בס"ד

# Shmitah in the Torah & Beyond

*Source Sheet by* [*Daria Jacobs-Velde*](https://www.sefaria.org/profile/daria-jacobs-velde)

*Based on* [*a sheet*](https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/3649) *by* [*Ris Golden-Sieradski*](https://www.sefaria.org/profile/ris-golden-sieradski-)

[**שמות כ״ג:ט׳-י״א**](https://www.sefaria.org/Exodus.23.9-11)

(ט) וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי גֵרִים הֱיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם. (י) וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע אֶת אַרְצֶךָ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ. (יא) וְהַשְּׁבִיעִת תִּשְׁמְטֶנָּה וּנְטַשְׁתָּהּ וְאָכְלוּ אֶבְיֹנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְיִתְרָם תֹּאכַל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה כֵּן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְכַרְמְךָ לְזֵיתֶךָ.

[**Exodus 23:9-11**](https://www.sefaria.org/Exodus.23.9-11)

(9) And a stranger shalt thou not oppress; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. (10) And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and gather in the increase thereof; (11) but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

*According to this text, what is the main intention and purpose of this time period?*

*Who benefits from Shmita?*

*What is happening in our fields during this year of Shmita?*

[**ויקרא כ״ה:א׳-ז׳**](https://www.sefaria.org/Leviticus.25.1-7)

(א) וַיְדַבֵּר יקוק אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר. (ב) דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבְתָה הָאָרֶץ שַׁבָּת לַיקוק. (ג) שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע שָׂדֶךָ וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְמֹר כַּרְמֶךָ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ. (ד) וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן יִהְיֶה לָאָרֶץ שַׁבָּת לַיקוק שָׂדְךָ לֹא תִזְרָע וְכַרְמְךָ לֹא תִזְמֹר. (ה) אֵת סְפִיחַ קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִקְצוֹר וְאֶת עִנְּבֵי נְזִירֶךָ לֹא תִבְצֹר שְׁנַת שַׁבָּתוֹן יִהְיֶה לָאָרֶץ. (ו) וְהָיְתָה שַׁבַּת הָאָרֶץ לָכֶם לְאָכְלָה לְךָ וּלְעַבְדְּךָ וְלַאֲמָתֶךָ וְלִשְׂכִירְךָ וּלְתוֹשָׁבְךָ הַגָּרִים עִמָּךְ. (ז) וְלִבְהֶמְתְּךָ וְלַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְצֶךָ תִּהְיֶה כָל תְּבוּאָתָהּ לֶאֱכֹל.

[**Leviticus 25:1-7**](https://www.sefaria.org/Leviticus.25.1-7)

(1) And the LORD spoke unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying: (2) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. (3) Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the produce thereof. (4) But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto the LORD; thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. (5) That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather; it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. (6) And the sabbath-produce of the land shall be for food for you: for thee, and for thy servant and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant and for the settler by thy side that sojourn with thee; (7) and for thy cattle, and for the beasts that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be for food.

*How does this text add to our understanding of Shmita from the previous source?*

*What are the agricultural activities that are not practiced in the seventh year?*

*Does there seem to be something potentially conflicting about the instructions given in this text?*

[**דברים ט״ו**](https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.15)

