

Shemitta: The Power of *Not* Doing

Rabbi Daniel Lerner, PsyD

Faculty, IBC and JSS Schools of Jewish Studies, Yeshiva University
Rabbi, Pikesville Jewish Congregation • Founder and Principal, Strategic Family Solution, LLC

Who Am I?

There's a well-known story about a precocious young boy who wanted to become a rabbi. His mother suggested that he go to speak to their shul rabbi to find out what the job entailed.

The rabbi, thrilled to meet with the young man, said, "I'm happy to answer any question you have about being a rabbi." "Well, besides giving a fifteen-minute sermon on Shabbat morning, what else do you do all week?" the boy asked. Without skipping a beat, the rabbi replied, "You don't want to become a rabbi. With questions like that, you can be the shul president!"

One of the first questions, if not *the first* question asked when two people meet is, "What do you do?"—meaning, "what do you do for a living?" By knowing what type of work a person does, we feel that we have a way to identify and relate to them accordingly.

One of my most humbling and instructive experiences occurred five years ago when I first entered the business world. After two decades spent in the rabbinate and Jewish communal work, I finally had the opportunity to experience, first-hand, the types of challenges faced by my congregants. Issues such as business meetings in non-kosher restaurants, closing a major deal on a winter Friday afternoon, conducting business during chol hamoed, and the question of "how much is enough?" were suddenly up-close and personal dilemmas. Since that time, my respect for my congregants has only increased. I now understand the tremendous willpower it takes to turn the phone off before entering shul and refrain from checking emails during *chazarat hashatz* (the chazan's repetition). I appreciate the commitment it takes to come to morning minyan and learn daf yomi instead of beating rush-hour traffic. I am more cognizant of the fact that while I was paid to daven, learn Torah, and do acts of *chesed* (kindness), my congregants actually do their mitzvot *lishma*, with no ulterior motives! Moreover, I had to ask myself whether or not my own *avodat HaShem* (service of G-d) had become a vocational habit or the result of a deliberate and ongoing set of choices.

Many, if not most of us identify ourselves by the activity that consumes the majority of our time—our work. We are business owners, accountants, plumbers, teachers, doctors, electricians, bankers, lawyers, purchasing agents, farmers, etc. Yet we can just as easily be categorized as spouses, parents, or grandparents. Furthermore, we can be identified as Torah-observant Jews, committed to daily prayer, Torah study, and mitzvah observance. We may profess, and even

believe, that our religious commitment or family responsibilities is our primary calling. Nevertheless, our tendency is still to be identified with our job.

The Talmud in *Berachot* (35b) relates:

See what a difference there is between the earlier and the later generations. Earlier generations made the study of Torah their main concern and their livelihood secondary to it, and both prospered in their hands. Later generations made their livelihood their main concern and their Torah study secondary, and neither prospered in their hands.

בא וראה שלא כדורות הראשונים דורות האחרונים, דורות הראשונים עשו תורתן קבע ומלאכתן עראי - זו וזו נתקיימה בידן, דורות האחרונים שעשו מלאכתן קבע ותורתן עראי - זו וזו לא נתקיימה בידן.

In *Ein Ayah* (vol. II pp. 173-175), Rav Avraham Kook references this passage and notes that the amount of time devoted to a particular activity is not the sole factor in determining that this is our main pursuit in life. What truly matters is that which we consider to be our priority. Rav Kook reminds us that the quantity of time at work does not necessarily mean that we love our coworkers more than our spouses. The fact that we sleep more than we study doesn't mean that we fundamentally believe that sleeping is more important than Torah. It is implicitly understood that certain natural and economic demands mandate a given commitment of time.

In the liturgy for Yom Kippur, we ask, “*Meh anachnu*, Who are we?” While the question seems to be rhetorical, it is, nevertheless, a haunting question. Who am I? What do I do? How can I know my true identity? And how do I stay true to my professed values?

One way of differentiating between our *professed* identity versus our *actual* identity, particularly when it comes to work, is to assess what we do with our free time. When we are home, at shul, on vacation, etc., where is our attention and energy directed at those times? The nature of those experiences can belie our true aspirations.

