|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [**1**](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926#v=1). And God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai, saying: |  | **א.**וַיְדַבֵּר יְהֹוָה אֶל משֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר: |
| **[2](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926" \l "v=2)**. Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: When you come to the land that I am giving you, the land shall have a Shabbat [a ceasing of work], a Shabbat of God. |  | **ב.**דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבְתָה הָאָרֶץ שַׁבָּת לַיהֹוָה: |
| **[3](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926" \l "v=3)**.  Six years you are to sow your field, and six years you are to prune your vineyard and gather its produce. |  | **ג.**שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע שָׂדֶךָ וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְמֹר כַּרְמֶךָ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ: |
| [**4**](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926#v=4). But in the seventh year there will be Shabbat, a Sabbatical [a period free of routine work] for the land; a Shabbat of God; your field you are not to sow, your vineyard you are not to prune. |  | **ד.**וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹן יִהְיֶה לָאָרֶץ שַׁבָּת לַיהֹוָה שָׂדְךָ לֹא תִזְרָע וְכַרְמְךָ לֹא תִזְמֹר: |
| **[5](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926" \l "v=5)**. The after-growth\* of your harvest you shall not harvest, and the grapes you had set aside you shall not pick. A Shabbat of sabbatical it will be for the land.  *[ \*סְפִיחַ - aftergrowth: Growth that has sprung up on its own without being sown– eg, from seeds that fell last harvest and took root]* |  | **ה.**אֵת סְפִיחַ קְצִירְךָ לֹא תִקְצוֹר וְאֶת עִנְּבֵי נְזִירֶךָ לֹא תִבְצֹר שְׁנַת שַׁבָּתוֹן יִהְיֶה לָאָרֶץ: |
| **[6](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926" \l "v=6)**. And [the produce of] the Shabbat of the land shall be yours, for you to eat and for your male slaves and female slaves, and for your hired worker and resident [non-Israelite] who live with you, |  | **ו.**וְהָיְתָה שַׁבַּת הָאָרֶץ לָכֶם לְאָכְלָה לְךָ וּלְעַבְדְּךָ וְלַאֲמָתֶךָ וְלִשְׂכִירְךָ וּלְתוֹשָׁבְךָ הַגָּרִים עִמָּךְ: |
| **[7](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9926" \l "v=7)**. And for your domestic animals and the wild animals that are in your land, shall be all [the land’s] produce to eat. |  | **ז.**וְלִבְהֶמְתְּךָ וְלַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְצֶךָ תִּהְיֶה כָל תְּבוּאָתָהּ לֶאֱכֹל: |

**Leading Idea: A Shabbat for the land.**

Vayikra 25:2-7 speaks to the land being given a “Shabbat” – a break from the cycle of being planted, pruned and harvested. Yet what does it mean for land to be given a period in which it doesn’t do work? Is this meant literally or is the land being anthropomorphized? And how should we read the preposition in this case ( שַׁבָּת **לַ**יהֹוָה / Shabbat **of** God): as a Shabbat *belonging to* God? Shabbat *dedicated to* God? Shabbat *for* God?

**Exercise: the meanings of “of” (“...לַ”) in** Shabbat **of** God / שַׁבָּת **לַ**יהֹוָה

*Replace the preposition ‘of’ in the sentences 1-4 with another phrase a-d below. You can only use each letter once.*

1. Picking up the coat, I noticed that it was the coat of Rachel’s father
2. It was a coat of many colors
3. On the pocket was the logo of the company where he worked.
4. Inside the pocket was a small book of poetry

1. dedicated to
2. belonging to
3. symbolizing / representing
4. with/ containing

In the case of שַׁבָּת לַיהֹוָה / Shabbat of God- what do you think ‘of’ means in this context?

**Discussion Plan: When is something considered work?**

For each of these sentences, decide if these actions are a form of ‘work’,

1. A boy delivering papers before school
2. A musician playing music at a restaurant in exchange for a free meal.
3. A horse pulling a cart
4. A bird building nest
5. A flower opening in the sun
6. The field producing a good crop of tomatoes
7. The farmer growing a good crop of tomatoes

Decide whether the word’ work’ is being used *literally* or whether we are using if *figuratively* (e.g.; anthropomorphizing the act of working). What does the word ‘work’ mean in each case?

