

Shemitah — the Forgotten Sabbath

It Has Everything to Do With the Weekly Sabbath!

Perhaps the word “Shemitah” is unfamiliar to you. It ought not to be, for it is a prime issue within the laws of the Eternal.

Just what is the Shemitah? The name comes from the Hebrew *shmita*, which means “release,” but it is also called the *Sabbatical year* (*sheviit*), or “seventh.” This *Sabbatical year*, which I am also going to refer to as the Land Sabbath in this article, is a major focus of attention in the word of God, as we shall see.

As a student of Ambassador College in 1972-1974, the Land Sabbath was a major focus of attention, because the year 1972-1973 had been calculated by someone within the Worldwide Church of God to be a Sabbatical year. Having received a Master’s Degree in soil fertility by that time, and coming from the farm in Minnesota, it was quite an odyssey to be involved with a working group at the college in search of answers to this mysterious year that arrived every seven years. Does it apply to the land today as it did in ancient times? If so, how should it to be kept? What are the purposes in keeping it? These questions kept rolling around in our pliable, inquisitive minds. As things turned out, we did indeed keep the Land Sabbath on the Ambassador College grounds that year in the best ways we knew how.

What Scripture Tells Us

The instructions for the Sabbatical Year are given in three places in Scripture (the NKJV in all cases).

Exodus 23:10-11. “Six years you shall sow your

land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.”

Leviticus 25:2-7, 20-22. “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a *sabbath* [Hebrew *shabbath*, “intermission”; from *shabath*, “repose, desist from exertion”] to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather its fruit; 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. 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. 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, for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land — all its produce shall be for food’ and if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?’ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in you shall eat of the old harvest.”

Deuteronomy 15:1-2, 12-15. “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; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the Lord your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today."

The Land Sabbath is also mentioned elsewhere, including Leviticus 26:33-35, Deuteronomy 31:10-13, Jeremiah 34:13-14, Nehemiah 10:31, II Chronicles 36:20-21, and II Kings 19:29.

Requirements for the Land Sabbath

These scriptures reveal some quite dramatic stipulations for this period of land rest that was commanded every seven years.

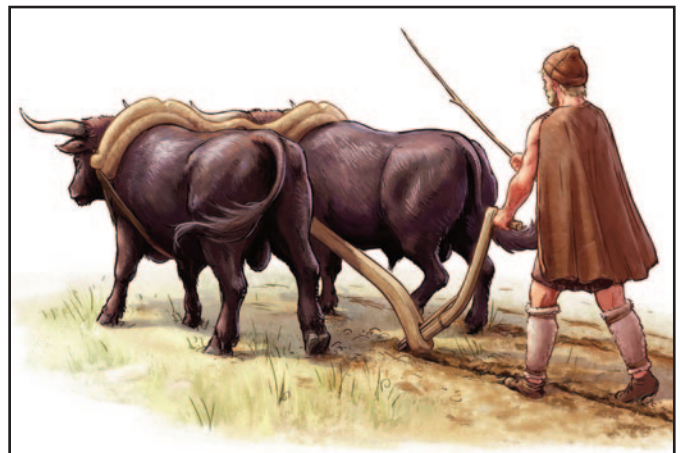
1. No commercial planting or harvesting of annual crops like barley, wheat, spelt, flax, or rye was allowed.
2. No commercial gathering of grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, or other fruits was to be done.
3. No tilling or rupturing of the soil, in preparation for planting or otherwise, were to be done.
4. No pruning or planting of grapes, or fruit and olive trees were to be undertaken.
5. All debts were to be released at the end of this seventh year.
6. Everyone was permitted to eat of whatever grew of itself this seventh year as long as they did not harvest for storage or sale; animals could eat the rest. In a real sense the land and its produce were available to

anyone who needed it — rich or poor, free or bond — and the ownership of the land and what grew on it were shared by all. The land owner abandoned his absolute ownership of the fields, vineyards, and orchards, and guaranteed free access to anyone who wished to collect and eat the produce of his land. That included the land owner himself.

7. Any bondman or bondwoman was released to freedom this Sabbatical Year, and given an ample share of the master's goods.

