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Leviticus 25

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Leviticus 25.

FOCUS: SABBATICAL YEAR, DAY OF ATONEMENT, YEAR OF JUBILEE

Topics.

- Six years you shall sow your field, prune your vineyard and gather fruit.
- The seventh year is a Sabbath you shall not sow nor reap your harvest.
- In the fiftieth year, on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet.
- In the fiftieth year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property.
- In the sixth year you will produce three years and eat until the ninth.
- Laws for houses in walled cities, villages and fields.
- You shall not lend money at interest, nor give food for profit.
- If your brother sells himself to you, he shall serve you until the Jubilee.
- If a poor brother sells himself to a stranger, he may be redeemed.
- The redemption price shall be calculated according to years of service.
- If a brother is not redeemed, he shall be released in the year of Jubilee.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Leviticus is about ceremonial rules and civil laws that God gave to Moses after He had given him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

- These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Lev. 26:46).

Either on Mount Sinai or when he met with him in the Tabernacle (also called the tent of meeting) when they were in the wilderness near the Mountain. Moses was to give these ceremonial laws to the Levitical priesthood, they embrace rules concerning sacrifices, offerings and worship; the ordination of Aaron and his sons and their ceremonial cleanness; the Day of Atonement; feasts and holy days and the Year of Jubilee. The civil and social laws and laws of justice he was to give to the government of Israel to implement within their society. The ceremonial and civil laws were not given to the secular world but are laws God gave to the nation of Israel. The central message is that God is holy and requires His people to be holy. The book also shows that God graciously provides atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the giving of the Law (about 1445 B.C.).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: speaks of pure oil being used to keep the seven branched lampstand regularly burning so that its light never goes out, of baking the twelve loaves of shewbread and covers laws for blasphemy, murder and the expression, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and speaks of the penalties for those who kill an animal and who kill a person.

LEVITICUS 25:1-2

The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.

- **Leviticus 25:1-2:** The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, ²"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD.

Since Moses could not speak to the entire nation at the same time, he most likely spoke to the priests and elders who then spoke to the heads of their tribes who then spoke to the heads of the families and in this manner the laws of the LORD would have been spread throughout the nation. These laws were given to Moses on Mount Sinai (Gen 25:1) and are to be applied when they cross the River Jordan and enter the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

THE SEVENTH YEAR SABBATH

LEVITICUS 25:3

Six Years you shall Sow, prune your Vineyard and Gather Fruit.

- **Leviticus 25:3:** For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits,

The word vineyard in this context is not limited to clusters of grapes only but embraces every kind of fruit that grows on the land such as vineyards, olive-gardens and plantations of fruit-trees. The statement, "six years you shall sow your field," embraces everything relating to: -

- Agriculture, both before and after sowing, such as fertilising the land, ploughing and harrowing it, treading the corn, reaping and gathering it in.
- Gathering in all kinds of fruit including vineyards, olive yards, orchards and gardens, and to the planting and cultivating of them, and gathering them in.

LEVITICUS 25:4-5

Do not Sow or Reap Your Harvest on the Seventh Year Sabbath

- **Leviticus 25:4-5:** but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.

During this seventh year Sabbath:

- All agricultural processes were to be put on hold.
- Those who farmed the land had no right to sow, plough or cultivate soil, the land was to lay entirely unsown, uncultivated and unplanted.
- No one was to tillage the ground, plant trees of any sort, or cut off dried-up branches.
- All labour was to cease in this seventh year as it did on the seventh day Sabbath.
- All yearly labour was to be put on hold, and everything left to freely grow up of itself.

The fruit and produce that did sprout up was the common property of the poor and the stranger, as well as the cattle and wild life. It was to be freely available for proselytes and servants, the rich and poor, the noble and lowly all were to have an equal right to whatever grew of itself, for their daily food. Since God promised to abundantly bless and multiply the sixth-year harvest, there would be more than enough stored in barns to supply what was needed for the shewbread, the wave sheaf for the Passover, and the wheat for the two wave-loaves at Pentecost.

Added to this, God would have blessed what grew up of itself, so that there was more than enough for the people to freely pick what they needed for their daily food. If Joseph could store barley and wheat to provide for the people of Egypt and Israel for seven years of famine, it very easy to accept that the nation of Israel could store in barns enough food to carry them through a little more than a year, especially when God promised He would multiply the sixth harvest.

The story of Joseph: there was seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and after them there was seven years of famine, so much so that all the years of plenty was forgotten, because the famine was so severe that it consumed all the land. (Gen. 41:28-31). During the seven plentiful years that the earth produced abundantly, Joseph gathered up all the food and grain in the fields and stored it in the cities in such great abundance it, was like the sand of the sea, so that Joseph could not measure it. (Gen. 41:46-49). When the seven years of plenty did come to an end, the seven years of famine began (Gen. 41:53-55) and when it had severely spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold food and grain to the Egyptians, and all the earth came to him to buy food, because the famine was severe over all the earth. (Gen. 41:53-57).

The year the Sabbatical Sabbath began: following are the two most common thoughts concerning which year they began to observe the first seventh year Sabbatical Sabbath year after the occupation of Canaan:

- Some feel it was first observed the seventh year after they entered the land. Others consider that the first six years were spent in the conquest and division of the land (Jos 5:12), and that the Sabbatical year was to be observed after six years of agriculture, and therefore maintain that the observance of the first Sabbatical year did not commence until the fourteenth year.
- The manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year. (Josh 5:12).

The prohibition against sowing, reaping, pruning and gathering implies that the sabbatical year of rest most likely began, like the year of Jubilee (v9), in the seventh Jewish month (Trishi) immediately after the Feast of Booths (also called Tabernacles) when the land had been completely harvested and cleared of its fully grown and ripe crops. This would be the perfect time for such a year to begin, since every field would have been completely harvested and every vineyard completely pruned, and therefore ready to produce new growth, new crops and new fruit.

Benefits of the land resting one year out of seven: allowing the land to rest for the seventh year would result in increased fertility of the soil and invigorate the productive vitality of the land.

The seventh-year sabbatical Sabbath is not a new law: Moses here is not establishing a new law but repeating a law that he had previously established in the book of Exodus.

- For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. (Exod. 23:10-11).

The Sabbath of Land shall Provide Food for You and Your Cattle.

- **Leviticus 25:6-7:** The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you, ⁷and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.

The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you means that all that grew up of itself on the untilled and uncultivated land would serve as their food, the barley, wheat, grain, vines, olives, figs, vineyards and all kinds of fruit trees, would be food for all people in common to freely eat of without distinction, including, the owners of the farms, fields and vineyards, their wives, family, servants and maids, the stranger (sojourner in KJV), the rich the poor, the noble and lowly including the cattle and wild animals all had an equal right to whatever sprouted up from the ground. Without being tilled and sown, the land would normally produce very little, however, the vines and other fruit-trees would continue to produce even without pruning and with God's blessing on the sixth-year harvest, the land would yield a considerable increase, even though the land, and all who would normally work on it would be at rest. No one would have to hunt and beg for food during this seventh sabbatical Sabbath year. If an owner of a vineyard locked up their vineyard, or a farmer hedged in his fields, or it they gathered their produce into their storehouses in the sabbatical year were breaking the law. Everything was to be left as it was after the sixth-year harvest and made freely available to everyone equally, all were to have the right to everything in every place, and each person was to only take what they needed for the day into their house. No one was to trade with anything the land produced or store it up, everything the sabbatical year produced could only be used for direct consumption.

