

Ranana Dine  
Sarah Zager

**A Sabbath of the Land for You: Shemita, Ethics, and Jewish Philosophy**

Class Session: Rest and Environmental Ethics

**Weekly Shabbat - For the Entire Jewish People**

**Abraham Joshua Heschel - The Sabbath, 1951**

While the festivals celebrate events that happened in time, the date of the month assigned for each festival in the calendar is determined by the life in nature. Passover and the Feast of Booths [Sukkot], for example, coincide with the full moon, and the date of all festivals is a day in the month, and the month is a reflection of what goes on periodically in the realm of nature, since the Jewish month begins with the new moon, with the reappearance of the lunar crescent in the evening sky. In contrast, the Sabbath is entirely independent of the month and unrelated to the moon. Its date is not determined by any event in nature, such as the new moon, but by the act of creation. **Thus the essence of the Sabbath is completely detached from the world of space. The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time.**

**Shabbat Every 7 Years - Land of Israel**

**Rav Kook - Introduction to Shabbat Ha'Aretz (1909).**

<p><b>The individual shakes off mundane routine frequently— every week. “Shabbat comes and so does rest!” The soul begins to shed her harsh chains. “The Lord has given you rest from your sorrow and trouble and from the hard service that you were made to serve.” [...] This is a holy day when the innate inclination of the people for a godly life emerges from its hiddenness and is a sign for the people that its soul treasure contains within it the need and the ability to rejoice in God, in the delight of the divine. This is concentrated in the point of the extra soul that dwells within each one of the people’s children.</b></p> <p><b>What Sabbath does for the individual, shmita does for the nation as a whole.</b> The Jewish people, in whom the godly, creative force is planted eternally and distinctively, has a special need to</p>	<p>הַיְחִיד מִתְנַעֵר מִחַיֵּי-הַחֹל לַפְּרָקִים קְרוּבִים, – בְּכֹל שַׁבָּת. "בֵּא שַׁבַּת בְּאֵה מְנוּחָה", מִתְחַלֵּת הַנֶּפֶשׁ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲרֵר מִכְבֻּלֶיהָ הַקָּשִׁים, "בְּיוֹם הַנִּיחַ ד' לָךְ מֵעֲצָבֶךָ וּמִרְגִזֶּךָ וּמִן הָעֲבֹדָה הַקָּשָׁה אֲשֶׁר עָבַד בְּךָ" [...] יוֹם קְדוֹשׁ, אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ תִתְגַּלֶּה נְטִיַת הָאָמָה – הַנְּטִיָּה שֶׁל הַחַיִּים הָאֱלֹהִיִּים כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵם – בִּיחִידֵיהֶם, אוֹת הִיא לְאָמָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּסִגְלַת נִשְׁמַתָּה צָרָךְ וַיְכַלֵּת לְהִתְעַנֵּג עַל ד', – וְנֵעַם אֱלֹהֵי, הַמִּתְכַּנְּס לְנִקְדָּה רִוְחָנִית שֶׁל נִשְׁמַת-יִתְרָה, שְׂרוּי בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁל כָּל יְחִיד מִבְּנֵיהָ.</p> <p>אֵת אוֹתָהּ הַפְּעוּלָה, שֶׁהַשַּׁבָּת פּוֹעֵלַת עַל כָּל יְחִיד, פּוֹעֵלַת הִיא הַשְּׂמִטָּה עַל הָאָמָה בְּכֻלָּהּ. צָרָךְ מִיַּחַד הוּא לְאָמָה זוֹ, שֶׁהִיצִירָה הָאֱלֹהִית נְטוּעָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ בְּאִפְּן בּוֹלֵט וְנִצְחִי, כִּי מִזְמַן לְזְמַן תִּתְגַּלֶּה בְּתוֹכָהּ הַמְּאֹר הָאֱלֹהִי שֶׁלָּהּ בְּכֹל מְלֵא זְהָרוֹ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִשְׁבִּיתוּהוּ חַיֵּי-הַחֲבֵרָה-שֶׁל-חֹל עִם הָעָמֶל וְהַדְּאָגָה, הַנִּזְעָף וְהַתְּחַרּוֹת אֲשֶׁר לָהֶם, לְמַעַן תּוּכַל לְהִתְגַּלּוֹת בְּקִרְבָּהּ בְּנִימָה טְהוֹרַת נִשְׁמַתָּה בְּכֻלְיוֹתָהּ כְּמוֹ-שֶׁהִיא. וְאֵם</p>
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<p>periodically reveal the divine light within itself with full intensity. Our mundane lives, with their toil, anxiety, anger, and competition do not entirely suffocate this creative force. <b>On the shmita, our pure, inner spirit may be revealed as it truly is.</b> The forcefulness that is inevitably part of our regular, public lives lessens our moral refinement. [...]</p> <p>Stilling the tumult of social life from time to time in certain predictable ways is meant to move this nation, when it is well-ordered, <b>to rise toward an encounter with the heights of its other, inner moral and spiritual life.</b> They touch the divine qualities inside them that transcend all the stratagems of the social order and that cultivate and elevate our social arrangements, bringing them toward perfection.</p>	<p>אֹתָהּ הָאֲבִירִיּוֹת, הַמְכַרְחַת לְהַתְלוֹת עִם כָּל סֵדֶר שֶׁל חַיֵּי-צִבּוֹר קְבוּעִים [...]</p> <p>הִנֵּה הַפְּסָקָת הַסֵּדֶר הַחֲבָרְתִּי בְּצִדְדֵי יְדוּעִים, מִתְקוּפָה לְתִקּוּפָה, מְבִיאָה לְאֵמָה זֹו, כְּשֶׁהִיא מְסַדֶּרֶת, עַל מְכוּנָה, לִידֵי עֲלִיתָהּ הַעֲצָמִית לְמְרוֹמֵי הַתְּכוּנוֹת הַפְּנִימִיּוֹת שְׂבֻחֵי הַמּוֹסְרִיִּים וְהַרוּחָנִיִּים, מִצַּד הַתְּכֻן הָאֱלֹהִי שְׂבָהֶם, הָעוֹמֵד לְמַעְלָה לְמַעְלָה מִכָּל תְּכֻסִּים וְסֵדֶר חֲבָרְתִּי וְהוּא מְעִיֵּד וּמַעְלָה אֶת הַסֵּדְרִים הַחֲבָרְתִּיִּים וְנוֹתֵן לָהֶם אֶת שְׁלֵמוֹתָם.</p>
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**Shabbat Always - The Levites**

