

Leviticus Chapter 25

Verses 1-55: Proper care for the Lord's property is prescribed for the sabbatical year (25:1-7), and the Jubilee year (25:8-55).

Verses 1-18: The phrase "I am the LORD your God" closes each of the three sections of this chapter (verses 17, 38, 55). After the introduction (verse 1), the Jubilee is discussed as it relates to:

- (1) A Sabbath for the land (verses 2-22);
- (2) The redemption of the property (verses 23-38);
- (3) And the redemption of slaves (verses 39-55).

The major concerns of the chapter are related in the words and phrases such as "jubilee, return ... unto his possession", "thy brother be waxen poor" (verse 25), and "fear thy God". The main purpose of these laws was to prevent the utter ruin of debtors. The basic theme was the liberation of that which was bound.

Verses 1-7: This involves revitalization of the land. The seventh year of rest would invigorate and replenish the nutrients in the soil. Whatever grew naturally was free to all for the taking (verses 6-7).

In addition to a Sabbath day, Israel observed a Sabbath year – "the seventh year ... a sabbath of rest unto the land", to remind the people that their land was a gift from the Lord that ultimately belonged to Him. The instructions for the sabbath year served to restore the social order, allowing those who had become poor to escape their poverty.

Leviticus 25:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,"

Not when Moses was with the Lord on that mount forty days, but after he came down from there. Even after the tabernacle was set up, while the children of Israel were encamped about that mountain, and before they took their journey from there. For they continued some time in the wilderness of Sinai, and here it was the Lord spoke to Moses. For the words may be rendered "by" or "near Mount Sinai". And so Josephus says, the following laws were delivered to Moses, when Israel was encamped under Mount Sinai.

"Saying": As follows.

Leviticus 25:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD."

What follows, being what the whole body of the people would be under obligation to observe, and therefore must be delivered to them all, at least to the heads and elders of the people, and by them to the rest.

"When ye come into the land which I give you": The land of Canaan, and until they came there, the following law concerning the sabbatical year could not take place. And as Maimonides says, it was only used in the land of Israel, and nowhere else, according to this text. And that both before and after the temple was built.

"Then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord": This was a very peculiar arrangement. Not only all agricultural processes were to be stopped every seventh year, but the cultivators had no right to the soil. It lay entirely fallow, and its spontaneous produce was the common property of the poor and the stranger, the cattle and game. This year of rest was to invigorate the productive powers of the land, as the weekly Sabbath was a refreshment to men and cattle. It commenced immediately after the Feast of Ingathering. And it was calculated to teach the people, in a remarkable manner, the reality of the presence and providential power of God.

Since this law was separated from the other laws given at mount Sinai, it was important to state here that this was also given at mount Sinai. It would be impossible to let the land rest before they owned any land, so of course this law was to be in force after they came to the Promised Land. The sabbath was not only for the people and the land, it is also associated with the 6000 years of the earth in a state of work, and then the 1000 years of rest during the millennium reign of Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 25:3 "Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

Under which is comprehended everything relating to agriculture, both before and after sowing.

As fertilizing the land, ploughing and harrowing it, treading the corn, reaping and gathering it in (see Exodus 23:10).

"And six years thou shall prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof": Which is not to be restrained to vineyards only, but to be extended to oliveyards, orchards and gardens. And to the planting and cultivating of them, and gathering in the fruits of them.

Leviticus 25:4 "But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard."

From all tillage of it, from planting and cultivating any sort of trees in it. And even from digging pits, ditches; and caves, as say the Jewish writers. And this was typical of that rest which believers enter into under the Gospel dispensation. And of the rest in the new Jerusalem state, and especially in the ultimate glory. Not only from the labors of the body, but of the mind. Through sin, Satan, doubts and fears, and through conflicts with various enemies, and when even all spiritual labors and services will be at an end but that of praise.

"A sabbath for the Lord": For his honor and glory, to ascertain his property in the land, to show the power of his providence. And display his goodness in his care of all creatures, without any means used by them.

"Thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard": Under which are comprehended all acts of agriculture. Which respect the cultivation of vines, olives, figs, and, according to the Misnah, there were some instruments which it was not lawful to sell to an artificer in the seventh year. Such as a plough, with all belonging to it, a yoke, a fan, a spade. But he may sell him a scythe, or a sickle, or a cart, and all its instruments. And which the commentators interpret of one that is suspected of working in that year. The house of Shammai say, a heifer that ploughed might not be sold that year.

