

Deuteronomy 15:1-11
Ha'Shemitah - The Remission
March 28,2021

“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. ²And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD’s release. ³Of a foreigner you may require it; but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, ⁴except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance— ⁵only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. ⁶For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

⁷“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, ⁸but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. ⁹Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. ¹⁰You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. ¹¹For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’

The passage today deals with a precept known as the shemitah. It is a precept that is a part of the Law of Moses. Before we get too far along, there are a few questions for me to see how theologically sound you are:

Who was the Law of Moses given to?

Does the Law of Moses pertain to anyone else?

Through Christ’s work, what is the state of the Law of Moses?

Because the shemitah is a part of the law of Moses, because the law of Moses only applied to Israel under the law, and because the law of Moses is annulled in Christ – for any who come to Christ, the shemitah has nothing to do with anything in our world today – nothing. That is, except as it is typologically fulfilled for us when we come to Christ.

In other words, and as an example: The Day of Atonement was for Israel alone, for Israel under the law, and it is fulfilled in Christ. The only thing about the Day of Atonement relevant to us now is how it is fulfilled for us in Christ. He is our propitiation. He is our Atoning Sacrifice.

The shemitah is no different. I bring this up, because there is a gigantically popular teaching, by a Jewish guy, that says that those nations who fail to follow the precepts of the shemitah will be judged by God for not doing so.

In particular, he focuses heavily on America, claiming that our national calamities are based on a rotating cycle of the shemitah. This is not just extremely unsound theology, it is heresy. The problem with him is that he has no idea what he is talking about, on this, or on a host of other issues that he claims spiritual insights into.

And the next problem is that because he is Jewish, people immediately associate him with being a specialist on all things Bible-related. That is a logical fallacy known as a genetic fallacy.

A genetic fallacy occurs when a claim is accepted as true or false based on the origin of the claim. "My parents told me that God exists; therefore, God exists." In this case "Jonathan Cahn is a Jew; therefore, his biblical insights are valid."

It is a scary place to be for those who hold to this, it is unprofitable (except for the one who makes stuff up in this capacity), and it results in misinformed people who have no idea about what something – such as the shemitah – is in the Bible for. I will give you a hint: Think Jesus.

Text Verse: *"And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of **release**, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing." Deuteronomy 31:10, 11*

I chose this for our text verse because the shemitah is mentioned only five times in Scripture. Four of those times are in the passage we are looking at today, and the final time is in the passage from Deuteronomy 31. That is all of the information that we have on it. Anything brought up, or claimed, apart from those verses has nothing to do with what Scripture teaches.

As we will see today, the year of release was at the same time as the seventh-year sabbath. If you remember from Leviticus 25, the Year of Jubilee occurred after seven of these cycles, in the fiftieth year. It's important to understand that there is no biblical record of the year of Jubilee ever being observed, nor of which year it was started, even if it was ever observed.

Further, it could not have been observed during times of exile. And more, the shemitah year does not correspond to the year of Jubilee. Rather, it precedes it. And more, there is no biblical record of the shemitah being observed, nor is it known if anyone ever observed it while in exile. And more, if it was observed, nobody knows the first year that it was observed.

In other words, based on Scripture alone, nobody knows when any of these mandates were observed, or even if they were ever observed even once. This should clue people into the fact that the mandates given in the law are typical of Christ. That is the reason they are included. Nothing else about them is relevant to the biblical narrative. If you bought the book, you wasted your money.

Stick with the Bible and you will be far better off. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Release to the Lord (verses 1-6)

The transition from Chapter 14 to 15 is interesting. Chapter 14 ended with the thought of the third year of tithing which especially is intended for the care of the poor, even though the tithe is designated for Levi, it extends to the poor of the land. Now, Chapter 15 begins with a seven-year period, also pertaining to the care of the poor.

The number ten, as in the tithe, signifies the perfection of Divine order. The number three, as in the year of the tithe, signifies that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire. The number seven, as in this year of release, is the number of spiritual perfection.