1. “When he insulted me I worked hard to control my anger”
2. “The printer worked away all afternoon printing the newsletter”
3. “The stream worked its way down the valley”
4. “Leading up to the big game, she worked on her volleyball serve”
5. “A housewife’s work is never done”

**Discussion Plan: Work and Rest.**

1. If your watch ceases working – is it resting?
2. If your heart ceases beating – has it stopped working? Is it resting?
3. If I stop working at 5:00pm, does that mean that after 5pm I am resting? Does it mean that after 5pm I am resting *from my work*? (if so,what might ‘resting’mean?)
4. If you are doing homework and decide to ‘give it a rest’ – what does this mean? (aren’t *you* the one resting from *it*?)
5. If a bird lands on a branch and stays a while – is it resting on the branch? If so, what is it resting from?
6. Can a dog rest? If so what is it doing when it rests? What is it resting from?
7. If a tree ceases growing in winter, is it resting?
8. When a bear ceases moving in its cave in winter, is it resting? What is it resting from?
9. When a cow produces milk, is it working?
10. When a tree produces fruit – is it working toward the harvest?
11. If someone says they have a ‘working farm’ – what do they mean?
12. Could I rest when I am at work?
13. Can I work at resting?

**Leading Idea: Shabbat on the seventh day and Shabbat in the seventh year.**

In Behar the seventh year is designated as the ‘Shabbat of the Land’ – how does this Shabbat parallel the injunction for observing a Shabbat on the seventh day? In Behar we told the seventh year is a ‘Shabbat of God’ – “שַׁבָּת לַיהֹוָה” - a year of rest from farming, but not why it is designated as such. However if we look at the other two references in Torah to Shabbat of the land – Shemot 23 9:12 and Devarim 15:2 we learn more about the seventh year. Taking an inter-textual approach exposes parallels between observing the seventh day as Shabbat (Shemot 20 and Devarim 5) and the seventh year as Shabbat (Behar, Shemot 23:6-10 and Devarim 15:2-15). In the selection from Devarim offered (dealing with Debt, and not dealing with release of slaves or land holdings). One of the nuances of language in dealing with these additional texts of Shmittah involves the difference between ‘letting go’ of something in the sense of releasing it from your control תִּשְׁמְטֶנָּה) ) ; ‘letting go’ in the sense of leaving it alone (leaving it to its own devices – וּנְטַשְׁתָּהּ) and ‘letting something go’ or releasing it in the sense of giving it away (Debt).

Furthermore, in these two passages, there are two reasons offered. One contrasts work and rest (connecting Shabbat of the land to rest on the seventh day of creation) reminding us that we are commanded to rest in recognition that this is a day dedicated to God, the other reason connects the observance of Shabbat to the exodus from Egypt, reminding us that in Israelite society no-one should be in the position we were in Egypt as slaves. On the seventh year we break the cycle of economic and civic oppression.

**Exercise: Finding parallels:**

1. Each of the items on the left hand side parallels an item on the right hand side. Find the pair then enter them into the appropriate quadrant below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * The family celebrates my birthday * You play in a soccer match against another school * You take part in national Clean-up day * You post a picture on facebook * America gives international aid to Africa | * The National Basketball team plays against a team in another country * The country observes President’s Day * You give Tzeddakah * You pick up litter in the school yard * You email a friend a birthday card. |

