

Prophetic Truths in Sabbaticals and Jubilees

After wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, Israel finally crossed the Jordan and somewhat conquered the land Yahweh had promised. They had not been thorough in driving out the enemy, however, leaving pockets of heathen culture that would prove to be Israel's downfall.

Deuteronomy chapter 7 relates that Israel would find a wicked people in their land. These were vile pagans and removal of them surgically was Yahweh's solution. He had warned Israel that these people would prove a snare and they should not intermarry with them or have any dealings with them socially, religiously or in any other way. Israel was not to annihilate them. Yahweh even gave miraculous help to accomplish this task.

Had Israel done what was commanded, they would have prospered in the Promised Land. But because they disobeyed, their punishment was years of servitude to their enemies.

Israel as a nation found it hard to accept the startling concept that Yahweh would allow His Chosen ones to be taken captive by a foreign power; by a king who worshiped idols and followed pagan ways. It simply was too difficult to grasp that Yahweh had for the time disowned Israel and would move them out of the Land He had promised them!

Northern Tribes Go to Assyria

The northern ten tribes, often referred to as "Ephraim," were taken captive to the area of present-day northern Iraq by the Assyrians and subsequently moved north and west, over the Caucasus Mountains (hence the term "Caucasian"). This occurred in the seventh century BCE.

The southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin were allowed to remain in the land for a time, having the advantage of seeing the wrath of Yahweh on their ten-tribed brethren Ephraim. Even so, Judah was unfaithful to Yahweh's laws despite the continual warnings of Elohim's messengers:

"And Yahweh Elohim of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of Elohim, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of Yahweh arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (2Chron. 36:15-16)

Shrugging off the plight of the northern ten tribes, Judah and Benjamin became even worse in their apostasy according to Jeremiah 3:8. About 130 years later the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin, along with many of the priests, were taken captive to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar. Only a few farmers and poor folk were left in the land of Israel.

Many Bible students do not realize that the prime reason for removing the Israelites from the Promised Land was because of their refusal to obey Yahweh and their rejection of His laws, which included laws of the land Sabbaths:

"And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servant to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfill the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: [for] as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfill threescore and ten years" (2Chron. 36:20-21).

As long as Israel was captive in Babylon, the Promised Land lay idle and desolate to fulfill the neglected 70 cycles of the Sabbatical- Jubilee. Israel had ignored Yahweh's laws, which demanded that the land lie idle every seven years. In addition, every seventh Sabbatical year was followed by the Jubilee year. Keeping these Sabbatical years gave the name "Holy Land" to the Promised Land.

"For thus says Yahweh, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. 29:10; see also Dan. 9:2).

When would Israel learn that the Sabbatical-Jubilee was holy both to the land and holy to Yahweh? The question posed to us is, does Yahweh still expect His laws, statutes, and judgments to be observed in this enlightened day and age? Does He change His laws and expectations of certain generations through the ages or does the Bible say that He is Yahweh and changes not? Malachi 3:6 confirms that He is changeless!

Sabbatical-Jubilee Commanded Early

The earliest Bible reference to the Sabbatical-Jubilee cycle is found in Exodus 21:2-6, the release of the slave on the Sabbatical. Exodus 23:10-12 relates to the Sabbatical land rest. The Sabbatical-Jubilee was therefore a part of the same Covenant established with Moses in Exodus 24:1-8.

Following the seventh Sabbatical year (or every 49 years) the sounding of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement of the fiftieth year heralded the beginning of the Jubilee.

Atonement falls on the tenth day of the seventh month and is a very solemn time, the holiest day of the year. The harvest is in, the early rains soften the earth to allow plowing and seeding for the next crop. But in the Sabbatical year the land is at rest.

Both the 49th and 50th years were times of rest for the land. Every Israelite would observe at least one Jubilee year

in his normal lifespan of 70 years. If a person observed his first Jubilee in his teen years, then he would enjoy another before his normal lifespan ended. It was a special occasion anticipated by the entire, rejoicing nation.