There is a harmonious working together of the various concepts in order to reveal how these things anticipate the work of Christ in redemptive history. The words of the law find their fulfillment in what He has accomplished. Understanding that, we begin...

“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts.

miqets sheva shanim taaseh shemitah – “From end seven years you shall make remission.” The meaning of “end” is not “after seven years,” but “the end of the seven-year cycle,” meaning the seventh year is what is being discussed.

This was seen already in Leviticus. It is not “seven and then,” but “six and then.” Each six-year period is followed by a special one-year time of remission. This is the same as the year of tithe of the previous chapter. It was not “three and then,” but “two and then.”

Here is introduced the word, shemitah, or “remission.” This is the first of five times it will be used, all in Deuteronomy, and with four of them in this chapter. It means, “a

letting drop,” and thus a remitting. The word comes from shamat, signifying to let drop or even cast down. The precept here follows from Exodus 21:2 –

“If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.” Exodus 21:2

However, and before continuing, the precept concerning Hebrew slaves being released in the seventh year is one that is debated over. Does this mean the year of remission now being looked at, or does it mean six years of service regardless of the year of release? That will be evaluated when we get to verse 12. The next reference is found in Exodus 23 –

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, ¹¹ but 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. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.” Numbers 23:10, 11

This allowance is the seventh year Sabbath of the land. It is not the same provision as the shemitah, but it surely is the same seven-year period. One is a Sabbath of the land, the other is a release from debts. The Sabbath of the land is then further detailed in Leviticus 25 –

“When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. ³ Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. ⁵ What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. ⁶ And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, ⁷ for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.” Leviticus 25:2-7

To understand all the details, it would be good to go back and review those particular sermons. Moses is now giving a new stipulation to be performed on this sacred seventh year.

One could look at this as an expansion of what has been thus far presented. A remission, or letting go, of all debts is to be made. As Moses next says...

² And this is the form of the release:

v'zeh debar ha'shemitah – “And this word the remission.” In other words, “What will now be stated is the principle set forth for the remission.” And that word is...

^{2 (con't)} Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it;

shamot kal baal masheh yadow asher yasheh b'reehu – “shall let drop every master of the loan of his hand who has lent in his neighbor.” Here is a word found only this once in Scripture, masheh. It means a loan. It is from the verb nashah, also found in this verse, which means to lend.

The picture is made vibrant with the words. The owner of the loan is to open his hand and simply let it fall to the ground. From there, Moses says...

^{2 (con't)} he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother,

lo yigos eth reehu v'eth akhiv – “no exacting of his neighbor and of his brother.” The word nagas is used. It is from a root signifying to drive an animal. It was used of the harsh taskmasters over the people while in Egypt. It gives the sense of coming hard after the one with the debt.

This was not to be done to neighbor or brother, but the meaning of this has to be drawn from the surrounding context. A person may have a non-Hebrew neighbor. For him, this did not apply. Thus, “neighbor” is further defined as “brother.” In other words, this is referring to dealings solely between the Hebrew people.

^{2 (con't)} because it is called the LORD's release.

ki qara shemitah l'Yehovah – “for called, ‘remission to Yehovah.’” In other words, one could paraphrase this as, “because proclamation has been made of the Lord's release” (Barnes). This is not a release in a general sense, but it is a release to the Lord.” This year of remission is, like the Sabbath year, to honor the Lord.

It was to be an acknowledgment of their position before the Lord, and they were to deal with their neighbor as the Lord would deal with them. In the end, they are the Lord's people, they were stewards of His land, and they were the recipients of His kindness.

To honor Him because of these things, they were to thus act accordingly with their fellow Hebrews. This continues to be seen in the next words...

³ Of a foreigner you may require it;

Here it speaks of the *nokri*, or stranger. It signifies a foreigner or alien, thus someone outside of the covenant people. This is not a mark of superiority over them, nor is it a mark of severity of treatment towards them.

The reason for this is because they were not bound to the same laws as Israel. While Israel was obligated to not sow, plow, or prune during the Sabbath year, the strangers were not under that obligation. Hence, they would have the usual income as during any other year. Thus, they were expected to pay their debts. Such was not the case with Israel. As this was so....