8. This year of release applied to the entire nation of Israel.

After seven cycles of Land Sabbaths — after 49 years — a Jubilee year was declared, in which everyone who had lost his land due to poverty or some other reason would return to reclaim his possession, free of charge! Compare that to today's real estate market. While the true landowners or a close relative could redeem the land at any time during those 50 years, during which he lost his inheritance, the



In ancient Israelite times, the act of plowing involved the pulling of shank to make an indentation into the soil, in order to drop seeds. Abad, often translated as till, means to serve the land.

owner was assured that on the Jubilee he would get it back.

What incredible "spiritual legislation" the Creator put into play for His special nation, which had the following effects:

1. Land speculation and the buying and sell-

ing of land were eliminated, for there was no price for land.

2. Inflation was severely limited because the value of food, clothing, and other items was tied to its demand-as-needed directly in one's own vicinity, not through third-party retailers and government money-management.

3. The poor were given great incentives to progress upward economically should they lose their land — they would get it back free of charge — or somehow fall onto hard times and have to become servants; within seven years of service to a wealthier Israelite they would be free, and take with them livestock and goods to begin life anew. God's instruction to Israel was to have mercy on the poor: "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you"



This painting called "Angelus" by Jean-Francois Millet typifies the deep humility farmers and gardeners experience when exposed to the terms of the Land Sabbath.

(Leviticus 25:35). Also, the good managers were prevented from becoming super rich because they could possess only their own land, and would have to give up any rented property every 50 years.

4. At least on the seventh year, everyone was put on an equal plane in terms of obtaining a food supply, since everyone could eat from anyone's field, vineyard, or or-

chard, at no cost.

Furthermore, the Jubilee year avoided the consolidation of the land in the hands of a few, avoiding the creation of a landless proletariat. Such an accumulation of wealth oftentimes leads to pride and arrogance (the rich answer roughly; Proverbs 18:23), which is the opposite of the Creator's desire.

God's Purpose for the Land Sabbath

Our great Creator does everything with great purposes in mind; the Land Sabbath is no exception. In particular, observance of this seventh year was the greatest possible recognition that almighty God is the sole Creator and Master of the country, for on that year nation laid its entire existence — both individually and nationally — at His feet, and essentially committed the land and its production to Him. What a humbling exercise of obedience to a heavenly command that has got to be ... to have faith that on the sixth year He would cause the field and vineyard and orchard to produce three times its normal abundance.

The year provided a periodic humbling of the entire nation — a leveling of pride and vanity, if you will — which helped maintain that character that the Creator desires for each of us individually and for entire nations!

"For you do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise" (Psalm 51; 16-17).

So, in a very direct way the Land Sabbath combats humanity's inborn selfish nature to get for the self, and instead urges people to look to God for one's help and hope. It is a national program to embed faith in the Creator for all the inhabitants of the land, to remind them that the land, the crops, and all that is provided by them are gifts from Him. It is to Him that they must

owe their total allegiance and obedience.

By removing servitude and debt, the Land Sabbath abets the manner in which people made in God's image are meant to live ... that is, in liberty and freedom, not in servitude and debt to others. The Land Sabbath promoted these ideals that our Creator desires for all of us. Note what Scripture has to say about these matters.

"But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galations 5:1).

"The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7).

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8).

Some have claimed that the land rest was designed by God for ecological purposes, to allow the organisms in the soil to "reorient" and "regenerate" their soil-borne communities and thus prepare for another six years of farming.¹ This might be a reasonable reason to cease from farming a soil if major disruption of the soil was involved, but the Israelite farmers did no such thing. They would plant grains by making an indentation in the soil with a tool pulled by an ox. For tree and vine crops there would be no such consideration, since the roots are already embedded in the soil.

Also, recall that in the sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle God would command a great blessing and cause the soil to produce a triple-abundant yield; if the fertility of the soil was depleted by lack of rest, then one would expect

less — not more — of a yield surge at the end of six years; the six years of cropping would have removed nutrients and supposedly disrupted soil biotic communities that might reduce yields. Thus, it is difficult to tie ecological benefits to the Land Sabbath as some restorative function caused by not cropping the soil. Of course, God's blessing of favorable rainfall and temperature this sixth year would be a major factor in explaining these tripled yield increases.

