

The Cycles of Seven IV

Land Sabbath/Year of Release/Jubilee Year

Michael Heiss—October 1, 2015

Good morning, everyone! What I hope to do in this final message is to sort of wrap up the land Sabbath, the Shemitah, the seventh year of release and an overview of the Jubilee year and, hopefully, read you a portion from a news clipping I read years ago showing that God's covenant with those people of Israel is valid even today in the 20th and 21st century.

God made certain promises and He keeps those promises. You and I are not under the Old Covenant. Technically, we're not in the New Covenant, yet, but we're under the terms of the New Covenant. The New Covenant will be firmly established with the return of Jesus Christ.

The Jewish people in what is known as 'Eres Yisra'êl,' the land of Israel, were told to do certain things. If they did them, God promised He would bless them. I'm going to read you some astounding accounts of what God did during and after what we would call the *Shemitah year or the land Sabbath*, what He did with crops and what He did to stop the locust plague. You will be amazed. This is historically documented. Of course, it didn't get very much play in the press, obviously. You don't want to really acknowledge God very much. Nevertheless, it's there.

The Land Sabbath:

Here we have the basis of it, Exodus 23:10: "And you shall sow your land six years, and shall gather in the fruits of it. But **the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie still**, so that the poor of your people may eat. And what they leave, the animals of the field shall eat. In the same way you shall deal with your vineyard *and* with your olive-grove" (vs 10-11).

Let us look clearly at v 11. It talks about in "...the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie still..." The word for *rest* is the basic Hebrew word that means *leave it alone, unplowed, don't touch it, let it go*. The word for *still* means *unused*.

If you want to have a more literal translation to get the feel of it, it would be *let it go and leave it alone*. One act is to let the land go. Hey, come on, stand back, you've been working it for six years, let it go, let it rest. Once it's away from you, stay away from it and leave it be. It's sort of a play on words in a way. It means to *let it go and let it be*. In that way, the land would rest and be still.

Something is very interesting, here. You will notice what it says in that same verse, v 11: "...so

that **the poor of your people** may eat..." I thought God was supposed to bless the people. I thought there weren't supposed to be poor people there.

Verse 3: "Neither shall you be partial to a **poor man** in his cause." A poor man? *Yes, they're poor!*

Verse 6: "You shall not pervert the judgment due to **your poor** in his cause." Now notice something that God says which is very striking. God made almost a blockbuster statement, if we can use that language. What does He say?

Deuteronomy 15:11: "**For the poor shall never cease out of the land**. Therefore, I command you saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, **to your poor, and to your needy**, in your land.'"

It was also echoed by the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. Let us see what He had to say on this subject about the poor. Let's look at the Gospels. We'll find the same thing in Matt. 26, Mark 14 and John 12.

Matthew 26:6: "Now, when Jesus was in Bethany, in Simon the leper's house, A woman came to Him with an alabaster flask of ointment, very precious, and poured *it* on His head as He sat down *to eat*. But when His disciples saw *it*, *they* became indignant *and* said, 'What reason *is there* for this waste? For this ointment could have been sold for much, and *the money* given to **the poor**.' But Jesus knew *this* and said to them, 'Why do you cause trouble for this woman? For she has performed a good work toward Me. **For you have the poor with you always**, but you do not always have Me'" (vs 6-11).

Why are there poor people? *A number of reasons!* Sometimes, it's time and chance. Sometimes accidents happen. Sometimes the husband dies and leaves the wife alone. As we used to say when I was growing up, sometimes you have what goes for a husband is a dirty ratfink and leaves her. So, she's stuck. Some cases, it's just plain poor judgment. There's an old saying, 'Poor people tend to have poor ways.' We used to say, 'You can take the boy out of the country but you can't take the country out of the boy.' You can take certain people out of poverty, but that doesn't mean you can take the *poverty-thinking* out of the person. For any number of reasons you could have the poor.

For further instruction in this land Sabbath, Leviticus 25:1: "And the LORD spoke to Moses in

Mount Sinai, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, “When you come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Sabbath to the LORD”’ (vs 1-2).

This is also a play on words. It’s amazing how many times you see this. What it really means is: ‘The land is to cease; a Sabbath ceasing to the Lord.’ While the term *Sabbath* is listed here once, it actually appears twice in the Hebrew. It’s a ceasing to the Lord, double emphasis. God puts emphasis on this land Sabbath. This is very important to Him.