The land is God's and the fullness thereof. This sabbath of rest for the land certainly drives home the fact, that God wants us to set aside a time for nothing but worshipping Him and rest for our body. This also lets us know that God has a schedule that we must abide by. As we said in a previous lesson, for the covenant of blessings from God to be activated in their lives, or in fact in our lives, this time of worshipping God must be observed.

Leviticus 25:5 "That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: [for] it is a year of rest unto the land."

That which sprung up of itself from grains of corn, shed in the harvest of the preceding year, without any ploughing or sowing. He might reap it, but not as at other times, the whole of it, and gather it as his own property. But only somewhat of it in common with others for his, present use.

"Neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed": Which was on this year forbid to be dressed. The grapes of which he might gather in common with others, but not as in other years, all of them, and as peculiarly his own. The words may be rendered, "the grapes of thy separations". Either such as in other years he used to separate for himself, and forbid others gathering them, but now made them common; Or which he did not labor in the cultivation of, but abstained from it.

"For it is a year of rest unto the land": Which is repeated, that it may be observed.

Perhaps this was to be for the widows, orphans, and strangers passing by. The Israelite was strictly forbidden to even gather that which grew voluntarily.

Leviticus 25:6 "And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee,"

That is, that which grew up of itself of the land, or on trees, vines, olives, etc. undressed, should be the meat or food on which they should live that year. And this comprehends everything that is fit for food, and also for drink, and for anointing. And even for the lighting of lamps, as in the Misnah.

"For thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid": The owner of the fields and vineyards, he and his family, wife, children, and servants, might eat of the fruits of them in common with others".

For whereas it is elsewhere said (Exodus 23:11). "That the poor of thy people may eat". This is observed here, lest anyone should think the rich are forbid eating them, as Jarchi remarks.

"And for thy hired servant, and for the stranger that sojourneth with thee": Which the same writer interprets of Gentiles. The food of this year was common to masters and servants, to rich and poor, to Israelites and Gentiles. All had an equal right unto, and share therein. Which might be an emblem of the first times of the Gospel, in which all things were had in common (Acts 4:32). And typical of the communion of saints in things spiritual. In salvation by Jesus Christ, common to Jews and Gentiles, high and low, bond and free. In the free and full forgiveness of sins by his blood. And in justification by his righteousness, which is unto all, and upon all them that believe. For there is no difference; in the participation of faith, and other graces. Which are alike precious, and in the enjoyment of promises, privileges, and ordinances, and even of eternal life itself.

The food provided by this bountiful harvest the year before will be sufficient for the owner of the land's family and all of his servants, and all of these other people listed in the verse above. It appears also, that all of these people took a year of rest as well. This would give them plenty of time to hear the law completely read again, and then to think upon the things of God. It should, also teach them, that God truly is their provider, and not just the work that they did in the fields provided the food. Except God bless the harvest, there would not be a crop anyway.

Leviticus 25:7 "And for thy cattle, and for the beast that [are] in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat."

The former signifies tame cattle, such as were kept at home, or in fields, or were used in service. And the latter the wild beasts of the field.

"Shall all the increase thereof be meat": For the one, and for the other. Jarchi remarks, that all the time a wild beast eats of the increase of the field, the cattle may be fed at home. But when it ceases to the wild beast of the field, then it ceases to the cattle at home. Nay, the Jews are so strict in this matter, that they say that when there is no food for the beasts in the field, men are obliged to bring out what they have in their houses (see Isa. 11:6).

The reproduction of cattle and other animals, is directly brought about by God. We see from this that this type of animal is put on the earth, so that man will have meat to eat.

Verses 8-55: The Year of Jubilee involved a year of release from indebtedness (verses 23-38), and bondage of all sorts (verses 39-55). All prisoners and captives were set free, slaves released, and debtors absolved. All property reverted to original owners. This plan curbed inflation and moderated acquisitions. It also gave new opportunity to people who had fallen on hard times.

Verses 8-17: The fiftieth year was the "Year of Jubilee". As in the Sabbath year, the land would lie fallow. It was also a year of "liberty", when all property was returned to its original owners. These are general instructions for Jubilee.

Leviticus 25:8 "And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years."

Or weeks of years. And there being seven days in a week, and a day being put for a year, seven weeks of years made forty nine years. The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and Jarchi, interpret it seven "shemittas", or sabbatical years. And a sabbatical year being every seventh year, made the same number.

"Seven times seven years": Or forty nine years, as follows.