<p><b>Mishneh Torah, Laws of <i>Shemita</i> and <i>Yovel</i> 13:12-3</b></p>	<p><b>משנה תורה, הלכות שמיטה ויובל יג:יב-יג</b></p>
<p>Why were the Levites not allotted land in Eretz Yisrael or a share in its booty along with their brethren? Because they were singled out to serve the Lord and minister to him, to teach his upright ways and just laws to many people, as it is written: "They shall teach thy laws to Jacob, and thy instruction to Israel" (Deuteronomy 33:10). For this reason, they were separated from worldly affairs: they fought no battles like the rest of Israel; they inherited no land; they won nothing by means of their physical ability. They are indeed the Lord's army, as it is written: "Bless, O Lord, his substance" (11). He, blessed be he, has won them for himself, as it is written: "I am your portion and your share" (Numbers 18:20).</p>	<p>וְלָמָּה לֹא זָכָה לְוֵי בְּנֵי־לֵוִי בְּנִחְלַת אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְבִזְזוֹתָהּ עִם אֲחֵיו מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִבְדִּיל לְעַבְדוֹ אֶת ה' לְשָׂרְתוֹ וּלְהוֹרוֹת דְּרָכָיו הַיְשָׁרִים וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו הַצְּדִיקִים לְרַבִּים שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים ל"ג י) "וְיָרוּ מִשְׁפָּטָיו לִיעֲקֹב וְתוֹרָתוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל". לְפִיכָּךְ הִבְדִּילוּ מִדְּרָכֵי הָעוֹלָם לֹא עוֹרְכִין מִלְחָמָה כְּשֶׁאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא נוֹחְלִין וְלֹא זוֹכִין לְעֲצָמוֹן בְּכַח גּוֹפֵן. אֲלֵא הֵם חֵיל הַשֵּׁם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים ל"ג יא) "בְּרַחֵם ה' חֵילוֹ". וְהוּא בְּרוּךְ הוּא זוֹכָה לָהֶם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּמִדְבָר יח כ) "אֲנִי חֵלְקָהּ וְנִחְלָתָהּ"</p>
<p>Not only the tribe of Levi, but each</p>	<p>וְלֹא שְׂבָט לְוֵי בְּלִבְדוֹ אֲלֵא כָּל אִישׁ וְאִישׁ מִכָּל בְּאֵי הָעוֹלָם</p>