The Unity of the Weekly Sabbath, Land Sabbath, and Jubilee

Notice Yahweh's command regarding provision of manna for the Israelites in the wilderness.

"See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:29-30).

As with special provision for the Sabbatical Year by abundant production on the sixth year, so in the wilderness there was an extra abundance of production of manna on the sixth day to carry through the rest week. The Jubilee



The provision of manna in double portion on the sixth day closely resembles the triple yields on the sixth year of the Land Sabbath.

year followed the same pattern.

Where the Land Sabbath is first mentioned in Exodus, the text immediately follows with a mention of the weekly Sabbath (Exodus 23:12). The two are intimately connected. During both periods we must renounce everything that is an exercise of our programmed control of the creation around us — using our own powers to build by our own efforts — and rest our entire beings within the bosom of the Source of all power. Any thoughts and acts of mastery over the world that we may manifest through our ingenuity and creativity are kindly set aside on both the weekly and seventh-year Sabbath to affirm our faith and affinity to the Creator who has made us in His image, and given us the choice of doing good or evil (Deuteronomy 30:10). Man would become little more than a “working machine” were it not for God’s command that we desist from servile work on the seventh day of the week, and during the seventh year.

The two Sabbaths show complementary characteristics.

Weekly Sabbath

1. A rest for individuals. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work ...” (Exodus 20:9-10).
2. A proclamation of God as Creator and Master of the entire universe.

Land Sabbath (and Jubilee)

1. A rest for the nation and its plants and soils. “... 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 or prune your vineyard (Leviticus 25:4).
2. A proclamation of God as the ultimate owner of the earth’s land and its living species.

It should be noted that the range of work

permitted on the weekly Sabbath is narrower than for the Sabbatical Year. Whereas the weekly Sabbath is a solemn rest, a holy convocation with no servile work permitted, no personal pleasure allowed, nor any words spoken but the Eternal’s (Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 58:13), the Land Sabbath year allowed typical daily lifestyles to continue without the usual farm work of tilling, planting, harvesting, and pruning. Of course, the weekly Sabbath always arrived every seven days during the Sabbatical Year.

The Keeping of the Land Sabbath Through History

Our heavenly Father keeps very good records, and the history of Land Sabbath observance in Israel was apparently not a very good one. I say that because in the cursings mentioned in Leviticus 26, the Sabbatical Year took

on special significance in terms of punishment for Israel if the nation failed to keep those years. Note the following reference.

The Weekly Sabbath

Rest for individuals

God is the Creator and Master of all the universe

The Land Sabbath

Rest for the nation and its soils and crops

God is the owner of the earth’s land and life-sustaining crops

“I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall rest — for the time it did not rest on your Sabbaths when you dwelt in it” (Leviticus 26:32-35).

Verse 35 seems to be prophetic, suggesting that Israel — at least once they slipped into idolatry and paganism — did not keep the Land Sabbath as the law dictated. Perhaps they kept an appearance of it but found ways around the

directions to not till, sow, reap, prune, harvest, and sell. The verse seems to imply that years of captivity of the nation would equalize the number of Sabbatical years that were not kept! If such is the case, and we take, for example, the 70 years of captivity in Babylon as an indication of the years the Land Sabbath was not kept, then $70 \times 7 = 490$ years. Is it possible that counting back from the first siege of Jerusalem's captivity (496 B.C.)², one comes to the year 986 B.C. as the year after which the Land Sabbaths were not kept? This date falls within Saul's 40-year reign (1000-960 B.C.). Whether this is true or not is impossible at this time to ascertain, but the possibility exists that for 490 years the Land Sabbath was not kept. It is possible that those years of failure to keep the Sabbatical Year were not continuous, but occurred during times of apostasy within the nation ... when leaders lost sight of the spiritual foundations of God's laws and lusted after private gain and personal aggrandizement, the very moral decay that the Land Sabbath was meant to remind people to avoid.