Shabbat and Shemittah

In the life of the Jew, Shabbat offers such an opportunity for values clarification. On Shabbat, we are required to disengage from work (assuming we're not congregational rabbis!). How we spend our Shabbat should indicate if our aspirational goals are mundane or spiritual. Just as Shabbat provides a respite from our daily grind, it would appear that the mitzvah of shemittah—an entire year of agricultural Shabbat—represents the ultimate litmus test of professed versus actual identity.

And the L-rd spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, Speak to the children of Israel and you shall say to them: When you come to the land that I am giving you, the land shall rest a Sabbath to the Lord.

Vayikra 25:1-2

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר. דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשָׁבַתָה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לַיהוָה.
וַיִּקְרָא כה-א-ב

In a well-known question, Rashi asks “What [special relevance] does the subject of shemittah have with Mount Sinai (מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני)?”

Rav Yehudah Leib Ginsberg, *Yalkut Yehudah*, notes a passage in *Avot D'Rabbi Natan* to explain the juxtaposition of shemittah with matan Torah:

Just as the Torah was given with a covenant, so too was work given with a covenant. As it states, "Six days you shall work and do all of your creative labor." R. Yehuda b. Beteira says: One who has not work to do, what should he do? If he has a courtyard or field that is desolate, he should tend to it as it states, "Six days you shall work and do all of your creative labor." Once the Torah states, "Six days you shall work," what is then derived from (the seemingly redundant words) "and do all of your creative labor"? This is to instruct us that anyone who has a yard or field that is desolate should go out and work in them. R. Yosi says: a person only dies from idleness.

Avot D'Rabbi Natan ch. 11

כשם שהתורה נתנה בברית כך המלאכה נתנה בברית שנאמר ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך ויום השביעי שבת לה' אלקיך (שמות כ' ט') ... רבי יהודה בן בתירא אומר [אדם] שאין לו מלאכה לעשות מה יעשה אם יש לו חצר חרבה או שדה חרבה ילך ויתעסק בה שנאמר ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך (שם כ' ט') ומה תלמוד לומר ועשית כל מלאכתך להביא את מי שיש לו חצרות או שדות חרבות ילך ויתעסק בהן. רבי יוסי אומר אין אדם מת אלא מתוך הבטלה.
אבות דרבי נתן פרק יא

At Sinai there was a covenant to engage in creative labor. Given the high value placed on work, it seems counterintuitive that the Torah would tell a farmer to sit idle and not to work the land for an entire year. Therefore, the Torah juxtaposes the mitzvah of shemittah to the revelation at Sinai. The same covenant that demands work six days of the week and a day off for Shabbat, also demands work for six years with a "Shabbat" year. This indicates to us that shemittah must be viewed within the same purview as the weekly Shabbat. In fact, Ibn Ezra (*Shemot* 20:8) notes that just as Shabbat serves as a time for introspection and Torah study while we are off from work, so too shemittah is a time for introspection and Torah study.

The Challenge of Observing Shabbat and Shemittah

Historically, we Jews have found Shabbat observance somewhat challenging and observance of shemittah *extremely* challenging.

One of the most impressive Biblical miracles is the "*man*" or manna, that heavenly food which sustained us during our sojourn in the Sinai desert. What makes this miracle so extraordinary is that it wasn't a singularity such as the splitting of the sea or the revelation at Mount Sinai. The *man* was ongoing; six times a week for 40 years. G-d explains that five days a week the *man* will be supplied each morning to provide food for that day; it was forbidden to save one day's *man* for the next. Indeed, no matter how much *man* the people gathered, they each ended up with exactly one day's ration of an *omer* for each member of their household. But on the sixth day, each person was given a double portion. The Jews were specifically commanded not to go out on the seventh day to collect *man*. Yet the Torah (*Shemot* 16:27) records that people did not listen and ventured out on Shabbat looking for *man*.

My question is very simple: if your employer were to say to you, "You have a six-day workweek. You are forbidden to work on day seven, and I'm going to pay you, in-advance, for *not* working on the seventh day." What would you do?

What a great deal! If you could get the same salary for working six days a week instead of seven, why would anyone insist on working an extra day? They didn't do it because they were hungry—they already had their food in hand from Friday. So how can we explain the behavior of those Jews who insisted on working and thereby defying G-d's will?