^{3 (con't)} but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother,

v'asher yihyeh lekha eth akhikha tashmet yadekha – “and which become to you your brother you shall let drop your hand.” The greatest debate concerning this remission is whether it applies only during the seventh year, or if it is permanent. If during the seventh year, it means that the debt is let go of, or released, during that year, but it can then be picked up again in the next year.

This is the view that most scholars take. Keil uses Exodus 23:11 to justify this view. There, using the same word, it says –

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, ¹¹ but 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. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.” Exodus 23:11

His analysis says, “it must be interpreted in the same manner here as there. And as it is not used there to denote the entire renunciation of a field or possession, so here it cannot mean the entire renunciation of what had been lent, but simply leaving it, i.e., not pressing for it during the seventh year.”

One does not logically follow after the other. How someone can see a precept that instructs someone to not plow a field for a year equate directly to canceling a debt for only one year is hard to follow. The point of releasing a debt is to restore a person to a debt-free, productive state. The point of not plowing one’s field was for the field to renourish itself and to provide for the poor.

It goes against everything that the Lord does for His people to say that the remission of the debt is only for a temporary period. Even Jesus spoke of this precept in Luke 7 –

“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” Luke 7:41, 42

Jesus went on to equate the woman weeping at his feet with the one who knew she owed a great debt. When He went on to say to the woman in verse 48, “Your sins are forgiven,” He didn’t mean they were forgiven, but would be remembered again someday. He meant that they were forgiven forever.

⁴ except when there may be no poor among you;

ephes ki lo yihyeh b’kha evyon – “End: for no may become in you poor.” The words are widely translated, many simply passing over the word *ephes*, or end. It signifies a ceasing, an end, an uttermost part, and so on. What is surely being conveyed is not “except” as the NKJV says. Verse 11 clearly and unambiguously says there will always be poor among the people.

What is being conveyed is, “For the end purpose of there being no poor among you.” This was to be a remedy to alleviate the poor from the land. As more poor people cropped up in the next six years, they were to then be given the same relief.

The remission of this debt for those who had come into poverty was an act of the Lord’s mercy. It is His law, and it is His provision within the law. To not obey the precept then reflected a disobedience to His command as well as a lack of faith in the Lord. The lack of faith is because of what Moses next says...

^{4 (con’t)} for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land

It is a statement of surety: *ki barekh yebarekha Yehovah ba’arets* – “For blessing will bless you Yehovah in the land.” It is a precept that is found several times in the Proverbs, such as –

“He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given.” Proverbs 19:17

What seems contradictory, but which is taken almost as an axiom in Scripture, is that the person who gives generously generally receives increase because of what he has given. In the case of Israel, the Lord – through Moses – indicates that in being obedient to the precept, He will bless them abundantly in the land...

⁴ (con't) **which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance—**

They are the often-repeated words of Deuteronomy, something which forms its own emphasis. The Lord is the Giver of the land. Israel is the recipient of the land. As this is so, then Israel has a responsibility to act in accord with the precepts of law. In failing to pay heed, they can just as easily be dispossessed from what they possess. As Moses next conveys to them...

⁵ **only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God,**

raq im shamo'a tishma b'qol Yehovah elohekha – “ONLY if hearing you will hear the voice of Yehovah your God.” The word *raq* is used in a limiting sense. This is how things are, but only if certain conditions are met. If they are not, then the promise of blessing cannot be anticipated, nor will it be forthcoming.

Also, the words here once again reveal the doctrine of divine inspiration. Moses is the one speaking, and yet he explicitly states that what he is saying is the voice of Yehovah. That continues to be seen in his next words...

⁵ (con't) **to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today.**

The translation is incorrect. It says *lishmor laasot eth kal ha'mitsvah* – “to watch to do all the commandment.” It is singular, not plural. It is one commandment even if it is made up of various precepts, statutes, and judgments. To neglect one part of the whole is to fail to observe the commandment.

Moses just spoke of hearing, meaning hearkening to, the Lord's voice. He now says that His voice is conveyed in “all the commandment which I command you.”