**Private/public**

**Local/National**

**Personal/Social**

**Other**

1. *Discuss the passages below together: What do you think the parallels are between Shabbat as a day of the week and Shabbat as the seventh year?*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **שמות כ:ח-יא**  זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָל מְלַאכְתֶּךָ: וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָל מְלָאכָה אַתָּה וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ עַבְדְּךָ וַאֲמָתְךָ וּבְהֶמְתֶּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהֹוָה אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶת הַיָּם וְאֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּם וַיָּנַח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ יְהֹוָה אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ:  **Shemot 20:8-11**  Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it. For six days you are to serve and perform all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Adonai, your God; you are not to make any kind of work, not you, your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your animals, nor the non-Israelite who is in your cities. For in six days God made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in it, and God rested on the seventh day. Therefore, God blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it. | | **שמות כג:ו-יב**  וְגֵר לֹא תִלְחָץ וְאַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת נֶפֶשׁ הַגֵּר כִּי גֵרִים הֱיִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע אֶת אַרְצֶךָ וְאָסַפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ:  וְהַשְּׁבִיעִת **תִּשְׁמְטֶנָּה** וּ**נְטַשְׁתָּהּ** וְאָכְלוּ אֶבְיֹנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְיִתְרָם תֹּאכַל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה כֵּן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְכַרְמְךָ לְזֵיתֶךָ: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי תִּשְׁבֹּת לְמַעַן יָנוּחַ שׁוֹרְךָ וַחֲמֹרֶךָ וְיִנָּפֵשׁ בֶּן אֲמָתְךָ וְהַגֵּר:  **Shemot 23:9-12**  The stranger [non-Israelite living amongst you] you are not to oppress, for you yourselves know the feelings of the stranger, since strangers you were in the land of Egypt. For six years you are to sow your land and gather in its produce. But in the seventh [year] you shall **let it go it** and **leave it alone**; that the needy of your people shall eat [it], and what they leave over, the animals [wildlife] of the field may eat. Do this also to your vineyard [and] to your olive-grove. For six days you are to make your work, but on the seventh day you are to cease, in order that your ox and your donkey shall rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed. |
| **דברים ה:יב-טו**  שָׁמוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּךָ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ :שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלַאכְתֶּךָ: וְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי שַׁבָּת לַיהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה כָל מְלָאכָה אַתָּה | וּבִנְךָ וּבִתֶּךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וַאֲמָתֶךָ וְשׁוֹרְךָ וַחֲמֹרְךָ וְכָל בְּהֶמְתֶּךָ וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ לְמַעַן יָנוּחַ עַבְדְּךָ וַאֲמָתְךָ כָּמוֹךָ:וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִאֲךָ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבִזְרֹעַ נְטוּיָה עַל כֵּן צִוְּךָ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:  **Devarim 5:12-15**  Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days may you work, and perform all your labor, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall perform no labor, neither you, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your ox, your donkey, any of your livestock, nor the stranger who is within your cities, in order that your manservant and your maidservant may rest like you. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God took you out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord, your God, commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. | **דברים טו:א-טו (extracts)**  **א**. מִקֵּץ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה שְׁמִטָּה: **ב**. וְזֶה דְּבַר הַשְּׁמִטָּה שָׁמוֹט כָּל בַּעַל מַשֵּׁה יָדוֹ אֲשֶׁר יַשֶּׁה בְּרֵעֵהוּ לֹא יִגֹּשׂ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ וְאֶת אָחִיו כִּי קָרָא שְׁמִטָּה לַיהֹוָה: ....  **ז.** כִּי יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחַד אַחֶיךָ בְּאַחַד שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּאַרְצְךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ לֹא תְאַמֵּץ אֶת לְבָבְךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן: **ח**. כִּי פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ לוֹ וְהַעֲבֵט תַּעֲבִיטֶנּוּ דֵּי מַחְסֹרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יֶחְסַר לוֹ: ...  **י.** נָתוֹן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא יֵרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִתְּךָ לוֹ כִּי בִּגְלַל | הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל מַעֲשֶׂךָ וּבְכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ: י**א.** כִּי לֹא יֶחְדַּל אֶבְיוֹן מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ עַל כֵּן אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ לֵאמֹר פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ לְאָחִיךָ לַּעֲנִיֶּךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ:  **טו**. וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּפְדְּךָ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל כֵּן אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה הַיּוֹם:  **Devarim 15:1-15 [extracts]**  **1**. At the end of seven years you will make a letting-go [a release].  **2.** And this is the manner of letting-go; every creditor is to release from his hand what he lent to his neighbor; he is not to oppress his neighbor or his brother, because the [time of] release of God has arrived...  **7.** When there is among you a needy person, from any-one of your brothers within one of your gates [cities], in the land God is giving you, you are not to harden your heart, you are not to shut your hand to your brother, the needy-one..  **8**. Rather, you are to open an open hand to him, you are to lend him lendings sufficient for his lack, which he is lacking.  **9**.  Take care in case there is a word in your heart, a low one, saying, "The seventh year, the year of release is approaching," and your eye is set on doing ill to your brother, the needy-one, and you not give to him, so that he cries out to God against you, for it will then be a sin to you....  **11**. For the needy will never be gone from within the land. Therefore, I command you, saying, you are to open an open hand to your brother, to your poor one, and to your needy one in your land.  **15.** And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord, your God, redeemed you; therefore, I am commanding you this thing today. | |