Three lessons the sabbatical year teaches us:

1. Under God's government with Israel there was no such thing as absolute ownership in the land vested in any man. The soil is the property of the LORD's, and as such was to be held in trust for Him, and not to be abused by overworking it for selfish profit and gain, but to be made the most of for the good of every creature which dwelt upon it. We are all God's children in that we are all descendants of the first man Adam and the earth was given to us to dwell on, which means we should all be applying this same principal of not abusing the earth or overworking it, for we are all like Israel of old, and are only tenants on it for the earth is the LORD's.
 - The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1).
 - For "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." (1 Cor. 10:26).
2. To beware of covetousness, for a man's life consists not in the abundance of his possessions.
3. We are to exercise a willing dependence on God's providence for our support and consider ourselves the LORD's tenants and to use our possessions as His stewards.

This year of rest typified the spiritual rest that all believers enter-into through Christ, for it is through faith in Him that we are eased of the burden of worldly care and striving to earn righteousness that leads to salvation and being counted worthy before God. Following are two possible symbolisms of the sabbatical seventh year Sabbath:

1. The food of this year was common to the owners of the farms and vineyards, their servants, the stranger, the rich, the poor all had an equal right to eat of it, which may signify the age of the Gospel in which

all things spiritual were common to all people, whether rich or poor, noble or lowly. For all can eat of the Bread of Life and receive full forgiveness of sin by his blood, and justification by his righteousness, which is freely available to all who believe, for there is no difference between Jew and Gentile when it comes to faith and salvation in Christ.

2. The spiritual rest which all believers enter-into through faith in Christ, for it is only through him that we are eased of the burden of worldly care and labour to earn righteousness that leads to salvation.

THE FIFTIETH YEAR AND DAY OF ATONEMENT

LEVITICUS 25:8-10

In the Fiftieth Year, On the Day of Atonement, Sound the Trumpet.

- **Leviticus 25:8-10:** "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. ⁹Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.

Some consider the seventh-year sabbatical Sabbath to be a full year, and the Jubilee to be a precise day, specifically the tenth day of the seventh month when they sounded the trumpet through the land. However, the following shows that all twelve months of the sabbatical year were considered as a jubilee and not just one day. The Scripture says the seventh year shall be a year of solemn rest for the land, you shall not sow your field, prune your vineyard or gather the grapes. (Lev. 25:4-5), clearly showing that the sabbatical seventh year Sabbath is a full twelve months. On the tenth day of the seventh month (the Day of Atonement) Israel was to sound a loud trumpet throughout the land and consecrate the fiftieth year, for it shall be a jubilee, when the people of Israel are to return to their property to its tribe and clan. (Lev. 25:9-10). Verse eleven states, "the fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you," clearly showing that the entire year was considered a jubilee year.

The day of Atonement: was on the 10th day (for one day) (Lev. 23:27) (Lev. 25:9). Five days later, on the 15th day was the feast of Booths/Tabernacle for seven days (Lev. 23:34) which was immediately followed by the 23rd day, the eighth day of the feast of Booths/Tabernacle. The LORD told the people of Israel to sound a loud trumpet and proclaim the year of liberty on the 10th day of the seventh month, which is the Day of Atonement and consecrate the fiftieth year. This means that the year of Jubilee began on the 10th day of the seventh month and finished on the 10th day of the seventh month of the following year. On the 15th day of the seventh month, (five days after the Day of Atonement) the feast of Booths/Tabernacles began for seven days (Lev. 23:34) which ended on the 21st day and was immediately followed by the final eighth day of the feast of Booths/Tabernacle on the 22nd Day of the seventh month. All Israel's harvests (the barley and wheat harvest) had been gathered in prior to the Day of Atonement making the Day of Atonement the perfect day for the seventh sabbatical year Sabbath to begin and to end.

The 50th year was the year of Liberty the year of Jubilee: the word jubilee comes from the Hebrew word (*yowbel*) and means, the blast of a horn (from its continuous sound); specifically, the signal of the silver trumpets, and the instrument itself. It carries the idea of a festival and used to introduce the jubilee. When Israel possessed the land, the LORD spoke to Moses saying:

- The land shall be divided for inheritance according to the number of names. ⁵⁴To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance in proportion to its list. ⁵⁵But the

land shall be divided by lot. According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. ⁵⁶Their inheritance shall be divided according to lot between the larger and the smaller." (Num. 26:52-56).

- You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. (Num. 33:54-56).

At the end of every seventh sabbatical cycle of years, in the 50th year of Jubilee, each field and estate that might have been alienated was to be restored to the family to which it had been originally allotted.

You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years:

(v8) Israel was to count seven weeks of years, meaning they were to multiply seven times seven which equals forty-nine years, then ten days later, on the Day of Atonement) of the fiftieth year they were to sound a loud Trumpet throughout the land of Israel announcing that the Jubilee year was to begin. During this fiftieth year the land was to return to its original owner or their heir. Though men purchased the land of Israel, no one literally owned it, for it could not be sold away from the original families of the tribes it was allotted to, but only sold through leases until the year of jubilee, and then returned to the original owner or their heir, and even they didn't literally own it, for the land is the LORD's, and the people of Israel are strangers and sojourners with Him on the land. (v23).

On the Day of Atonement, you shall sound the trumpet: (v9) God now appoints another perpetual ordinance, that on the tenth day of the seventh month of the fifteenth year Israel was to announce the beginning of the Jubilee year. They were not only to sound trumpets in Jerusalem, but in every city, town, village throughout the land of Judea and Israel, for all the land was to be at rest and not just certain parts of it. This extraordinary fiftieth year was to be celebrated as a year of rest from work and of rejoicing. Public notice was to be given through the whole country, by the sound of loud trumpets to announce its beginning.

It shall be a jubilee for you: (v9), these words embrace the following:

- This most extraordinary of all civil institutions, that was given the name of "Jubilee" from a Hebrew word signifying a musical instrument, a horn or trumpet, began on the tenth day of the seventh month, (the Great Day of Atonement), when, the heads and authorities of the nation would publicly order trumpets to be blown throughout the land to proclaim the beginning of the universal restoration of all things.
- The observance of the jubilee and the sabbatical year was only to begin when the Israelites had taken possession of the Promised Land.
- During this fiftieth year every ancient owner of land and estates that had been alienated by a sale was to be restored to the land of their inheritance.
- Israel was to set their slaves free to return to the family to which they belonged.
- It mattered not how often an estate had been sold or alienated between one jubilee and another, or how many hands it had passed through, it must return to the heirs of the persons who were first possessed of it at the next fifty-year jubilee.
- The jubilee was announced with the sound of silver trumpets blasting out across the land on the evening of Great Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month (Trishri).
- By this method of leasing the land allotted to the tribes was preserved and kept in their families, until the coming of the Messiah.

