

SHMITA

Rabbi Miriam Liebman

“Time...is everlasting; it is the world of space which is perishing...We pass through time; we occupy space.”

— Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, epilogue

Space went first; empty streets, empty dinner tables, empty store shelves. Then came time.

In this void, I took to checking on the progress of the flowers I planted on my front porch. It was as if knowing that if my flowers bloomed, this was somehow proof that time really did continue on in some sort of forward trajectory.

“For six years you are to sow your land and to gather in its produce, but in the seventh, you are to let it go and to let it be, that the needy of your people may eat, and what remains, the wildlife of the field shall eat.”

— Exodus 23:10

Shmita. Rest.

We were blessed with a year of rest. A year to puzzle in front of the fireplace. A year to nurture sourdough starters. A year to rethink priorities and disengage from capitalism.

What remains, the wildlife of the field shall eat: dolphins swam the canals of Venice; pumas roamed the streets of Santiago.

Shmita. Rest.

Unless. Unless grocery deliveries are not an option because your job is the grocery store deliverer. Unless driving the bus is a choice between your physical wellbeing and your financial wellbeing. Unless attending to the patient turns into *being* the patient.

“Where did demons come from? On the sixth day, God created the souls of beasts, cattle, and other things that crawl on the earth. It was time to create the bodies of these animals, but Shabbat came first, work had to cease, God had to rest, and God did not have time to create their bodies. These animals became demons.”

— Breishit Rabbah 7:5

Shmita. Rest.

Unless rest itself is a demon. Unless rest itself is a risk.

“Poverty causes a dip in cognitive function equivalent to pulling an all-nighter.”

— The Time Tax, Annie Lowry

You are to let it go and to let it be, that the needy of your people may eat: it is rest that allows us to reboot and recharge and rest that helps us take care of one another.

Shmita. Rest.

Because a year of rest is only as good as we make it.

Take some time to meditate on where you find yourself in these themes:

1. Where did you experience emptiness this past year?
2. What did you discover in those voids?
3. What rituals or routines did you turn towards?
4. Where did you find rest?
5. Where were there barriers to your rest?
6. How do we create more available rest for more of us more of the time?

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