

## Receive the *Shemitah* of 5782

*“Then Adonai said to Moses on Mount Sinai, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: When you come into the land which I give you, then the land is to keep a Shabbat to Adonai. <sup>3</sup>For six years you may sow your field and for six years you may prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits. <sup>4</sup>But in the seventh year there is to be a Shabbat rest for the land—a Shabbat to Adonai. You are not to sow your field or prune your vineyard. <sup>5</sup>You are not to reap what grows by itself during your harvest nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. It is to be a year of Shabbat rest for the land. <sup>6</sup>Whatever the Shabbat of the land produces will be food for yourself, for your servant, for your maidservant, for your hired worker and for the outsider dwelling among you. <sup>7</sup>Even for your livestock and for the animals that are in your land—all its increase will be enough food” (Lev. 25:1-7)*

The words of the *Torah* are the words of *Adonai* Himself, and not the product of man’s invention. For surely no human being—who being born with an inclination toward sin which he inherited from his father Adam—could think of making part of the national constitution of a nation, a teaching which defies all normal standards of economics and flows against the tide of human societies throughout the world. Here we are introduced to God’s economy while simultaneously being confronted with some of the most sublime principles of human dignity, equality, and justice found anywhere. In Leviticus 25 we first learn about the *Sabbatical Year* (called the *Shemitah*) giving the land a rest while trusting God for a three-year provision of food. We are also taught about the *Jubilee Year* (*Yovel*) where debts were forgiven, slaves set free, and property returned to the original owner. As if this was not enough to blow most economies, this chapter concludes by encouraging and legislating the children of Israel to help their fellow Israelites when they are found in poverty.

The *Shemitah* and the weekly *Shabbat* both share several things in common. First of all, they share the same common Hebrew word for the Seventh Day, *Shabbat*. The main idea behind the Hebrew root of the word is *to cease* and *to desist*. Since this seven-year cycle is also called a *Shabbat*, it would, therefore, follow that whatever can be said about the *Weekly Sabbath* could also be said concerning the *Seven-Year Sabbath*. Hence, by designating a *Shabbat rest* every seven years as well as every seven days, *Adonai* is continuing to emphasize that the primary nature of our relationship to Him is that of complete and absolute rest from our work(s).

But the similarity between the two kinds of *Shabbat* goes beyond that of rest. There is at least one *Shabbat* associated with each of the *mo’adim*. But none of these special *Shabbat* days are called a *Shabbat to Adonai*. Only the seventh-day *Shabbat* and the *Shemitah* share this designation. In the case of the weekly *Shabbat*, it is called *Adonai’s* because it was He who first ceased from His work and *rested from His creative work*. So, *Shabbat* is *Adonai’s* idea and invention from the beginning. He set the precedent, He established the pattern and He laid down the principle(s). Therefore, He is Lord of *Shabbat*!

However, here Leviticus 25, *Adonai’s Shabbat* carries with it one additional feature: it is not for *people*, but for the *land*. Here is a provocative question: To whom does the real estate of the Land of Israel belong? If the politicians could answer this question, it would solve a vast majority of the contemporary world problems! But all the politicians have to do is to read the *Torah*. The answer is clear, the land of Israel belongs not to the Arab or to the Jewish people. It belongs to *Adonai* Himself. It is His Land! He is its proprietor! Because He owns this treasured land, *Adonai* has the right to decide who may or may not live on it. The *Torah* indicates that *Adonai* gave the land of promise to the children of Israel to live in as an inheritance.

Why did the Lord have the *Shemitah* and the *Yovel* year begin on *Yom Kippur*? Why not on *Aviv* 1 when He Himself designated the New Year to begin? What might be the significance of this? One of the primary themes for the *Yovel* is the theme of freedom. The most fundamental freedom everyone can experience is the freedom from sin. Hence, we have the proclamation of freedom after *Yom Kippur*. There are several Hebrew words translated “freedom.” Scripture states that when the *shofar* is blown announcing the *Yovel* Year, we are to: “... *proclaim liberty (d’ror) throughout the land to all its inhabitants*” (Lev. 25:10). The Hebrew word *d’ror’s* synonym is *hofesh*.

*Hofesh* is used in Exodus 21:1 in reference to the *Shemita* year where slaves also went free. But there is a difference between the *Shemita* year freedom and the *Yovel* year freedom. This difference is indicated not only by the different Hebrew words used in each case (Exodus 21 and Leviticus 25) but also by what actually happened to the released slaves. During the *Shemita* year, the *hofesh* was only a qualified release since the slave, if he wanted, was permitted to stay on longer. It is interesting that in Modern Hebrew a vacation from work or school is referred as a *hofesh*. So, when the *hofesh* is over we would be back at it again. However, the emancipation in the *Yovel* year was absolute when all slaves were to be set free hence *d'ror* was used.

Messianic Rabbi Jonathan Cahn told hundreds of people gathered at the *Prophecy in the News* conference in Orlando, FL, March 7-8, 2015: *'The pattern of the Shemita is ... it begins so undramatic you barely notice it.'* Here are the signs that Cahn revealed about the beginning of that *Shemita* year, on or around 9/25/14:

- *The stock markets became violent and started crashing for about a month*
- *A massive earthquake shook parts of America*
- *The manifestations of Ebola*
- *The Supreme Court was tackling the issue of gay marriage on a national scale*
- *China overtakes the U.S. as the No. 1 economic power*
- *Russia takes the title of strongest military power away from America*

*"This is the beginning of the ending of the American Age. We are seeing things we have never seen in human history, and it is no accident. The Bible says woe to those who call evil good and good evil. It is no accident that at the same time the nation is calling evil good, it's calling good – like you, like believers – evil. What's happening now is you're hearing more and more of Believers being persecuted for simply trying to stay true to their faith. It is all coming to a head."*

***L'Shanah Tovah V'Chag Sameach!***