay the debt to his sons” — although this is implicit in, “if he repays it (it is

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<sup>40</sup> {In the succinct Yiddish original, “די’ הפצא’ פון חוב”; lit., “the debt entity.”}

merely considered that) the Sages are pleased with him.” This emphasizes that the **borrower** and the **sons** are unrelated, not only legally (for the sons are not considered in the lender's place and the **borrower** has no obligation to **them**), but even regarding the Sages being pleased.

This explains the novelty of the second clause (“one who borrows from a convert”) over the first clause (“one who returns a debt after the seventh year”) under the rule of progressing from the lesser novelty to the greater: “The Sages are pleased with him” applies not only when the “good” {i.e., benefit} affects **all three** factors under discussion (as is the case regarding repaying a debt on *sheviis*), but rather, even in a matter that the good is related to only two of the factors.

## 10.

EVEN WHEN THE “GOOD” IS ONLY FOR ONE FACTOR

The third clause says: “All movable property is acquired by *meshichah*; but whoever keeps his word, the Sages are pleased with him.” Here, too, “the Sages are pleased with him” not only because of the (incidental) consideration — that he kept his word but (also) because of the transactional object — the moveable property itself.

But {“the Sages are pleased” is} not on account of the two other factors: the seller and the buyer:

Since the buyer did not perform *meshichah* (even if he has already paid), the seller and the buyer (the one who performs the act of acquisition) do not have a {transactionally binding} seller-buyer relationship (as defined by {the laws of} acquisitions).

Furthermore, by being one who “keeps his word,” he isn’t forestalling a loss either to the seller or to the buyer. The buyer {if the sale is canceled} loses nothing ({even} when the buyer has already paid, he receives his money back). It only affects the object being purchased: This item becomes associated with the

buyer by means of the seller's utterance (or also because of the money paid by the buyer). The *mishnah* teaches that even in such a case — when the effect only pertains to one of the three factors — still, “the Sages are pleased with him.”

## 11.

### TWO EXTREMITIES

The cancellation of monetary debts has paradoxical themes:

On the one hand, the theme of the cancellation of monetary debts is that “every creditor shall relinquish his authority...; he **shall not** pressure his fellow.” The theme here is negative. (Consequently, “one who returns a debt in the seventh year, the Sages are pleased with him,” as mentioned above).

A similar theme exists in *shemita* of land — “The land shall rest, a Shabbos for Hashem,” and, “you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard; the aftergrowth of your harvest you shall not reap and the grapes you had set aside you shall not pick; it shall be a year of rest for the land.”<sup>41</sup> The land shall **not** be worked — a negative theme.

On the other hand, the negative theme of *shemita* must be expressed through a proactive or positive theme — orally — as mentioned above, “One who returns a debt after *sheviis*, the creditor must **say** to the borrower: “I release it...,” because the verse says: “This is the **matter** {*devar*, lit., ‘word’} of the *shemita*.” Several authorities<sup>42</sup> maintain that reciting these words (“I release it”) is a (biblical) *mitzvah*.

[The *mishnah* continues:<sup>43</sup>

When a murderer has been exiled to a city of refuge, and its citizens want to honor him, he must **say** to them: “I am a murderer.” If they insist: “Even so {we want to honor

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<sup>41</sup> {*Vayikra* 25:4-5.}

<sup>42</sup> {See Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Halvaah*,” par. 36.}

<sup>43</sup> {*Sheviis* 10:8.}

you},” then he may be honored by them, because the verse says: “This is the matter {*devar*, lit., ‘word’} of the murderer.”

This serves as a warning for others to not mistakenly honor him. As the *Jerusalem Talmud* explains,<sup>44</sup> this is like a situation in which a person is honored because people assume he has mastered two tractates; if he has mastered only one, he must advise them.]

A deeper layer to this explanation: The seventh year refers to the *sefirah*<sup>45</sup> of *malchus*,<sup>46</sup> which comprises both elements: a) The *bittul*<sup>47</sup> of *malchus* to the higher *sefiros*; b) *malchus* refers to the world of **speech**.

Therefore, *sheviis* also contains these two elements: “**The land shall rest**” refers to the *bittul* or “rest” of the land — *malchus* — “you shall not sow,” and likewise to the cancellation of monetary debts. And alongside with the above, there is a *mitzvah* to **speak** — “the matter {*devar*, lit., ‘word’} of *shemitah*.”

In light of this, we understand the above Midrash that those who observe the *sheviis* are referred to as “those... who perform His **word**, who give heed to the voice of His **word**.” This is unlike the usual wording in similar contexts, “(those who fulfill) His *mitzvos*,” or, “His **statutes**,” or the like. *Shemitah* is related specifically to speech.

The Midrash concludes that this clause must refer to “people who observe *sheviis*”:

Here we say, “those who perform his word (*devaro*),” and later we say, “this is the matter (*devar*) of *shemitah*.” Just as the “matter” (*davar*) mentioned in that verse refers to people who observe *sheviis*, the “word” (*davar*) mentioned here refers to people who observe *sheviis*.

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<sup>44</sup> *Talmud Yerushalmi*, tractate *Sheviis*, ad loc.

<sup>45</sup> {*Sefiros* are Divine emanations. There are ten *sefiros*, which are various phases in the manifestation of Divinity, generally categorized by intellectual and emotional faculties.}

<sup>46</sup> {*Malchus* is the 7th of the *sefiros* that relate to the emotional faculties.} *Derech Mitzvosecha*, “*Mitzvas Kedushas Shnas HaSheviis*.”

<sup>47</sup> {*Bittul* connotes self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego.}

On this basis, we can better appreciate why tractate *Sheviis* concludes, “Whoever keeps his **word**, the Sages are pleased with him.”

By studying and delving into the laws of *sheviis* (and “whoever studies the part of Torah that discusses... it is considered as if he has fulfilled...”),<sup>48</sup> we will hasten the time concerning which it says, “Hashem, You have favored Your land (‘they will observe the *shemita*h years’)<sup>49</sup> and you have returned the captivity of Yaakov”<sup>50</sup> (“You have returned the house of Yaakov from captivity”),<sup>51</sup> and “Hashem, too, will provide what is good, and **our land will yield its produce.**”<sup>52</sup> We will become “mighty in strength who performs His word, who gives heed to the voice of His word”; we will observe the *mitzvah* of *sheviis* as obligated by the Torah, in its practical sense, in the Land of Israel. Imminently, Hashem will “keep” His “word” — “the word of Hashem is the End of Days”<sup>53</sup> — “**Kingship** will belong to Hashem,” with the coming of our righteous *Moshiach*, who will lead us upright to our Land.

— From talks delivered during Tishrei 5733 (1972) — a *shemita*h year

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<sup>48</sup> *Menachos* 110a.

<sup>49</sup> {*Midrash Tehillim*, sec. 85, par. 1.}

<sup>50</sup> *Tehillim* 85:2.

<sup>51</sup> {*Targum to Tehillim* 85:2.}

<sup>52</sup> *Tehillim* 85:13.

<sup>53</sup> *Shabbos* 138b.