**Discussion Plan: Shmittah: Ceasing, Releasing. Letting go and Letting be**

*The seventh year is referred to in different ways – sometimes as a Shabbat of the Land (a ceasing or ‘letting go’ of the activity of farming the land) and sometimes as Shmittah (a ‘letting go’ of ownership, of money owed to us, food, and more). But what is involved in letting go of something? Explore what might be involved in ‘letting go’ in each of the following cases.*

1. *Replace the word in bold with the one that fits best in the brackets.*
2. “At first I checked facebook every day, but after a few months I **ceased** dong that.” (gave up, let go of)
3. “After I **let go** of my anger I no longer felt so bad. (released my anger, stopped feeling angry)
4. “After a while, I stopped nagging my brother and **let him go** to play with his friends (let him be, waived my rights to him, abandoned him)
5. “At first when my baby-brother’s cried all night it upset me, but after a while I learnt to **let it go**. (let it be, ignore It, cease caring about it)
6. “The librarian **released** the computer into my care.” (let go of the control of it, gave up ownership of it / waived her rights to it).
7. “The house next door was in bad shape - the owners were **letting it go** to ruins.” (ceasing care of it, abandoning it, waiving their right to it)

1. What is the difference between:
2. Letting go of the ball, when you throw it

Letting go of the ball so someone else can have a turn playing with it.

1. Letting go of your anger by yelling

Letting go of your anger by breathing deeply until you calm down.

1. Letting go of the chair lift when you get to the top of the mountain

Letting go of your parent’s hand

1. Letting go of a fear

Letting go of something that worries you.

*How is the tension between “You shall not eat the produce of your land” and “Everyone shall eat the produce of the Sabbatical year” resolved in the following sources? What does “letting go” of the land mean in each case?*

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| לא תקצור: להיות מחזיק בו כשאר קציר, אלא הפקר יהיה לכל:  You shall not reap: to keep it like a regular harvest, but it must be rendered ownerless, [and available] for everyone [to take at will].   |  | | --- | | **לך ולעבדך ולאמתך:**לפי שנאמר (שמות כג יא) ואכלו אביוני עמך, יכול יהיו אסורים באכילה לעשירים, תלמוד לומר לך ולעבדך ולאמתך, הרי בעלים ועבדים ושפחות אמורים כאן:  **for you, for your male and female slaves:**Since the Torah says [regarding Shemittah], “and the poor of your people shall eat [it]” (Exod. 23:11), one might think that it [the produce of the Shemittah year] is prohibited to be eaten by wealthy people. Torah, therefore, says here, “for you, for your male and female slaves,”-we see that the [wealthy] owners and the male and female slaves are included here [to permit them also to eat of the Shemittah year produce].  *Rashi on Behar* |   *Rashi on Behar* |

פר החינוך

פד. מצות שמטת קרקעות.  
Sefer HaHinuch, 84

ועוד יש תועלת, נמצא בדבר לקנות בזה מדת הותרנות

, כי אין נדיב כנותן מבלי תקוה אל הגמול.