- Every new born male child of Israel was born into a financial system in which if their families land was sold or forfeited, it would be returned at the year of jubilee.
- All prisoners, captives and slaves were declared free, and debtors were absolved of their liability and every inheritance throughout the land of Judea was restored to its original owner.

The symbolism of the Jubilee: this restoration of all things shadows forth Christ's redemption from slavery of sin and Satan, and every believer's liberty from spiritual debts being brought again through Christ's death and resurrection to the liberty of the children of God and published to the world not by trumpets, but by the sound of the Gospel.

THE FIFTIETH YEAR

LEVITICUS 25:11-12

The Fiftieth Year shall Be a Jubilee and Be Holy to You.

- **Leviticus 25:11-12:** That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. ¹²For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.

For six years Israel was to:

- Sow their field, prune their vineyards and gather in its fruits

The seventh year was:

- To be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land
- Nothing was to be sown in the fields or pruned the vineyards or gathered.
- The Sabbath of the land would provide food for the people, the cattle and wild animals. (Lev 25:3-7).

Then we are told Israel was:

- To count forty-nine years and on the tenth day of the fiftieth year on the Day of Atonement sound loud trumpets throughout all the land and consecrate the fiftieth year.
- Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants for it is a Jubilee.
- Everyone returned to their property and to their clan.
- Nothing was to be sown in the fields or pruned the vineyards or gathered, for it was a jubilee to be holy to Israel. (Lev. 25:8-12).

It is possible that the fiftieth Jubilee year of rest coincided with each seventh sabbatical year of rest and was the last of the series of the seventh sabbatical year of rest of which the first coincided with the previous Jubilee year.

You shall eat its produce from the field: (v12) though no food was to be stored into barns or storehouses or be hoarded in homes as a private stock in reserve and the land was to lay at rest the people were to go out every day and take as much as they needed of what grew of itself in the barley and wheat fields, the vineyards, orchards gardens of vegetables and herb gardens for their daily consumption and necessary health and well-being. The increase of all produce was common to all people including cattle and wild animals.

It shall be holy: (v12) for the following two reasons:

- In most aspects, it was set apart and separated from worldly employments and work and was a year dedicated to God.
- It was a year devoted to the worship of the LORD and men and their families were restored to their rightful inheritance and slaves and servants were set free, making it a time of great joy.

The entire jubilee sabbatical year foreshadowed, the enjoyment we are to expect under the headship of our Saviour and King during his millennial Kingdom age.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

LEVITICUS 25:13-17

In the Year of Jubilee each of You shall Return to His Property.

- **Leviticus 25:13-17:** "In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. ¹⁴And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong (oppress in KJV) one another. ¹⁵You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. ¹⁶If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. ¹⁷You shall not wrong one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.

You shall not wrong (oppress in KJV) one another: (v14) not only does the Law provide against the poor man losing his land forever, but also ensures that in the temporary sales of land the buyer and seller are not to take advantage of each other's circumstances. The seller was not to require more, likewise, the buyer was not to take advantage of his brother's misfortune by giving him less than the land was worth, but a fair bargain was to be made, and the full value given.

Return every man unto his possession: (13) this is repeated from verse ten, most likely to highlight the great importance of the law that demands, that the land was to be restored to its rightful heir, whether he had disposed of it by sale or by gift. This law that commanded that the right heir could never be permanently excluded from their land, was a manifestation of great wisdom for preserving and keeping tribes and families perfectly distinct, and their genealogies faithfully recorded, in order that all might have evidence to establish their right to the ancestral property.

If you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor: (v14) these words show that an Israelite who was reduced to poverty could only sell his land to a fellow-Israelite, and not to a Gentile. According to the Law, the Promised Land, was to be divided by lot in equal parts among the Israelites. The lot that did come into the possession of each family was to continue through the generations to be the property of the descendants of the original possessor. However, if an owner was compelled due to poverty to sell a field, it could not be purchased from him for longer than the remaining years to the next Jubilee, for then it returned to the original possessor or his family. Purchasing land was can be likened to us today buying the remaining time of an unexpired lease. When purchasing a portion of land, they were to count how many years had passed from the time of the last jubilee, this would show them the remaining years that the purchaser would be entitled to hold it. Naturally, in calculating the cost of the remaining lease, things like how many seventh sabbatical years remain, and the possibility of droughts, plagues and wars etc., would be considered. Much like modern companies today estimate how much they will lose because of theft over the year and add it to the cost of their products. Verse twenty-five states:

- You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. (v15).

This means the following two things:

1. The man buying land from his neighbor was to set the price they pay by basing it on the number of years since the last year of jubilee.
2. The man selling the land was to set the sale price by taking-into account the number of years remaining until the next year of Jubilee. According to the number of remaining harvest years, for the price is to be set according to the number of years the land can produce crops before the next year of Restoration.

To preserve their tribes and families the land could only be sold by leases until the year of jubilee, and then returned to the owner or his heir.

If the people of Israel sold a portion of land, they were to:

- Pay according to the number of years remaining to the Jubilee and sell according to the number of years remaining.
- If the years remaining were many, the price would increase if the years were few the price would decrease, because it was the seasons of crops that the land produced that was being sold and not the land itself.
- In all the country that Israel possessed they were to allow redemption of the land, if one of their brothers became poor and sold part of his property to pay his debt, then his nearest redeemer was to redeem the land his brother had sold.

If a man had no one to redeem it, and he later became prosperous himself so that he was able to redeem the land he had sold. He was to calculate the years from the time he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it and then he could return to his property. If he did not have enough means to recover it, then what he sold would remain in the hand of the buyer until the year of Jubilee, when it would be released, and he could return to his property.

You shall not wrong one another: (v17), meaning during the transaction and estimating of the price of the land to be sold or purchased they were not to cheat or deceive in the estimation of the price, but do what is fair for all. It is to this transaction that the statement, "you shall fear the Lord your God," applies to, it means be fully aware that God is watching and be fearful of bringing His judgment upon yourself, by cheating or deceiving a brother from what is a fair price. Having the fear of God before their eyes, and on their hearts, should restrain them from doing wrong to a neighbour in word and in deed and preserve the buyer and the seller from doing an ill thing, when it was in their power to do so.

THE SIXTH YEAR

LEVITICUS 25:18-22

The Sixth Year Will Produce Three Years; until the Ninth Year.