Flavius Joseph stated that 23 B.C. was a Jubilee year, which would place 2027 as another Jubilee, 40 cycles since Christ.

to the seventh year is the prohibition of growing or harvesting certain crops for export within the boundaries of Israel. Most people have come to believe that the agricultural laws of the Torah are no longer binding, which has brought them to

cancel debt forgiveness laws as well.³

Even for those who consider that the Land Sabbath is binding today, some Israeli farmers have developed a way around the law by saying that the Deuteronomy 15:2 command is to forgive the debts of a "friend or brother." Talmudic scholars have interpreted this to mean that only private debts are canceled, but by transferring the debt to a public religious court, then the debt is theoretically no longer between friends, brothers, or neighbors. This enables people to fully recover the debt that was once private. Further, many Israeli farmers get around keeping the Land Sabbath by hiring non-Jewish workers to work their land, claiming that others are laboring, not the farmers themselves.⁴

The Dates of the Jubilees

There is no conclusive information I have found to show when the Land Sabbaths and Jubilee years are to be kept. The cycle is 50 years, but some scholars have even challenged that obvious fact, supposing it is 49 years. Some of these arguments are discussed in the sources given in the end notes, but will not be addressed here.⁵

Some Jubilee years proposed include (in modern times) 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995, and 2017.⁶ There is one date that appears to have considerable historical respect, and that is the year 1977. The reasoning is thus. Josephus in *Antiquities of the Jews* indicates that 24 B.C. was a Sabbatical Year, and 23 B.C. was a Jubilee year.⁷ That would place the next Jubilee year to begin on the Day of Atonement of 27 A.D., which was the year that Jesus began His ministry, if one accepts the idea that he was born on 4 B.C. If He did indeed begin His ministry in 27 A.D., the year 1977 — which is 1,950 years (39 Jubilees cycles) from the beginning of His ministry — would coincide with the date of the Jubilee stated by Josephus, and would also indicate the commencement of the 40th Jubilee cycle in 2027. Note also Jesus' statement in Luke 4:17-19,

"And He was handed the book of the

prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

‘The spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
‘To preach the gospel to the poor;
‘He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted,
‘To proclaim liberty to the captives
‘And recovery of sight to the blind,
‘To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
‘To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’”

Was Jesus claiming that this time, in the year 27 A.D., was the year of Jubilee? This ap-

pears to be the case. We know that the temptation in the wilderness occurred in the late winter or early spring (Matthew 4:11; Luke 4:1-13) and His baptism by John occurred immediately after that (John 1:32), very soon after which was the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-10) and then the Passover (John 2:13). At this time he was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23). The Jubilee announcement stated above at the synagogue in Nazareth was most likely the following fall (Sivan), in 27 A.D.

Of some interest is that, depending upon when the beginning of the Jubilee year is determined in 23 B.C., it is possible that the year 28 A.D. was the next Jubilee year. Such a view is taken by R.H. Vargo, who believes that not only is Sivan 2028 a Jubilee year, but that Jesus Christ will return at that time.⁸

Should We Keep It Today?

The question of whether or not farmers and gardeners today should keep the Land Sabbath, not just in Israel but in any part of the world, is

extremely critical in that, as we read in Leviticus 26, the very existence of Israel was dependent on their keeping the year. One might ask whether those commands for the land of Israel should apply to other lands, and in my view the answer is an emphatic “yes,” because all land on earth is the Creator’s, and He intends for one law — His laws — to oversee all people worldwide ... for “... all the earth is Mine” (Exodus 19:5).

“The Lord will establish you as a people holy to Himself, as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall

see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you” (Deuteronomy 28:9-10).

“One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who

dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you” (Numbers 15:15-16).

My view is seconded by Johathan Cahn in his book, *The Mystery of the Shemitah*,⁹ who claims that nations which do not follow the principles of the Land Sabbath will be judged by God. He claims that Elul 29 has coincided with many crises in America every seven years: drastic stock market drops, credit crises, recessions, the Twin Towers collapse, and even the Great Depression. The five great economic crashes of the last 40 years were supposedly on Shemitah years: 1973, 1980, 1987, 2001, and



Jesus very likely proclaimed the Jubilee year when He announced in Luke 4:17-19 the beginning of the “acceptable year of the Lord.” This was likely in 27 A.D.

2008.