In a similar vein, it is difficult to understand why the mitzvah of shemittah was neglected during ancient times. The farmer presumably works to provide income and security for his family. The Torah (Vayikra, 25: 20-22) addresses this reasonable concern as follows:

And if you should say, "What will we eat in the seventh year? We will not sow, and we will not gather in our produce!" [Know then, that] I will command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield produce for three years. And you will sow in the eighth year, while [still] eating from the old crops until the ninth year; until the arrival of its crop, you will eat the old [crop].

וכי תאמרו מה נאכל בשנה השביעית הן לא נזרע ולא נאסף את תבואתנו: וצויתי את ברכתי לכם בשנה הששית ועשת את התבואה לשלש השנים: וזרעתם את השנה השמינית ואכלתם מן התבואה יָשון עד השנה התשיעית עד בוא תבואתה תאכלו יָשון.

Conversely, the Torah (Vayikra 26:34-35) states that the consequence for noncompliance is the destruction of the land. Rashi (25:18) explains that the Babylonian exile was due to transgressing the laws of shemittah.

Question: Would you be willing to make the following investment? The investment provides a 300 percent return *and* all of your profits will be provided up front. Failure to invest will cause a loss of your income. Normally, an investment of time, money, or energy, by definition involves risk. Indeed, it can be argued that even spiritual investment involves some risk, as it requires faith that our efforts will be rewarded. Yet the mitzvah of shemitta runs counter to the entire risk-reward paradigm. With shemittah, the Torah states that *before* the seventh year begins, your sustenance for the next two-plus years will be provided. So why did Bnei Yisrael not keep the laws of shemitta? Why did they persistently violate shemittah to their own detriment?

It would seem that our difficulty in properly observing Shabbat and carefully observing shemitta has to do with something other than our material sustenance.

In order to understand this, let's ask ourselves: is *all* of the time and effort we expend at work necessary? And if so, at what point are we able to responsibly disengage from work to give our full attention to our Creator, to our loved ones, and to ourselves?

Humanity was Created to Toil

The Talmud, *Bava Kamma* 118b, tells us that a person is always aware of how much money he is carrying. If you ask someone how much money they made last year, most likely they could tell you. We have accounting programs to tell us how much we spend, what we spend it on, and what our projected expenses will be. We can determine money saved and money wasted. Yet, there's no hourly rate for building a relationship with our loved ones. In order to sustain and grow relationships, we need to make decisions about how valuable these people are to us. What is the value to the five-minute phone call to our spouse in –between meetings or the half hour of patience giving attention to our children at the end of a 12-hour work day? What about spending a few more minutes on the

phone with our grandparent rather than begging off to get back to work? What is the cost-benefit of attending a school function for my child or a life cycle event for a relative or friend? What is the value of visiting the sick or consoling a mourner? Do we take the time to do these things, and if we do—do we constantly feel the need to run out to “get back to work”?

And what about our relationship with G-d? How much is that truly worth to us? In which column do we place the 60 to 90 minutes per day for prayer—“cost” or “benefit”? Perhaps that depends on how much we value the relationship.

There is no shortage of examples where the Talmud lauds the value of work. Although our Talmudic sages did not seek empirical support, the research does demonstrate work to be associated with increased life expectancy and idleness as associated with a host of psychological maladies, not the least of which is depression. It is not coincidental that we refer to a job as a “livelihood” and our work as “making a living.”

I would humbly submit that, for many of us, disengaging from work is anxiety-provoking. While we are working, we are focused, goal-oriented, have a sense of control, and, if we are fortunate, a sense of fulfillment. Not working creates a void that, if not managed appropriately, can trigger an identity crisis. This sense of angst is not always about sustenance, it’s about *who we are*. After all, if *I am* an accountant, lawyer, rabbi, social worker, doctor, builder, etc., than who am I when I’m not actively engaged in those activities that reinforce my self-definition? How do I have a sense of my own reality if I am not doing my job? How do I feel that my life has meaning and purpose when I am disengaged from my livelihood?

There is a Talmudic debate (*Sanhedrin* 99b) about how to interpret the verse in *Iyov* (5:7) “*Adam l’amal yulad* - Man was born to toil”. R’ Tzadok haKohein (*Pri Tzaddik*, *Vayikra*) explains that “*ameilut*-toil” is an essential feature of the human experience by referencing the Talmud in *Bava Metzia* (38a): “*Adam rotzeh b’kav shelo m’tisha kabin shel chaveiro* - a man desires one portion of his own more than nine portions of his fellow”. According to Rashi (*ad loc*), one’s own portion is more cherished by virtue of his own toil (“*she’amal bahen*”).

