

Inheritance insured or, The Sabbath year, Jubilee & perpetual blessing

... our abundance at this present time supplies their lack, that their abundance also may become a supply for your lack; that there may be equality. As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack." — 2 CORINTHIANS 8:14,15

And through [in] you ALL families of the earth shall be blessed. — GENESIS 12:3

Analysis

A. (24:1-9) Perpetual blessing: light & life – & liberty

[24:1-4] The oil is to be "pure," carefully cleansed from leaves and all impurities; and "beaten," that is, not extracted by heat and pressure, as are inferior grades, but simply by beating and macerating the olives with water – a process which gives the very best. The point in these specifications is evidently this, that for this, as always, they are to give to God's service the very best – an eternal principle which rules in all acceptable service to God. The oil is to come from the people in general, so that the illuminating of the Holy Place, although specially tended by the high priest, is yet constituted a service in which all the children of Israel have some part. [Kellogg 475]

[24:1-4] The explanation that Zechariah was given about this oil was. " 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit', says the LORD Almighty" (4:6 NIV). Thus the nation's ability to share this light with the world depended on the supply that came from the Spirit of God and the ministry of the high priest in the holy place. [Kaiser 1163]

[24:1-4] We are recalled to the contrast of the 2 testaments and covenants by Kidner, who notes that whereas the lampstand was really only accessible to the priests in the tabernacle and temple, Christians are explicitly commanded to bring God's light where everyone can benefit by its lumination. [See Kidner 130]

[24:5-9] In general, therefore, the meaning of the offering of the shew-bread must be the same as that of the meal-offerings; like them it symbolised the consecration unto the Lord of the product of the labour of the hands, and especially of the daily food as



Philadelphia's Liberty Bell

Is there a crack in our concept of freedom? Jefferson's 'freedom' promises "life, liberty & the pursuit of happiness". The Divine promises see no true liberty, thus no real life, without **land**.

prepared for use. But in this, by the twelve cakes for the twelve tribes it was emphasised that God requires, not only such consecration of service and acknowledgment of Him from individuals, as in the law of chap. ii., but from the nation in its collective and organised capacity; and that not merely on such occasions as pious impulse might direct, but continuously. In these days, when the tendency among us is to an extreme individualism, and therewith to an ignoring or denial of any claim of God upon nations and communities as such, it is of great need to insist upon this thought thus symbolised. It was not enough in God's sight that individual Israelites should now and then offer their meal-offerings; the Lord required a meal-offering "on behalf of the children of Israel" as a whole, and of each particular tribe of the twelve, each in its corporate capacity. There is no reason to think that in the Divine government the principle which took this symbolical expression is obsolete. It is not enough that individuals among us consecrate the fruit of their labours to the Lord. The Lord requires such consecration of every nation collectively; and of each of the subdivisions in that nation, such as cities, towns, states, provinces, and so on. Yet where in the wide world can we see one such consecrated nation? Can we find one such consecrated province or state, or even such a city or town? Where then, from this biblical and spiritual point of view, is the ground for the religious boasting of the Christian progress of our day which one sometimes hears? Must we not say, "It is excluded"? [Kellogg 478-479]

B. (24:10-23) The Name and its sacredness

[24:10] We may learn from this passage that during their tyrannical oppression many young women married into the Egyptian nation, in order that their affinity might protect their relatives from injuries. It might, however, have been the case that love for his wife attracted the father of this blasphemer into voluntary exile, unless, perhaps, his mother might have been a widow before the departure of the people, so as to be at liberty to take her son with her. [Calvin iv 95]

[24:11] The passage, together with ver. 16, is of special and curious interest, as upon these two the Jews have based their well-known belief that it is unlawful to utter the Name which we commonly vocalise as Jehovah; whence it has followed that wherever in the Hebrew text the Name occurs it is written with the vowels of Adonqy, "Lord," to indicate to the reader that

this word was to be substituted for the proper name – a usage which is represented in the Septuagint by the appearance of the Greek word *Kurios*, "Lord," in all places where the Hebrew has Jehovah (or Yahveh); and which, in both the authorised and revised versions, is still maintained in the retention of "Lord" in all such cases – a relic of Jewish superstition which one could greatly wish that the Revisers had banished from the English version, especially as in many passages it totally obscures to the English reader the exact sense of the text, wherever it turns upon the choice of this name. [Kellogg 481-482]