It is obvious that the Land Sabbath cannot be properly kept unless the entire nation keeps it. Individual commercial farmers who keep the year by desisting from tilling, planting, controlling weeds and pests, and harvesting, or not controlling insect pests and diseases on vine crops and fruit, nut, and olive trees would not be able to survive economically since taxes, machinery and land payments, and other costs would not cease the seventh year. Some few farmers who are debt-free might survive a year-long land rest, while others might endure resting a seventh of their land each year, so during a seven-year cycle the entire farm would be rested.

Note too that a modern farmer, who is generally pushing his yields with high yield potential varieties, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and other inputs is pushing the maximum yield possible. Compare this with an ancient Israeli farmer who would save seeds from the previous crop, possibly use some animal manure for fertilizer, but would otherwise plant using a small furrow into which he would drop seeds, and then pray for rain and good weather to germinate and move the crop along. He would take whatever God's growing season — temperature, rainfall, and storms — gave him, along with whatever weed pressure, soil fertility levels, and insect and pathogen problems came along. Instead of an 80 bu/acre wheat crop, he might be satisfied with 15 or 20 bu/acre. Then in the sixth year he could receive a triple blessing of 60 bu/acre. The modern farmer could not expect such an extra increase, since he is already maximizing his yield.

These modifications of the original intent of a nation-wide Sabbatical Year, however, cannot be fulfilled within today's competitive society by farmers who want to stay in business. So, what is a Christian farmer to do? We might also ask what is a Christian gardener to do who is intent on fulfilling the laws of the Creator?

Here are my viewpoints on the matter.

Farmers who grow commercially. The decision to keep the Land Sabbath over one's total acreage for a particular year is usually not

tenable, because of loss of production while fixed costs continue to mount. The farmer could rest a seventh of his land each year, so the entire farm will be rested over a seven-year period, at least giving all of the land a rest every seven years.



Commercial crop producers are those directed by the Sabbatical Year laws.



Family garden plots were likely not included in the land rest, since everyone needed vegetables.

A problem appears, however, when the proper years of keeping the Land Sabbath are not known with absolute certainty. This fact has already been discussed in some detail. The entire nation is meant to observe this seventh-year period as one, and today such a practice would be impossible. No government today would ever think of declaring a Land Sabbath, and even if they did few farmers would keep the year as it ought to be kept.

Gardeners who grow for their families. Non-commercial, family vegetable plots, I believe, were excluded from the commands of the Land Sabbath to not sow, weed, and reap. This makes considerable sense if one realizes that it is unlikely that the naturally-seeded vegetable

greens and root crops from the previous planting would be sufficient to sustain growing families with several children. In some cases there might be enough of these crops to sustain families, but fresh vegetables are an important component of a person's diet, and while volunteer grapes, figs, pomegranates, and grains could sustain a person, these items are not available fresh throughout the year. Furthermore, raisins, prunes, dried figs, and bread products would not provide a complete and balanced diet. Of course, meat, eggs, and milk products would be available as well, but I find it hard to imagine that God would deprive His nation during a Sabbatical Year of fresh vegetables, and require the people search through the countryside for edible green plants.

Some might wonder if the term "commercial" farmer should even be applied to ancient Israelite farmers in the days that the Land Sabbath was given. There is plenty of evidence in Scripture that shows there was indeed a great deal of commercial farming in the land of Israel, and many farmers grew much in excess of their personal family needs, the bulk of which was sold. Take for instance the case of Boaz. He was "... a man of great wealth ...," a farmer who had many hired reapers and a threshing floor and heap of grain (Ruth 2:1-7; 3:1-7).

Elisha was a farmer before following Elijah after the events at Mount Carmel.

"So he [Elijah] departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth" (I Kings 19:19).

Elisha was involved in a large agricultural operation, likely planting grain along with 11 other groups of workmen with their oxen. Jesus presented the Parable of the Vineyard Workers, where workers were hired at 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m. to work on the grape crop; this could not have been a small, family operation. It was obviously commercial. Other examples of ancient commercial farming operations can be found in Scripture.

The Prophetic Significance of the Land Sabbath

There is little reason to deny that the Land Sabbath, like the weekly Sabbath, and the Jubilee as well, are pictures of the coming millennial age of incredible peace and prosperity. Look at the instructions the Eternal has given for these momentous times.