Moses is carefully relaying to Israel that what he is speaking out is, in fact, the voice of the Lord. What he says is to be considered as conveyed by Yehovah himself. Therefore, if the people are obedient to the commandment, they can expect the blessing that comes with the commandment. As he next says...

⁶ For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you;

The Hebrew is in the perfect form and is thus stronger: “For the Lord your God has blessed you.” The meaning is that His favor is on them, and it will continue on them if they are careful to keep the commandment. For this reason, there is no excuse to oppress one another.

They are blessed and that will continue, so why should dropping a loan in the seventh year even be considered an inconvenience? They were given grace, and they needed to be gracious and merciful as well. And because of the Lord’s blessing...

⁶(con’t) you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow;

v’haavata goyim rabim v’atah lo taavot – “and you shall lend nations many, and you no shall borrow.” Here is a new and rather rare verb, *avat*. It comes from the noun *avot* which is an article that is pledged. Thus, it can mean to lend or to borrow depending on the form of the verb. Both meanings are used in this one clause.

This verb, *avat*, is closely related to the word *eved*, translated as “servant.” The connection is easily seen in the proverb –

“The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender.”
Proverbs 22:7

In lending to the nations, they would become debtor nations of whom Israel would then rule...

⁶(con’t) you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

This was certainly fulfilled during the reign of David and then Solomon, but it is also true that other nations reigned over Israel from the time of the Judges and on occasionally. Thus, it shows that Israel was not obedient to the commandment. If they were, such would not have been the case.

Nehemiah even explicitly states this during his lengthy prayer of confession to the Lord while using the same word that Moses now uses. Thus, admitting that they had failed to do as he instructed –

“Here we are, servants today! And the land that You gave to our fathers, To eat its fruit and its bounty, Here we are, servants in it! ³⁷ And it yields much increase

to the kings You have set over us, Because of our sins; Also **they have dominion** over our bodies and our cattle At their pleasure; And we are in great distress.”
Nehemiah 9:36, 37

Obey the voice of the Lord your God
Observe that which He has spoken to you
Be careful to observe in this life you trod
This is what I am instructing you

You are to release all debts in the seventh year
You shall do this because I have so instructed you
Do not worry about the loss; you shall not fear
Just be obedient; to the precept remain true

And I will bless you with a blessing in all that you do
Things will turn out fine, if you hearken to my word
Good things shall come upon you
If you just carefully observe all you have heard

II. You Shall Open Your Hand Wide (verses 7-11)

Of the following 5 verses, there is a decidedly chiasmic structure –

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 The Seventh Year, the Year of Release
Taking care of the needy (1/25/21)

- a. you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother
- b. but you shall open your hand wide
- c. lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs
- d. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart
 - x. The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand
- d. and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing
- c. You shall surely give to him
- b. You shall open your hand wide
- a. to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land

⁷ **“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren,**

ki yihyeh b'kha evyon me'akhad akhekha – “For become in you poor from one your brothers.” The Hebrew reads as it did in verse 4, *b'kha* – “in you.” Moses has been consistently speaking in the singular.

At times, such as now, it is surely speaking of the nation, “in you, Israel. At times, he is probably referring to each individual. You, Israelite, are to do this. The entire passage is being kept very personal. Here, when he speaks of a person in Israel, he says that person is “in you.” One of the people within the body becomes needy. Moses then further defines him saying...

^{7 (con't)} **within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you,**

Being within the gates signifies closeness. It would also generally signify not just a Hebrew brother, but a person probably within the same tribe of Israel. But regardless of that, Moses again notes that it is in the land given to them by the Lord.

They did nothing to merit what they possessed, and yet they possessed the land. Further, they lived within the gate of the land, implying security. And yet, there is a brother who is not secure. He is, rather, in need. If so...

^{7 (con't)} **you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother,**

To harden the heart is to be equated with searing one's conscience. The heart is the seat of reasoning and understanding. And yet, one can purposefully say, “I see no reason to help this person. He got himself into his pickle and so he can get himself out.” In this, he will then shut his hand.