"And the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be forty and nine years": Just such a space of years there was between each jubilee, which, as afterwards said, was the fiftieth year. So as there were a seventh day Sabbath, and a fiftieth day sabbath, the Day of Pentecost, so there were a seventh year Sabbath, or sabbatical year, and a fiftieth year Sabbath.

Seven, as we have mentioned so many times, is a spiritual number. These seven sevens would just magnify the spirituality of this time. We see then, that during these 49 years, work was to be done only 42 of the years.

Leviticus 25:9 "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth [day] of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land."

"The trumpet": This was blown on the tenth day of the seventh month to start the 50th year of universal redemption.

This blowing of the trumpet would pronounce the beginning of the Year of Jubilee. This is the seventh month by the spiritual calendar. This was also the first month of their civil calendar. Day of Atonement, which we dealt with in a previous lesson, was an extremely important time for these Israelites. This was the one time of the year when the High Priest carried the blood into the Holy of Holies for the sins of the people and for his own sins, as well. We find from the statement (throughout the land), that this was not just a local celebrated day, but all must observe this day. This jubilee would be a new beginning for those who will be set free.

Leviticus 25:10 "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout [all] the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family."

Not only must they let the land lie fallow, but the people were allowed a one-year break from their labor. Those bound by a work contract were released from their commitments and there was the release of indentured servants.

"Proclaim liberty" is the Hebrew *deror*, and is related to the Akkadian *andurarur* – "freedom, liberty". It is a technical expression referring to the release of Hebrew Slaves and of property every 50 years in the Year of Jubilee. "This verse is inscribed on the American Liberty Bell. God

owned the land, "for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (verse 23), and thus Israel was not to build up a landed aristocracy. The land would be distributed to Israel by lot, which depicted that God apportioned it according to His will. Chapter 25 prohibits anyone from selling himself or his land permanently. (Isa. 5:8 and Amos 2:6), depict violations of this law. Isaiah uses the term "release" in the famous passage (Isa. 61:1), announcing good news to the afflicted, including a proclamation of "liberty" to captives. This text, anciently portraying the reversal of Jerusalem's material and spiritual fortunes, was quoted by Christ in the synagogue in Nazareth with reference to His own ministry (Luke 4:18-19).

The only reference to such a release in Israel's history occurred during the reign of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem was under Babylonian siege (ca. 587 B.C.).

This is total restoration. Not only are they set free, but their land is returned to them as well. Hallow means to make clean. This could be ceremonially clean, as well as physically clean.

Leviticus 25:11 "A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather [the grapes] in it of thy vine undressed."

Which, clearly shows, that not the forty ninth year was the year of jubilee, as many learned men have asserted. Chiefly induced by this reason, because two years would come together in which were no sowing or reaping. but that God, that could cause the earth to forth fruit for three years (Lev. 25:21). Could make it bring forth enough for four years. And in order to make their sentiment agree with this passage, they are obliged to make the foregoing Jubilee one of the fifty, and begin their account from there. But this could not be done in the first account of the Jubilee. Of the name (see notes on Lev. 25:9).

"Ye shall not sow": In the Year of Jubilee, which shows also that this could not be the forty ninth year, which of course being a sabbatical year, there would be no sowing, reaping, etc. And so this law or instruction would be quite needless.

"Neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. As in the sabbatical year (see notes on Lev. 25:5). The same with respect to these things being observed in the Year of Jubilee. As in that; and so Jarchi observes that the same that is said of the sabbatical year is said of the Jubilee. Two holy years being found next to one another, the forty ninth year the sabbatical year, and the fiftieth year the jubilee.

Leviticus 25:12 " For it [is] the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field."

Men being restored to their liberty, possessions, and families, it must be matter of joy to them. And therefore, this year was to be separated from all others, and devoted to the ends and uses before mentioned. And men were to live upon the spontaneous productions of the earth, without any tillage of land, or cultivation of vines, etc.

"Ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field": They were not to reap corn, and gather grapes and olives, and bring them into their barns and storehouses, as in other years. But were to go out

every day into their fields, and gather for present use, and all were common to all sorts of men, and to cattle, as in the sabbatical year (see notes on Lev. 25:7).

It seems that there was a separation between using this foodstuff for a cash crop, and just eating it. It appears that it was alright to eat the food that voluntarily grew, but not to harvest it. The stranger, the widow, or any who did not have food, could eat it also.

Leviticus 25:13 "In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession."