Land Sabbath

No tillage and planting, weeding, or commercial farming
No pruning or planting of orchards and vineyards
Food crops that grow of themselves free for the taking by anyone
Forgiveness of debts
Freedom and liberty of bond servants, and goods given to them on release

Weekly Sabbath

No servile work to "earn a living"
True joy in the presence of brethren, a holy convocation
A time of feasting and plenty

Jubilee Year

Return of land inheritors to their allotments if they had been lost
All of the stipulations of the Land Sabbath

All of these characteristics are traits of the age to come! These traits have been expounded upon in my books *The Three Edens*¹⁰ and *The Bridge to Eden*,¹¹ which reveal that the millennial age will be a veritable Garden of Eden worldwide. A full description of the character of this coming age is not the purpose of this article, so I will just mention a few aspects of this beautiful millennium of peace.

The ecosystem of the earth

- Abundant production of both food and non-food crops (Amos 9:13; Genesis 2:8-9; Micah 4:3-4)
- Beauty throughout the landscape (Gen-

YEAR OF THE LAND SABBATH CYCLE*

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| YEAR 1 Work the land | YEAR 2 Work the land | YEAR 3 Work the land | YEAR 4 Work the land | YEAR 5 Work the land | YEAR 6 Work the land | YEAR 7 Rest the land |
| 1,000 years | 1,000 years | 1,000 years | 1,000 years | 1,000 years | 1,000 years | 1,000 years |
| Adam | Flood | Abraham | Israel | Christ | Modern | Kingdom |
| DAY 1 Work | DAY 2 Work | DAY 3 Work | DAY 4 Work | DAY 5 Work | DAY 6 Work | DAY 7 Rest |

DAY OF THE WEEKLY SABBATH CYCLE

*A day is like 1,000 years (Psalm 90:4; II Peter 3:8).

esis 2:9; Isaiah 55:12-13)

- An amiable, bucolic climate from a restored water canopy and global energy transfer (Genesis 1:6-7; 2:9, 25)
- Greatly enlarged land masses and fertile soils (Revelation 16:17-20; Amos 9:13)
- Cessation of storms, earthquakes, and calamities (Genesis 2:5-6)
- Trees and vines allowed to grow unrestricted, without pruning, but in their natural architecture designed at creation (Genesis 1:11-12; 2:8)
- Tame animals, and likely the introduction of species not now known (Isaiah 11:6-9)

The economy

- No money, with goods in abundance for free (Isaiah 55:1; Micah 4:3-4)
- Industry based on love and serving (Nehemiah 1:5; Matthew 7:12; Luke 22:25-27)
- Homestead and community-centered life (Isaiah 5:8; Micah 4:4)
- Prosperity beyond belief (Leviticus 26:3-13; Deuteronomy 28:1-13)

Personal living

- Strong and large families (Psalm 128:3)
- Excellent health and long life (Isaiah 65:20)
- The laws of God governing relationships,

music, and entertainment (Galatians 5:22-23)

- One language worldwide (Zephaniah 3:9)
- Education founded on Scripture and truth (Deuteronomy 6:5-9)
- Total peace and lack of war (Micah 4:3-4; Isaiah 2:4)

This time of refreshing, talked about by Peter in Acts 3:19-21, will remove the great stresses that afflict our world and oppress mankind and all living things.

“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:19-23).

Final Thoughts

It is clear from Scripture that the Land Sabbath is a year that all nations should observe. The Eternal living God made it for the great benefit of mankind, to boost his faith and humility while relying upon the Creator to sustain him — and the entire nation — through a year in which reliance on food produced the sixth year, and on food growing of its own accord the seventh year, was essential. The similarities of the Land Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath, and the Jubilee year are many, and together they reveal many mysteries of the coming age.

Farmers ought to keep the Land Sabbath in some way if they can, though the year is designed to be kept by the entire nation. Moreover, as has been detailed in this paper, we cannot be sure of the exact year of the land Sabbath, much less the year of Jubilee. Gardeners producing food for their own household need not, in my belief, rest their plots the seventh year, any more than the Israelite families did not rest their own vegetable gardens the seventh year.

The Sabbatical Year was not designed by the Creator as time for the soil to regenerate itself, since fracturing and disruption of the soil surface was not generally practiced in Israel. Neither would fruit trees and grape vines be benefitted, since the soil over their root zones was not disrupted and they continued to produce crops, albeit without pruning.

