

June 19, 2022

“Celebrate Jubilee”  
Lesson 3 of Unit

Lev. 25:8-12, 25. 35-40, 47, 48, 55

**Intro**

Americans are generally familiar with the Emancipation Proclamation, delivered by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 to free American slaves from the institution of slavery. God also deals with the concept of slavery in a number of ways in the Old Testament.

He freed the Israelites from their bondage to Pharaoh and Egypt—they were delivered from slavery. And He didn’t free the Israelites just so they could enslave others, in any fashion. One area God specifically addresses is economic enslavement. This is the background behind the Year of Jubilee.

God instituted the Sabbath laws, which are the background and basis of the Year of Jubilee. In these laws, God instructed the people to work for six days, but to not work on the Sabbath (meaning “ceasing”), but instead rest. In Lev. 25:1-7 (the lead-in to today’s study), God extends the Sabbath concept to years. The Israelites are instructed to sow their fields for six years only, and God promised to bless the fields with enough food to provide for the 7<sup>th</sup> year, in which they are not to sow the fields. Even the animals are to rest during the 7<sup>th</sup> Sabbath year. This idea will get expanded again in the Year of Jubilee, seen in today’s passage.

**Read Lev. 25:8-12, 25, 35-40, 47, 48, 55**

1. vs. 8: God instructs here the counting of seven sabbaths of years—to get to a total of 49 years

Our text notes the following values of the regular seven-year sabbaths

Ecologically sensitive: soil gets to replenish its natural resources

Socially sensitive: poor not denied the rest/relaxation afforded to the wealthy

Spiritually sensitive: God’s people get more time to worship/reflect on His will

God is now going to use the seven-year cycle to introduce another

2. vs. 9: God instructs a trumpet to sound “on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement”

Note God’s use of 7’s

7<sup>th</sup> day, 7<sup>th</sup> year, 7<sup>th</sup> month

In this seventh month, the first day is a day of rest and offerings (Lev.23:24-25)

The tenth day is the Day of Atonement (23:27-31)

This day is called “a sabbath of rest” (23:32)

On the fifteenth day, the people cease work

Start the 7-day Festival of Booths or Tabernacles

Sounding the trumpet on the Day of Atonement signals God’s presence

It also indicates that God is going to do something special

The trumpet sounds on this most holy day for the Jewish people

3. vs. 10: The fiftieth year “proclaim(s) liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants  
The Day of Atonement indicates a clean slate as regards sin  
The Year of Jubilee means a clean start in an economic sense  
Families who have had to sell off land to pay debts get the land back again  
God institutes a plan so there won’t be another “Egypt”  
Debt-slavery among God’s people will not happen like it did before  
To see how this works from God’s view, read Lev. 25:14-15 (not covered in our lesson)
4. vs. 11-12: The Year of Jubilee is further set out in these verses  
No sowing or reaping is to occur  
There will essentially be two Sabbath years in a row for the land  
This seems problematic: how can the land produce enough for 3 years?  
God says He will provide enough for that time (Lev. 25:20-22)
5. vs. 25: As of Leviticus 25, the Israelites haven’t yet taken possession of the Promised Land  
When that happens, the leaders will divide the land, so each family has its own land  
According to Lev. 36:1-9, that land is to be kept in the family  
Here in vs. 25, God provides a way for that to happen in tough economic times  
The nearest kin is to buy the land  
This has two benefits:  
First, the property stays among relatives  
Second, the relative may be willing to restore the land before Jubilee
6. vs. 35: God provides instructions on how to deal with those who had land and become poor  
First—other Israelites are to help him “as you would an alien or a temporary resident”  
This means the newly-poor will have to rent land somewhere  
This means someone with land must create space for these people  
Second—God says “so he can continue to live among you”  
This indicates that the poor person must stay a member of Israel  
The people must find a way to keep that one in Israel, not send them away
7. vs. 36-37: These two verses deal with economic issues, like last week’s lesson  
In terms of dealing with the poor, Israelites are not to—  
Take interest “of any kind”  
Not “lend him money at interest”  
Not “sell him food at a profit”  
Those who provide relief are not to take advantage—they are to help  
Lending food or money isn’t to gain a profit—it’s to help someone through tough times
8. vs. 38: This verse may seem oddly connected (or not connected) to the previous ideas  
God reminds Israel that He brought them out of Egypt, that He is the LORD your God.  
This is a way to remind those who might get greedy to reflect on their past  
God delivered them from the same circumstances these poor will be in  
Destitute, unable to fend for themselves, vulnerable  
God has delivered *His people* so they can reflect his justice and compassion  
They weren’t delivered to become like another Pharaoh

9. vs. 39-40: This verse essentially deals with how the poor are treated

To deal with poverty, a poor person could sell himself as a slave to another  
God says that person is to be treated like a hired worker, not as a slave  
This is because at the time of Jubilee, they will be returned to their land

10. vs. 47-48: God now adds the flip side of the coin

An alien or temporary resident becomes rich, and buys an Israelite as a slave

What happens in that case?

“aliens or temporary resident” are likely those who choose to identify with God’s people

This means they also accept and obey God’s covenant laws

So a person in this category buying a poor person as a slave has the same laws

Do not mistreat them

A relative can redeem them (and the implication here is that a relative should)

11. vs. 55: This verse ties in with vs. 47-48

Israelites are not to be slaves to foreigners, meaning foreigners aren’t to be their masters

God says in vs. 55 that Israel is to be His servant, as He brought them out of Egypt

Israel already has a master—they are not to have another

Application: The year of Jubilee caused many things to happen:

Liberty proclaimed for all who were enslaved to debt

Remission of debt occurred

Land restored to families who had sold it

Land was to lie fallow for the next year

In the New Testament, Jesus essentially proclaims a spiritual Jubilee in Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord...has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recover of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

“The year of the Lord’s favor” sounds like a Jubilee year. Christ frees those who are captives to sin, rather than debt-slavery. But in the NT and now, the two are not direct parallels. We are encouraged by Paul in 2 Cor. 8 to help supply other’s needs so ours will be met in a time of need. We are to watch out for each other in the body, as we are “aliens and strangers” here on earth, as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:11.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for Your word, that reminds us of Your principles for living a just and holy life. Thank You for redemption from our sins through Christ. Help us to assist each other, and to accept assistance as needed. In Jesus’ name, Amen.