As we will see, the Jubilee has prophetic implications in Yahweh's dealings with mankind. We are given insight into the grand finale of Yahweh's redemption of the earth as He establishes the Kingdom under the Messiah.

The Sabbatical cycle in certain instances influenced Israel's daily living. The right of an heiress to marry was restricted so that the law of the Jubilee could be preserved, Numbers 36:4-7.

Because Yahweh had told Moses that women may inherit their fathers' land, they had to marry inside the tribe of their fathers so their land would always remain in the proper tribe when the Jubilee released it to its original family (v. 4).

Naboth refused to sell his vineyard so that it would remain an inheritance for his family, 1Kings 21:1:4.

The Jubilee is so significant that it will be kept in the Millennial Kingdom, as shown by Ezekiel 46:17. There the king is reminded that any property given to a servant reverts to the original owner (the king) at the time of the Jubilee.

Other references to the Jubilee are in Nehemiah 5:1-19; Isaiah 37:30; 61:1-2, and Jeremiah 34:8-9.

Sabbatical Year Command

The Sabbatical-Jubilee cycle is detailed in Leviticus 25. Beginning with verse 3 we read,

"Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh for Yahweh: you shall neither sow your field, nor prune your vineyard.

"That which grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap neither gather the grapes of your vine undressed: of it is a year of rest unto the land... And you shall number seven Sabbaths of years unto you, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be unto you forty and nine years. then shall you cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall you make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and you shall return every man unto his possession, and you shall return everyman unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of your vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: you shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of this jubilee you shall return every man unto his possession" (vv. 3-13).

The Sabbatical year, we learn from Leviticus 25:4, occurs every seventh year - a Sabbath of rest both to the land and to Yahweh.

The fields are not to be sown nor the vines pruned. No crops are to be planted; the vineyards are to be left untouched. the produce of the land and vineyard could be eaten, but not stored or preserved (harvested).

All debts among Israelites were canceled. After seven of these Sabbatical years (or 49 years), the next or fiftieth year is the Jubilee. The following points differentiate the Sabbath year and the Jubilee:

Sabbath

- ▶ Land and vineyards rest.
- ▶ All voluntary foods could be eaten.
- ▶ All debts canceled.

Jubilee

- ▶ Land has its rest.
- ▶ Land reverts to the original owner.
- ▶ All Israelite slaves freed.

The fiftieth year is eagerly anticipated as a time of joy and merriment. The great landowners had to give up the lands they once cultivated, which reverted to the original owner. This kept the lands with the tribe to whom they were first given.

Idyllic simplicity returned to soften the distinction of rank. Debts were forgiven, and those having lost their property through accident or poor management were rejuvenated as opportunities brought by the restoration awaited them. This insured a wider prosperity, and a system of social opportunity that encouraged initiative.

All slaves were redeemed and freed. The Sabbatical-Jubilee years might be called the great "leveler" of Israelite

society.

All were equal before Yahweh. Neither the rich nor the poor cultivated his field.

But Are These Times for Today?

Following industrialization and a more sophisticated civilization, the laws of Yahweh became increasingly less esteemed by our modern society. The demands made by industry, manufacturing, commerce, and banking are not appeased by fallowed farmland.

Canceling of borrower's debts is unheard of. How can the entrepreneur grow and expand (into a large company) if he is required to return legally purchased property every fiftieth year?

These are but a few of the questions asked today. The farmer has more freedom to apply Yahweh's laws to his life than most who work for a regular wage. However, the increasingly heavy burdens laid upon him by lenders, plus the pressures inherent in today's economies, challenge his very survival and are detrimental to his obedience to the laws of Yahweh. One way for a farmer to obey the laws of the land rest is diversification.

The Jubilee is known as the year of liberty. Leviticus 25:12 explains that it is a holy year to Israel . It was because of Israel 's keeping of the Jubilees that the Promised Land came to be known as the Holy Land . However, there is some question whether Israel did indeed faithfully keep both the Sabbatical and Jubilee years.