The Land Sabbath is a blessing granted by our Creator to all of mankind. It need not be kept every seventh year during the millennial reign of Christ because **every year will be a Sabbatical Year!** Every year will be a Jubilee as well, for a population released from debt and slavery! This seventh year rest pictures not only the dramatic change that will soon envelope the ecosphere of the entire earth, but the incredible change that will redirect the lives of all mankind. It is the rest that the author of Hebrews so beautifully stated,

“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from

His [on the seventh day of creation]. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:8-11).

That creation after which God rested is outlined in Genesis 1. It was a creation into which He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God here is speaking of “another day” in the future that remains for the people of God. It is a rest — a Sabbath — in the coming age that will amplify Eden worldwide, which is pictured by the Land Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath and Jubilee!

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest in the wonderful world tomorrow as saints of the Most High, and endure to the end!

End Notes

The New King James Version of Scripture has been used throughout this paper.

Special thanks are extended to Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, author of *Shemitah and Yobel* (The Soncino Press, London/Jerusalem/New York, 1972, and to Eliezer Gevitz who wrote *Shemitah: What It's All About* (Torah Umesorah Publications, Brooklyn, New York, 1993)., whose discussions were most helpful in understanding the topic of the Land Sabbath and Jubilee.

1. The Church Administration Department of The Worldwide Church of God on November 14, 1973, issued a paper on *The Land Sabbath and Its Application in the Twentieth Century*. The conclusions of this paper, designed to give guidance to the ministry for helping farmers and gardeners to decide how to observe the Land Sabbath, are as follows.

“With the passage of time since the original statement of land sabbath application in our society, we have grown as a institution in understanding how to apply the principle more effectively. This paper is the end product representing a lengthy study into the entire land sabbath situation. The following policy has been prepared in conjunction with all Headquarters Evangelists, as well as those individuals rep-

resenting the farm program at Big Sandy.

“POLICY: The land sabbath is to be taught as an ecological principle. The principle is God wants us to take care of the soil. It is advisable that God’s people, after working the land for six years, allow it to rest in the seventh year. This rest may be done in part — a little at a time over a period of years— or may be done all at one time, if desired. However, this principle is not a binding law for which the transgression is sin — and the penalty is death. This is merely an ecological principle which is intended to take care of the land. This principle comes under the same category as other ecological laws, such as the law referring to capturing birds. The Bible tells us not to take the mother bird — for she will die in captivity — but we may capture the baby birds. This allows the mother to lay more eggs and breed other baby birds. This principle is something the ministry should not enforce in any way. It becomes a member’s personal responsibility.”

2. E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1922, Appendix 50, Chronological charts.

3. Anonymous, What is Shemitah?, *Got Questions*, www.gotquestions.org.

4. See 3.

5. Anonymous, Shmita, en.wikipedia.org.

6. Judah David Eisenstein, Sabbatical Year and Jubilee, *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906, www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12967-sabbatical-year-and-jubilee; Hal Kaup, Some calculations on the Jubilee cycles, <http://www.htdbv8.com/1911/r4778b.htm>; Rodger C. Young, Evidence for inerrancy from a second unexpected source: the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles, *The Shiloh Excavations*, 2015, www.biblearchaeology.org/research/chronological-categories/exodus-era/; Anonymous, Jubilee (Biblical), en.wikipedia.org.

7. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 15, Chapter 9, Section 1 footnote, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960, page 330; Anonymous, When is the next Biblical Jubilee?, *The Josh Link*, www.thejoshlink.com.

8. R. H. Vargo, Jubilee Year Revelation, www.christsreturn2028.com.

9. Jonathan Cahn, *The Mystery of the Shemitah*, Frontline Book Publishing, 2017.

10. Paul W. Syltie, *The Three Edens, the Story of God’s Universe, Earth, and Mankind in Conflict With the Adversary*, Xulon Press, Fairfax, Virginia, 2011.

11. Paul W. Syltie, *The Bridge to Eden, the Arduous Passage From This Age of Chaos to the Next Age of Perfection*, Xulon Press, Fairfax, Virginia, 2016.