

Stephanie Brown's "Field of Dreams"  
Drash for Rosh Hashanah 5782

Amen. We're commanded to give the fields of the earth a shmita, a 7<sup>th</sup> year of rest. They've worked hard; the lands have produced food and sustenance for us for 6 long years, and it is now time for them to rest.

I love Judaism! Our tradition gives us instructions for how to take care of so many things: ourselves, our fellow humans, our business dealings, our workers, our families, our animals and as we have heard today, even our land. In the infinite wisdom that the torah provides, it tells us to let the land rest and lie fallow.

Shmita: Shabbat for the land.

Now any farmer can tell you the same thing—there are good reasons to let the fields lie fallow. According to my research, "fallowing allows the land to recover and store organic matter while retaining moisture and disrupting the lifecycles of pathogens by temporarily removing their hosts."

Cool! Who wouldn't want their pathogens' hosts removed? This sounds helpful and for sure, retaining moisture sounds really good to all of us who are experiencing a time of severe drought. Further research yielded the following: "Key to the success of improved fallows are **nutrient cycling**, increased availability of macronutrients and improvement in soil pH, increased organic matter, enhanced biological activity, and improved soil properties.

From the research, it seems clear that letting the land lie fallow for periods of time allow for it to rebuild itself, to improve its soil, to purportedly make itself stronger for future crop production.

Dayenu! These are reasons enough to follow this sage advice of the torah for shmita, to allow the fields to replenish, renourish, and regenerate. But maybe that isn't the only reason to fallow the land.

Here's my theory:

What if the reason to let the land lie fallow was to give it time to do something else for a year...? Just like us after a long day..., you know what that's like! You're exhausted, you lay down...AHHHHH.....your bed never felt so good!!! We lie down and we go to sleep. And we all know that ample sleep is required to keep us healthy, as it allows the brain and body to slow down, promotes better physical and mental performance the next day and over the long-term. It supports the cardiovascular and immune systems. All manner of things that sleep does for us.

And—we ALSO know, a very important part of sleeping for us-- is to dream.

So here's my theory: what if another reason, maybe the most important reason to let the land lie fallow, like when we go to sleep--is to allow it to ---wait for it---*dream*?

(Ok, you can tell me I'm crazy, it's not the first time I've ever heard it!)

But what if it were true?

That the land, like us, needs time to dream.

So go with me for a minute...

Imagine the land during it's year of shmita, was dreaming...?

What would the land be dreaming about?

Maybe it would dream to be something else? Would it dare to envision itself as a hill, a mesa, a tree, a cloud, or with delusions of grandeur, a MOUNTAIN? And if it slept long and hard enough, would it maybe even experience itself to be another life form altogether? Would it long to float freely like a bird?

Or would it dream to just be the best land it could be—rich, nutrient-laden soil? A place for worms to crawl and micro-organisms to congregate, for ants to build homes and flowers to sprout up?

Maybe it would dream of this acorn falling into it and embedding into its dark rich soil. Could the land see itself shielding and nurturing this acorn? Could it dream to keep it safe so the Divine spark of life it contains sheds its clippah? and pushes forth from the soil into a sapling?

In it's wildest dreams what holier task could the land want than to nurture the Divine sparks—the holy sparks of flowers and crops and insects and micro-organisms and acorns? To nurture them into becoming the full expressions of their life force? To being the healthiest, strongest most beautiful whatever they can be?

For this Rosh Hashana I wish for you—like the land—to have a shmitah year of rejuvenation. Of renewal. And of time and space to dream about your full expression of being. May your body, mind and soul find a way to rejuvenate fully so that you can bring forth the divine spark within your own being. Here's to a year of our finest field of dreams.

Debarti