Ancient Israel kept the Passover. They could not forget how the pagan deities of Egypt were discredited and destroyed at that time - and the mighty nation of Egypt humbled by the power of Yahweh.

The Days of Unleavened Bread reminded Israel that they had left the leaven of Egypt behind, and became a new creation as they journeyed to Sinai to receive the Covenant of Yahweh.

The Feast of Tabernacles accomplished a similar memorial. The 40 years spent wandering in the wilderness was to remind Israel of their disobedient refusal to enter the Promised Land. They dwelt in tents and booths and recalled Yahweh's faithfulness in caring for them during their wilderness wanderings. These all showed Israel 's dependence upon Yahweh and the blessings that would follow when they obeyed him.

Sabbatical and Atonement

On the tenth day of the seventh month, Israel celebrated the Day of Atonement. This emphasized the righteousness that was required by Yahweh. On this day the sins of the nation were confessed, which is the first requisite to establish righteousness.

Confession is an opening of the heart, which leads to forgiveness and restoration of Yahweh. Through fasting and keeping the Day of Atonement, Yahweh's people are reminded of His righteousness and His forgiveness as they accept His grand plan for the forgiveness of sin.

The Day of Atonement was the only day of the year when the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, which was the nearest approach to Yahweh possible through the blood offering. The Day of Atonement pictured the forgiveness of Israel 's sins and the nation's getting right with Yahweh. Known as Yom Kippur, it was the "day of covering" of their sins, pointing to the true Lamb of Yahweh who came to take away the sins of the world, not just cover them.

The trumpet sounded on the Day of Atonement, bringing in the Sabbatical year. It was a year-long Sabbath. The thought, character, and purpose for the Sabbaths were magnified in the keeping of the Sabbatical year. During the Sabbatical year the Book of Deuteronomy was read to the people. The Sabbatical marked the canceling of all indebtedness.

Jubilee Frees Land, People

Following the seventh Sabbatical year came the year of the Jubilee, which occurred every fiftieth year (or after the succession of the seven Sabbatical years). It has been called the outer circle of the great sabbatical system, which comprises the Sabbatical year, the Sabbatical month, and the Sabbath day.

Just as in the Sabbatical year, the Jubilee also was a time of keeping the land uncultivated. The distinctive mark of the Jubilee year was the liberation of all slaves of Hebrew blood.

The blowing of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement also released every bondman.

The Jubilee year was different in another point in that the land was restored to the original owners. All land that had been assigned to a family was again returned to that family. This required that the tribal and family registers be carefully kept so that the rights of the people should be protected. It was from such records that we know that Yahshua descended from the tribe of Judah.

Jewish writers declare that the Jubilee was observed up to the time of the fall of Judah in the year 586 B.C.E. References are also to be found in Ezekiel 7:12-13; 46:16-18, and Isaiah 63:4.

Many Jewish writings can be found confirming their belief in the subject of one day as being a thousand years, and applying the six-day week to the time allotted to man. The seventh day or the seventh thousandth year belongs to

Yahweh. Most chronologists agree that 4,000 years passed from creation to the coming of the Messiah at Bethlehem. Since that time, some 1,998 years have passed, according to our Roman calendar. The return of the Messiah could well come within our lifetime.

The Year of Our Release?

A number of Bible scholars point out that Israel was delivered from both the Babylonian and Egyptian captivities at the time of the Jubilee. The analogy to us as believers in the Messiah is that He is the one who sets us free. The bondage of Israel was cruel, enforced servitude. Yahshua set us free from the bondage and shackles of sin. *"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,"* John 8:36.

How ancient Israel must have thrilled to the sound of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement, announcing the actual release from slavery. Of how much greater joy will it be when the trumpets sound and the Messiah returns to this earth! All tears will be dried, and the brokenhearted comforted. The meek and the poor in spirit will be exalted and the thirsty and hungry filled. The first trumpet is blown on the first day of the seventh month, which is the new moon day (Rev. 14:6-7 could well be that period between the two warnings of the trumpet). Then follows the blowing of the second trumpet on the Day of Atonement, hearing release, redemption, and deliverance.

