

In this chapter the LORD gives instructions to the people regarding keeping sabbaths for the land and introduces the concept of the jubilee year.

Leviticus 25:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, **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.

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

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.

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.

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,

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

The LORD instructed the people through Moses to allow the land to have a sabbath every seventh year once they were in possession of the Promised Land. Six years they were to plant, prune and harvest. In the seventh year they were not to plant, prune, or even harvest what grew on its own.

Verses 6-7 seem to contradict what was just said about not harvesting. Maybe it is addressing the fact that their obedience would result in God providing a miracle every six years that would cause them to reap enough to sustain them for three years (6th, 7th sabbath year, & 8th until harvest) as described in verses 18-22 below.

Some additional insight is given in Exodus. It would seem that the poor and the beasts of the field were allowed to eat of anything that grew on its own.

Exodus 23:10–11 “And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.”

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.

Leviticus 25:9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile 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.

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 jubile

unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

Leviticus 25:11 A jubile 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.

Leviticus 25:12 For it *is* the jubile; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.

After every seventh sabbath year, 49 years, the fiftieth year was to be declared a jubilee. It was to be announced by the blowing of the trumpet throughout the land on the day of atonement. The jubilee was established as a day of liberty—a time when all debts were cancelled and every person could reclaim his ancestral land inheritance and make a new beginning. Again the instruction is given that one was not to plant or even reap that which grew on its on. Again verse 12 sounds like a contradiction. I can only reason that the same principles apply as stated in the previous section.

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

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

Leviticus 25:15 According to the number of years after the jubile thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, *and* according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee:

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.

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

Obviously, all business deals were to be made taking into consideration the debt cancellation associated with the year of jubilee. The negotiated price for land or possessions bought or sold were to reflect that consideration. The longer you were going to benefit from the possession being marketed, the more you should expect to pay for it. The fewer years of benefit from the transaction made, the less you should expect to pay. In all transactions one was expected to be fair and not seek to oppress or take undue advantage of one another. All transactions were to be made in light of a healthy fear of “the LORD your God.” He knows all and is sovereign in power and authority.

This is just as true today as then. The problem is that people act based on false assumptions. It often seems to us as though people often disregard God's word without consequence. What we forget is that God's thoughts and ways are far beyond what we can truly understand.

Isaiah 55:8–9 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

What we perceive to be a lack on God's part is actually often a display of his grace and mercy and/or His purpose in producing spiritual growth in His children.

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Romans 5:3-5 "...we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

The psalmist struggled with the same thoughts we have when he saw the wicked prosper; however, he finally realized that they would experience God's righteous judgment. We need to learn from the words of the psalmist.

Psalms 73:3 & 17 "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.... Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."

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.

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

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:

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

Leviticus 25:22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat *yet* of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat *of* the old store.

With these verses we are given understanding as to how observing the land sabbath will continue to provide for the sustenance of the people. It's a miracle of faith. Frankly, I think that we give God the most pleasure when He sees us respond to Him in faith in spite of what reason and logic seem to dictate. God says that their obedience to Him will result in their dwelling in the land in safety and prosperity. Reason and logic say that one cannot possibly have enough to eat without yearly sowing and reaping. God says that if you obey Him, He will provide your every need. Think about it—God is basically instituting a year's vacation every seven years.

I'd like to share some comments from Ray Stedman that I ran across in my studies relevant to this section.

"The sad thing is that Israel never experienced this. Never once did they ever have a sabbatical year! In all their history they never trusted God enough to try it out and see what he would do. And so they never saw God's supply. They never learned that he would keep his word. And this is the reason why, after 490 years

of living in the land, the nation had degenerated to become a moral cancer. So God allowed the Babylonians to sweep them off the land and remove them to captivity. Jeremiah was told that they would be captives in the land of Babylon for 70 years because that is the number of sabbatical years they had failed to observe. You see how this underscores the truth that God always gets his way, despite man's rebellion. You can never cheat God. He had been counting up all the years Israel had forgotten. The end of the sixth year came and Israel didn't have the faith to trust in God's promise and so they planted their crop in the seventh year. And God let them go ahead. He doesn't stop people if they insist on doing wrong. But he kept a record for 490 years, 70 of which were sabbatical years. At the end of that time he said, "Now we'll give the land its rest, while you're in captivity in Babylon." And it did rest. Nobody used it. Nobody farmed it for 70 years because God wanted to impress this great truth upon his people."

Leviticus 25:23 ¶ The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land *is* mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me.

Leviticus 25:24 And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

Leviticus 25:25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away *some* of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

Leviticus 25:26 And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it;

Leviticus 25:27 Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession.

