

MITZVAH 27: SHEMITTAH LOAN CANCELLATION

by Rabbi Moshe Goldberger

"This is the matter of Shemittah (the sabbatical year): Every lender shall cancel his debt which his friend owes him..." (Devarim 15:2)

When shemittah year comes, in addition to stopping all agricultural work in the Land of Israel, all debts are canceled, unless a pruzbul (override) document was written. This applies nowadays by law of the Sages.

Even if the borrower offers to pay, the lender must say, "The debt is cancelled." If the borrower continues to insist on paying, the lender may accept the payment (Shevi'is 10:8).

The Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 47) explains that this mitzvah teaches us to be generous and to realize that Hashem supplies all of our needs, including monetary ones. When a lender forgoes his payment due to shemittah, Hashem will reimburse him.

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