

THE SHMITA /SABBATICAL YEAR



By Don Esposito

Some believe that the 7th year land rest from scripture is only physical. This is not true as it is also most spiritual and a sign of faith. The land rest is physically set to replenish the land of nutrients, but also is an extension of the Sabbath command of faith.

The Sabbath is called the faith commandment because anyone can say they don't lie, or steal, but with the Sabbath you are either worshipping or working. It takes faith to enter the Sabbath covenant and maybe lose your job and not have money to pay bills.

It is the same with the land rest. It takes faith in believing in the word of Yahweh to rest your land every 7th year if you are a farmer and will lose not only a whole year of your own personal food, but a whole year of income selling your grain/vegetables etc.

Lev 25:20 And when you say, What shall we eat in the seventh year; for, lo, we may not sow nor gather our increase?

Lev 25:21 Then **I have commanded My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it shall produce the increase for three years;**

Lev 25:22 and you shall sow the eighth year, and shall eat of the old crop until the ninth year, until the coming in of its crop; you shall eat of the old.

The land Sabbath is just as much a law as the 7th day Sabbath and takes just as much faith to follow it. Do you believe the promise of Yahweh in Lev 25:20-22 above? If you are faithful and obedient in this law than you will be blessed, but if you are not obedient and do not rest your

land every 7th year according to scripture, then you will deplete your land As they have done in the US/Babylon and many other parts of the world and it will become fruitless and unproductive.

The land of Israel is no different than any other land and any land not rested will be depleted.

Also, some claim that scripture only states to keep the land Sabbaths when you enter into Israel but they are not being honest with the situation, as it states that because they were entering Israel and that is where Yahweh's covenant was made. As a matter of fact **NO law** in the Torah was meant to be kept outside of Israel because Israel was never meant to be kicked out of the land, but was kicked out because of disobedience.

Lev 23:9 And YAHWEH spoke to Moses, saying,

Lev 23:10 Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them, **When you come in to the land which I am giving to you, and have reaped its harvest, and have brought in the Omer, of the beginning of your harvest, to the priest, (clearly this is the harvest and land of Israel)**

Lev 23:11 then he shall wave the Omer before YAHWEH for your acceptance; on the morrow of the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Lev 23:12 And you shall prepare a lamb in the day you wave the Omer, one without blemish, a son of a year, for a burnt offering to YAHWEH.

Lev 23:13 And its food offering shall be two tenths part of flour mixed with oil, a fire offering to YAHWEH, a sweet fragrance; and its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine.

Lev 23:14 And you shall not eat bread, nor roasted grain, nor fresh ears, until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your Elohim; it is a never ending statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:15 And you shall number to you from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day you bring in the sheaf of the wave offering; they shall be seven complete Sabbaths;

Lev 23:16 to the next day after the seventh Sabbath, you shall number fifty days; and you shall bring near a new food offering to YAHWEH;

Lev 23:17 you shall bring in bread out of your dwellings for a wave offering, two loaves; they shall be of two tenth ephah of flour; they shall be baked with leaven; first-fruits to YAHWEH

Lev 23:18 And besides the bread, you shall offer seven lambs, without blemish, sons of a year, and one bull, a son of the herd, and two rams; they are a burnt offering to YAHWEH, with their food offering and their drink offerings, a fire offering of soothing fragrance to YAHWEH.

Lev 23:19 And you shall offer one he-goat for a sin offering, and two lambs, sons of a year, for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

Lev 23:20 And the priest shall wave them, besides the bread of the first-fruits, a wave offering before YAHWEH, besides the two lambs; they are holy to YAHWEH for the priest.

Lev 23:21 And you shall make a proclamation on this same day; it is a holy gathering to you. You shall do no laborious work of service. It is a never ending statute in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Lev 23:22 **And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not completely reap the corner of your field, nor shall you gather the gleaning of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor, and for the alien: I am YAHWEH your Elohim. (Would we only do this in Israel? I think NOT)**

Lev 23:23 And YAHWEH spoke to Moses, saying,

Lev 23:24 Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first of the month, a Holy Day Sabbath shall be to you, a memorial acclamation of the resounding of trumpets, a holy gathering.

Lev 23:25 You shall do no laborious work and you shall bring a fire offering to YAHWEH.