To you and me, living today, we’re not living in that economy. We’re not under this Old Covenant. It doesn’t mean that much to us. To them and to the God Who gave it to them, it meant a lot. That’s why He put it this way. So, He says:

Verse 4: “**But in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest to the land...**” This Sabbath of rest, this is what is called ‘Shabbat sabbaton’ and consequently, it is *a solemn rest, a solemn Sabbath*. It’s a Sabbath to the Lord. So, we’re told:

Verse 5: “You shall not reap that which grows of its own accord for your harvest, neither gather the grapes of your undressed vine *as a harvest*. **It is a year of rest to the land.**” It’s a *solemn rest* to the land. *Not just a rest—solemn!*

- God’s driving home the point!
- He’s serious!
- He does mean business!

When it came to the Day of Atonement, we’ll see the same language. God doesn’t use this language with every Holy Day. He doesn’t use this language every time you see the word *Sabbath*, but He uses it here. So, the Day of Atonement is a very special day to God.

Leviticus 23:32: “*It shall be to you a Sabbath of rest*, and you shall afflict yourselves...” That phrase is again, ‘Shabbat sabbaton,’ *a solemn rest*. Other Holy Days, God doesn’t put it that way. There’s something special about the Day of Atonement. Perhaps because that is the day that symbolizes the complete wiping out of sin, the complete cleansing of the people. On that day is when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies with the incense, and Israel’s sins were wiped clean, *physically speaking*, not spiritually, but in terms of being ritually pure for temple worship. That was very important.

To show you what God thinks of it and those who broke it... God was very serious and this is one of the reasons that He drove Israel into captivity.

Leviticus 26:33: “And I will scatter you among the nations, and will draw out a sword after you. And your land shall be a desolation, and your

cities waste. **Then shall the land enjoy its Sabbaths, as long as it lies waste, and you are in your enemies’ land; then shall the land rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies waste it shall rest because it did not rest in your Sabbaths when you lived on it**” (vs 33-35).

God says, ‘I’m going to give the land rest. After all, whose land is it? It’s My land, not yours. I give it to you. You have homes on it. You plant. You sow your vineyards, your fields, but remember, the land is Mine. I *order* you to let it rest on the seventh year. You didn’t do it. You’ll be in captivity for 70 years so the land can have it’s rest.’

He says the same thing, again, 2-Chronicles 36:20: “And the ones who had escaped from the sword, he carried away to Babylon where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia, To fulfill the Word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah **until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of the desolation it kept the Sabbath to the full measure of seventy years**” (vs 20-21).

God says, ‘I’m going to give My land a rest. You will be in captivity. When the land has had its rest, I will bring you back, because I have plans for you.’ He also had some secret plans about His Son, which He did not tell them at the time. God had a purpose for it.

This land and this promise was made to the people living at that time, but it isn’t just for that time. Now, I want to read to you about a certain kibbutz in the land called ‘Eres Yisra’el.’ In that land, the land God gave to Israel by the hand of Moses. Moses didn’t go in, he lost his temper. Joshua led them in. Remember, the Old Covenant is still there.

This was a kibbutz. It was a religious kibbutz, not a secular one. What happened was a certain Rahj, a certain great religious leader had about 500 residents in this kibbutz. They were going to start almost a Shemitah year, beginning of the seventh year land Sabbath. They didn’t plant everything until toward the end of the sixth year.

- Where were crops?
- What are they going to eat?
- What was going to happen?

Let me read as it was printed:

The miracle promised by the Torah had been very much in evidence for anyone whose stubbornness has not blinded him to the obvious. As if extending an invitation to all of Israel to observe Shemitah unconcernedly the wheat crop that year was 300,000 tons, double the amount of the

previous year. In characteristic fashion, the directors of the agricultural ministry told the press conference that the bumper crop was merely the result of aggregate improvement in farming technique. Similar explanations were offered for the bumper crop of citrus fruits in the orchards of the Negev.

That, too? You know secular-minded people. They do not acknowledge the hand of God.

The people...however, had no doubt whatsoever as to what was responsible for the sudden prosperity. The moshav orchards produced three times their normal crop, a jump from an annual sum of 700 containers to more than 2,000. Jewish agency representatives came to investigate this highly publicized phenomenon, but could not find any rational reason for it.