It is a new word, *qaphats*, translated as “shut.” It comes from a primitive root meaning to draw together. One can think of walking by the poor guy, thinking his evil thoughts, and then clenching his hand so that no chance of money being passed on to him could occur. And yet, this person is in a land that was given to him, and he is living securely within the gates of a city of the land. Thus...

⁸ **but you shall open your hand wide to him**

ki phatoakh tiphtakh eth yadekha lo – “for opening you shall open your hand to him.” Notice the contrast: Shutting hand, bad. Widely opening, good. The sense is just the opposite of the last thought. The miserly person will literally clench his fist as he encounters poverty Pete, but the people are to instead not just open the hand, but to open it generously.

Obviously, the hand is being used in place of what the hand possesses. Therefore, a wide-open hand signifies gracious and abundant giving. And more...

8 (con't) and willingly lend him sufficient for his need,

Moses uses the same word, *avat*, that was introduced in verse 6, and it is repeated for emphasis: *v'haavet taavitenu dei makhsoro* – “and lending, you shall lend sufficient his need.” In other words, this stress is said in contrast to the hardened heart. Thus, the paraphrase of “willingly” is well stated.

Also, there is another new word here, *makhsor*. It signifies a lack or a need. It is the noun form of the more common verb found in the next clause...

8 (con't) whatever he needs.

asher yekhsar lo – “whatever needs to him.” This is added to ensure that the idea of the stresses in the previous two clauses are perfectly understood. If he needs five dollars, you are to open your hand. If he needs five thousand dollars, you are to open your hand. He has a need. If you can meet the need, you are to do so. And this is especially to be considered at all times, excepting none...

9 Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart,

The Hebrew is very forceful: *hishamer lekha pen yihyeh davar im l'vavekha veliyaal* – “Watch to you! Lest become word in to your heart – worthless.”

The person knows that he is supposed to help out his fellow Hebrew. But then he suddenly realizes that if he does, he will lose his money in doing so. It is a worthless thought set in contrast to the high value of what this poor person needs. That thought is...

9 (con't) saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,'

qarevah shenat ha'sheva ha'shemitah – “Is near year the seventh, the remission.” In other words, the person has to pay back any loans during the first six years, but in the seventh year, the loan is to be forgiven. But then he thinks, “Wait! This is the third month of the sixth year.” In less than a year, I will have to let the loan drop.”

It is a worthless thought to the Lord, and it is not to be considered. It is the Lord's land,

this guy belongs to His people, the law was given by Him, and there can be no excuse for withholding what he is supposed to willingly provide.

These words surely indicate that the remission of the debts is not a temporary, one year, remission to be taken up again after the shemitah. Rather, the year of remission means the debt is to be forgiven – wholly and entirely – forever. Otherwise, the importance of these words would be wholly without merit. The remission was to be forever. Thus, the wrong attitude creeps in...

^{9 (con't)} **and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing,**

Here it says, “and your eye be evil *b’akhikha*, or in your brother.” Again, the words of Moses are close and personal throughout the entire passage. Whether speaking of Israel in the singular, or speaking to the individual of Israel, the words demonstrate evident closeness in the matter at hand.

The evil eye is an eye of wickedness. It is uncaring, greedy, and so on. Jesus uses the term in the New Testament, first in a parable –

“Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?” ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.” Matthew 20:15, 16

And again, in general discourse He says –

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” Mark 7:21-23

If someone is to be this way, it will not go unnoticed...

^{9 (con't)} **and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you.**

Again, it is close and personal, “and become in you sin.” The shemitah is “to Yehovah.” Thus, in neglecting the need of the needy, it is an attack against the precept of the Lord. And the precept of the Lord is to be considered as a representation of the character and moral nature of the Lord.

To treat this matter as such is to trample on the name of the Lord who designated the shemitah in the first place. In such a situation, the imputation of sin is a given. To avoid such a thing...

10 You shall surely give to him,

The Hebrew is again emphatic, "Giving you shall give to him." Despite the coming year of remission, there should be no consideration at all of that fact. Rather...