Lev 23:26 And YAHWEH spoke to Moses saying,

Lev 23:27 Also, on the tenth of this seventh month shall be a day of atonement; there shall be a holy gathering, and you shall humble and weaken your bodies and shall bring a fire offering to YAHWEH.

Lev 23:28 And you shall do no work in this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to atone for you before YAHWEH your Elohim.

Lev 23:29 For any person who is not humbled in this same day shall be cut off from his people.

Lev 23:30 And any person who does any work in this same day, I shall even cut off that person from the midst of his people.

Lev 23:31 You shall do no work; it is a never ending statute throughout your generations, in all your dwellings.

Lev 23:32 It is a Sabbath of rest to you, and you shall humble your souls in the ninth of the month at evening; from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath.

Lev 23:33 And YAHWEH spoke to Moses, saying,

Lev 23:34 Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, In the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be a Feast of Booths, seven days to YAHWEH.

Lev 23:35 On the first day shall be a holy gathering; you shall do no laborious work.

Lev 23:36 Seven days you shall bring a fire offering to YAHWEH; on the eighth day you shall have a holy gathering; and you shall bring the fire offering to YAHWEH; it is a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work of service.

Lev 23:37 These are the set feasts of YAHWEH which you shall proclaim, holy gatherings, to bring a fire offering to YAHWEH, a burnt offering, and a food offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, the thing of a day on its own day;

Lev 23:38 besides the Sabbaths of YAHWEH, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you shall give to YAHWEH.

Lev 23:39 Also, in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather the increase of the land, you shall keep the feast of YAHWEH seven days; on the first day a Holy Day Sabbath, and on the eighth day a Holy Day Sabbath.

Lev 23:40 And you shall take to yourselves on the first day the fruit of majestic trees, palm branches, and boughs of oak trees, and willows of the valley, and shall rejoice before YAHWEH your Elohim seven days. **(These were all trees indigenous to the land of Israel)**

Lev 23:41 And you shall celebrate it a feast to YAHWEH, seven days in a year, a never ending statute throughout your generations; in the seventh month you shall keep it.

Lev 23:42 You shall sit in Sookkuhs for seven days; all who are native in Israel shall sit down in Sookkuhs,

Lev 23:43 so that your generations shall know that I caused the sons of Israel to live in Sookkuhs, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am YAHWEH your Elohim.

Lev 23:44 And Moses declared the appointed feasts of YAHWEH to the sons of Israel.

If we believe the premise that the land Sabbath was only to be kept in Israel then I would also have to believe that the Holy Days including Passover were only to be kept in Israel, as it states the same thing, "**when you enter the land you are to keep these days**". As a matter of fact every Holy Day can only be kept properly with agriculture that can only be found in Israel and that region. If we are honest with scripture it never states about keeping the Holy days anywhere but Jerusalem.

1Ki 14:21b And **he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which YAHWEH chose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.**

Deu 16:2 And **you shall sacrifice a Passover to YAHWEH your Elohim** of the flock, and of the herd, **in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell there (Jerusalem).**

Deu 16:13 **You shall perform the Feast of Tabernacles seven days after you have gathered in from your grain-floor, and from your winepress.**

Deu 16:14 And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son, and your daughter, and your male slave, and your slave-girl, and the Levite, and the alien, and the fatherless, and the widow that are inside your gates.

Deu 16:15 **You shall keep a solemn feast seven days to YAHWEH your Elohim in the place which YAHWEH shall choose (Jerusalem);** for YAHWEH your Elohim shall bless you in all your produce, and in every work of your hands, and you shall be altogether joyful.

Deu 16:16 **Three times in a year shall all your males appear before YAHWEH your Elohim in the place which He shall choose (Jerusalem): In the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks and in the Feast of Tabernacles.** And they shall not appear before YAHWEH empty,

Again, this is not saying this because we should not keep the Holy Days in our Diaspora, but because the original intent of the whole covenant, and primarily the land covenant was to be in the land of Israel. It was never thought of doing any Torah law outside the land because being outside the land was being outside of covenant relationship and Israel never thought they would ever be outside of the land.

