

Jubilee

The Torah also commended the *Yovel*, the Jubilee. In addition to the *Shmitah*, every 50th year, was a kind of double *Shmitah*. All tribal lands returned to their original owners. This was to prevent anyone monopolizing the real estate and ensuring a fair division. We don't know if this ever happened. It required lots of conditions such as a Sanhedrin of rabbis to convene and declare its start. But the idea of a Jubilee, also remains part of our language as a kind of symbol of freedom, not just a matter of years.

But freedom has many facets and these are reflected in Biblical language. There is another word used of the Jubilee, the word *Dror*. Which is a beautiful name in Hebrew and literally means freedom but it is used this way only once in the Torah. Its only other mention is one other place in the Torah where it is applied to sweet-smelling spice. Perhaps this is the origin of the phrase "freedom is sweet." Whereas *Yovel* applies to the time factor, *Dror* implies a national liberation. And then there is another word for freedom, *Hofshi*. That simply means being "let out."

There are different dimensions to freedom. One is the act of release, the removal of an obligation. That's, if you like, negative. It's good in that it removes a burden. But it doesn't substitute anything positive. *Dror*, means a positive sense of freedom. It is the appreciation of one's free state. And that involves an obligation to use one's freedom well and constructively. To be able to develop our inner beings and our spirituality.