[24:13,14] The precise method is not mentioned, but perhaps the offender was made to lie down, after which his head was crushed with large stones and the remainder of his body covered with smaller ones to form a cairn. This procedure would prevent

"Extreme individualism" versus community & corporate consecration

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anyone incurring accidental ceremonial defilement, and as long as the congregation remained in the area the heap of stones would serve as a reminder of the crime that had been committed. [Harrison 221-222]

[24:14] Blasphemy brings guilt on those who hear it as well as on the blasphemer himself. To rid themselves of this guilt the hearers had to lay their hands on the blasphemer's head (v. 14). His subsequent death then atoned for his own and his hearers' sin. [Wenham 311]

Substitution of LORD for the Tetragrammaton

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[24:15] The kind of death is also appointed, when He commands the offender to be stoned by the whole people, so that all may learn from the sight that such a monster should be annihilated as contaminating the earth. God also would prove the zeal of His people, by calling them all forth in defense of His glory, and arming them for vengeance. [Calvin ii 432]

[24:20] ... this is one of 3 passages in the OT setting out the so-called *lex talionis* (cf. Ex 21:23-25; Deut 19:21), a fundamental principle of biblical and Near Eastern law, namely, that punishment must be proportionate to the offense. Retribution is a principal goal of the penal system in the Bible. [Wenham 312]

C. (25:1-22) Israel's guarantee of ecological responsibility, economic security & stability – the Sabbath year, and the Jubilee

(v 10) Note that the freedom to expand, to profit does NOT trump the freedom guaranteed to each family – the *proclaim liberty* is for ALL the land's inhabitants. How does our economic system guarantee freedom to ALL families?

Leviticus 25 is indeed unique among all the chapters of the Torah, for it is the only chapter that deals with the subject of land tenure in ancient Israel. [Kaiser 1170]

All the provisions of the Hebrew Law were meant to counteract the separation of the people from the land. It sought to prevent the growth of great estates and a landed aristocracy on the one side, and the growth of a landless proletariat on the other side. [Walter Rauschenbusch *Christianity and the Social Crisis* 19-20]

[25:1] The law for the sabbatical and jubilee years brings to a close the laws

given to Moses by Jehovah upon Mount Sinai. This is shown by the words of the heading (Leviticus 25:1), which point back to Exodus 34:32, and bind together into an inward unity the whole round of laws that Moses received from God upon the mountain, and then gradually announced to the people. The same words are repeated, not only in Leviticus 7:38 at the close of the laws of sacrifice, but also at Leviticus 26:46, at the close of the promises and threats which follow the law for the sabbatical and jubilee years, and lastly, at Leviticus 27:34, after the supplementary law concerning vows. The institution of the jubilee years corresponds to the institution of the day of atonement (ch. 16). Just as all the sins and uncleannesses of the whole congregation, which had remained unatoned for and uncleansed in the course of the year, were to be wiped away by the all-embracing expiation of the yearly recurring day of atonement, and an undisturbed relation to be restored between Jehovah and His people; so, by the appointment of the year of jubilee, the disturbance and confusion of the divinely appointed relations, which had been introduced in the course of time through the inconstancy of all human or earthly things, were to be removed by the appointment of the year of jubilee, and the kingdom of Israel to be brought back to its original condition. The next chapter (ch. 26) bears the same relation to the giving of the law upon Sinai as Exodus 23:20-33 to the covenant rights in Ex 20:22-23:19. [Keil ii 455]

[25:1-7] The conservation of natural and other resources which is prescribed by this legislation forms the basis of good agricultural and ecological practice. [Harrison 223]

[25:1-7] The very soil on which their harvests grew was improved by this rest, as if to shadow forth the time when it should no more yield less than it did in Paradise. And, besides all this, no man appropriated to himself anything that the land then produced; all was common, to the rich, to the poor, to the Hebrew, to the stranger – a token of the restoration of mutual love. [Bonar 446]

This right of the hungry man to help himself was not like the coin flung to a beggar in pity. It was the claim to joint-ownership. It was his right. There is a fundamental moral distinction between the two things. [Rauschenbusch 20]

[25:2-7] The earth was to be saved from the hand of man exhausting its power for earthly purposes as his own property, and to enjoy the holy rest with which God had blessed the earth and all its productions after the creation. From this, Israel, as the nation of God, was to learn, on the one hand, that although the earth was created for man, it was not merely created for him to draw out its powers for his own use, but also to be holy to the Lord, and participate in His blessed rest; and on the other hand, that the great purpose for which the congregation of the Lord existed, did not consist in the uninterrupted tilling of the earth, connected with bitter labour in the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:17,19), but in the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of the earth, which the Lord their God had given them, and would give them still without the labour of their hands, if they strove to keep His covenant and satisfy themselves with His grace. This

Just how does OUR economy guarantee freedom & blessing to ALL families?