However, Yahweh tells us in Leviticus 26 that in the end time if we realize the sins of our forefathers and ourselves and we cry out to Him in Jerusalem and ask Him for forgiveness, then He will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and **He WILL REMEMBER THE LAND!**

Lev 26:2 You shall keep My Sabbaths, **(including land Sabbaths)** and revere My sanctuary; I am YAHWEH.

Lev 26:3 If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them,

Lev 26:4 then I will give you rains in their season, and the land shall give her produce, and the tree of the field shall give its fruit;

Lev 26:5 and your threshing shall reach to the vintage, and the vintage shall reach to the sowing time; and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction, and live in your land securely.

Lev 26:14 And if you will not listen to Me, and do not do all these commands;

Lev 26:15 and if you reject My statutes, and if your soul hates My judgments, so as not to do all My commands, to the breaking of My covenant;

Lev 26:20 and your strength shall be consumed in vain, and your land shall not give her produce, and the tree of the land shall not give its fruit.

Lev 26:21 And if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to listen to Me, then I will bring seven times more plagues on you according to your sins **(7 times more for neglecting the 7th year land rest)**

Lev 26:32 **And I shall make the land desolate,** and your enemies who are living in it shall be astonished at it.

Lev 26:33 **And I will scatter you among nations,** and shall draw out the sword after you, and your land shall become a waste, **and your cities shall be a desolation.**

Lev 26:34 **Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths, all the days of the desolation. And you shall be in the land of your enemies; then the land shall enjoy rest, and shall enjoy its Sabbaths.**

Lev 26:35 **It shall rest all the days of the desolation, that which it has not rested in your Sabbaths while you lived on it.**

Lev 26:40 **And if they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass with which they have trespassed against Me; and, also, that they have walked contrary to Me,**

Lev 26:41 that I also have walked contrary to them, and I have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are then humbled, and they are pleased to pay for their iniquity;

Lev 26:42 **then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and I shall also remember My covenant with Abraham, and I shall remember the land.**

Lev 26:43 **For the land shall be forsaken by them, and shall satisfy for its Sabbaths, in the desolation without them. And they shall satisfy for their iniquity, because, even because, they have kicked against My judgments, and their soul has loathed My statutes.**

Lev 26:44 **And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I hate them, to consume them, to break My covenant with them; for I am YAHWEH their Elohim.**

Lev 26:45 Then I shall remember for them the covenant of the first fathers, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their Elohim; I am YAHWEH.

Lev 26:46 **These are the statutes and the judgments and the laws which YAHWEH has given between Him and the sons of Israel, in Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses.**

How can we prove to Yahweh that we are really repentant and will be obedient to His Torah unless we show Him by keeping the whole Torah in our Diaspora? If not we are just like the Christians, who state yes, the Sabbath was kept for 2,000 years until Messiah, and yes it will be kept in the Millennium, but we don't have to keep it now in our dispensation of grace.

This is not convincing to Yahweh and will not bring the blessing of Him hearing our prayer and restoring Ephraim back to the land, it will only make Him think we are no different than ancient Israel who defiled His Sabbaths, both 7th day and land rests. Leviticus 26 clearly states that in our Diaspora if we repent and keep all the Torah and cry to Yahweh in our obedience then He will hear us and remember the land covenant and bring us back.

And how do we know we have the Sabbatical year correct?

Please look at the following historical references that all point to the sabbatical cycle.

- We are told by Maccabees 6:49 that Judas Maccabee's defeat at Beth-Zur was a sabbatical year. This is dated from the autumn of **163 BC to 162BC.**
- Josephus tells us that the murder of Simon the Hasmonian happened in a sabbatical year of **135 BC to autumn of 134BC.**
- Josephus also states that Herod's conquest of Jerusalem happened in a sabbatical year from Autumn **37 BC to 36 BC**
- King Agrippa's sabbatical year was **41 AD to autumn of 42Ad**
- A papyrus document found in Aramaic found in Israel is dated to the second year of Nero, which is stated as a sabbatical year in the autumn of **55 to 56 AD.**
- Historical references for the temple being destroyed shows it was in a sabbatical year of **69AD to 70AD.**
- Dated documents found from the bar Kokhba revolt showed the year to be a sabbatical one dated **132AD to 133 AD.**
- The ruins to a synagogue found have a mosaic and have it was dated to the second year of a sabbatical cycle, which was **237 AD to 238AD.**