Do you remember the first paycheck you ever received? However meager it might have been, there was an inherent value to it because *you earned it*. I remember many businessmen who used to save the first dollar they earned as a keepsake. This does not mean to say that we wouldn’t be excited to win the lottery. The fact is, a healthy individual feels better about and has a greater sense of satisfaction from the products of his or her own work. The more invested we are in any endeavor, the more we value that entity.

Our desire to be self-supporting is by design. Rav Yosef Karo, *Maggid Meisharim* to *Bereishit*, describes that G-d created the world in a way that we can earn our own keep (both spiritually and materially) rather than being degraded by *nahama d’kisufa*—shameful bread. This is why G-d placed Adam in *Gan Eden* “*l’ovdah, ulishomrah*—to work and to guard it.” This is why G-d gives us *mitzvot*. Instead of giving us handouts like beggars, G-d wanted us to have a sense of autonomy. The way we can feel independent is by earning our own keep both materially and spiritually through the expenditure of our own efforts.

While the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 99b) concludes that we are born to toil in Torah, what is less clear is how this applies for each individual. The Talmud prompts us to ask ourselves: **How can I best invest my time, my physical prowess, and my creative energy to positively transform myself and the world to the greatest degree possible?**

As human beings, we have a natural desire to sense the reality of our existence. That we matter; that we have an impact; that what we do is consequential. This sense of purpose and life-satisfaction can only come from that which results from our own efforts. From that which we design, build, cultivate, invest in, grow, etc.

Perhaps this is why B'nei Yisrael went out to work on Shabbat to collect the *man* even though their sustenance had already been provided. Perhaps this helps explain why the Jews didn't stop working their land during shemittah even though they were paid not to work. When my identity is bound to my work, not working is disorienting. When my sense of accomplishment is tied to activity, being non-active feels disempowering.

According to the *Sefer HaChinuch* no. 84, shemittah is an instructional tool that assists us in relinquishing control and learning to trust HaShem as well as an opportunity for practicing generosity. The other Rishonim identify one or both of these themes: the recognition of the supremacy of HaShem and greed reduction as the "reason" for the mitzvah of shemittah.¹

Our existence in this world involves a partnership with G-d whereby G-d is the founder and majority shareholder. Ironically, our inability to stop working leads to us losing perspective on *why* we are working.

In this context, we can understand that exile is not so much a punishment as it is a natural consequence of our decisions. When we view our material success as purely the result of our own efforts, we forfeit the benefits of G-d's partnership. We soon find ourselves in a world where G-d's presence is less palpable and where G-d's law is disregarded.

By confusing activity with productivity we disempower ourselves by becoming slaves to our work. We lose perspective and our toil becomes transient instead of transcendent. The result is not only a loss of identity it's also a loss of control.

The challenge of shemittah is the requisite inaction as opposed to action. By relinquishing control, we demonstrate our recognition that we are ultimately not in charge. That indeed, the world can continue without us exerting our influence. Torah study is not necessarily the reason for shemittah. Yet Torah-study, along with introspection and spiritual recalibration is the ancillary benefit of standing down and recognizing G-d's sovereignty over the world.

Koach and Gevurah

The *Midrash Rabbah* recognized the challenge of shemittah:

¹ It is notable that the type of generosity involved in shemittah is one that is passive. The produce in our field is ownerless and, therefore, anyone may come and take what they want. This is different from the experience of *ma'aser*, *terumah*, and other forms of *tzedakah* where I have the satisfaction of allocating and directing various gifts to others in need. As such, the gifts accrued to the needy do not represent the landowner's beneficence, but rather, an act of relinquishment.

"[The] mighty (גבורי) in strength (כח) that fulfill His word" (Ps. 103:20). Of whom does the verse speak? R. Yitzchak said: The verse speaks of those who observe the Sabbatical year. The common practice is that a person fulfills a mitzvah for one day, for one week, for one month. But does he perhaps do so for the rest of the days of the year? Now this man sees his field untilled, his vineyard untilled, and yet he pays his taxes and does not complain—have you a mightier (גביר) man than this?

