

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

NO REGRETS


By Rabbi David Ashear, Author of *Living Emunah* (Artsroll)

Koheles says, "There is a time to give birth and a time to die." Isn't it obvious that there is a time for birth? I heard a beautiful explanation from Rabbi Pesach Eliyahu Falk.

He told of a young couple, married for several years without children. They went to doctors, underwent treatments and prayed tearfully, but to no avail.

The years went by, their prayers unanswered. Ten years after they were married, they heard that a certain *tzaddik* was visiting their neighborhood and would be staying very close to their home. The wife turned to her husband and said, "Look, the *tzaddik* is practically coming to our door. Why not go and receive a *bracha* from him?" The husband agreed, and he went to the *tzaddik* who blessed the couple that they should have a child.

Within the year, the *bracha* was fulfilled. The wife was overjoyed, but she felt very frustrated. "What were we thinking all this time? We knew about this *tzaddik* even before we were married. Why did we not go to him sooner? We could have had a child nine years ago, and all these years of aggravation and anxiety could have been avoided!" Her husband explained, "We were not granted a child because of the *tzaddik's* blessing. On the contrary, Hashem sent the *tzaddik* to us because the time had come for us to have a child.

We did not think of it earlier, because the time had not yet come!" We must never regret what we could have done—we do our *hishtadlus*, and leave the rest to Hashem. And if things don't work out as we hope, we trust that this is Hashem's decision, and the best thing for us. 



gem

OF THE WEEK

FOR US BUT NOT OURS

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.

The Torah repeatedly emphasizes that shemita is a "Shabbos to Hashem," rather than a fallow year mandated for agricultural benefit.

While both *Shabbos* and *shemita* involve a cessation of work, their legal definitions differ based on their purpose.


On *Shabbos*, work is defined by the *melachos* (creative acts) used to build the *Mishkan*, including any derived activities (*toldos*). For instance, since planting is prohibited, anything that assists in growth—watering or pruning—is also forbidden. *shemita*, however, is limited to the activities named in the Torah.

We know this because the Torah specifically lists both planting and pruning; if one could be derived from the other, the repetition would be unnecessary. Similarly, it explicitly mentions harvesting, even though it shares the same functional nature as pruning. *continued on reverse side*

powerful
PRAYER 

BARUCH SHE'AMAR:
DIVINE RECKONING

Sometimes we are confused to see good people suffering while wicked people seem to prosper. The *Torah* tells us that sometimes a *tzaddik* will receive his punishment in this world in order to bring him into *Olam Haba* totally cleansed. And sometimes, a *rasha* gets his reward in this world for any *mitzvos* he has done.

That is why we say "Baruch chai l'ad v'kayam l'netzach." Hashem is eternal. He has plenty of time to repay every debt to both *tzaddikim* and *rashaim*. 

Adapted from Biur Tefillah (Ani Maamin Foundation)

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HEAR THE MESSAGES

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation


We read the stories of ancient times in the *Tanach*. The prophets warned the nation for hundreds of years that a terrible churban would come if they didn't return to the path of Torah.

The first chapter of *Yeshaya* describes the destruction of *Yerushalyim* and the land of *Yehuda*, about two hundred years before the predictions came true. It's one thing to ignore such prophecies when life is good, the national economy is still thriving and the army is strong. The cities are fortified and there is no indication whatsoever of an imminent catastrophe. However, that period of seeming security did not last. The ten tribes were attacked, slaughtered and exiled and their kingdom came to its end, resulting in the loss of about eighty percent of our people. The *nevi'im* now warned the land of *Yehuda* that precisely the same would befall them, for the exact sins committed by the ten tribes.

As had been predicted, *Nevuchadnetzar* became king of *Bavel*, and attacked the Jewish nation of *Yehuda* just one year later. For the next eighteen years there was no tranquility in the land. The false prophets had been lulling the people into a false sense of security by telling them that *Nevuchadnetzar* would never come. *Shalom Shalom!* Finally, He came with a massive army, together with the armies of numerous northern kings who were subordinate to him. The *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed, and the remainder of the people were exiled to *Bavel*. Still there was no wave of *teshuva*. Indeed, we are told that many Jewish men were marrying foreign wives.

We think to ourselves: Were they crazy? Didn't they get the heavenly message that they need to shape up and do *teshuva*? After the threat of annihilation by *Haman* in the story of Purim, it didn't take long for the masses to turn away from their Creator again. The era of the second *Bais Hamikdash* was one of great decline for most Jews.

It seems to be most puzzling, indeed. But wait a minute! Is it any different today? Have we not received message after message from heaven for decades? When the state of Israel was founded, the masses were confident that we would now find peace and tranquility. With a strong army and an air force, the surrounding Arab countries will be afraid to harm us. Could we have imagined that they would develop a culture that allowed that to commit suicide or ramming attacks and not be concerned about dying.

With about 80% of the Jewish people either intermarried or at least assimilated, and worldwide antisemitism up to the sky, isn't it time to hearken to the heavenly messages. It is certainly true that the ones who need it most don't read my weekly column, but we who know better must do our part in hearing the messages from above and performing the correct *teshuva*. 


To be continued...

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This technical difference reflects their distinct spiritual goals. The mitzvah of Shabbos proclaims Hashem as the Creator of the universe. By refraining from creative labor, we acknowledge that man possesses no true creative power; we merely manipulate what Hashem has already brought into existence.

In contrast, Shmita is an acknowledgment of Hashem as the ultimate Owner of the Land of Israel. To fulfill this, we only need to give up our ownership and declare Hashem the true Owner, leaving every aspect of the production and harvest of the seventh year to Him.

This creates the understanding that the land is not ours at all, but belongs only to Hashem, and that all of our sustenance comes from Him, not our own work. By not planting, pruning, or storing whatever happens to grow, and by opening our fields to all — both man and beast — we are showing that Hashem is the true owner of the land and its fields.

We are relying on Hashem to get us through the seventh, and most of the eighth year, and so the soil of the whole country is stamped as ownerless for a year and made into a national public declaration that the Jewish people are not the owners of the Jewish Land, but merely tenants. 



wonder WORLD

FALLOW GROUND



Is nutrition under siege?

A 1996 study by Alex Jack titled "Nutrition Under Siege" reveals a concerning pattern: our produce is becoming less nutritious as over farming depletes the minerals in the soil. To combat this, researchers suggest a simple solution—letting the land lie fallow. Or, better yet, allow livestock to pasture on the resting land.

In *Parashas Behar*, Hashem commands us to do exactly this every seventh year. The benefits are profound: grazing animals provide natural fertilizer, while the rest period allows soil microorganisms to diversify and nutrient levels to replenish. Additionally, parasites and diseases die off without a host. Beyond improved nutrition, this "*Shabbos for the land*", which boosts yields. One study found that broccoli planted in a field that had been left to fallow for one year produced 30 more cartons per acre than in continuously farmed soil. While we cannot claim this is the sole reason for the *mitzvah*, we can certainly marvel at the "natural" effects of following it!