Then, in a most striking scripture in the book of John, chapter 4 we see;

Joh 4: 35 *Do you not say that **after four months comes the harvest?** Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and see the fields that are white and have ripened for the harvest already.*

This is where Yahshua was speaking with the Samaritan woman, and it is around summer time, yet the harvest is white (ready to be picked) and yet He states that it will be 4 months until they can legally harvest the grain. Only in a sabbatical year would this be possible. Since Yahshua started His ministry in the fall of 27 AD and this is the following summer, then, we can pinpoint this sabbatical year of **27AD to 28AD** according to Yahshua Himself.

The amazing part about all 9 references is that even though they are over hundreds of years apart, they all fit the same sabbatical cycle, and therefore it is clear proof from history that this cycle, which goes back to the days of Yahshua should be followed by us today.

Was it important to Israel? A whole nation went into captivity we are told in Ezekiel 20 for primarily the reason of not keeping the Yahweh's Sabbaths (including land Sabbaths as Lev 26 shows) and lacking faith in Yahweh.

Also, look at Ps 24:1.

Psa 24:1 [A Psalm of David.] The earth belongs to YAHWEH, and the fullness of it; the world, and those who live in it.

If the whole earth belongs to Yahweh, then that means just as the 7th day Sabbath should be kept all over the earth, then also the 7th year land rest should be also, as if the land is not rested in New York it will get depleted just as well as in Israel.

The reason that Yahweh gave the land rest command to Israel for when they entered the land was that in the wilderness they had no agriculture and their food was the manna from heaven, which was also a sign of faith and trust in Yahweh. So now in the land they would not have manna but would be growing their own food and would still have to inhibit faith in Yahweh for rain and also for blessing in the 6th year for Yahweh to provide as He promised for the 7th, 8th and even 9th year.

As more proof that the Sabbatical should be kept worldwide look at the significant events that have happened worldwide in many sabbatical years in the last 100 years.

1917-18- end of world war 1, and signing of Belfour declaration to allow for the modern state of Israel to be made: 1931-32- beginning of great depression- 1938-39- The beginning World War 2- 1945-46- the end of World war 2 and the beginning of last generation with start up of UN, IMF, World Bank etc, 1966-67- Six day war in Israel, 1973-74- Yom Kippur War, 1980-81- end of Hostage crisis with USA and Iran- 1987-88- Stock market crash in USA, 1994-95- ratifying the Oslo Accords in Israel. 2001-02- 911 event in USA- also stock market crash- 2008-9 worst one day stock market crash in USA history market drops 777.7 points. The Next Shmita year is 2015-16.

So we see that besides just land rests the Shmita year also acts as prophecy markers to the covenant people of Yahweh who are faithful in keeping it. The Torah is binding as Yahshua said in Mathew 5.

Mat 5:17 Do not think that I came to annul the Torah or the Prophets; I did not come to annul, but to fulfill.

Mat 5:18 Truly I say to you, Until the heaven and the earth pass away, in no way shall one yod or one stroke pass away from the Torah until all comes to pass.

Mat 5:19 Therefore, whoever loosens one of these commandments, the least, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the worst in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.

Mat 5:20 For I say to you, If your righteousness shall not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of YAHWEH, never!

The modern day Pharisees (The Rabbis) most do not keep the Shmita year even in Israel and they also don't tithe and do away with many laws of Torah. But we know that the Torah is still binding except for the animal sacrifices with the Levitical law that was added to the Torah at Mount Sinai and that priesthood was changed to Melchizedek. I agree not all laws apply to everyone as driving laws would not apply to me if I did not have a car or driving license. However, clearly land Sabbath laws would apply to those farming because it is part of Yahweh's judicial order to rest the land every 7th year according to the Biblical calendar.

So in summary, the Congregation of Yahweh Jerusalem believes in the keeping of the whole Sabbath command, both the 7th day Sabbath and also the land rest Sabbaths as they are a command to Yahweh's covenant people worldwide and a sign of His provision over them. And it is also a sign of prophecy and faith for His people. And in keeping them in our Diaspora we are proving to Yahweh that if He will bring us back to the Promised Land of Israel that we will be faithful to every Torah command.