

## BEHAR 1 - THE LAND ABOVE AND BELOW SHALL OBSERVE A SHABBAT

A fundamental principle in our mystical tradition is that we exist in this physical world while simultaneously in a parallel spiritual world. 1 There is an overt interdependence between the thoughts speech and deeds of man on earth and the processes in the Divine mystical world of Asilut. This idea of reflective worlds forms the basis in that man has in his power the ability to influence for good or bad the highest of the spiritual worlds. The results cascade down from Asilut emanating throughout the worlds of Creation finally extending its influence here below in the lowest physical world of Asiyah. The Sages hint to this idea when they express a preference to interpret the term מהלכות instead of simply "laws". 2 The Rabbis evidently intend to convey that every thought, word or action in this physical world will result in an alteration of the pathways in the highest spiritual realm above - known as the world of Asilut. This in turn will affect the manner in which the spiritual realms will send forth an influx downwards to the physical world here below. Hence We - individually and nationally are set to experience the rewards via the pathways we establish above or God forbid any punishments caused by the damage we inflicted on these pathways. This is how R. HaAri interprets (Shaar Hagilgulim 21) 3 a Mishnaic teaching from the Talmud "According to the measure with which one measures his actions -So does the heavenly court measure for him in return". 4 Namely - according to the blemish he causes above so it will result in a parallel blemish below. In this context we can begin to understand the apparent reward and or punishment of the nation as depicted by the Torah for keeping or damaging the spiritual pathways associated with the Misva of Shemitah. We intend to explore the spiritual effects in the "land" above which result from keeping the Shabbat of the Land here below. The benefits of keeping the laws result in our dwelling securely in the land while a desecration of the law - damages the pathways. The latter defect results in our exile from the land - allowing the nations to rule over us.

### WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL WORK ON THE SPIRITUAL WORLD?

We are taught that Hashem placed Adam Harishon in Gan Eden to work it and watch it. 5 Adherence to the Creator will result in establishing the pathways in the spiritual worlds above. While this activity to work the land can be interpreted as simply performing the Misvot Aseh and refraining from committing Misvot lo Ta'aseh; R. HaAri also sees this being accomplished through physical labor "As one plows; he naturally performs the Misva of not harnessing an ox and donkey together". 6 In fact during every type of מלאכה one can fulfill a Misva - elevating the mundane and clearing the pathways in the spiritual realm above. 7 Next it is important to learn why exactly certain activities serve a spiritual benefit at certain times ; but are forbidden and spiritually damaging at other times.

### THE TORAH LEGISLATION TO OBSERVE VARIOUS SHABBATOT

Just as the seventh day of the week is considered a Shabbat - so too is the seventh year in a continuous cycle called a Shabbat. In that year in the land of Israel - sowing and reaping fields and pruning and picking of vines are prohibited. If it is so as we said earlier - that all work can be associated with a Misva; why would this type of activity be forbidden on the Shabbat? 8 Aren't we creating the pathways above as we were directed in Gan Eden to be occupied with these labors? Why are we commanded to abandon these agricultural activities every seventh year? The answer lies in the fact that during every seventh year there is a change from the previous six years in the spiritual realm above. The spiritual land above called the Malkhut of the World of Asilut experiences a Shabbat. R. HaAri (SH Behar) teaches 9 us that the spiritual earth above at that time experiences an ascent. In its new elevated state the pathways established through agricultural activity are no longer necessary to be paved and any attempt to do so is in fact counterproductive. The spiritual earth does not at that time require any activity below. This is the

meaning of the legislation that the land in the seventh year experiences a Shabbat or an elevation and is to remain at rest in its proper realm above.

#### THE SPIRITUAL CHAOS WHEN ONE DOES FORBIDDEN WORK

If one does forbidden work on one of the Sabbaths he often causes holiness to descend - falling downward into the grasp of the spiritually unholy. Alternatively he allows the evil spiritual husks to ascend to the place of holiness displacing Kedusha. Hence agricultural work done in the land of Israel in the seventh year implicates that there is a deficiency in the pathways above. The refrain from work on the other hand acknowledges that during that period of Sabbath there is no deficiency in the pathways above. Working the physical land below causes the spiritual land above to lose its status of Shabbat or elevated state. This will result in his or the nations severance from the land of Israel below.

#### EXILE FOR THE NATION WHO IGNORES THE SABBATH OF THE LAND

The Yalkut Shimoni (328) teaches 10 that Hashem advised Moshe that if he desires to prevent Israel from descending into exile - he must caution them regarding the laws of Shemitah. As we noted earlier - any agricultural activity on the physical land of Israel during the Shevi'it will cause the essence of the spiritual land to descend. This will cause holiness to descend to a spiritual realm associated with the nations of the world. This results in those who "physically parallel holiness" called Israel below to descend as well. This manifests itself in the nations who have their spiritual parallel in the area of descent to rule over Israel. This is what R. Abhu likely meant in his response (Sanhedrin 39a) to a student's inquiry into the reason for the laws of Shevi'it. " Since their sin caused an exile above - the result was exile below". 11

#### DWELLING SECURELY IN THE LAND

When we follow the Torah by watching the Shabbat and refrain from agricultural activity - we thereby fortify the spiritual land above. As the land remains in its elevated state it grants no access of its holiness to the nations below. This watching of the Shabbat will grant Israel the ability to remain securely in the physical land of Israel below. They will not descend into exile via their commitment of keeping the Misva of Shemitah. They will be have been assured that the holiness of the spiritual land above has remained secure - keeping it afar from the spiritual hands of the nations. This is what the Torah promises 25:18 "You shall observe my laws and faithfully keep my rules (concerning the land above - keeping it secure) in order that you may live in the land below securely." 12 This is not a random reward for keeping this Misva. It is rather as we learned earlier - a direct result of keeping the land above secure.

**Shabbat Shalom**

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