- **Leviticus 25:18-22:** "Therefore you shall do my statutes and keep my rules and perform them, and then you will dwell in the land securely. ¹⁹The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and dwell in it securely. ²⁰And if you say, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?' ²¹I will command my blessing on you in the sixth year, so that it will produce a crop sufficient for three years. ²²When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating some of the old crop; you shall eat the old until the ninth year, when its crop arrives.

Some feel that only the fiftieth sabbatical year of Jubilee is in focus, here, but that cannot be the case for the following reason, if it only refers to one sabbatical year the sixth-year harvest would only have to supply food for three years as the following shows:

1. The sixth-year harvest would supply food for that part of the sixth year which was between the beginning of the sixth-year harvest and the beginning of the seventh year.
2. Then supply food for the whole of the fiftieth year of Jubilee.
3. Then for that part of the eighth year through to when the seed sown in the eighth year and until it had grown and was ready to harvest later in the eighth year which would all be completed by the seventh month of the eighth year.

The problem with this scenario is that verse twenty-two says, "When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating some of the old crop until the ninth year." This means that there must be two sabbatical years in focus, the first being the seventh year Sabbath of rest and the second being the Jubilee year. Taking both sabbatical years of rest into account harmonizes the eighth and ninth year together as the following shows:

1. The sixth-year harvest would supply food for that part of the sixth year which was between the beginning of the sixth-year harvest and the beginning of the seventh year.
2. For the whole seventh sabbatical year of rest.
3. For the whole of the Jubilee year.
4. For that part of the ninth year through to when the seed sown in the eighth year had grown and was ready to harvest and eat in the ninth year.

This means that the sixth-year harvest would to supply for four years. This should not be difficult to accept, especially when we consider the following two things:

1. Joseph under the blessing of God could store barley and wheat to provide for the people of Egypt and Israel for seven years of severe famine throughout all the land of Egypt and Israel.
2. God sent down a double portion of manna every sixth day to make up for the day of rest (Exodus 16:22-27)

With these two miraculous wonders in mind it is very easy to accept that the nation of Israel could store in barns enough food to carry them through three or four years, especially when God promised He would abundantly multiply the sixth harvest.

When you sow in the eighth year: (v22), at the termination of the sabbatical Jubilee year the Israelites resume the cultivation of the soil in the eighth year, the abundant crop of the sixth year (the year preceding the seventh sabbatical year of rest) will not only suffice for this eighth year, but will reach through to that part of the ninth year when the crops sown in the eighth are ripe and gathered in. This means that the sixth year's harvest will suffice till the Feast of Tabernacles, in the seventh month (Tishri) of the ninth year.

You shall eat the old until the ninth year: (v22) since they ceased from tilling the ground for two years running, (the seventh sabbatical year of rest and the jubilee year) they would still eating of the sixth year's harvest (the old) at the time of the feast of tabernacles in the seventh month (Tisri) of the ninth year, when the increase and harvest of the eighth was ready to take into their houses. It should also be mentioned here, that the words, "I will command my blessing on you in the sixth

year" (v21), is said concerning all the seventh sabbatical years of rest. It seems that it would have been better to place these encouraging promises immediately after the account of the sabbatical seventh year of rest spoken of in (v1-7). One of the most likely reasons these encouraging words have been placed here maybe because in both the year of Jubilee and in the seventh sabbatical year of rest (v11), they were not to sow, reap, or gather, and therefore the things said here are for encouragement for both for the seventh sabbatical years of rest, and for the year of Jubilee, especially since the LORD could easily provide for them both (i.e., every sixth year Sabbath for three years and once in fifty years for four years).

What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we cannot sow or gather: (v20-21) at various times Moses pre-empts what the people of Israel might ask, and therefore raises the question himself saying, "You may say, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we cannot sow or gather in our crop?' The LORD replies, "I will command my blessing on you." This means that in the sixth year the LORD will multiply the produce of their fields, barley, wheat, vineyards, olive yards, figs, orchards, fruit trees and vineyards etc., making them exceedingly more fruitful than in other years. The LORD promises to send out His Divine command to the soil in the sixth year that it should be a blessing to them as He had promised them earlier on another occasion.

- The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. (Deut. 28:8).

In the sixth year, the LORD would bless the land with such abundance that it would bring forth fruit for three years, supply the lack of food that would have resulted from the cessation of all labour during the sabbatical year. The wonder of the sixth-year blessing was that it would yield a miraculous supply of food for three continuous years. This same abundant blessing also applied to the sabbatical year of Jubilee. We read of a similar blessing in the story of Sennacherib the king of Assyria sending his Rabshakeh, to mock the living God, and Hezekiah praying "O Lord, God save us," to which the following word of the LORD came to him:

- This shall be the sign for you: this year you will eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs of the same, then in the third-year sow and reap and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. (2 Kings 19:29-31) (Isaiah 37:30).

The blessing the LORD would place upon the sixth-year crop would produce such an abundant supply it would provide enough to last to the time when seed was sown in the eighth year, through to the ninth year when the seed planted in the eighth year had grown and was ready to harvest. Up until this ninth-year harvest they would still be eating some of the old sixth year crop.

NOTE: this clearly shows the intimate relationship Moses had with God, for only a man who was conscious of acting under divine authority would dare introduce such a major law, that had the potential to cause the death of thousands through starvation if the LORD had not blessed, their harvest in such a manner.

THE LAND IS THE LORD'S

LEVITICUS 25:23-24

The Land shall Not be Sold, for it is Mine, and You are Strangers.

- **Leviticus 25:23-24:** "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me. ²⁴And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.

The following words of the LORD's are most beautiful, "For you are strangers and sojourners with me in the land." (Lev. 25:23). Here God pictures Himself dwelling in the land of Israel as a stranger in this world with them. There is wonderful truth revealed in these words of Gods that

is often overlooked which is (generally speaking), that the faithful who belong to Christ see themselves (consciously or unconsciously) dwelling on earth and God dwelling in heaven, but this is not how God sees us, His view is not of Himself being high above in heaven and us on earth, but of Him dwelling with us on earth in this world as we follow our dreams and go about our duties and the mundane things of this life. The apostle Paul, since his encounter with Christ no longer considered his citizenship to be of this world, but to be of heaven." (Philip. 3:20). Every Christian should view themselves as walking through life in this world hand in hand with God, for this is how He views us.

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity: (v23) these words are a resumption of the laws concerning the sale and purchase of land, which have briefly been mentioned in (v14-17), emphasises the law that no plot of Israel's land must be absolutely alienated from its original owner or their heir, because poverty forced them to sell their property that they had inherited from their father or ancestor. After Israel entered the land of Canaan, God appointed Israel to divide the land among their tribes and families. Each tribe held the land as tenants of the LORD and not as owners since it was the LORD's land and therefore, they had no right or power to sell it to strangers. However, in difficult financial circumstances, individuals could temporarily sell their properties (or more correctly sell their leases), but the seller had the right to redeem it, at any time, on payment of an acceptable and fair price to the present owner. Should they not redeem the property, they recovered it free at the fifty-year Jubilee.