10 (con't) and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him,

This is set in contrast to the words, "lest there be a wicked thought in your heart." Instead of entertaining a worthless thought, there should be no evil in the heart, but rather a sense of joy. This is because it is in accord with the law, it is right towards a fellow Israelite, and it is pleasing in the sight of the Lord who gave the command in the first place. As Moses says...

10 (con't) because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you

The word translated as "because" is *galal*. It is a noun coming from the verb *galal* which means "to roll." In other words, in doing right, blessing will roll back upon the right-doer. And that will be...

10 (con't) in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.

The words translated as "put your hand" signify an outstretching of the hand. This takes the reader right back to verses 7 and 8 where Moses said to not shut the hand, but to open it wide. In the act of the unclenched hand, blessing will come back upon the all works of that person's outstretched hand.

11 For the poor will never cease from the land;

The point of opening the hand wide is to alleviate the plight of the poor who arise in the land. Life is time and chance according to Solomon. In this, circumstances change, and difficult conditions arise for even the most industrious or talented soul. The Lord doesn't interfere in these things.

He allows people to make decisions and some of them will be poorly made. This is why the poor will never cease from the land. The shemitah was given to alleviate this and to

restore such brothers through the remission of debt. In this, the poor will be restored. It is the Lord's land, they are His people, and these are His precepts. And so, Moses says...

***11 (fin) therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'**

Moses repeats his words from verse 8, "opening you shall open," thus stressing the importance of the matter. The hand is to be extended and what comes to it is to be given away without consideration of the year of remission.

But Moses extends the thought now to close out the passage by adding in another word to describe his plight, ani. It signifies one who is humbled, lowly, or afflicted.

The idea for adding this in is surely to contrast the blessing that lies ahead for tending to his need. He is humbled; you will be blessed. He is lowly; you will be exalted. He is needy; you will be filled.

The shemitah has come and I must let go of what you owe
And I know that it is the right thing to do
It would be great if I got it all back, but even so
The Lord has instructed that I provide remission to you

And who can argue with that? It is a small thing to do
When everything came from Him in the first place
And all along, He has been faithful and true
From Him has come goodness as a smile from His face

I know that from Him has come so much more
Than anything that I could ever have returned from you
He has given more than I could ever ask for
Certainly, this is a small thing he asks me to do

III. The Shemitah. Fulfilled in Christ.

In Luke 6, Jesus said –

“And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be

great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” Luke 6:34-36

The shemithah anticipates the state of all people who are the Lord’s. Through sin, we have become poor before God. In our poverty, we have a debt we cannot pay. The shemithah of Israel was given to anticipate this. It is a correction of our impoverished and needy state.

Jesus saw us in our poverty, and He has given to us freely, asking nothing in return. He extended His hand and paid the debt that we could not pay. And He brought us back to a right standing before God.

The word shemithah signifies a letting drop. One opens his hand and lets go of what it holds. Thus, it is a remission. In the New Testament, the noun translated as remission is *aphesis*. It is derived from the verb *aphiémi*, that carries essentially the same meaning, to let go. Thus, *aphesis* is a letting go, and thus forgiveness.

In Hebrews 9:22, the author tells us, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” The Lord, through Moses, told the people of Israel to “let go” of the paltry money they held in their hands in order to restore their fellow brother to a right standing, free from the impoverished state that he could not correct.

In Christ, the Lord let go of the most precious thing, His life, in order to restore us to a right standing before God, free from the impoverished state we were in and that we could not correct.

And the Lord, through Moses, told the people of Israel not to even take into consideration the wicked thought of the heart that would say, “The seventh year, the year of remission, is at hand.” The nearer the day of release, the more likely there would be loss, and the higher the loss was sure to be.

And the Lord, through Christ, was willing to provide us remission even up to the last moment of our existence, where not even a single work could be worked back in some attempt to repay the infinite debt that we owed. This is the lesson of the first recorded death after that of the Lord Himself –

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’

⁴⁰ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God,

seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' ⁴² Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.'