Well, the reason for it is, there was no rational reason. God said, 'If you do this, then in the sixth year I will command the land to produce.' That's exactly what God did. These were carnal-minded people, to use our old expression. They do not accept the name of Jesus. They do not accept Him as the Son of God. They are Jews, but they acknowledge the God Who led them into the land, or the God as they understand Him. He told them to do this and they did. God said, 'If you do this, then I will do that.' They did this and God did it. There's more:

During the three past Shemitah years...

We're going back 21 years over the years time.

...observed by these faithful farmers, there was no shortage of wondrous happenings. Fourteen years ago the orchard, which produced the triple crop last year, was written off as 'certain failure' by expert agronomists. The trees were planted shortly before the advent of the Shemitah year and were then abandoned on the orders of the Rahj of Mendelson, which forbade his followers to perform any labor in caring for them.

That's what God said, 'Don't touch them. Leave them alone. Don't plow. Don't harvest—for food, of course, you can pick apples or pears or whatever you've got, citrus fruit—but do nothing. Do not put fertilizer on them. Leave them alone. That's what they did.

The experts predicted that the saplings would die in a matter of months unless they received the intensive care accorded to other trees planted at the same time. The

people of this kibbutz ignored the gloomy predictions and their faith in God was vindicated. Their trees fared even better than the trees of the neighbors.

Another amazing thing. Then there was the miracle of the rotten seeds.

When it came time for planting in the eighth year...

Remember, now, this was the first time they'd had this kibbutz. This the first time they had planted anything. They needed seed to plant in the eighth year. They didn't have any seed. They went around to neighbors, 'You have any seed? You have any seed?' A couple of the irreligious people said, 'We do have some of these old seeds but we don't know if they're any good or not.' They found such seeds and they planted them and once again, a bumper crop. God said that that's what He would do. If that isn't enough, I still marvel at this:

Perhaps one of the most striking miracles of all was that of the locust plague. All of the settlements around this religious kibbutz suffered that Shemitah year from produce-devouring insects, but when the army of locusts reached the borders of...it miraculously came to a halt, as if someone had issued an order that the fields of the Shemitah observers were not to be touched.

They just stopped. They were seen on the fences mulling around, but they never went over the fence into the crop of the Shemitah believers. There's no doubt, God told those locusts, 'Halt! Go no further!' That Old Covenant, believe me, is still in effect and God still honors it. Is God going to honor it in lands other than that land? *I don't know!* I'm a little hesitant because:

- God didn't say it to the people in Africa
- He didn't say it to the people in Asia
- He didn't say it to the people in Central and South America

*He gave the command to the people of Israel who went into that land that God called **His land**, but it's still there. God still honors His Sabbatical year.*

The Year of Release:

Along with that, we also have what we call, the *year of release*. This is not specifically the land Sabbath, but the land Sabbath is not what we're looking at specifically. This is what God says was to happen:

Deuteronomy 15:1: "At the end of every seven years you shall **make a release**"—*Shemitah*. That's where we get the name.

Verse 2: “And this *is* the manner of the release: Every man who has a loan to his neighbor shall release it. He shall not exact *it* from his neighbor or from his brother because **it is called the LORD’S release.**”

Verse 4: “Except when there shall be no poor among you. For the LORD shall greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you *for* an inheritance to possess it.”

Remember, we talked about before? God just said that He’ll bless them. There’s a caveat there and Fred Coulter has often pointed this out: **IF, IF, IF!**

Verse 5: “Only **if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God** to be careful to observe all these commandments which I command you today.” They didn’t do that.

You can go back and you can see for the first couple of generations, they went into the land. Read in Joshua and Judges 1—the people during the lifetime of Joshua and the generation of the first judges, they obeyed God. After that, they went after one false god after another. Just read the book of Judges. Every time, God had to bail them out with a judge. That’s why, although God said He would bless them, He said, ‘**Only IF you obey Me. Obey My voice. Do what I tell you to do.**’ They didn’t do it.

That’s why there was really ‘poor’ among them. They didn’t realize what they were doing. They really didn’t, but it didn’t matter. God said, ‘Here’s My Law and statutes. You see the pillars, obey.’ They wouldn’t do it.

This year of release took place at the *end* of the seventh year. Remember, for agricultural purposes and for commercial purposes, the year does not begin in the spring—like with Passover, Nisan to Nisan—NO! It begins in the fall of the year with the Feast of Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah as Jews call it.