For the land is mine: (v23) as the whole earth is, but the land of Canaan was uniquely the LORD's, which he had chosen above all other lands for the inheritance of His people; out of which he drove the old inhabitants from it because of their gross sins. In this land the LORD:

- Placed His own people in the land to possess it with Him as their head.
- Put His city, temple and dwelling place in its midst.
- It was the land where He was served and worshipped, and where the Messiah was to be born and therefore called Immanuel's land.
- It is a figure of the better country, the heavenly country filled with glory and happiness, that God preparing for His people.

The land of Israel is God's estate, all who dwell on it dwell on it at God's will and as His guests, it could be rightly said that God is Israel's Landlord and they are His tenants.

LAWS WHEN THERE IS NO REDEEMER

LEVITICUS 25:25-28

In the Year of Jubilee what is Sold shall be Returned to its Owner.

- **Leviticus 25:25-28:** "If your brother becomes poor and sells part of his property, then his nearest redeemer shall come and redeem what his brother has sold. ²⁶If a man has no one to redeem it and then himself becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it, ²⁷let him calculate the years since he sold it and pay back the balance to the man to whom he sold it, and then return to his property. ²⁸But if he has not sufficient means to recover it, then what he sold shall remain in the hand of the buyer until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his property.

No Israelite ever parted with their land except when distress and lack of finances forced him to do so, and the only reason the law allowed for a Israelite to sell his land, a field or a portion of it was because he had become so low, and had such a lack of finances and had become so poor that he was forced to part with it because of the pressure of poverty. It

was not lawful for anyone to sell their property on speculation (i.e., simply to make a financial profit) or to put money into their bank account, or to trade a portion of it for goods, servants and cattle.

His nearest redeemer shall redeem what his brother has sold: (v25) it was the duty of the nearest kin (i.e., the redeemer that is nearest to him), to redeem the property which his poor and distressed relative had been compelled to sell. The man who purchased the land had no power to prevent the kinsman from redeeming the land at any time on payment of a fair compensation to the present holder of it. If the seller (the rightful owner of the land) or a near kinsman was unable to pay to the person who had purchased the land the fair value of the crops between the estimated redemption value and the next jubilee year, then the land was to continue with the person who had purchased the property until the year of jubilee, when it returned back to the original owner who sold it without any repayment whatever.

It shall be returned (it shall go out in KJV): (v28) meaning the land shall be set free. The purpose of the law of Jubilee was:

- To secure to each family a permanent interest and ownership in the land.
- To prevent the accumulation of land on the part of the greedy few who are ever anxious to join field to field to establish themselves as land barons.
- To limit the existence of landless beggars and extensive land owners.

The symbolism of the nearest redeemer: the Israelites were God's chosen people the redeemer was their nearest kinsman. Likewise, those who belong by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ are God's chosen people and Christ is their Redeemer, who paid the ultimate price to Redeem us from our bondage to sin and death and put us into the possession of the heavenly inheritance. Nor is it in the power of any principality or power to prevent us from receiving our rightful eternal promised inheritance in our Redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ.

LAWS FOR REDEEMING HOUSES IN WALLED CITIES

LEVITICUS 25:29-30

Laws for Houses in Walled Cities.

- **Leviticus 25:29-30:** "If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, he may redeem it within a year of its sale. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption. ³⁰If it is not redeemed within a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee.

An Israelite could sell his house with a walled city without being driven by stress of poverty. If it was sold and the seller of the sale wished to redeem it, the Law gave him the power to do so, and in case he died the law empowered his son, to repurchase the property at the same price which he received for it. If it was not redeemed within a full year, then it would belong to the buyer and his generations and would not be released in the Jubilee year but remain the property of the purchaser forever. Following are six possible reasons why houses in walled cities could be redeemed within a year of its sale, but not afterward.

1. Walled cities are temporary man-made buildings, the work of man, who builds them up and tears them down, and in this sense are not classed as the creation of God as the land is.
- 2 To encourage strangers and proselytes to come and settle among them.

- 3 Because most of the houses in cities were occupied by business owners and traders whose wealth did not depend on the land.
- 4 By not allowing them to be redeemed at any time within the following fifty years, limited confusion of ownership amongst the tribes and families
- 5 The only value of a house in a walled city, was that it gave people a place to dwell in, whereas, the value of a house in the country is the land surrounding it that can be farmed.
- 6 Allowing houses to be easily sold and purchased in walled cities made it easier for other Israelites and proselytes to establish themselves in the land of Israel and having multitudes of people dwelling so closely together in a city added great strength, honour and various advantages to the whole land.

LAWS FOR REDEEMING HOUSES IN VILLAGES

LEVITICUS 25:31

Laws for Houses in Villages and Houses in Fields.

- **Leviticus 25:31:** But the houses of the villages that have no wall around them shall be classified with the fields of the land. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee.

Following are general laws concerning buying and selling houses amongst Israelites.

- A purchaser was not buying the land, but the crops that it had the potential to produce, they only paid the estimated amount of each annual harvests up to the next year of jubilee.
- The buyer of the land was not to take advantage of the sellers' misfortune, but pay a fair price to the owner, likewise, to redeem the land back a fair price must be paid to the present owner.
- If a brother through hardship and lack of finance was forced to sell himself to pay a debt and dwell with his family, his family were not to give him food and lodging for profit.
- The intention of the law of redemption was that no one who belonged to the nation Israel would become a slave, even under the pressure of poverty, this, is why fellow Israelites were commanded to relieve their brothers suffering want and who needed charity.

Following are three ways in which the land could be redeemed:

1. If a brother became poor and sold his land, it was the duty of his nearest family member or kinsman to buy it back from the purchaser and restore it to his brother (v25).
2. If, the man who sold the property, later prospered he could offer a fair and just price to the current owner and redeem the land.
3. If there was no one to redeem the land, either because there were no relatives upon who the obligation rested, or because they were all too poor, then the owner would have to wait until the year of Jubilee when it would return to him or his heir.

Houses of villages that have no walls around them: following are three laws concerning houses in villages:

1. They are, connected with agriculture and the cultivated land and as such are counted as the fields of the country and subject to the same law as the land they are built on and the same law of jubilee.

2. They may be redeemed at any time before the year of jubilee providing the rightful buyer offered a fair and proper price.
3. If the land was not redeemed, it would then freely go out in the jubilee year; to the original owners of them or their heirs, without paying anything for it.

Houses in the country were considered to be of greater value than those in cities, one of the most likely reason for this was because cattle, sheep, goats, horses and livestock of all kinds grazed on the land and the owners farmed crops of all kinds, barley, wheat, fruit trees and vineyards etc., on it, provided food for all Israel and for this reason was considered to be far more valuable to the health and well-being of the nation, than houses in cities could ever be. Added to this, families dwelling in cities were not as permanently fixed to their houses as those in the country were to their lands.