A further benefit from this [letting go] is to acquire the virtue of waiving one’s rights, *because a donor is not equal to the one who gives without any hope of reward.*

ועוד יש תועלת אחרת, נמצא בזה שיוסיף האדם בטחון בשם יתברך, כי כל המוצא עם לבבו לתת ולהפקיר לעולם כל גדולי קרקעותיו ונחלת אבותיו הגדלים בכל שנה אחת ומלמד בכך הוא וכל המשפחה כל ימיו, לא תחזק בו לעולם מדת הכילות הרבה ולא מעוט הבטחון

Yet a further benefit is that a person increases his faith in God as a result.” When someone is able to give away and make ownerless for the entire world all that is grows on his land and his ancestral heritage during an entire year and is taught to do this, neither he nor his family will ever become excessively greedy or mean or lacking in faith.

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**Leading Idea: For our own sake or for the sake of the other?**

We have a dog – it is my job to take it out each morning for a walk. But what brings me and the dog together at that moment? Do I go for a walk for the sake of the dog? Or do I go for that walk because it is good for me? Furthermore, if I do it for the sake of the dog, is it just an *instrumental* necessity (to keep the dog healthy) or is it something more than that (my dog needs walking for the sake of its own state of being – *to be a happy dog*?). this second explanation might be called an *ontological* explanation; it is to do with its mode of being, or existing, in the world. Indeed we can ask the same question if I am waking the dog for my own sake – am I doing it as an instrumental necessity (if I didn’t the dog would get sick, and that would impact on my enjoyment in having a dog in the house), or am I doing this because going for a walk is good for my own state of being – it offers me the opportunity to show care and responsibility and a way of relating to my neighborhood environment- it brings out a good side of me. We can represent these four variables in the following way:

For the sake of the Other (the dog) For my own sake

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| Dogs require walking to stay healthy – as a consequence, I take him for a walk every morning. | I like(and benefit from) having a healthy dog in the house – as a consequence, I take him for walks every morning |
| Dogs need walking – their mode of being is as a walking, sniffing, inquisitive being - and the act of walking my dog (where it can engage in these ways of being in the world) keeps my dog happy as a dog. | Taking the dog for a walk affects my own mode of being in the world. I relate to the world around me differently- it brings out the relational caring, responsible and friendly aspect of being human. |

*Each of these ways of viewing things comes into play in this Parashah around the idea of* ***a******Shabbat for the land****. We can ask - is the Shabbat of the land for the lands sake , or for our sake?, and is it given for instrumental ends or in recognition of its own mode of existence? Like the case with the dog, we can play out four possibilities. These possibilities connect to different voices in our tradition, some of which are provided in the accompanying secondary sources.*

Instrumental account

Ontological

account

Ontological

account

* ***The Shabbat of the land is for the land’s sake*** – the weight here is on the injunction that the land will have a Shabbat every seven years. When it has this status, we are not to engage in our regular cycles of planting, tending to the land and reaping. That is, our ceasing to be able to ’work the land’ is a *consequence* of its Shabbat (in order that we do not interrupt/break its shabbaton).

The call for a Shabbat for the land for the land’s sake can be seen according to instrumental reasons or metaphysical reasons.

* + *An Instrumental reason*: When the land is given a rest from being worked it allows the nutrients to come back into balance – we do this both for the sake of the health of the land - to keep the land healthy and in balance.

*A metaphysical (or ontological) reason*: For the sake of its own mode of being. Resting the land from our labor allows it to just be, to exist, undisturbed by human agendas, as part of God’s creation.

* ***The Shabbat of the land is for our sake*** – the weight is on the injunction that every seven years we are to cease working the land. We cannot plant, tend to the fields or harvest the produce. This ceasing of our labor *constitutes* a Shabbat for the land.

The call for a Shabbat of the land for our sake can also be seen according to instrumental reasons or metaphysical (or ontological) reasons.

