

*Parshas Behar* begins with the *mitzvah* of *shemita*. *HaShem* commands us not to work in our fields in *Eretz Yisrael* for the entire seventh year. We let the land rest and devote our time to studying Torah. *HaShem* assures us that although we do not work the land during the seventh year, we will still have enough to eat: “The land will give forth its produce and you will eat your fill.”

In the following *passuk*, the *Torah* says: “And should you ask: ‘What will we eat in the seventh year? We will not plant or harvest.’ And I will command My blessing....”

*HaShem* promises us that the harvest of the sixth year will be so plentiful that there will be enough for three years: the sixth year; the seventh year, which is *shemita* when we do not work the land; and even the eighth year, while we are waiting for the new produce to grow.

It seems a bit surprising that the *Torah* should tell us that people may ask what they will eat. Hadn’t the *Torah* already told us that “The land will give forth its produce and you will eat your fill”? Why would anyone have a question after being told this? And wouldn’t the *Torah* consider asking such a question to be a lack of *emunah*?

If we read the wording in the *passuk* carefully, we see that the *Torah* does not consider asking this question wrong. The *passuk* says: “And **should** you say...” It does not say: “And **if** you say...” It almost sounds as if it is right to ask.

A person who is asking this question is not lacking in *emunah*. He knows that *HaShem* promised that we will have food to eat and he trusts Him. He is only wondering how *HaShem*’s blessing will come about. After all, according to the laws of nature, the sixth year should not be a very plentiful year. Land which is farmed year after year loses the richness of its soil. Indeed, one of the explanations which is given for the *mitzvah* of *shemita* is that it gives the land time to rest and rebuild itself. The person’s real question is this: does that mean that *HaShem* will work miracles for us?

The *Torah* answers: Yes. It promises that if we have *emunah* and *mesirus nefesh* and keep the laws of *shemita*, ignoring the laws of nature, *HaShem*, too, will provide for us in a way that is above the laws of nature. The sixth year, when the soil is at its weakest, will be a most plentiful one.

Our Rabbis teach us that since the Creation, each thousand years are like one year of the *shemita* cycle. We are now in the sixth thousand-year period since Creation. We might ask the same question which is in this week’s *parshah*. Certainly, we believe that the *geulah* will come any moment. But we may wonder: how is it that our generation, which is weak when compared to the previous generations, will merit the *geulah*?

The answer is the same as in the *parshah*. When *HaShem* sees our *emunah* and *mesirus nefesh*, our determination and our willingness to do things that by nature people may find hard to do, then He, too, will overlook the natural course of events and bring the *geulah* immediately.

(Adapted from *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XXVII, p. 189)

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