LAWS FOR REDEEMING LEVITE HOUSES

LEVITICUS 25:32-34

Laws for Levite Houses in the Cities they Possessed.

- **Leviticus 25:32-34:** As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites may redeem at any time the houses in the cities they possess. ³³And if one of the Levites exercises his right of redemption, then the house that was sold in a city they possess shall be released in the jubilee. For the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. ³⁴But the fields of pastureland belonging to their cities may not be sold, for that is their possession forever.

The people of Israel were to give to the Levites forty-two cities from their inheritance for them to dwell in and give them pasturelands surrounding the cities for their cattle, livestock and their flocks. (Num. 35:1-8) (Josh. 21:1-3). The cities and the land were given to the Levites as a permanent gift for the support of their ministry.

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Redemption laws for Levites concerning their houses, cities and land.

- The Levites were allotted only cities and their suburbs to dwell in, they had no fields that they could build houses upon nor did they have ownership of vineyards. The field they did have surrounding their cities were for their livestock and cattle and flocks of sheep and goats.
- They were permitted to exchange their houses amongst themselves.
- Only a Levites had the power to redeem a Levite house.
- They were able to redeem a house at any time and all Levites had equal power to redeem a house, which in other tribes only the nearest kindred had.
- A priest could sell his house, garden, and right of pasture to another priests, but not to an Israelite of another tribe.
- A common Israelite of another tribe could purchase a Levite house, but if they did it could be redeemed by another Levite, if it was not redeemed it would return to the original owner in the Jubilee year.
- The fields of pastureland surrounding the cities were a permanent allotment for the support of the Levites ministry and could never be alienated or sold for any moment in time, they were God's gift to them for their possession forever.
- Their houses were as important to them as the land was to the other tribes, therefore they came under the same legal laws as houses on the land.

- The purchaser of a Levite's house was not in the position of owner, but tenant, because the house could be redeemed.
- No person of another tribe was permitted to redeem a Levite house, only Levites, could redeem a Levite house, but by, marriage a near Levite kin to the Levite who sold the house could redeem it.

General laws for Levites:

- Unlike common Levites who sold houses in cities and only had one year to redeem them, Levites were not restricted to a year to redeem their houses within their cities but could redeem them at any time before the year of jubilee.
- If the Levites sold their houses in walled cities, they were not limited to having to redeem them by the end of the year, as the common Israelites were.
- If they sold their fields, they could be redeemed immediately if they chose to do so, this redemption was unique to the Levites.
- If the house was not redeemed it would return to their rightful heirs in the year of Jubilee.

Land dedicated to the LORD: if a man dedicated part of his land or field to the LORD, it became the possession of the priests. For a detailed application of the laws concerning land dedicated to the LORD for the service of the sanctuary and the laws of redemption and the Jubilee regarding land and the sanctuary, see (Lev. 27:16-25).

LAWS FOR A POOR ISRAELITE

LEVITICUS 25:35-38

16

You shall Not Lend Money at Interest, Nor Give Food for Profit.

- **Leviticus 25:35-38:** "If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. ³⁶Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. ³⁷You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit. ³⁸I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.

If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself: (v35) as the laws of jubilee guard the future interests of an Israelite who is driven by stress or poverty to sell the property, he inherited from his father or his male ancestor. Moses now points out the duties each member of the community is to have toward the needy and penniless brother who must wait until the year of jubilee for the restoration of his property, but who in the meantime is unable to support himself. If a brother became so poor that he could not support himself, so he lived with his family they were to:

- Support him as though he was a sojourner, meaning do him no wrong and love him as themselves for they themselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Lev. 19:33-34).
- Take no interest or profit from him.
- Not lend him their money and charge him interest.
- Not give him their food for profit.

The brother may have been reduced to a low estate, through afflictions in his body, through losses in trade, or lack of business, or for any other reason, so that he cannot support himself and his family, but not because

of laziness, idleness, selfish-indulgence, apathy or negligence, but because of unavoidable circumstances.

During this ancient era: this law of supporting each other in times of need, worked for the following reasons. Every Israelite man desired to be independent and support themselves and their own families, and not be dependent on others or be supported by them. The common attitude was that those prospering would help their brothers that lacked and when those who lacked, prospered they in turn would help others. This is the principle concerning giving that the apostle Paul teaches.

- If the readiness (to give) is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what they do not have. ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. ¹⁵As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack." (2 Cor. 8:12-14).

This is a call to the people of Israel to show charity and benevolence to family members, especially those who can no longer support themselves or maintain a livelihood. It is the duty of every Israelite to support their family members and do all they can to help them regain their financial independence and livelihood. For information concerning tithing see the title:

- Tithing (ONE WEBSITE MENU).

As though he were a stranger and a sojourner: (v35) meaning he is not to be treated like an outcast because poverty has compelled him to sell the property he inherited from his father or his male ancestor but is to receive the same consideration which strangers and sojourners receive, who, like the unfortunate Israelite, have no land or property.

- When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. ³⁴You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 19:33-34).

If an Israelite brother fell into ruin his brother was to let him live with him like a resident foreigner. He was not to be regarded or treated as an outcast but treated with the same respect and consideration as a resident foreigner who, like him, had no resources to possess land, or accumulate property and live in comfort. The duty of the brother was to give charitable support and interest free loans of money to help the one suffering get back up on their feet.

Fear your God, that your brother may live beside you: (v36) in this context the statement, "fear God," means be fully conscious that the omniscient, invisible, immortal Holy Almighty God sees all things, especially when His people do not show compassion to their brothers in distressing and difficult circumstance, but instead take advantage of them for their own gain and profit. Whoever, denies a person who belongs to God's family when they can help, brings God's judgment upon themselves, this is what it means to fear God in this context, it denotes doing what is right, according to Jesus command and the royal law, love your neighbor as yourself. When the religious leaders of Jesus day asked him "which is the great and the most important commandment in the Law?" He said to them, the most important concerning mankind is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," (Matt. 22:36-40) (Mark 12:28-31). The apostle Paul wrote, "the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Rom 13:8) and that, "all, commandments, are summed up in the words, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," because love does no wrong to a neighbor and for this reason love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom 13:9-10). Paul goes on to say, "the whole law is fulfilled in the following words, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:14). Jesus brother James wrote, "if you really fulfill the royal law according to the

Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well." (James 2:8). Fearing God carries the idea of being consciously aware that if we deliberately violate the law of love we will bring God's judgment and condemnation upon ourselves. Having this awareness quietly resting in the subterranean part of our mind, will motivate us to avoid what is wrong and do what is right.

You shall not lend him your money at interest or give him food for profit: (v36-37) this is an emphatic compassionate repetition of the declaration made in the previous verse. No Israelite was to lend money to the poor and needy suffering distressing circumstances and insist upon interest, nor were they to supply them with food expecting to gain and make a profit (i.e., if I give you five bushels of barley, you pay me back six bushels). Regarding interest David wrote those who will dwell in God's tent and on His holy hill are those who, "Do not put their money out at interest." (Psalm 15:5). Ezekiel states that the righteous, "Do not lend at interest or take any profit." (Ezek. 18:8) nor do they take interest for profit." (Ezek. 18:17).

