



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## The Jubilee Laws, Part 2

God's laws of jubilee are moral, economic and spiritual. We are in the process of examining the literal application of these laws. Understanding the literal will provide the foundation for comprehending the cosmic and spiritual implications of the jubilee. We have found that a jubilee occurs every 49 years—although there is no evidence that a jubilee was *ever* kept either by Israel in the Old Testament or in any Christian nation in the New Testament era.

Nonetheless, there will come a time when the jubilee will be kept. It will have a profound and very beneficial impact on the economy and upon every individual. This is because it means that all debts will be cancelled! — not postponed, not a “debt rescheduling,” not a “debt restructuring” as the World Bank, IMF and other international lending agencies often do. The jubilee means a total erasure of the debt, a complete forgiveness of all debts. When that is coupled with the abolition of usury (*any* interest whatsoever), can you imagine the joy the jubilee will bring to every citizen!

Let us now return to the minutiae of the jubilee law. In the previous FMS, we discovered from Leviticus 25:8-17 several important provisions of the jubilee law. (We will not take time to review them all.) First, we learned the time of its declaration—in the seventh month of the 49<sup>th</sup> year.

Secondly, if a person fell into poverty, he could essentially lease out his land to another with the price determined by the number of harvests that could be expected until the next jubilee. If a person fell so very far into debt, he could not only lease out his land, but he could hire himself out as a laborer for another. In bibli-

cal terminology, he is then a “hired servant.” Let us now continue.

**KJV Leviticus 25:18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety.**

**19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety.**

These two verses are as much prophecy as they are admonitions. God is not merely telling Israel and their descendants that they *ought* to be obedient; He says we *will* be obedient. Then, as a consequence, we will be secure in our land and we will enjoy abundant food. It is a restatement of the same refrain heard often throughout God's law: if you obey, you will be blessed; if not, you will be cursed. The fact that it is a prophecy as well, assures us that there will come a day when we will keep all His statutes and judgments. This future fact is also witnessed by the prophet Ezekiel. It prophesies of some time (yet future) when the New Covenant will be more fully implemented.

**Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.**

**27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.**

**28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.**

**29 I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will in-**

crease it, and lay no famine upon you.

**30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.**

For obedience, God promises that no famines will occur. This segues back to the “problem” we mentioned in the previous FMS.

**Leviticus 25:20 And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase:**

Although verse 20 mentions the seventh year specifically, the chapter’s context concerns the jubilee as well. In the 49<sup>th</sup> year, the land gets its normal seventh year rest. But in the 50<sup>th</sup> year—the jubilee year, God commands that there be no sowing or reaping in that year as well. That means two years with no new food being grown. Keep in mind that the 50<sup>th</sup> year also counts as Year One in the next seven-year cycle.

The jubilee year ends in the autumn of the 50<sup>th</sup> year and some planting for winter crops could be done at that time. But for the major food production, it is not until the spring of Year Two (the 51<sup>st</sup> year) that planting can be done. Therefore, it will be the autumn of that year before there is abundant new food harvested. Two and a half years on stored food? Yes, indeed! It is a promise from the Creator of the universe. Can we have any better guarantee than that! Here’s His promise:

**Leviticus 25:21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year [i.e., the 48<sup>th</sup> year], and it shall bring forth fruit for three years.**

**22 And ye shall sow the eighth year [the 50<sup>th</sup> year in the autumn when the jubilee ends], and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year [51<sup>st</sup> year]; until her fruits come in [a smaller amount in the spring; the greater part in the autumn] ye shall eat of the old store.**

Therefore, we are assured that even when there is a double sabbath year in the 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> years, God will provide enough harvest in the 48<sup>th</sup> year to tide the people over until the harvest of the second year of the new seven-year cycle.

The next verse is another cardinal principle of God’s law for a prosperous economy. It includes provisions for compassion for those who temporarily suffer misfortune and debt. Recall our illustration of

Farmers John Smith and Elmer Jones in last issue.

**Leviticus 25:23 The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me.**

### Laws of real estate

Today when someone “sells” a piece of land, it is permanent. What is meant by the word “sold” in verse 23 is what we today would call “leasing” the land. In other words, in God’s laws for the nation’s economy, the land itself is almost never sold in today’s sense of the word, because God owns all the land. (My personal practice is that one should almost never say “never” because there may be some unforeseen exception. In fact, in the jubilee laws there is just such an exception which we shall discuss in this issue. Notwithstanding, God is still the sole owner, and we are stewards, even when the land is permanently “sold” as in the exception case.)

As we saw with John and Elmer, what is meant is not the sale of *the land itself*, but the sale of the right to use the land until the next jubilee. Meanwhile, in the run-up to the next jubilee year, God makes provision so that a man like poor John Smith can get his property—his family inheritance—back *before* the year of jubilee arrives. It is through the principle of redemption.

