

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

B'HAR-B'CHUKOTAI

"And G-d spoke to Moshe at Mt. Sinai saying: Speak to the children of Israel and say unto them, when you come into the Land which I give to you, let the Land rest a Shabbat to G-d." (Vayikra 25:1-2)

Rashi addresses this pasuk and asks, "What does the laws of the Sabbatical year have to do with Mt. Sinai?" Rashi's response that just as the laws of the Sabbatical year spoken at Mt. Sinai...

The obvious question arises. Why this particular piece of legislation chosen to teach us that all the Torah laws originated at Sinai?

Every seventh year we let the land lie fallow. Plowing, planting and harvesting all prohibited. They set sanctity aside for the fruits that grow. Another kind of Shabbat that we meet every seven days is perhaps different but has many similar features. Both deeply affect the economy and both teach us that the world has a Divine Creator. The world was not the result of some spontaneous creation by accident. G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. We use this

divine lesson to withdraw ourselves once a week from Creation. The weekly Shabbat gives man his spiritual freedom. We realize that we are masters of - and not the slave to - our surroundings.

Similarly, the Sabbatical year corrects our perspective of the world. It is a year of rest as for as agriculture is concerned.

The produce is ownerless, debts cancelled, and we are free and equal. Just as the freedom of the individual is an important ideal in the Torah, so is the freedom of the land from man's absolute ownership. The lesson is that whatever we have, it is temporary. It can be subject to recall anytime. G-d says to man, "For you are strangers and alien residents with Me." Man is a resident guest in G-d's world. We own no wealth or possessions; they are all gifts from G-d. Now, perhaps, we can understand the significance of the laws of the Sabbatical year. When we recognize that everything belongs to its Creator, and that all people are His children, that each of us is only temporary sojourner in the land, then we earn the right to be citizens in the Kingdom of G-d, and then we are ready to accept all His rules given to us at Sinai.

It is here, at the mention of Sh'mita that we can really appreciate all the details of the laws given to Moshe at

Mt. Sinai and see beyond the transcendental experience. The Sabbatical year is so crucial in conceiving what we received at Sinai that at the end of Parshat B'chukotai, the Torah warns us that exile and desolation in the Land of Israel is Divine compensation for all the Sabbatical years unobserved.

The events that surround us for the past year, only stresses to us how fragile and temporary life is on this world and how important for us to take advantage of the time we have here. 🏰