Hebrews 4:1-11 summarizes the Sabbaths Yahweh has given us to remember His great plan of redemption of mankind. We are told that there remains a Sabbath of rest for the people of Yahweh. There is the Weekly Sabbath which is set aside for the people of Yahweh. Also, the Sabbatical rest for the land of Canaan around Jerusalem. Finally, the rest and redemption for the elect people of Yahweh who will reign with Yahshua when He returns to set up the Messianic Kingdom:

"Blessed and holy is he that part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power but they shall be priests of Elohim and the Messiah, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

But not all will attain that rest because of unfaithfulness. The faithful will have rest from their enemies, no drought, sickness, sin, or hindrances to happiness.

Computing the Jubilee

A long-standing debate is how to compute the Jubilee year in segments of 49 or 50 years? It should be noted that the Jubilee year is the year following the seventh Sabbatical year. It is the year following every 49 years.

From the beginning of one Jubilee year to the beginning of the next Jubilee is 49 years. The 7 times 7 years of the Sabbaticals may not be broken any more than can the 7 times 7 weeks in computing Pentecost. Furthermore, the 50th year is year one in the count toward the next Sabbatical year, 7 years later.

To demonstrate that the Jubilee immediately follows the Sabbatical year, note the prophecy of Isaiah:

"And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall eat this year such as grows of itself; and the second year that which springs of the same; and in the third year sow, reap, and plant vineyards and eat the fruit thereof" (Isa. 37:30).

"This year" refers to the Sabbatical year. The "second year" refers to the Jubilee year, and the "third year" is to once more sow grain and reap and plant vineyards. The day after Atonement, which ends the Sabbatical-Jubilee year, the farmers can again plow the ground for planting of wheat and barley that fall.

Cycle May Determine Savior's Return

If the Sabbatical-Jubilee cycle was important to Israel, then it is all the more important to us looking for the return of the Messiah. He quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2:

"The Spirit of Yahweh Elohim is upon me; because Yahweh has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to [them that are] bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh" (See also Luke 4:18).

In quoting this verse, Yahshua stopped in the middle of verse 2, which doubtlessly meant that He was now calling people out of the world to become His followers. The "acceptable year" is understood to refer to the beginning of the Sabbatical year. He came to preach the Good News to the meek and humble, those whose hearts were open and teachable.

From those of a kindred mind He would build His assembly. He would now choose those who would become the nucleus of His body of believers, the "ekklesia," known as the "church." He told Peter that this group of "called-out ones" would never die out, but would always exist on this earth, Matthew 16:18.

Just as the Savior was cut off in the middle of the week and died on a Wednesday, so He left unsaid the rest of Isaiah 61:2, which tells of the vengeance yet to come. Note the latter part of this verse:

"...And the day of vengeance of our Elohim; to comfort all that mourn" (Isa. 61:1-2).

He comes with anger and vengeance for the wicked, but comfort and help to those who revere Yahweh's Name and are submissive to Him.

This ties in with Revelation's prophecy: *"And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the"*

dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy NAME, small and great: and should destroy them which destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18). (See also Luke 20:16; 2Thes. 1:8; 2:8; Heb. 10:27.)

The Sabbatical-Jubilee cycle pictures the grand finale of the Believer's earthy sojourn. It represents the fulfillment of the promise made to the redeemed, which will be accomplished when He returns in the day of vengeance.

The Sabbatical and Jubilee system set captives free, brought rest, restored land to rightful owners, canceled debts, and reunited families. These special times, therefore, fit in beautifully with our Savior's return and what it means spiritually. Knowing how all of Yahweh's special days relate to His plan of redemption, there is little doubt that the Sabbaticals and Jubilees will be key in the timing of Yahshua's return.

Although we are not positive about when His return will be, it could very well be on a Sabbatical or Jubilee year. None of the Feasts of the seventh scriptural month have been fulfilled, as far as we know. By observing the weekly, annual, and Jubilee years, we keep our minds focused on His imminent return.