(א) מִקֵּ֥ץ שֶֽׁבַע־שָׁנִ֖ים תַּעֲשֶׂ֥ה שְׁמִטָּֽה׃ (ב) וְזֶה֮ דְּבַ֣ר הַשְּׁמִטָּה֒ שָׁמ֗וֹט כָּל־בַּ֙עַל֙ מַשֵּׁ֣ה יָד֔וֹ אֲשֶׁ֥ר יַשֶּׁ֖ה בְּרֵעֵ֑הוּ לֹֽא־יִגֹּ֤שׂ אֶת־רֵעֵ֙הוּ֙ וְאֶת־אָחִ֔יו כִּֽי־קָרָ֥א שְׁמִטָּ֖ה לַֽיקוק׃ ... (ד) אֶ֕פֶס כִּ֛י לֹ֥א יִֽהְיֶה־בְּךָ֖ אֶבְי֑וֹן כִּֽי־בָרֵ֤ךְ יְבָֽרֶכְךָ֙ יקוק בָּאָ֕רֶץ אֲשֶׁר֙ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֔יךָ נֹֽתֵן־לְךָ֥ נַחֲלָ֖ה לְרִשְׁתָּֽהּ׃ (ה) רַ֚ק אִם־שָׁמ֣וֹעַ תִּשְׁמַ֔ע בְּק֖וֹל יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֑יךָ לִשְׁמֹ֤ר לַעֲשׂוֹת֙ אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָ֣ה הַזֹּ֔את אֲשֶׁ֛ר אָנֹכִ֥י מְצַוְּךָ֖ הַיּֽוֹם׃ (ו)...(ס) (ז) כִּֽי־יִהְיֶה֩ בְךָ֨ אֶבְי֜וֹן מֵאַחַ֤ד אַחֶ֙יךָ֙ בְּאַחַ֣ד שְׁעָרֶ֔יךָ בְּאַ֨רְצְךָ֔ אֲשֶׁר־יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֖יךָ נֹתֵ֣ן לָ֑ךְ לֹ֧א תְאַמֵּ֣ץ אֶת־לְבָבְךָ֗ וְלֹ֤א תִקְפֹּץ֙ אֶת־יָ֣דְךָ֔ מֵאָחִ֖יךָ הָאֶבְיֽוֹן׃ (ח) כִּֽי־פָתֹ֧חַ תִּפְתַּ֛ח אֶת־יָדְךָ֖ ל֑וֹ וְהַעֲבֵט֙ תַּעֲבִיטֶ֔נּוּ דֵּ֚י מַחְסֹר֔וֹ אֲשֶׁ֥ר יֶחְסַ֖ר לֽוֹ׃ (ט) הִשָּׁ֣מֶר לְךָ֡ פֶּן־יִהְיֶ֣ה דָבָר֩ עִם־לְבָבְךָ֨ בְלִיַּ֜עַל לֵאמֹ֗ר קָֽרְבָ֣ה שְׁנַֽת־הַשֶּׁבַע֮ שְׁנַ֣ת הַשְּׁמִטָּה֒ וְרָעָ֣ה עֵֽינְךָ֗ בְּאָחִ֙יךָ֙ הָֽאֶבְי֔וֹן וְלֹ֥א תִתֵּ֖ן ל֑וֹ וְקָרָ֤א עָלֶ֙יךָ֙ אֶל־יקוק וְהָיָ֥ה בְךָ֖ חֵֽטְא׃ (י) נָת֤וֹן תִּתֵּן֙ ל֔וֹ וְלֹא־יֵרַ֥ע לְבָבְךָ֖ בְּתִתְּךָ֣ ל֑וֹ כִּ֞י בִּגְלַ֣ל ׀ הַדָּבָ֣ר הַזֶּ֗ה יְבָרֶכְךָ֙ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֔יךָ בְּכָֽל־מַעֲשֶׂ֔ךָ וּבְכֹ֖ל מִשְׁלַ֥ח יָדֶֽךָ׃ (יא) כִּ֛י לֹא־יֶחְדַּ֥ל אֶבְי֖וֹן מִקֶּ֣רֶב הָאָ֑רֶץ עַל־כֵּ֞ן אָנֹכִ֤י מְצַוְּךָ֙ לֵאמֹ֔ר פָּ֠תֹחַ תִּפְתַּ֨ח אֶת־יָדְךָ֜ לְאָחִ֧יךָ לַעֲנִיֶּ֛ךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ֖ בְּאַרְצֶֽךָ׃ (ס)

(יב) כִּֽי־יִמָּכֵ֨ר לְךָ֜ אָחִ֣יךָ הָֽעִבְרִ֗י א֚וֹ הָֽעִבְרִיָּ֔ה וַעֲבָֽדְךָ֖ שֵׁ֣שׁ שָׁנִ֑ים וּבַשָּׁנָה֙ הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔ת תְּשַׁלְּחֶ֥נּוּ חָפְשִׁ֖י מֵעִמָּֽךְ׃ (יג) וְכִֽי־תְשַׁלְּחֶ֥נּוּ חָפְשִׁ֖י מֵֽעִמָּ֑ךְ לֹ֥א תְשַׁלְּחֶ֖נּוּ רֵיקָֽם׃ (יד) הַעֲנֵ֤יק תַּעֲנִיק֙ ל֔וֹ מִצֹּ֣אנְךָ֔ וּמִֽגָּרְנְךָ֖ וּמִיִּקְבֶ֑ךָ אֲשֶׁ֧ר בֵּרַכְךָ֛ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֖יךָ תִּתֶּן־לֽוֹ׃ (טו) וְזָכַרְתָּ֗ כִּ֣י עֶ֤בֶד הָיִ֙יתָ֙ בְּאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם וַֽיִּפְדְּךָ֖ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֑יךָ עַל־כֵּ֞ן אָנֹכִ֧י מְצַוְּךָ֛ אֶת־הַדָּבָ֥ר הַזֶּ֖ה הַיּֽוֹם׃...(יח) לֹא־יִקְשֶׁ֣ה בְעֵינֶ֗ךָ בְּשַׁלֵּֽחֲךָ֙ אֹת֤וֹ חָפְשִׁי֙ מֵֽעִמָּ֔ךְ כִּ֗י מִשְׁנֶה֙ שְׂכַ֣ר שָׂכִ֔יר עֲבָֽדְךָ֖ שֵׁ֣שׁ שָׁנִ֑ים וּבֵֽרַכְךָ֙ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֔יךָ בְּכֹ֖ל אֲשֶׁ֥ר תַּעֲשֶֽׂה׃ (פ)

[**Deuteronomy 15**](https://www.sefaria.org/Deuteronomy.15)

(1) (At the end of) [e]very seventh year you shall practice *shmitah/* remission of debts.

