

PARSHAS BEHAR

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

According to the Zohar, Shmittah refers to Klall Yisrael while Yovel represents wisdom. The Avnei Nezer explained the words of the following midrash (Shmot Rabbah, Chapter 48). 'He counts the number of the stars, to all of them He gives a name' (Psalms, 147); it is also written in Isaiah, 'He calls each one by name'. When the Holy One Blessed be He calls to a group he calls them by the singular form, name, however, when He wants to speak to each individual separately, He calls them by their names Gavriel, Raphael etc., as it is written, 'see I have called by name, Betzalel'. There are some who achieve their holiness individually but there are some people whose holiness can only be through the influence of the group.

We can better understand this if we think of the human body and its organs. If one is able to achieve spirituality and holiness on his own, then all 248 organs will all become a completely holy camp, or as it is written 'and all your camp shall be holy'. Such a person is then prepared to receive the holy light. If, however, any of the organs are not purified and sanctified then that person is blemished and the Shechinah does not dwell in a blemished vessel. Yet there is still a way that that person can achieve holiness and that is through the Klall. In a whole group it is surely possible for all of the individual holy characteristics to unite and form a sanctified unity. After all, each person is able to complement the other and nothing spiritual goes to waste, not even a deep sigh. However, it is only possible to achieve holiness through the group when one is a lover of Israel in truth, as though one were an organ within a body. When the body is in danger of being beaten then the hands will cover the threatened organ to protect it. They do so without regard to their own pain and irrespective of the danger to themselves. So too, to love Israel in truth, is to be able to love other Jews even though they may cause us damage or do things to annoy us. When one is able to love Klall Yisrael in this way, then one is able to achieve holiness through the sanctity of the Klall. This is good advice for every individual: to perform the mitzvah of Ahavat Yisrael with all their strength and under all circumstances. Through truly keeping this great mitzvah in the Torah, the individual can better merit holiness and sanctity through the power of Klall Yisrael.

So we were given the two mitzvot of Shmittah and Yovel. All the verses of Shmittah are expressed in the singular showing a unity of purpose and identity, just as at Matan Torah Israel encamped as with a singular heart- even though people's minds are different their hearts can be united. Yovel is spoken of in the plural with the exception of the Shofar as that refers to the heart. Shmittah demonstrates the power of the unity of Klall Israel to bring holiness even to those individuals who are not able to achieve it on their own. The fields become ownerless, all Yisrael are made equal and

all social illness is healed. But in Yovel there is something even greater. In that year each person returns not only to their inheritance and to their original possessions but also to the root of their individual neshamot. The Zohar teaches that Yovel is Binah. By attaching the source of one's own neshamah to Klall Yisrael one receives additional Binah of the heart. So that it is now possible for the individual to reach holiness and spirituality through his own actions.

Moreover, in regard to Shmittah it is written, 'a Sabbath unto G-d', just as it is written with regard to the Sabbath of creation. It is difficult to see the connection between the two Sabbaths as the cessation from work involved is different. In the Sabbath of creation all work is forbidden and a person has to devote themselves completely to G-d. However, in regard to Shmittah we know that only agricultural work is forbidden and the Earth continues to work in providing growth to the trees and to sefichim. The Or HaChaim comments that the Creation was meant only to last for seven days and then after the Shabbat G-d renewed the world till the next one, and so continuously. And so it is with Israel receiving its Promised Land. This was not given to them to work except for a period of 7 years and then it reverted to its Divine Owner. During the seventh year they ate from the Table on High, and then the cycle was recommenced. That is why there is holiness in the fruit of Shmittah and that is why the Torah introduces that year with 'coming into the Land of Israel. This is unlike the injunction against Orlah where the Torah speaks about the general planting of trees, even in Chut La Aretz. Since the onwership of the Land reverts to its Divine Owner up every seventh year, it is similar to the Sabbath of Creation except that that refers to the whole of creation and therefore all work is forbidden. The Sabbatical year however, deals only with the inheritance of Israel, so that is why only agricultural work in that Land is forbidden and requires that the land be declared ownerless.

We know that the laws of Shmittah were extended to apply to the poor of the non-Jew (Torat Cohanim). This is strange as compared to all the agricultural gifts to the poor which include by law only Jewish poor. This should be even more so with regard to Shmittah considering all that we have said above. So it is strange that the law was changed regarding the sanctity of the fruit and the non-Jew. This comes to teach us that the Torah does not sanctify the fruits as assistance to the poor but rather to insist on Divine Ownership of those fruits[all wealth?]. For that purpose it was necessary to show that the Land reverted to G-d during Shmittah, and that included the non-Jews.

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