בס"ד

17 Av 5781, Doc. 1656-20

Dear the Highly Esteemed
Rabbi Yehuda HaLevy Amichay *shlita*
Torah VeHa'aretz Institute

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my appreciation of your work at Otzar Ha'aretz, founded three *shemitot* ago, to distribute fruits and vegetables throughout the Holy Land during the *shemitah* year, employing *mehudar* solutions.

As the verse states: "Then shall the land make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land rest and make up for its sabbath years" )*Vayikra* 26:34).

Furthermore, Midrash Tanchuma expounds on the verse in *Tehilim* (103:30) גיבורי כח עושי" דברו" "Mighty beings who do His bidding."

What is the verse discussing? Said Rabbi Yitzchak: The verse refers to those who observe the Sabbatical year. Why are they called "mighty beings?" They see their fields ownerless, and their trees ownerless, and the fences unlocked, and they see their fruits being eaten, and they conquer their evil inclination and remain silent [can there be anyone mightier than this?!].

At first blush, we need to understand what makes them so mighty? The Torah promised that they would have a miraculous bumper crop to last for three years in the year before *shemitah*. This, itself, is a miracle since it is not natural for fields to produce three times their usual yield. Since the Torah promised that G-d's word will take place, what is the big deal to rest on the seventh year and relinquish ownership of one's fruits and vegetables?

However, this is the power of the evil inclination entrenched within man and the power of the lust for money. Even if one already has in his hand the yield and profit of three years, and even if he sees that this occurred in a miraculous manner—when he sees how his fields lay fallow and it seems he is seemingly losing money, it takes inner strength to restrain himself and subjugate his will to the will of the Torah. This is how things are. Knowing the truth is insufficient to force man to act in accordance to this knowledge. Instead, man needs inner strength to surmount his inclination and impose his knowledge on his behavior. (Rabbi Aharon Kotler ztz"l, excerpt from the introduction to *Dinei Shevi'it*)*.*

For this reason, it is important to strengthen everyone involved in mitzvah of *shemitah*, especially the Torah giants who head and guide the Torah Veha'aretz Institute. It should be the will of Heaven that they succeed in increasing Torah and glorifying it, and continue to be the guardians of observing the *mitzvah* of *shemitah* in the Holy Land. The Holy One Blessed Be He should protect them that no mishap will ensue as a result of their work. In the merit of observing the *mitzvah* of *shemitah*, may we merit the complete redemption speedily in our days, *amen*.

Blessings of the Torah,
Yitzchak Yosef
Rishon Lezion
Chief Rabbi of Israel