



ONE TORAH FOR ALL

One Torah shall be to him that is home-born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.
Exodus 12:49

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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The Shemittah

Some thoughts and questions

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 25:2

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Shabbat unto YHWH.’”

Please note that in the above passage, it states that when you come into the land, you shall keep a Shabbat unto YHWH. The next verse then states that for six year you are to sow your fields, and then you shall keep a Shabbat to YHWH.

Vayyiqra (Leviticus) 25:3-4

3 “Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof;

4 but in the seventh year shall be a Shabbat of solemn rest for the land, a Shabbat unto YHWH; you shall neither sow your field, nor prune your vineyard.”

There is one item of extreme importance to take note of in this passage. YHWH tells Moshe to speak to the children of Israel as a whole – them. This is found in the second person plural in the Hebrew text. However, the commandment itself is given in the first person singular. Thus, it is up to each person individually to keep and do this commandment. As I continue to present my thoughts and questions concerning this subject, this bit of information will be crucial for you to come to your own conclusions concerning the Shemittah.

Furthermore, it states, when YOU come into the land, YOU shall do (remember, this you is singular, not collective, plural) . . . in other words, each person’s count will be different. The whole nation did not even come into the land at the same time. First, two and a half tribes took their inheritance on the east side of the Yarden (Jordan) before the rest of the tribes took possession of their land west of the Yarden.

Shemot (Exodus) 23:29-30

29 "I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against you.

30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you be increased, and inherit the land."

YHWH even tells them in advance that they shall not all take possession of the land at the same time. This alone is a strong indication that the whole land was never intended to have a land Shabbat during the same year. Rather, each person would have a land Shabbat as counted from the time he took possession of his land inheritance.

Furthermore, when a father passed on his inheritance to his son(s), then when the son came into the land (took possession of it), he would restart the count of when he took possession of the land. He would not continue his father's count. Rather, he would begin a new count, beginning with a Shabbat of rest for the land he just took possession of from his father. Thus, eventually, someone would be keeping a shemittah every year in the land. Thus, no one would be going hungry or be without, because while they were on a land Shabbat, their neighbors most likely would not be, at least not all of one's neighbors.

Consider this, when a man gets married, he is exempt from being called to war for one year, a Shabbat at the beginning of his marriage—same pattern for the land—a Shabbat at the beginning. Why? The people who had been in possession of the land had not been giving the land a rest. Thus, the land needed a rest upon Israel entering into the land and taking possession of it.

But why would a son need to do this at the beginning of his taking possession of the land from his father? It is his declaration that it is now his land and that he will keep the commandments of YHWH for himself, not according to his father, but according to his own relationship with YHWH. He is not serving the Elohim of his father, but he is serving his own Elohim, YHWH. Furthermore, if the father had missed a land Shabbat for any reason, then the son, by restarting the count, takes care of it and gives the land its proper rest.

This is how this works out for us. We bought our land 3 years ago. In three more years, we will observe a land Shabbat. We have not yet discussed our new land. But it may be on a different schedule, that is, it needs a land Shabbat now, then we may work it for six years. Basically, it would be offset by three years from our original land. We're not sure; we have to do some more studying and praying and discussing.

This is a very new position for us, but it was made quite real to us because of the land dispute. YHWH gave us an object lesson that is difficult to miss. Basically, the three quarters of an acre we lost was our garden. When we first purchased this property and moved here, we did not give the land a rest. We should have.

Dibre Hayamim Beit (2nd Chronicles) 36:21

“to fulfil the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Shabbatot; for as long as it lay desolate it kept Shabbat, to fulfil threescore and ten years.”

For all the various sins that Israel was guilty of, including idolatry, the sin for which they were removed from the land was for not keeping the shemittah. Once this truth came to my mind, again, I realized that this was also true for us. While we were ignorant of this commandment, that is, beginning the cycle of the counting of the land Shabbat with a Shabbat, we were still guilty of it. YHWH in His great mercy desired to teach us this lesson right away. Thus, He removed us from that portion to which we had not given a rest when we took possession of the land. It was an important and valuable lesson, one which we desire to pass on to His people.

We hope and pray that these thoughts and ideas, while they may be new to you, will be a blessing to you and spark good healthy discussion amongst His people.

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