Studies to determine the secular dates of the sabbatical and Jubilee years rest heavily on the Savior's beginning ministry, which appears to be 27-28 C.E. The Jews were so determined to keep all Yahweh's law after their return from the Babylonian captivity that they alleged that there was no reason to sell themselves into slavery or be redeemed. Records of these years, therefore, are sparse since Ezra.

Our studies indicated that the last Sabbatical year was 2001-2002, to be followed by 2008-2009. These annual Sabbaths begin on the Day of Atonement, with 3 1/2 months in one year, and 8 1/2 months of the following year. An interesting discovery is that the last secular year in which the Sabbatical cycle falls is divisible by 7. It so happens that 2002 divided by 7 equals 286 with no remainder! The next year that is divisible by 7 is 2009 = 287. There probably is no further significance with our secular years.

Certainly a study of this neglected cycle will bring many obscure Bible truths to our attention and make the Bible become clearer as we draw nearer to our Heavenly Father and His beloved Son, who make it all possible.

We are not setting dates, but do point out the importance of all the words of Yahweh by which Yahshua said we should live, Matthew 4:4. Yahshua tells us to discern the signs of the times, and His Sabbaticals and Jubilees are additional benchmarks for the time of His return.

Dual Significance in the Sabbaticals and Jubilees

<i>The Law</i>		<i>The Parallel Prophecy</i>
Lev. 25:9	Announced by a trumpet	1Cor. 15:52; 1Thes.4:16; Matt. 24:31
Lev. 25:4,19	Rest from labors	Heb. 4:9-10
Lev. 25:10	Reunite with family	Matt. 24:31; 1Thes. 4:16-17
Lev. 25:13;27:24	Land to rightful owner	Matt. 5:5; Dan 7:18, 22; Rev. 2:26-27
Lev. 25:10	Slaves freed	Isa. 60:12-14; 49:23; Rev. 20:4; John 8:36
Lev. 25:35	Debts Canceled	Rev. 21:4; John 8:36

Sabbaticals and Jubilees in History

Sabbatical Year	Jubilee Year	Sabbatical Year	Jubilee Year	Sabbatical Year	Jubilee Year
205-04		97-98		1749-50	
198-97		104-05		1756-57	
191-90		111-12		1763-64	
184-83		118-19		1770-71	
177-76		125-26	126-27	1777-78	
170-69	169-68	132-33		1784-85	
163-62*		139-40		1791-92	1792-93
156-55		146-47		1798-99	
149-48		153-54		1805-06	
142-41		160-61		1812-13	
135-34		167-68		1819-20	

128-27		174-75	175-76	1826-27	
121-20	120-19	181-82		1833-34	
114-13		188-89		1840-41	1841-42
107-06		195-96		1847-48	
100-99		202-03		1854-55	
93-92		209-10		1861-62	
86-85		216-17		1868-69	
79-78		223-24	224-25	1875-76	
72-71	71-70	230-31		1882-83	
65-64		237-38		1889-90	1890-91
58-57		244-45		1896-97	
51-50		251-52		1903-04	
44-42		258-59		1910-11	
37-36		265-66		1917-18	
30-29		272-73	273-74	1924-25	
23-22	22-21	279-80		1931-32	
16-15		286-87		1938-39	1939-40
09-08		293-94		1945-46	
02-01 B.C.E.		300-01		1952-53	
06-07 C.E		307-08		1959-60	
13-14		314-15		1966-67	
20-21	Key Date	321-22	322-23	1973-74	
27-28	28-29			1980-81	
34-35				1987-88	1988-89
41-42 (Luke 4:16-21)		1700-01		1994-95	
48-49		1707-08		2001-02	
55-56		1714-15		2008-09	
62-63		1721-22		2015-16	
69-70		1728-29		2022-23	
76-77	77-78	1735-26		2029-30	
83-84		1742-43	1743-44	2036-37	2037-38
90-91					

*years in bold face are verifiable