* + *Instrumental reasons*: (a) When the land is left fallow it comes back into balance – doing this enables the land to remain productive and we are able to continue to live off the land in the years ahead (for example, letting the animals come and graze means they will naturally fertilize it through their dung). (b) When we cease working the land it also frees us up to pursue other ends during this year (study, creative activity).
  + *A metaphysical (or ontological) reasons*: Experiencing a Shabbat of the land once every seven years leads us to experience and possibly internalize a different mode of being in the world – a different way of relating to other people and to the universe. Our ownership of land and our control over our land establishes a hierarchical social order (the hierarchy of ‘landowner’, ‘worker’, ‘resident’ and ‘slave’; a society of ‘have’s and ‘have not’s). When we cease to control land- and with it the production and ownership of food - we are returned to a natural social order where all of us exist as equals (equally vunerable and equally entitled), capable of living off the produce of the land as equals.

*This is a complex set of ideas – in the High School/Adult curricula this is introduced via a three-step activity – Part A and Part C are critical preparation for looking at the secondary sources, whether Part B is necessary depends on how well the students grasp the four logical possibilities arising from the combinations of these variables when they do Part A.*

*In Primary school the emphasis is on art A and B and only minimally on analyzing secondary sources.*

**........................**

**Leading Idea: The Public and the Private**

**Discussion Plan: (Part A)**

**For our own sake or for the sake of someone / something else?**

Discuss the following situations together and ask yourselves:

1. *For whose sake is this being done? (Is the person doing the action primarily doing it for themselves, or for someone/something else?) If both, which one is stronger?*
2. *Is it being done for instrumental reasons (because it serves your interests to attend to it this way) or as an expression of value ( for instance, so that something /someone can be at its/their best)? If both, which one is stronger?*
3. Your parents throw you a birthday party
4. You agree to wash the family car for extra pocket money
5. Your class goes to a nature reserve to pick up trash on ‘clean-up’ day.
6. You make sure to eat healthily and exercise.
7. You walk the family dog in the morning before school
8. Your friends want to go to a movie - you would prefer to play sports, but you go with them to the movie so that you can all be together.

**Exercise: For our own sake or for the sake of someone / something else? (Part B)**

*Part A had us thinking together about (i) what it means to do something for our own interests, or for the interests of others; and (ii) what it is to do something for instrumental reasons or to express a value. We can use a table to explore this more formally. When two variables intersect, four logical possibilities emerge.*

For my own sake

For the sake of someone or something else

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Instrumental account

Value account

*For the situations below, divide into small groups of 3-4 people. Each group takes one situation (so that all the situations are covered) and fills out the table showing what it would look like to do the action from the perspective of each quadrant. Come back together and share what you have done.*

1. The family car is dirty, so you decide to wash it.
2. You study hard for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah
3. You walk the family dog in the morning before school.
4. The school soccer team needs another player – you are good at soccer and go to the try-out.
5. Your parents are listening to music – you move through the room quietly so as not to disturb them.
6. You keep your room tidy
7. Your friend forgets his/her lunch and you offer his/her half of yours.

*Example: The family car is dirty, so you decide to wash it.*

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| **I do it for the sake of the family – so that the car has good visibility through the windscreen.** | **I do it for my own sake – it is safer if if the windscreen is clean and it is in my interest to keep the family safe.** |
| I do it for the sake of the family – it is a way of expressing how much I care about them. | I do it for my own sake. The condition of the car reflects my values- the fact that I am a responsible person. |

Value Explanation

For the sake of someone or something else

For my own sake

Instrumental

Explanation

**Exercise: For our own sake or for the sake of someone / something else? (Part C)**

In our text there are also two variables going on:

* Is the land given a Shabbat for our sake or for the land’s sake?
* Is ‘not working the land’ done for instrumental reasons or for another reason?

**Secondary Sources on ‘Shabbat of the land’**

“The Israelites were commanded to conserve the soil by giving it periodic fallow years [years where it is not farmed]and not to pursue short-term gain at the cost of long-term harm to the land [by overfarming it].”

...

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *The dignity of Difference: how to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*” conitinuum: London, 2002 p.167-8



Rabbi Jonathan Sacks  is the former Chief Rabbi of the UK and the Commonwealth. born in [London, England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London,_England) in 1948, he is a well known public intellectual and Jewish scholar.