(2) This shall be the nature of the remission: every creditor shall remit the due that he claims from his fellow; he shall not dun his fellow or kinsman, for the remission proclaimed is of the LORD.

(4) There shall be no needy among you—since the LORD your God will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a hereditary portion— (5) if only you heed the LORD your God and take care to keep all this Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day.

(7) If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kinsmen in any of your settlements in the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kinsman. (8) Rather, you must open your hand and lend him sufficient for whatever he needs. (9) Beware lest you harbor the base thought, “The seventh year, the year of remission, is approaching,” so that you are mean to your needy kinsman and give him nothing. He will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will incur guilt. (10) Give to him readily and have no regrets when you do so, for in return the LORD your God will bless you in all your efforts and in all your undertakings. (11) For there will never cease to be needy ones in your land, which is why I command you: open your hand to the poor and needy kinsman in your land.

(12) If a fellow Hebrew, man or woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall set him free. (13) When you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed: (14) Furnish him out of the flock, threshing floor, and vat, with which the LORD your God has blessed you. (15) Bear in mind that you were slaves in the land of Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I enjoin this commandment upon you today...(18) When you do set him free, do not feel aggrieved; for in the six years he has given you double the service of a hired man. Moreover, the LORD your God will bless you in all you do.

*What does the text from Deut. add to our understanding of Shmitah?*

*What is challenging about Shmitah?What is inspiring about Shmitah?*

It is a commandment to divest one’s self from everything that the land produces in the seventh year, as Exodus 23.11 states: “In the seventh year, you shall leave it untended and unharvested.” Anyone who locks his vineyard or fences off his agricultural field in the Sabbatical year has nullified a positive commandment. This also holds true if he gathered all of his produce into his home. Instead, he should leave everything ownerless [*hefker*]. Thus everyone, [rich and poor], have equal rights in every place, as Exodus 23.11 states: “And the poor of your people shall partake of it.” One may only bring a small amount of produce into one’s home, just as one brings from ownerless property.

*– Rambam, Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shmita v’Yovel, 4.24*

*According to the Rambam, what is the landowner allowed to do and not allowed to do with his/her produce during the Shmittah year?*

*How does the concept of "hefker" (ownerless) add to our understanding of the land and its bounty during the Shmittah year?*

*Who benefits from Shmittah? What questions are you left with?*

**שבת ל״ג א:ה׳**

בַּעֲוֹן גִּלּוּי עֲרָיוֹת וַעֲבוֹדָה זָרָה וְהַשְׁמָטַת שְׁמִיטִּין וְיוֹבְלוֹת — גָּלוּת בָּא לָעוֹלָם, וּמַגְלִין אוֹתָן, וּבָאִין אֲחֵרִים וְיוֹשְׁבִין בִּמְקוֹמָן. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״כִּי אֶת כׇּל הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵל עָשׂוּ אַנְשֵׁי הָאָרֶץ וְגוֹ׳״, וּכְתִיב: ״וַתִּטְמָא הָאָרֶץ וָאֶפְקוֹד עֲוֹנָהּ עָלֶיהָ וְגוֹ׳״, וּכְתִיב: ״וְלֹא תָקִיא הָאָרֶץ אֶתְכֶם בְּטַמַּאֲכֶם אוֹתָהּ״.

[**Shabbat 33a:5**](https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat.33a.5)

**Sue to the sin of prohibited sexual relations, and idol worship, and** failure to let the land **lie fallow** during **the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years, exile comes to the world ...** **And it is written: “And the land was defiled, therefore I did visit the iniquity thereof upon it,** and the land expelled her inhabitants” (Leviticus 18:25).

*What does it mean for the whole world to be in exile? What does that have to do with Shmitah?*

The matter of Shmita and Yovel correspond to the way of acting, mentioned in the *Pirkei Avot* [Ethics of the Fathers, 5:10]: 'One who says "What's mine is yours, and what's yours is yours," this is a righteous person'.

*- Mea Shiloach (19th Century)*

With gratitude to [Ris Golden-Sieradski](http://docs.google.com/undefined) and "We Will Return to You: A Jewish Sourcebook on Land, Agriculture, and Sustainability" created by the Kayam Farm @ Pearlstone

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