The people of Israel were permitted to charge foreigners interest:

- You may charge a foreigner interest, but you may not charge your brother interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (Deut. 23:20).

This prohibition against charging family members interest is a natural law of compassion that families in right relationship with each other today naturally apply to their family members suffering financial difficulty due to circumstances beyond their control.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt: (v38) here the LORD reminds them of the following five things: -

- 1 They had been strangers and sojourners themselves in Egypt.
- 2 He had given them such favour in the eyes of the Egyptians that they gave them jewels of gold and silver and raiment to leave Egypt.
 - The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. ³⁶And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus, they plundered the Egyptians. (Exod. 12:35-36).
- 3 He had saved them from slavery and bondage and brought them into the land of milk and honey.
- 4 He had dealt bountifully with them, prospered them and protect and defended them.
- 5 He had made His covenant with them and chosen to be their God.

The LORD is saying, because I have shown you goodness and kindness, you should not hold grudges or resent others in difficult circumstances, but freely do the same to those in distress and be kind and compassionate to those who are in similar circumstances, and do what you can to relieve them from their troubling difficulties, especially those who are your brothers.

I am the LORD your God: (v38), this not only carries the idea that the LORD is the omniscient, all-knowing, all-seeing wise God that knows all that is done in the most secret, cunning and devious manner; but also carries the idea that God is the omnipotent Almighty all-powerful invincible supreme God able to punish those who oppress or defraud their neighbor. The apostle Paul wrote: see that no one transgress and wrong his brother in any matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all things, so be solemnly warned. (1 Thess. 4:6).

LEVITICUS 25:39-43

A Brother who Sells Himself to You, shall Serve until the Jubilee.

- **Leviticus 25:39-43:** "If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave (bondservant in KJV) ⁴⁰he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. ⁴¹Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers. ⁴²For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves (bondman in KJV). ⁴³You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God.

Slave (bondservant in KJV): the word bondservant comes from the Hebrew word (*`abodah*), and refers to work, labour and service of any kind, and by implication, to enslave to bondage, to be kept in bondage and compel to become a servant. When an Israelite was compelled, through misfortune and extreme poverty to sell himself to his debtor to pay his debt, his master was not to make him serve as heathen slave who are either purchased at slave markets or captured during war and made to do the hardest kinds of work and loathsome menial duties for as long as they were owned by their master.

No citizen of Israel was to ruthlessly and oppressively rule over another Israelite but treat them as the LORD'S servant whose engagement was temporary, because every Israelite that did sell themselves because they had incurred a debt they could not pay could only be held as a slave for six years and had to be released in the seventh sabbatical year of rest.

- If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. (Deut. 15:12).

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Added to this an Israelite that was a slave at the time of the fifty-year Jubilee was to be released regardless of whether they had been a slave for one week, one month, one year etc., they must be set free. It is interesting to notice, immediately after the LORD gave Moses the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter twenty-one, He gives greater detail of His laws in the following chapter and the very first thing He says is:

- When you buy a Hebrew slave (servant in KJV), he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. (Exodus 21:2).

And gives the following laws for slaves who love their masters:

- If the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' ⁶then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever. (Exodus 21:5-6).

Right after Israel's dramatic Exodus from their slavery in Egypt, one of the first things God tells them is that Israelite slaves should go free without having to pay any redemption money. No Israelite was to be permanently enslaved, but to be set free in the seventh year.

Treatment of Israelite servants: when a native Israelite was sold for a debt, or for a crime, he was to serve six years and go out on the seventh. If he sold himself, because of poverty, the work and labour given to him must be such as was fitting for a son of Abraham. Israelite masters were required to give to their Israelite servants' work that was suitable for a brother.

- Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. (Col. 4:1).

If an Israelite became poor and sold himself to a foreigner a fellow Israelite could redeem him by paying his redemption price or if the Israelite slave prospered and became rich, he could redeem himself." For information on calculating the redemption price see the title:

- He shall Calculate His Redemption According to his Years of Service," following (v. 50-52) (below).

Moses law states: every Israelite slave must be released after six years' service, because they must be released in the seventh sabbatical year of rest. (Exod. 21:2) (Deut. 15:12). This means that if an Israelite slave was to be redeemed it would have to be during his six-years of slavery. If he became a slave around the fiftieth year of Jubilee, it mattered not whether he worked, one month, one year or two or three years etc., he and his children were to be set free in the year of Jubilee. This typified redemption from the service of sin and Satan, by the grace of God in Christ, whose truth sets us free.

- You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. (John 8:32).

We cannot ransom our fellow-sinners, but we can lead them to Christ and to his Gospel and grace, which sets free those who are slaves to sin and death.

He shall go out from you (depart from thee in KJV): (v41) following are three laws concerning a slave going out free:

1. If he had a wife and children when he sold himself, or he married with his master's consent while he was a slave his master was obliged to provide for his wife and children. His wife and children were not sold to the slaves' master and because of this they were not properly his servants, and therefore the slaves' wife, with her children had the right to go out with her husband.
2. When an Israelite slave regained his freedom in the seventh sabbatical year of rest, he went out from his master a free man with his wife and children and returned to his tribe and near relations.
3. If the Israelite slave regained his freedom during the year of Jubilee, he went out with his wife and children and returned to his tribe and near relations and regained any property that he inherited from his father or his ancestor that may have been sold.

LAWS FOR A MALE AND FEMALE SLAVE

LEVITICUS 25:44-46

You May Buy Slaves from Nations and those Born in Your Land.

- **Leviticus 25:44-46:** As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you. ⁴⁵You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your land, and they may be your property. ⁴⁶You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves of them, but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another ruthlessly.

Following are five laws concerning Israel buying slaves:

1. The Law forbids the Israelites to have their own people work as slaves or do menial work that belongs to slaves, nor were they to rule over one another ruthlessly. The only exception to Israel having slaves was if poverty had reduced an Israelite to sell himself as a temporary slave. Should this happen, he nevertheless, remained a fellow-heir with the rest of the nation in the land of their possession and inheritance. For

this reason, consideration was to be shown to them in their adverse circumstances and no difference was to be made between their daily food, clothing and dwelling place that their master enjoyed.

2. Israel could buy men and women from the surrounding nations to do the work appointed to slaves. However, they were limited to the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and the Syrians, who were their neighbours, because they were not permitted to buy any slaves from the seven nations in the land of Canaan who they were ordered to destroy.
 - In the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, ¹⁷but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, ¹⁸that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God. (Deut. 20:16-18).
3. Israel could buy slaves from among the strangers who dwelt among them and from those born in their land.
4. In contrast to their own people who were made temporary slaves for six years, the slaves Israel did buy from other nations were their property and could be bequeath as an inheritance to their sons as a possession forever.
5. In case of injury the master was obliged to release them from slavery and set them completely free. Him.
 - When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. ²⁷If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth. (Exod. 21:26-27).