“Just as the Jewish people recognize that God created the world by resting on Shabbat, so does the chosen Land recognize God as its creator by resting(not have people farm it) in the seventh year....

Abarbanel commentary on Torah.

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The dignity of Difference: how to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations” conitinuum: London, 2002 p.167-8



1437-1508. Born in Lisbon, Portugal, into a family distinguished by their financial, political and Jewish communal leadership achievements. Then in 1483, he was forced to flee to Spain, where he re-established himself till the expulsion of Spanish Jewry in 1492. Ultimately he made his way to Italy, where he lived in Naples and Venice till his death in1508

When I read *parashat Behar*, I see a God Who insists that labor be balanced by rest. Just as we balance the hubbub of workweek with a day of Shabbat, so we balance the earth's seven years of producing with a year where it is not farmed. Rotating cycles of crops with cycles of rest (or planting something like winter wheat, then plowing it back into the earth) enables land to stay fertile, to remain a source of abundance, and this is not only common sense but holy obligation.



*Rabbi Rachel Barenblat, Ordained in 2011, Rabb Barenblat is Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, MA. She runs a award winning blog called “Vevateen Rabbi”*

**Leading idea: Private versus Public Ownership.**

There seems to be a contradiction in the text – in verse 5 we are told not to farm the land, in verse 6 that, even without farming, we can’t eat the new growth that springs up in the seventh year naturally without our tending it *(“The after-growth\* of your harvest you shall not harvest, and the grapes you had set aside you shall not pick.”).* Yet in the very next P’sukim (verse 7and 8) we are told “*And [the produce of] the Shabbat of the land shall be yours, for you to eat and for your male slaves and female slaves, and for your hired worker and resident [non-Israelite] who live with you. And for your domestic animals and the wild animals that are in your land, shall be all [the land’s] produce to eat.*

If we attend carefully to the language, however, we see a difference – we are not to eat of the after growth of “**your** harvest” (קְצִירְ**ךָ**) or “grapes **you** have set aside” ( ועִנְּבֵי נְזִירֶ**ךָ),** but we can eat from the produce of “ha’aretz”, **the land.** This points to a difference between *land generally* and *privately owned parcels of land*, a distinction we might understand as a distinction between *public* and *private* spheres, between what is publically available for the use of everyone, and what is privately owned by individuals for their own use.

**Public and private in Western Philosophy**

The idea of a public sphere involves several components. On one hand, it refers to

*a relationship that is socially and politically constituted in a particular space with the active involvement of people sharing a set of traditions (laws, institutions, language and practices).* On the other hand, it refers to *a general idea of some good (value) that is woven into networks (political domains, social practices and institutions).* <http://eurospheres.org/files/2010/08/Eurosphere_Working_Paper_2_Kocan.pdf>

The private sphere involves the areas of one's life in which one works for oneself. The private sphere is one of personal and familial ownership (wealth, land, home, slaves. Objects). We have authority and control over the things we accrue as individuals, whereas in the public realm our authority and control is as a representative of the society (appointed leaders, formal and informal; active citizens; delegates). Furthermore if the public sphere embodies and conveys general ideas of the good and worthy, these in turn impact upon the private sphere (in that our personal lives are held accountable to concepts and laws that are determined in the public sphere.) For instance, if during the Sabbatical year all can eat equally from the produce of the land, then this experience of human equality is understood to be instructional for, and thereby influence, the way we understand who we are in the world once the Shabbat of the Land is over. This idea that the shmittah year is there to communicate something of value to us about how we ought to live our lives – is present in the secondary sources.

Removing human manipulation also raises a question about the ‘natural state’ of the public sphere – Is the ‘natural state’ hierarchical or equal? The text and commentaries suggest that once we put ownership aside, we are all equal as the natural state of the social sphere is equality not hierarchy.

Thinking of the Shabbat of the land *in terms of living for a year in the public realm invites us to ask what social, political and cultural role it plays and what idea of the ‘general good’ it embodies.*

**Discussion Plan: What is public? What is private?**

1. If I gather flowers from my own backyard, are they public or private?
2. If flowers are growing on an abandoned block of land, are they public or private? If I collect some of them and put them in a vase in my kitchen, does that change anything?
3. If someone leaves a broken chair out with their trash, is it now public or private?