<p>well-informed thinking person whose spirit moves him to devote himself to the service of the Lord, to know the Lord, and has walked uprightly after casting off his neck the yoke of many a cunning wile that men contrived, is indeed divinely consecrated, and the Lord will forever and ever be his portion. God will provide sufficiently for his needs, as he did for the priests and the Levites. David, may he rest in peace, declared: "The Lord is my allotted portion and my cup; thou holdest my lot" (Psalm 16:5).</p>	<p>אֲשֶׁר נָדְבָה רוּחוֹ אוֹתוֹ וַהֲבִינוּ מִדְּעוֹ לְהַבְדִּיל לְעַמֵּד לִפְנֵי ה' לְיִשְׁרָתוֹ וּלְעִבְדוֹ לְדַעַת אֶת ה' וְהִלְךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמוֹ שְׁעֵשָׂהוּ הַאֱלֹהִים וּפְרָק מֵעַל צְוָאָרוֹ עַל הַחֲשָׁבוֹנוֹת הַרְבִּים אֲשֶׁר בִּקְשׂוּ בְנֵי הָאָדָם הָרִי זֶה נִתְקַדֵּשׁ קִדְשׁ קִדְשִׁים וַיְהִי ה' חֶלְקוֹ וַנְּחַלְתּוֹ לְעוֹלָם וּלְעוֹלָמֵי עוֹלָמִים וַיִּזְכֶּה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה דָּבָר הַמְסַפֵּיק לוֹ כְּמוֹ שְׁזָכָה לַפְּהַנִּים לְלוֹיִם. הָרִי דָוִד עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם אוֹמֵר (תהילים טז ה) "ה' מִנְתַּ חֶלְקִי וְכוֹסֵי אֶתֶּה תוֹמִיךָ גּוֹרְלִי"</p>
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**Shabbat Every 7 Years - For the Planet, For Everyone**

**Laurie Zoloth - 2014 AAR Presidential Address: Interrupting Your Life: An Ethics for the Coming Storm.**

Second, we need to think of and for the group of us, for we are ten thousand people, the size of a small city, and we have the power of speech. This is a problem of collective action, the biggest problem we as teachers have faced as a species, and it can seem utterly overwhelming, but we can make decisions at the AAR scale. Here is one idea, from my Jewish tradition; I hope a good one among the many that will emerge in our Annual Meeting. **We could create an AAR Sabbatical Year. What would this mean? It means that once in every six years, we would pause.** Following the biblical cycle, we could choose to not meet at a huge annual meeting in which we take over a city. Every year, each participant going to the meeting uses a quantum of carbon that is more than considerable. Air travel, staying in hotels, all of this creates a way of living on the earth that is carbon intensive. It could be otherwise. **What if instead of coming together, we spread out over the land, as it were, and read out papers to one another at our own universities and institutions? What if we could meet, each of us in our own city and turn to the faces and the needs of our fellow citizens?** What if, on that day, we taught the poor, volunteered in local high schools or community colleges, or the prison, the hospital, the military base, the church, mosque, synagogue, or temple, at a place that is not your own, worked at planting an orchard or a garden, served food to the poor, offered our teaching, offered to learn? What if we turned to our neighbor—the woman who cleans the toilets, the man who sweeps the sidewalks—and included them in the university to which we are responsible? We would then be actively making an interruption in our lives, saying by this act: **I will sacrifice to save my planet.** I am not suggesting—far from it—that we do more than try this, in seven years, when the sabbatical year comes again—2021.