Leviticus 25:28 But if he be not able to restore *it* to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.

Much to the consternation of the nations, God declares that the land of Israel belongs to Him. Even the Israelites are only allowed residence there in accordance with His will as His guests and lodgers.

God declares that any land transactions that are made are temporary at best. It is always subject to redemption. If a poor man sells off land to meet his needs, any of his kin can come and redeem what he has sold. If he has no kin but becomes able to redeem it himself, he is to be sure that the buyer is compensated equitably for the investment he made. If he cannot redeem the land, the buyer can continue to profit from his purchase until the year of jubilee. In the jubilee year every man is allowed to return and take possession of the land of his inheritance.

Leviticus 25:29 And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; *within* a full year may he redeem it.

Leviticus 25:30 And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that *is* in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubile.

Leviticus 25:31 But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubile.

Sales of homes in walled cities were subject to different guidelines. One who sells a home within the confines of the walled city is only allowed a year to redeem his home. If he cannot redeem it within that time, the home becomes the permanent possession of the purchaser. It is not subject to return in the year of jubilee. Homes outside the confines of the city wall fall under the regular guidelines of redemption and are to be returned to the seller in the year of jubilee.

Leviticus 25:32 Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, *and* the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time.

Leviticus 25:33 And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in *the year of jubile*: for the houses of the cities of the Levites *are* their possession among the children of Israel.

Leviticus 25:34 But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it *is* their perpetual possession.

The Levites, the tribe singled out as God's possession to serve as His priests, were allowed special exemption. Any sale of home or lands without regard to location were eligible for redemption and were always to revert to the original owner in the year of jubilee. The Levites were not, however, allowed to sell any of the fields adjoining their cities; they were designated as belonging permanently to the Levites.

Leviticus 25:35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: *yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.*

Leviticus 25:36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

Leviticus 25:37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

Leviticus 25:38 *I am* the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, *and* to be your God.

Any Israelite that became poor and fell onto hard times was to be given a helping hand. He was not to be charged interest nor were you to profit from any food given him. You were to remember that His God is your God, and he deserves the same treatment you have received from God.

Leviticus 25:39 ¶ And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:

Leviticus 25:40 *But* as an hired servant, *and* as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, *and* shall serve thee unto the year of jubile:

Leviticus 25:41 And *then* shall he depart from thee, *both* he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.

Leviticus 25:42 For they *are* my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen.

Leviticus 25:43 Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God.

If a man became so poor that his only choice was to sell himself as a slave, you were to treat him as a hired servant or a tenant—not a slave. In the year of jubilee he and his family were to be freed and allowed to return to the land of his inheritance. God considers all the people of Israel to be His servants, and they were not to be treated as slaves. Again, you should remember that His God is your God, and he deserves the same treatment you have received from God.

I think it is important to note that slaves were given the lowliest and least desired duties.

Leviticus 25:44 Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, *shall be* of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids.

Leviticus 25:45 Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that *are* with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession.

Leviticus 25:46 And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them* for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour.

The purchase of slaves as one's permanent possession from foreign nations was permitted. These slaves were even considered part of the inheritance for one's children.

Though this was permitted, it is clear from other scripture that they were to be treated with compassion and allowed to enjoy religious privileges with the rest of the household.

Exodus 20:10 "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:"

In fact, provision was made for the servant to be freed if the owner struck his servant such as to cause blindness in an eye or the loss of a tooth.

Exodus 21:26 "And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake."

Exodus 21:27 "And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake."

I think the Psalmist expressed God's expectation of the treatment of servants beautifully.

Psalms 123:2 "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us."

Leviticus 25:47 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family:

Leviticus 25:48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:

Leviticus 25:49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

Leviticus 25:50 And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him.

Leviticus 25:51 If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for.

Leviticus 25:52 And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubile, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption.

Leviticus 25:53 And as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: and the other shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight.

Leviticus 25:54 And if he be not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the year of jubile, both he, and his children with him.

If the situation arose that an Israelite had to sell himself to a resident foreigner or a member of his family, that man could be redeemed by his uncle, his uncle's son or any other person of close kinship. He could also redeem himself should he come into possession of enough money to do so. The price of redemption was to take into account the number of years remaining until the jubilee year. The more years there were until jubilee, the more the redeemed man was to be refunded. The fewer the years until jubilee, the less he was to be refunded. As long as he is in servitude, he is to be treated as a hired servant—not a slave. If he has not been redeemed by the year of jubilee, he and his family are to be freed to return to their home.

Leviticus 25:55 For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

God is very clear in stating that His people are only to serve as His slaves—not the slave of any man.