If I pick the broken chair up and take it home and fix it, is it still public or private?

1. If there is a running track around the local park, is this for public use or private use?
2. If there are cans of soda put out on a table at a birthday party I am invited to,
   1. is it OK fr me to take one? Are the cans for guests (public) or for the family (private)?
   2. Once I take it, is it now my can of drink?
   3. If I go into the kitchen and taking one for their fridge, is this different? If so, how?
3. Is the street light on the corner sidewalk for public use or private use?
4. If I go to the dog rescue center and get a dog, whose dog is it before I take it? After I take it?
5. If I bring a box of oranges into the school and leave them with a sign “Please take one” – are they now part of the public domain of the school

or privately owned?

1. If someone walks in off the street who doesn’t have children at the school, is the sign also addressed to them?
2. If you post a comment on someone’s facebook page, is that a private act (between you and them) or a public act?

וגם ללמוד מזה שלא יתנשא העשיר על העני, אמרה תורה שבשנה השביעית כולם שווים, יחד עשיר ואביון יש להם רשות בגנות ובשדות לאכול לשבעה

***רבי צבי קלישר:*** *בפירושו לתורה בפרשת "בהר"*

One can learn that a rich man should not be higher than a poor man, the Torah says that in the seventh year they are all equal, both the rich and poor together have a right to gather freely in the gardens and in the fields, and their right to eat their fill...

*R.Zvi Kalisher: Torah Commentary, Behar*

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| **לך ולעבדך ולאמתך:**לפי שנאמר (שמות כג יא) ואכלו אביוני עמך, יכול יהיו אסורים באכילה לעשירים, תלמוד לומר לך ולעבדך ולאמתך, הרי בעלים ועבדים ושפחות אמורים כאן:  **for you, for your male and female slaves:**Since the Torah says [regarding Shemittah], “and the poor of your people shall eat [it]” (Exod. 23:11), one might think that it [the produce of the Shemittah year] is no allowed to be eaten by wealthy people. The Torah, therefore, says here, “for you, for your male and female slaves,”-we see that the [wealthy] owners and the male and female slaves are included here  *Rashi on Behar* |

What the Sabbath achieves in its impact on the individual, the Shmittah achieves in its impact on the nation as a whole. A year of solemn rest is essential for both nation and land, a year of peace and tranquility, without oppressor or tyrant. He shall not oppress his neighbor or brother, for a shmitttah has been proclaimed to Adonai, a year of equality and relaxation, There is no private property and no privilege...

*Rav Kook. (1865–1935)*

*Rav Kook was the first*[*Ashkenazi*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkenazi_Jews)[*chief rabbi*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chief_rabbi)*of the British*[*Mandatory Palestine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandatory_Palestine) *and the founder of*[*Yeshiva*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeshiva)*[Mercaz.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercaz_HaRav_Kook" \o "Mercaz HaRav Kook) He was a Jewish*[*thinker*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual)*, [Halachist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halacha" \o "Halacha), [Kabbalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah" \o "Kabbalah) and a renowned*[*Torah*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah)*scholar.*



The Purpose of this law is for the rich man to appreciate how much the poor man suffers, his life consisting of constant uncertainty, his eyes constantly turned up to Heaven to beg his food, constantly wandering and unsettled and thinking only ‘where can I find a little bread for myself, for my wife and for my children?’

The rich man is always happy and contented with his fields and vineyards and the corn that his fields produce, and he pays no attention to the poor man, failing utterly to feel his suffering.

For this reason God instructed that there should be a Sabbatical on the seventh year, so that the rich man should suffer and ask himself “if I do not sow or reap, how can I feed myself in the eighth year and where will I find my food?” The rich man then thinks “If I , who suffer only one year because I do not sow, find that my eyes are in darkness, what about the poor man who suffers and despairs all the time and worries how he can feed himself?” That way he feels the suffering of the poor and feeds them.

*Rabbi Abraham Sava, Tseror Hamor, Leviticus 25.*