

**THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL**  
SESSION 10 | THE SABBATICAL YEAR

**THE BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE FEAST**

**LEVITICUS 25:1-7 | THE INSTRUCTION**

- The feast was for the land, not the people, **then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD** (v. 2).
- The people were not to sow, nor prune, nor reap the harvest that may come naturally (vv. 4-5). However, the term **reap** (v. 5) must not be taken as an instruction not to eat, as verse 6 will show. Reaping refers to the collection of the produce by the landowner and placing it into barns or selling it in the market.
- The *natural* produce of the land **shall be meat for you** (v. 6). In the King James, the word **meat** is a reference to all solid food, in comparison with *drink*. Thus, the natural produce of the land was to be consumed during the seventh year, but efforts were not to be made to plant, prune, nor market the harvest.
- The food was to be food not only for the landowner, but also for any person (Jew or Gentile) and any animal (domesticated or wild) (v.7).
- The feast is also mentioned in Exodus 23:10-11.

**LEVITICUS 25:18-22 | A PROMISE**

- The people were instructed that it will  **dwell in the land in safety** (v. 18) if the people obey God's instruction.
- Verse 20 required a recognition and a commitment from the people. The recognition was that they wouldn't have anything to eat. The commitment was that they would not **sow, nor gather**.
- The promise is found in verse 21, **Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years**. That is, they would have the sixth-year harvest which would feed them that year, the seventh year, with enough to plant the eighth year and sustain them until that harvest.

**THE SPIRITUAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAEL**

The major function of the Sabbatical year was much like the function of the weekly Sabbath: to remind them that God is their creator and sustainer. The weekly Sabbath was about creation, the seventh-year Sabbath was about being sustained.

The other major function was to be a regular reminder that the land did not belong to them but was God's.

**A MAJOR ISSUE WITH GOD**

In Leviticus 26:34-35 God warned His people about how serious He was about the matter. He promised that the land would **enjoy her sabbaths** (v. 34) even if it meant that God would allow an enemy to take the nation into exile. In 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 this took place. The Babylonian captivity was 70 years in length because for 490 years (since the time of King Saul) the nation had not observed the Sabbatical year.

## THE MODERN JEWISH PRACTICE

The Hebrew word *Shemithah* (“to release”) is the word used for the seventh-year sabbatical. Based on calculations from the destruction of the second Temple, Israel is currently in a Shemithah year, September 7, 2021 - September 25, 2022.<sup>1</sup>

The regulations for the land are found in the Scriptures discussed above. But individually, Deuteronomy 15:1-2 also requires the release of debts between Jews. Deuteronomy 15:9-10 warns against a heart that will not make a loan with an approaching Shemithah year because of this regulation. However, that is exactly what happened among the Jewish people, as can be imagined. The famed Rabbi Hillel declared that a *pruzbul* could be announced which would enable the debts to be collected. This “work-around” noted that the Torah requires the release of *private* debts. A *pruzbul* makes all debts *public* and thus not subject to the regulation.

Concerning the land, there are certain orthodox farmers who are “Shemithah observant.” They relinquish ownership of the land for the year. Special offerings are taken to support these observant Israeli farmers. During this year, the property gates are open, and anyone can come in to take from any natural produce, enough for their family. In addition, Shemithah observant grocery stores will only sell imported produce.

## MODERN CHRISTIAN ABUSE

So-called Messianic Rabbi Jonathan Cahn is respected in many segments of evangelical and charismatic Christianity. His book, *The Harbinger* was a best seller, using unbelievably bad hermeneutics to connect the attack on the World Trade Center with passages in the Old Testament prophets. In 2015 (and since updated), Cahn wrote *The Mystery of the Shemithah*, which was also a New York Times bestseller.

According to the publisher, the book will enable you to “discover new insight on current events such as:

- How the Great Depression and other economic events fit into the Shemithah
- How stock market crashes in 2015 were linked to the period of nullification at the end of the Shemithah
- How the Shemithah of 2015 affected economies worldwide
- How the pattern of sevens predicted 9/11 to the exact hour
- How the World Trade Center was conceived, started, finished, and destroyed in Shemithah years
- How the rise—and possibly the fall—of America can be linked to the year of the Shemithah”

Cahn calls his book a “revelation,” a book that “basically wrote itself.”<sup>2</sup> I think it is a man’s abuse of Scripture combined with *wrong-division* of the Word mixed with an incredible desire of Christian people for God to *do something*.

No respectful Biblical interpreter would get the “Shemithah mystery” that Cahn devised. No respectful Jewish theologian would interpret the Hebrew scriptures in a way that created such self-serving prophecies.

This is yet another example of how the Christian community, all but devoid of *any* teaching on **rightly dividing the word of truth** (2 Tim. 2:15), can be so easily *hoaxed* by bad theology. And, sadly, on a regular basis the *hoax* is based on mis-appropriating on of the feasts of Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> *What is Shemithah?* [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/562077/jewish/What-Is-Shemithah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/562077/jewish/What-Is-Shemithah.htm). Accessed August 17, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Cahn, Jonathan. *The Mystery of the Shemithah Updated Edition*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House Book Publishing, 2018. Pg. 3.