It begins on Tishri 1 and it ends 12 or 13 months later, depending on whether it’s a leap year or not, on Elul 29. Elul always has 29 days. Just before our Feast of Trumpets, the day before, was Elul 29. *On that day the debts were released!* That doesn’t mean that if you were a kind soul you couldn’t have released them during the year. You could do that, but **you had to release them before sunset beginning the Feast of Trumpets!** What does God say:

Verse 6: “For the LORD your God blesses you as He promised you. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow....”

Verse 7: “If there is among you a poor man of one of your brothers inside any of your gates in your land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart...”

Verse 8: “But you shall open your hand wide...”

Verse 9: “Beware that there is not a thought in your wicked heart, saying, ‘**The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,**’ and your eye may be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing....”

Verse 10: “You shall surely give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him because for this thing the LORD your God shall bless you...”

Verse 11: “For the poor shall never cease out of the land....”

The point was, it was a national calendar and the seventh year was the seventh year for all of Israel. No such thing as the seventh year being a seventh year for one and another year being a seventh year for somebody else.

God is saying that if it’s coming the fifth year and your brother needs a loan and you’re saying that He needs \$10,000 and he can pay it back \$2,000 a year. ‘I can do math! I can calculate. Wait a minute, \$2,000 the sixth year, \$2,000 the.... I’m just...’ Abbot and Costello: as Costello would say, ‘Hey, about 6,000 bucks just went south!’ God says, ‘Don’t do that! Don’t think that way! I will bless you. I will increase your harvest. I will increase your produce!’ This was the *year of release*. Think of what a wonderful thing it would be.

The Jubilee Year:

We don’t have time to go into the Jubilee year. In the 50th year, all debts released. You lost your home that you lived in, you could always redeem it if you could. If you couldn’t, remember, God said that all the land was His. God said, ‘This is your ancestral home. You shall not lose it.

If you had a house in a walled city and you lost it and you couldn’t redeem it. *Tough luck! You lost it!* But, if it was your home, your ancestral home, the home that God gave you, *it had to go back to you in the Jubilee year.* No great ‘boom/bust.’ You’re not going to have thousands of people or more crowding into cities because they lost their homes. What an incredible blessing this would be to a country in it’s agricultural methods, in aiding in production. You would not have the terrible mess that we have today in this country.

So, God said, ‘The seventh year of release from the debts and of course in the Jubilee year, their homes. If he’s serving you, it doesn’t matter, if he serves you, he shall go back free.

Suppose he serves you before the Jubilee year? You know, it’s about 36 years and the 7th he shall go free. What if he’s sold to you in the 47th year or 48th year? ***The Jubilee year trumps the year of release!*** If I’m sold to somebody in the 47th year, I’m only going to serve 2½ years or so, because in the Jubilee year, God says, ‘You go back home. You are released.’

- that’s how important the Jubilee year was to Him
- it’s how important the Shemitah year was to Him
- it’s how important the Sabbatical year, the land Sabbath, was to Him.

It was a rest. It’s a rejuvenation so that a nation would always be on a sound, economic footing, not like we have today with a horrific ‘boom/bust.’ There would be no massive wealth in the hands of just a few people.

That doesn’t mean that God is against wealth. It doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t have ‘rich’ people. He wasn’t talking about that. When you have 4%, 5%, or 3% of the population in control of 80% or 90% of a country’s wealth, it’s unconscionable almost.

If people think it’s bad in the U.S., you can go back in history, back to the Pharaohs of Egypt, and back to the rulers of Babylon. In fact, at the beginning of the rise of England, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, 2% of the population—that would be Her Royal Majesty, herself, the clerics and the nobles—owned over 85% of all the land and the worth in England. Go to France, where Louis XIV reigned, it was even worse. They called him the ‘Sun King’ for nothing. He just bled his subjects.

That is not to happen in Israel! Therefore, you’ll always have a prosperous country! I hope this gives you an overall view of:

- the Sabbath year
- the Sabbath Day
- the land Sabbath
- the year of release
- the Jubilee year

I hope you’ll read more in Lev. 25 of the specific commands on the Jubilee year. It is fascinating.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Exodus 23:10-11, 3, 6

- 2) Deuteronomy 15:11
- 3) Matthew 26:6-11
- 4) Leviticus 25:1-2, 4-5
- 5) Leviticus 23:32
- 6) Leviticus 26:33-35
- 7) 2-Chronicles 36:20-21
- 8) Deuteronomy 15:1-2, 4-11

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Mark 14
- John 12
- Joshua
- Judges 1

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