This clearly shows that owning foreign slaves as property was not only permitted but was also a patriarchal custom. Male and female slaves maybe captives taken in war (Num. 31:6-9) (Deut. 20:14), while others maybe appointed slaves because of their crimes, or those purchased from foreign slave-dealers. The general price of a slave was around fifty to thirty shekels.

- The valuation of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴If the person is a female, the valuation shall be thirty shekels. (Lev. 27:3-4).
- If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned. (Exod. 21:32).

It is interesting to note, Caiaphas the high priest and the elders offered Judas thirty pieces of silver, the price of a heathen slave to betray their Messiah. (Zech. 11:12-13) (Matt. 26:15). It was clearly not the purpose of Moses to do away with slavery, but rather highlight the fact that slaves are human men and woman like them and remind slave owners that they should be treated with justice and not cruelty, as the Egyptian taskmasters treated them.

LAWS FOR REDEEMER A BROTHER

LEVITICUS 25:47-49

A Poor Brother sold to a Stranger may Be Redeemed.

- **Leviticus 25:47-49:** "If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger's clan, ⁴⁸then after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him, ⁴⁹or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him, or a close relative from his clan may redeem him. Or if he grows rich he may redeem himself.

Stranger: comes from the Hebrew word (*ger and guwr*). The word (*ger*) means, a guest, and by implication a foreigner (i.e., alien, sojourner, stranger), while the word (*guwr*) carries the idea of turning aside from the road for a lodging or any other purpose. (i.e. sojourn as a guest)

Sojourner: comes from the Hebrew word (*towshab and yashab*). The word (*towshab*) means a dweller, especially as being distinguished from a native citizen, but not one that is unfamiliar. It carries the idea of a temporary lodger and resident (i.e., alien, foreigner, inhabitant, sojourner and stranger). The word (*yashab*) means to sit down in quiet and by implication to dwell, to remain, to settle, to marry, to abide, to continue to dwell and to make and keep house. The words, "if a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich," (v47) carries the following idea, if a foreigner peacefully dwelling amongst the people of Israel prospered and became rich by trading with them, while an Israelite man that also traded with them did not prosper but was so extremely unfortunate in his business that he incurred a debt he could not pay, and therefore sold himself to the stranger or sojourner who had become rich to pay his debt. After he had sold himself he could be redeemed at any time, for one of his brothers, or his uncle, his cousin or a close relative from his tribe may redeem him by paying out his debt to the man who purchased him, or if the man himself grew rich he could redeem himself, by paying out his debt to the man that purchased him.

CALCULATING THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION

LEVITICUS 25:50-52

Calculated the Redemption Price According to Years of Service.

- **Leviticus 25:50-52:** He shall calculate with his buyer from the year when he sold himself to him until the year of jubilee, and the price of his sale shall vary with the number of years. The time he was with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired servant. ⁵¹If there are still many years left, he shall pay proportionately for his redemption some of his sale price. ⁵²If there remain but a few years until the year of jubilee, he shall calculate and pay for his redemption in proportion to his years of service.

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Estimating the Israelite slaves' value: the dollar value of the Israelite slave was to be calculated according to the time of an hired servant (Lev. 25:50), meaning that each year the Israelite slave worked for his master was to be calculated as if he had served as a hired servant (i.e., his dollar value was to be based upon what his master was paying his hired servants each year), the redeemer would then pay this annual dollar value for each year that remained until the seventh sabbatical year of rest. Following are some examples.

Example 1: if the Israelite slave was worth \$100 to his master for each year he worked and their remained 5 years to the next sabbatical year of rest, it would cost \$500 to redeem him.

Example 2: if the Israelite slave was worth \$100 to his master for each year he worked and their remained 3 years to the next sabbatical year of rest, it would cost \$300 to redeem him.

Example 3: if the Israelite slave was worth \$100 to his master for each year he worked and their remained 1 year to the next sabbatical year of rest, it would cost \$100 to redeem him.

- When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. (Exod. 21:2).
- If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. (Deut. 15:12).

The fifteenth year of jubilee: if the Israelite man became a slave sometime near the fifteenth year of jubilee the master of the Israelite slave and whoever undertook to redeem him was to count from the year

he was purchased to the year of Jubilee and then count how many years he had served, and how many remained. The redemption price was calculated according to the years that remained to the Jubilee, based upon the dollar value the Israelite slave had been to his master in the years he had worked. Naturally this only applies to those who have not been released at the end of six years, for all Israelite slaves had to be released every seventh sabbatical year. This also means that the maximum amount of years remaining to the Jubilee year can never be more than six years. The original purchase price of an Israelite slave was based upon six years wages of a hired servant (the most any Israelite slave could work). If the buyer had just purchased the slave and someone offered to redeem him the redeemer would be required to pay six years wages of a hired servant to the slaves' buyer. If the Israelite slave had worked for his master for four years, the redeemer would only be required to pay the wages of the remaining two years to the seventh sabbatical year of release. If this was around the time of the fifty-year Jubilee and the slave had only worked a few years so there were still some years remaining of the six, but only one year to the year of Jubilee, the redeemer could pay the cost of the remaining years or wait until the Jubilee when all Israelite slave would be freely released at no cost.

NOTE: it must be kept in mind that there could never be more than six years remaining to the next fifty-year Jubilee, for every Israelite slave must be released every seventh sabbatical year of rest.

- When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. (Exod. 21:2).
- If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. (Deut. 15:12).

ISRAELITE SLAVES NOT REDEEMED

LEVITICUS 25:53-55

A Brother Not Redeemed, shall be Released in the Year of Jubilee.

- **Leviticus 25:53-55:** He shall treat him as a servant hired year by year. He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight. ⁵⁴And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of jubilee. ⁵⁵For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

The words, he shall treat him as a servant hired year by year," means the Israelite slave was not to be considered employed for the full six years, but from year to year as common servants were. This was because the Israelite slave could be redeemed at any time during the six years if someone came forward to pay out his debt.

If he is not redeemed by these means: (v54) if no one came forward with the redemption money, the Israelite slave would remain in his master's service for six years until the seventh sabbatical year of rest came by at which time, he regained his freedom. If the fifty-year Jubilee happen to come during the Israelite slaves six years of service, he would also regain his freedom regardless of whether he had worked one week, one month, one year, etc., and regain any of his land that may have been sold.

He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight: (v53), this means that the Israelites were not to allow a foreign master to rule over and Israelite slave ruthlessly (i.e., cruelly and brutally as the Egyptian taskmasters ruled over them). They were not to be silent spectators of the cruel treatment of their Israelite brothers by foreign masters. However, this does not mean they were to physically harm them as Moses did, but rescue them through paying their redemption price.

- One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. ¹²He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (Exodus 2:11-12).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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