In the beginning of it, as Aben Ezra, though not on the first day of Tisri, but the tenth day. The day of atonement, when the trumpet was blown.

"Ye shall return every man unto his possession": Which is repeated from (Lev. 25:10). The reason of which, the Jews say, is to include gifts, and which, according to them, are like sales, and returned in the Year of "Jubilee". That is, if a man gave his estate in possession to another, he returned to it, in the Year of Jubilee. Equally as if he had sold it. And therefore they observe the same phrase is twice used by Moses, to include gifts. But perhaps the truer reason is, because this was a special business done at this time, and of great importance. The word "return" being so often used, may serve to confirm the sense of the word "Jubilee", given previously (see notes on Lev. 25:9).

It appears that this was not an option. This was law for the Israelites. The land was purchased for the amount of time left in the jubilee. I would suppose, it was more like a lease than a sale.

Verses 14-16: The Jubilee year had an effect on the value of land, which was to be considered in all transactions.

Leviticus 25:14 "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbor, or buyest [ought] of thy neighbor's hand, ye shall not oppress one another:"

Any estate or possession, house or land, at any time before the year of jubilee.

"Or buyest ought of thy neighbor's hand": Of movable goods, as the Targum of Jonathan interprets it. And so, other Jewish writers restrain this to goods which are bought by hand, and delivered from hand to hand. And so they think that fields, and servants, which they say are like to fields, are excluded hereby. But it seems to refer to anything saleable, and chiefly to fields and vineyards, as the following verses show.

"Ye shall not oppress one another; the buyer giving too little, or the seller requiring too much": No advantage was to be taken, either of the necessity of the one, or the ignorance of the other. But a fair bargain was to be made, and the full value given, neither too much nor too little. The Jews by "neighbor" understand an Israelite, and not a Gentile. Not that there might be no buying and selling at all between Jews and Gentiles. Or that the former might oppress and defraud the

latter, though not an Israelite. But lands and inheritances might not be sold at all to Gentiles, only to Israelites.

Leviticus 25:15 "According to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbor, [and] according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee:"

That is, reckoning how many years had passed since the last jubilee, and how many there were to come to the next. And so give as many years' purchase as were yet to come.

"And according to the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee": Only care was to be taken. That as many years as were sabbatical ones, which were not years of fruit, should be deducted out of the account by the seller. Since these were years the buyer could have no profit by the estate, and therefore it was not reasonable that such years should be reckoned into the purchase. And hence the Jewish writers gather, that when a man had sold his field, he could not redeem it in less than two years. Because a number of years cannot be less than two, and that if even the buyer agreed to it, it might not be done.

Leviticus 25:16 "According to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for [according] to the number [of the years] of the fruits doth he sell unto thee."

More was to be asked and required, and should be given for an estate, when, for instance, there were thirty years to the year of jubilee, than when there were but twenty.

"And according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it": If it wanted but five, or six, or ten years unto it, then, in proportion, less was to be insisted upon and given.

"For according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee": Which also must be considered, how many years of tillage of land, and cultivation of vineyards, etc. There were in the account, and how many sabbatical years to be deducted. For only according to the number of fruit years was the estate to be valued and sold.

Leviticus 25:17 "Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God: for I [am] the LORD your God."

"You shall not therefore oppress one another": No one should take advantage of or abuse another person, because cruelty is against the very character of God. Penalties for crime were to be swift and exact.

All of this is saying, that within the 50 years before another jubilee, there would be 42 crops. The amount of money for the use of the land then should be determined by what the crop would produce before another jubilee. If it was just 5 years to jubilee, pay for the number of crops produced in that 5 years. He was trying to teach them that they were brothers, and as brothers, they should have compassion one for another. The main reason for them obeying God, is because they feared Him. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Verses 18-22: Naturally, the Israelites would be apprehensive after two successive years of neither planting nor harvesting crops. God promised blessing "in the land" for obedience: freedom from want and war (26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14), including enough crops "in the sixth year" to carry over for "three years, an astonishing promise!

God's provision in the year of no planting was given, which on a smaller scale had been true for the Sabbath day during the Exodus (compare Exodus 16:5).

Leviticus 25:18 "Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety."

These and all others he enjoined. By which tenure, even obedience to all his commands, moral, ritual, and judicial, they were to hold the land of Canaan, and their possessions in it. Which is intended in the next clause.