Vayikra Rabbah 1:1

גבורי כח עושי דברו במה הכתוב מדבר א"ר יצחק בשומרי שביעית הכתוב מדבר בנוהג שבעולם אדם עושה מצוה ליום א' לשבת אחת לחודש א' שמא לשאר ימות השנה ודין חמי חקליה ביירה כרמיה ביירה ויהבי ארנונא ושתיק יש לך גבור גדול מזה.
ויקרא רבה א:א

What's the difference between *koach* and *gevurah*? Rav Yosef D. Soloveitchik, in his article "Catharsis" (*Tradition* 1978), explains that *koach* generally denotes physical strength that is part of a natural endowment. *Koach* is the type of brute strength that we humans share with the animals. By contrast, *gevurah* represents the uniquely human trait of transcendence. *Gevurah* is our ability to override our *koach*, to be guided by our values and not by our primal instinct; to make decisions that go against our nature and desire, as in "Aizehu gibor? Hakoveish et yitzroh—Who is mighty? One who conquers his evil inclination" (*Avot* 4:1).

I believe that when it comes to observance of mitzvot, the difference between *koach* and *gevurah* is the difference between willpower and strength of conviction. Many of us have been taught or tacitly believe that willpower is the key ingredient for breaking a bad habit or sticking to a New Year's resolution. But all we need to do is think about how long most New Year's resolutions really last to know that willpower has a pretty limited run. Willpower alone is not enough to break a bad habit.

For instance, imagine trying to lose weight by saying "I'm just going to eat less." It might work for a few hours, or a couple of days, or even a few weeks, but eventually you're going to find yourself staring down a delicious chocolate sundae or going toe-to-toe with a pastrami burger and fries. Without the strength of conviction, it's only a matter of time until you break.

Shabbat provides a brief respite from our daily grind. Yet many of us find it difficult to completely disengage from weekday concerns. What is the content of our conversation at the Shabbat table? Are we truly giving our undivided time, attention, and energy to our loved ones and our Creator?

For many of us, Shabbat observance is an exercise in *koach* or willpower. Many of us can white-knuckle it through Shabbat, knowing that our smartphones will come out concurrently with the emergence of three stars. "Just one Shabbos and we'll all be free" to once again become enslaved to our technology habits. "Eliyahu Hanavi—time to turn on the TV." Many of us opt for the "minyan on the block" over a beit kneset so we can arrive home at the earliest possible second after nightfall. Woe unto us if we are unfortunate to be stuck in a minyan where *Veyiten Lecha* is recited, and woe to the chazan who cannot complete *Veyiten Lecha* in under four minutes.

Despite these challenges, even a Shabbat observed through "*koach*" can serve as a touchstone, indicating to us that we indeed have the capacity to survive 25 hours without our mundane pursuits and technological compulsions. Yet Shabbat itself is not long enough to break our habits; to regain our identity; to facilitate a spiritual realignment with our ultimate values.

Shabbat affords us a “taste” of *Olam Habah*, the World to Come, but Shabbat alone is too short a time span for significant and sustainable life changes to occur. This is because the behaviors that form the habits that define us develop and are reinforced over long periods of time. They become embedded through repetition until they are second nature. That which is second nature does not easily change. When it comes to our spiritual trajectory, Shabbat does not offer the requisite endurance to break our habits and reset our spiritual trajectory.

By contrast, the observance of shemittah requires the implementation of *gevurah* over *koach*. The ability to abstain from asserting power over nature, to relinquish control over material pursuits, to dial down the drive for tangible results for the sake of abstract values—for an entire year(!)—elevates the farmer to the highest spiritual realm.

No doubt, the overt observance of shemittah is one of self-restraint. Shemittah by definition provides an opportunity to recognize HaShem’s omnipotence. It is humbling to realize that the world can continue without us. That despite all of our ingenuity and sweat-equity—“*Ain ode milvado*”—nothing exists without G-d.

However, the deeper message of shemittah is one of actualization. Shemittah is a device whereby we emulate G-d through a process of spiritual self-determination.

Just as when we observe Shabbat we are emulating G-d’s behavior, so too shemittah allows us to act G-dly as well. These are periods of time where we exercise self-control and engage our capacity for reflection, consolidation, and self-direction.

