

26 JULY 09 GOD'S ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAM Lev 25:8-21, 23, 24 God is interested in every area of our lives, including our economic welfare. He set up a system in Israel to keep families from becoming irrevocably poor. It included, as in this passage, the year of Jubilee.

Let's take a look.

THE CONCEPT OF JUBILEE - REST & RETURN OF PROPERTY 8), 9), 10) "Sevens" are important in scripture. Seven sevens were to be reckoned, 49 years in all, & the 50th year was then proclaimed as the year of jubilee. During that half-century, the land would not become "crop-poor" because it would lie in rest every seventh year (at least that was God's plan). The month presently called "Tishrei," contains no less than 5 Jewish holidays, the most prominent mentioned here, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). This month corresponds to our mid-September to mid-October. Another type of poverty was prevented in God's plan, the irreversible poverty of a family. When the shofar sounded to proclaim the entrance of the Jubilee, all debts were cancelled, all Jewish slaves were freed, & all property was returned to the family who originally possessed it! In Christ our sin-debt is cancelled, our slavery to sin is ended, & we are guaranteed an inheritance in heaven, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away!" Our own Jubilee!

11), 12) Because year 49 was a sabbatic year, this rest for the land, man, & beast during the Jubilee year, would be the second such time of rest in a row. There was to be no sowing of crops, and there was to be no reaping. Apparently, people were only allowed to eat what they already had stored up & what they might find growing of itself in the field.

Imagine the spiritual benefit of depending more than ever on the Lord for sustenance, and not just on a man's ability to raise a crop. And how about the extra time, normally spent in production, for the study of God's Word, for worship, for cultivating the family instead of cultivating the fields! There is wisdom here.

THE CONCERN OF JUBILEE - DON'T WRONG EACH OTHER

13) O my, what a blessing to have the chance for a fresh start! Mistakes erased - calamities behind you - back on your family's ancestral land as when you were a child. Bad financial judgments are erased in the Jubilee!

14), 15), 16, 17) Twice in this paragraph God admonishes the Hebrews to not take advantage of each other. There are many today who make great gain at great loss to others. In God's economic plan, that was forbidden! The warning was to the seller and to the buyer. In the marketplace today, fairness and equity are tossed aside in favor of "buying low" and "selling high." The arrangement was more like renting or leasing than it was exchange of ownership. In fact, Moses here writes plainly that it is the number of crops the land can produce between the bargain and the next jubilee that set the price for the land. Many years to the jubilee, higher price; fewer years to the jubilee, lower price.

When men take economic advantage of others, they demonstrate that they do not fear the Lord. A recurring theme of the prophets is for justice among the people. God condemned ill-treatment of the weak, the widow, the orphan, the poor. Being just and being kind to the poor demonstrated that a man honored his God.

THE CONFIDENCE IN JUBILEE - GOD WILL PROVIDE 18), 19) The sabbatic year and the jubilee year presented Israel with a real test of faith. Could they trust God to provide for them during the years of occupational inactivity? Obedience to God's decrees and laws would secure two things for Israel - 1- they would dwell safely in the land, and 2- they would have plenty to eat, even though there were years of no agricultural activity. God would make it clear in Deut 29:25 ff.

that disobedience would lead their expulsion from the land. See Joel 2:24 & 26 for God's promise of peace and plenty upon the obedient. Of course, we need to refrain from the temptation to measure our obedience today by our prosperity. 20), 21) God anticipates a natural question from His people. "If we don't work the fields, how will we have enough to eat?" After all, that is how groceries normally make it to the table. Really? How about those 40 years in the wilderness? No sowing, no reaping, but no lack of food, & every week they got enough manna on Friday to last them until Sunday so they didn't have to work on Shabbat. That background should be a good foundation for faith. And then God adds His promise to send enough produce in year 48 to last for three whole years! THE CORNERSTONE OF JUBILEE - GOD IS THE OWNER 23), 24) God absolutely forbids permanent transfer of real estate, and He states a compelling reason for the prohibition in declaring that He is the Owner anyway. As Dr. Lee used to say, man only holds it in fee simple. It was this principle that kept Naboth from selling his vineyard to Ahab, and it will keep men from finding themselves in irreversible poverty, as well. The story of Ruth and Boaz well illustrates the value of God's plan to have property redeemed even before the year of jubilee. How wonderful of the hearts of men were toward God in obedience and toward each other in care and love. This is the sum - love God, and love your neighbor.