Martin Luther King
... and behind him



Walter Rauschenbusch
... and behind him, **Leviticus 25**

The Sabbath year
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intention of the sabbatical year comes out still more plainly in the year of jubilee, in which the idea of the sanctification of the whole land as the Lord's property is still more strongly expressed, and whose inward connection with the sabbatical year is indicated by the fact that the time for observing it was regulated by the sabbatical years (Leviticus 25:8). [Keil ii 457]

D. "... proclaim liberty throughout the land to ALL its inhabitants"

[25:10] This, of course, is the source of the famous inscription on the Liberty Bell in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. [Kaiser 1172]

[25:8-55] The remainder of this chapter, vv. 8-55, is occupied with this ordinance of the jubilee year; an observance absolutely without a parallel in any nation, and which has to do with the solution of some of the most difficult social problems, not only of that time, but also of our own. ... To suppose that these enactments should have originated, as the radical critics claim, in post-exilic days, when, under the existing social and political conditions, their observance was impossible, is utterly absurd. [Kellogg 490-491]

[25:8] The third kind of Sabbath follows, which was composed of forty-nine, or seven times seven years. This was the most illustrious Sabbath, since the state of the people, both as to their persons and their houses and property, was renewed; and although in this way God had regard to the public good, gave relief to the poor, so that their liberty should not be destroyed, and preserved also the order laid down by Himself; still there is no question but that He thus added an additional stimulus to incite the Jews to honor the Sabbath. For it was a kind of imposing memorial of the sacred rest, to see slaves emancipated and become suddenly free; houses and lands returning to their former possessors who had sold them; and in fine all things assuming a new face. They called this year *Jobel*, from the sound of the ram's horn, whereby liberty and the restitution of property were proclaimed; but as I have said, its main feature was the solemnity which shewed them to be separated from other nations to be a peculiar and holy nation to God; nay, the renewal of all things had reference to this, that being redeemed anew in the great Sabbath, they might entirely devote themselves to God their Deliverer. [Calvin ii 451]

[25:9] The blowing of trumpets, or blast of the far-sounding horn ((shophar), see at Leviticus 23:24), was the signal of the descent of the Lord upon Sinai, to raise Israel to be His people, to receive them into His covenant, to unite them to Himself, and bless them through His covenant of grace (Exodus 19:13,16,19; 20:18). ... so at the expiration of the seventh sabbatical year the trumpet-blast was to announce to the covenant nation the gracious presence of its God, and the coming of the year which was to bring "liberty throughout the land to all that dwelt therein" (Lev 25:10), deliverance from bondage (Lev 25:40.), return to their property and family (Lev 25:10,13), and release from the bitter labour of cultivating the land (Lev 25:11,12). [Keil ii 458]

[25:17] Ideally there would be no well-marked division of society into classes, and no exploitation of the poor by rich landowners. That this did not occur ... is indicated by

the pronouncements of such 8th century BC prophets as Isaiah {5:8} and Amos (2:6). [Harrison 226]

[25:1-22] The jubilee, with 2 fallow years in succession (11), intensified the test of faith to an extreme; for the whole ordinance meant taking one's hands off the most basic things of life, to concede that they were primarily God's. This was too much for pre-exilic Israel, whose land had to wait for the captivity to enjoy its sabbaths (26:34f.; 2 Chron 36:21). [Kidner 131]

[25:22] Overreaching and oppression God would avenge; they were therefore to fear before Him. On the other hand, if they kept His commandments and judgments, He would take care that they should dwell in the land in safety (secure, free from anxiety), and be satisfied with the abundance of its produce. In this way Leviticus 25:18-22 fit on exceedingly well to what precedes. Jehovah would preserve them from want, without their sowing or reaping. [Keil ii 460]

Was the Jubilee a short year of 49 days?

[25:8] Another possibility ... is that the jubilee year was a very short "year" only 49 days long, intercalated in the seventh month of the 49th year. This short "year" would function like February 29 in our leap years, and serve to keep the religious festivals, many of which were connected with harvesting, in step with the seasons. [Wenham 319]

Jubilee year

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– Samuel Kellogg