"And ye shall dwell in the land in safety": Without any fear of enemies, or of the neighboring nations about them seizing upon them, and distressing them. And Jarchi observes, that it was for transgressing the sabbatical year that Israel was carried captive, which he thinks is intimated in (2 Chronicles 36:21). And that the seventy years' captivity in Babylon were for the seventy sabbatical years that had been neglected.

Leviticus 25:19 "And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety."

That is, continually, and even in the seventh year, the sabbath of rest. For the land, though not manured, ploughed, and sowed, nor the vines, olives, and fig trees pruned, yet shall yield fruit as in other years, the Israelites observing the statutes and judgments of God.

"And ye shall eat your fill": Feel no want of provisions, but have fullness of everything as at other times. And never make a scanty meal, having sufficiency and plenty of all things.

"And dwell therein in safety": Not fearing enemies, nor being disturbed by them, nor carried captive.

The main lesson to be learned in this, is the fact that God will keep the covenant with them, and bless them if they keep the statutes He has placed upon them. He reminds them of some of the blessings they will receive when they keep His statutes. They will never go hungry, and they will dwell in the land safely. The following Scriptures say it best.

Psalms 37:25 "I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Proverbs 16:7 "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Verses 20-21: "Bring forth fruit for three years": When the important query was asked, God responded by promising to supply enough to last.

Leviticus 25:20 "And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase:"

Such as are of little faith, disbelieve the promise, and distrust the providence of God, and take thought for tomorrow. And indulge an anxiety of mind how they shall be provided with food in the sabbatical year ordered to be observed. In which there were to be no tillage of land, nor pruning of trees.

"Behold, we shall not sow": That being forbidden.

"Nor gather in our increase": Neither the barley, nor the wheat, nor the grapes, nor olives, nor figs, into their houses and barns, to lay up for stores, as in other years. Though they might go out and gather in for present use in common with others. Now if any should put the above question, as it was very likely some would, in such a view of things, the answer to it follows.

Leviticus 25:21 "Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years."

Upon their fields, vineyards, and oliveyards, and make them exceeding fruitful, more than in other years. All fruitfulness at any time depends upon the blessing of God, and follows upon it, but is more visible and observable when there is an exceeding great plenty.

"And it shall bring forth fruit for three years": And thus God blessed the sixth year with such a plentiful increase as was sufficient for time to come, until a new crop was gathered in. As he had blessed the sixth day with a double portion of manna, for the supply of the seventh.

We see that God is proving to them, over and over again, that He is their provider. God is saying here, that if they will keep this sabbath for the land, they will not lose any of their crop at all. God will have the crop on the 6th year to bring three times as much as it would on an ordinary year. This would be a beautiful year of rest, that they would not have to be thinking of the commercial side of life. They could rest and keep their minds and hearts stayed on God.

Leviticus Chapter 25 Questions

1. Where was Moses, when God spoke to him in verse 1?
2. When was the practice of the sabbath of the land to be carried out?
3. What does the author believe this rest of the land to be associated with?

4. What two things are specifically mentioned not to do in verse 4?
5. The land is _____ and the fullness thereof.
6. What message does this sabbath for the land drive home to believers?
7. For the covenant of God to be activated in their lives, what must they do?
8. Was it O.K. to reap the voluntary growth?
9. What does the author believe, perhaps, the crop was for?
10. How was the owner of the land to live in sabbath year?
11. Who was the owner of the land obligated to feed, besides his immediate family?
12. What would this year of rest give them plenty of time to do?
13. Who was their real provider, and ours?
14. The reproduction of animals is brought about by whom?
15. Why were cattle and like animals put on the earth?
16. What does the number 7 mean spiritually?
17. What was to happen at the passing of seven of these seven years?
18. What year was the jubilee?
19. What day was the trumpet of jubilee to sound?
20. What other celebration was on this same day?
21. What did the blowing of the trumpet proclaim?
22. What does the statement “throughout the land”, tell us?
23. What one word describes how they were to treat the year of jubilee?
24. What wonderful thing happened to a slave on jubilee?
25. What happened to the land on jubilee?
26. What does hallow mean?
27. How was the price of the land determined, since it went back to the original owner on jubilee?
28. What had God warned them not to do to their neighbor?

29. In a 50 year span, how many crops could be produced?
30. What was God trying to teach these people about their land?
31. What is the beginning of wisdom?
32. What is the main lesson to be learned in all of this?
33. Where do we find the Scripture that says “I have never seen the righteous forsaken, or his seed out begging bread”?
34. When does God make a man's enemies to be at peace with him?
35. How did God answer the question, what will I eat the seventh year?