Thus, our cessation from work on Shabbat and relinquishing control during shemittah presents an interesting dialectic: on the one hand, we recognize our mortal limitations and G-d’s omnipotence. On the other hand, we become empowered by emulating G-d’s own behavior of “*shavat vayinafash*, He ceased to work and rested.” In this latter dynamic, our abstention becomes an empowering and expansive experience.

By ceasing our work, we show that we are not enslaved by the physical world. By disengaging from our mundane habits we can truly manifest our autonomy.

In his book, *The Survivors Club*, journalist Ben Sherwood writes about U.S. Air Force Captain Brian Udell, an experienced flight instructor with over 100 combat missions. On April 15, 1995, Udell was on a routine training exercise in his F-15E tactical jet fighter off the coast of North Carolina on a moonless night. Udell began an “easy” maneuver—a 60 degree right turn; but due to a malfunction on his heads-up display, Udell suddenly found himself upside down, racing toward earth at an almost vertical angle. At 10,000 feet, his plane shattered the Mach-1 barrier and Udell knew it was time to bail out.

In the time it took Udell to pull the ejection handles, his plane traveled another 4,000 feet, less than six seconds away from crashing into the Atlantic Ocean. The bubble covering the cockpit ripped away at 4,500 feet. At 1,500 feet, Udell ejected. The force of the ejection tore off Udell’s helmet, mask, earplugs, gloves, and watch and shredded his life preserver. The one-man life raft hanging at the end of a 15-foot cord attached to Udell’s right hip was still intact, yet he was severely injured.

Udell's parachute opened just 500 feet above the water; he floated in total darkness, then suddenly plunged 10 feet under the frigid Atlantic water. Udell felt the salt water burn his wounds as he struggled toward the surface. Alone, some 55 miles off the North Carolina coast in five-foot seas without a life vest, Udell tried to frog kick to no avail.

Udell was exhausted and running low on energy. His body ached all over. Given his injuries, swimming wasn't an option and he faced the threat of hypothermia or a shark attack.

Udell tried repeatedly to pull himself into the life raft, but with only one functioning arm, he couldn't get leverage and the waves kept pushing him away. Finally, Udell put his head against the canvas, and closed his eyes as they welled up with tears. The one vivid image that appeared in his mind's eye was his beloved wife, who was pregnant with their first child. At that moment, Udell stopped fighting and started praying. Broken and battered, he cried out: "**G-d, I need help.**"

Udell suddenly felt a surge of energy, and he summoned all his strength with one last attempt to pull himself onto the raft. This time, instead of knocking him off, a gentle wave nudged him to safety. To date, Udell is the only pilot ever to survive ejecting at sea level from a jet going faster than the speed of sound. He went on to serve two more tours in Iraq and on September 7, 1995, he witnessed the birth of his son.

Udell is deeply modest and doesn't claim any credit for what he did. When he couldn't pull himself onto the raft, he believes G-d gave him one more assist by sending a wave that saved his life.

After interviewing Udell, author Ben Sherwood concluded: "At this crowded intersection of what we command and what we don't, the most effective survivors know **when to hold on, when to let go and when to let G-d.**"

Few of us will ever have to relinquish control to G-d in such a dramatic circumstance. Yet as the Midrash clearly states, the importance of relinquishing control during the shemittah year is nothing short of heroic.

In extolling the virtues of democratic capitalism, the father of modern economics Adam Smith coined a metaphor known as "the invisible hand" to describe the self-regulating nature of the free-market. Interestingly, we also believe in an invisible hand metaphor as it pertains to the wealth of nations—we call it the *yad HaShem*—the hand of G-d. Although we may plant and reap, buy and sell, invest and accrue, we must never mistakenly think that we are ultimately in control. Shemittah, like Shabbat, has us step back and appreciate that our national sovereignty and prosperity results, not through the might and power of our own hand, but by our ability to recognize the *yad HaShem*—the Hand of G-d in all of our material endeavors.

When we stand before G-d on Rosh Hashana, we affirm our belief that G-d is our King and we are His subjects. *That* is what we do and *this* is who we are! As G-d's ambassadors to the world, our highest aspirations must involve our recognition of...

When to hold on, when to let go, and when to let G-d.