⁴³ And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'" Luke 23:39-43

The time of shemitah was coming, the criminal had no way of paying the debt he owed, he implored his Brother Israelite, and the letting go, the remission, was granted. To see the end of the account, but which is not the end of the story, one has to continue on to the Gospel of John –

"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him." John 19:31, 32

As far as recorded history goes, these are the first two people who died after the death of the Lord. And what a difference between the two.

For the one, God was his Creditor, and Christ is the remission of his debt because he identified with Him. Though a debtor with a debt he could not pay, the Lord – through His shed blood – became the means of God's letting go. And that, even though the time of remission was – literally – moments away.

God got nothing in repayment. Not a single tract handed out, not a single person to lead into the kingdom, not a single Sunday morning saying, "It's the Lord's Day again. Thank you, JESUS, for having saved me." Nothing was repaid, and yet God, through Christ extended His hand out to him and forgave the debt.

The other criminal with Jesus did not identify with Him, and his debt to God remained unpaid. For him, there is no remission, no letting go, no shemitah.

I once watched a History Channel program on what it means to be saved. During the program, a Baptist minister was interviewed. He openly and boastfully proclaimed that he did not accept the premise that someone who had lived a bad life, right up until the end, could be saved.

He said, “There is no deathbed forgiveness.” That person neither understood the premise of the shemitah, nor does he understand how it points to Christ – meaning, he does not understand the meaning of the word “grace.”

I find it probable that such a lifelong sinner on the deathbed with a heart that has called out to God through Christ is more likely to be saved than that ridiculous minister who has spent his life working for what he cannot earn and trying to pay a debt that he cannot pay.

The shemitah was given to end the cycle of human debt and poverty that we find ourselves trapped in. But it is only open to those who are the Lord’s. The provision was not granted to the foreigner. But God in Christ took care of that, calling all people near through the blood of Christ, if they will simply respond and identify with Him. In doing so, we are accepted, and in Him, the shemitah, the letting go, the remission, is given.

The premise in this was that there would be no poor among the Lord’s people, and indeed, He not only brought that about, but He made us rich in Christ in the process. Paul says –

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”
2 Corinthians 8:9

Imagine someone in Israel walking around finding every single person that needed help and giving to them all. In doing so, he would bring himself to a state of poverty. Who would do that? God in Christ would. And God in Christ did.

He offers to do so for you as well. Today is the day. Your time for needing remission is at hand, and the Lord already knows when you are going to die. It may be today, or it may be many long years from now. But He has graciously offered to help you out, even if you will never pay back a penny. He is a great God, a wonderful Lord, and a marvelous Savior. He is JESUS.

Closing Verse: *“...in whom we have the redemption through his blood, the remission of the trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.” Ephesians 1:7 (YLT)*

Next Week: Isaiah 26:19 What Power does the Resurrection Give?... (Your Dead Shall Live) (Resurrection Day Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Ha'Shemitah - The Remission

"At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts

And this is the form of the release:
Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor
Shall release it; the obligation shall cease

He shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother
Because it is called the LORD's release, this name and not another

Of a foreigner you may require it
But you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother

Except when there may be no poor among you
For the LORD will greatly bless you in the land
Which the LORD your God is giving you
To possess as an inheritance, from His open hand

Only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God
Pay heed, please, to what I say
To observe with care all these commandments
Which I command you today

For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you

You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow
You shall reign over many nations
But they shall not reign over you – not today, and not tomorrow

"If there is among you a poor man of your brethren
Within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God

-----is giving you
You shall not harden your heart
Nor shut your hand from your poor brother, such you shall not do

But you shall open your hand wide to him

-----such shall be your deeds
And willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs

Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying
'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand
And your eye be evil against your poor brother
And you give him nothing; such wickedness you have planned

And he cry out to the LORD against you
And it become sin among you
You shall surely give to him
And your heart should not be grieved when you give to him
-----as you are instructed to do

Because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you
In all your works and in all to which you put your hand
This shall certainly be the case
For the poor will never cease from the land

Therefore I command you, saying
'You shall open your hand wide to your brother
To your poor and your needy, in your land
Be sure to not simply pass it on to another

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...