### The laws of redemption

All Christians know that by His death on the cross, Jesus brought redemption. He was in fact fulfilling the laws of redemption which were set forth in the Old Testament, this being one of the key passages. Therefore, as we come to understand more about the laws of redemption in the Old Testament, we will come to understand more of our Savior and of the great work which He accomplished for us.

We had stated at the outset of this study (FMS #31, June 2001) that out of the jubilee laws flow the principles which underlie some of the most common doctrines in all Christendom; namely, the doctrines of grace, redemption and forgiveness. We have already seen how the jubilee mandated the cancellation (*forgiveness*) of all debt. That is to say, God commands that *grace* be shown the debtor. More on those later. Now we come to the foundational law concerning redemption.

**Leviticus 25:24 And in all the land of your**

**possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.**

Granting the redemption is not optional. It is a commandment. (It is not one of the Big Ten, but a commandment, nonetheless, which we generally call a “statute.”) The creditor has no choice. He is not allowed to refuse the redemption as long as either the debtor himself or a relative meets the conditions stipulated in the following verses.

**25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away *some* of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.**

**26 And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it;**

**27 Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus [refund the balance] unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession.**

Notice first, that the only option which exists is the one which rests with the original possessor and/or his kinfolk. If they can put together the funds to buy back the property, then the lessee (“rich” Elmer Jones in our earlier illustration) has no right to refuse to restore it to the original “owner” (possessor/steward).

Secondly, although we used an extreme hardship case in our illustration of John Smith losing both his entire farm and his personal freedom (to work for himself), verse 25 makes it clear that the same buy-back (redemption) principle applies to whatever poor John Smith had to lease out in his distress.

Perhaps his situation might have only necessitated him leasing out a few acres to Elmer, or even an extra tractor he had. In such cases, the terms of the agreement with Elmer Jones would stipulate that John Smith retains all his redemption options under the law (i.e., God’s law). Of course, the depreciated value of a tractor would have to be taken into account after years of use by Elmer Jones. But the principle remains applicable.

Verse 25 allows that if John Smith has the proverbial “rich uncle,” and rich Uncle Wilbur agrees to help his nephew by redeeming the property for him, then Elmer Jones must “sell back” his lease rights, except in this case, to Uncle Wilbur Smith on behalf of nephew John Smith. By God’s law, Elmer has no choice. How then do they calculate the cost to get it back (i.e., the redemption price)? Answer: the same

way it was sold in the first place, except in reverse (see verse 27).

But if John Smith has no rich uncle or anyone else to help him out, the law allows that if John himself has had his fortunes reversed so that he now has the money to redeem himself and/or his property, he may do so (v. 26), and once again creditor-lessee Elmer Jones has no right to refuse the redemption. But if neither John Smith himself nor anyone else redeems him or his property before the declaration of the jubilee, what happens then? In that case, John Smith has no choice but to wait until the jubilee.

**28 But if he be not able to restore *it* to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.**

All of these verses (Leviticus 25:11 through 28) have been explaining verse 10, which we repeat:

**Leviticus 25:10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.**

What does God mean by “liberty” here? As we have seen by the passage following it, He means that if a person becomes poor and has to lease out some of his land, or if the individual himself has to go into bondage by working for someone else, then the 50<sup>th</sup> year shall be a jubilee for him. He is set free from the bondage. His (former) possessions are returned to him. There is no cost, no fee, no premiums or any other charge made upon the person being liberated. He goes out *free for nothing* (to be redundant for emphasis).

We should also take special note from our study of verses 24-28 above, that only certain persons are allowed to redeem. The debtor who had to sell in the first place may redeem himself and/or his property, if he were somehow to come into some money. Or someone who is a *near kinsman* can redeem the debtor and/or the debtor’s property. Hint: that particular stipulation sheds prophetic light in the context of the New Testament and our Savior’s work. However, we must defer discussion of that at this time and stay on course examining the literal application of the laws of

redemption.

To sum up to this point, if a person is unable to redeem his land, and there is no kinsman to redeem it for him, then in the 50<sup>th</sup> year, on the Day of Jubilee, his land comes back to him free and clear because—to repeat a cardinal principle—nothing gets past the jubilee...with one exception: urban property.

**Leviticus 25:29** And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year may he redeem it.

**30** And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubile.

A “townhouse” today has a very specific meaning, but this statute is applicable to any house in an urban area. We will not attempt to delineate further, but it is obvious that exactly what constitutes a “walled city” in modern society is a matter for some lengthy discussion. Whatever it refers to, it is clear that if the property remains unredeemed for 12 months, that after that, it belongs permanently to the buyer. We also realize by this statute that God places a high standard of value on agricultural land, on the country as opposed to the city. Next a further distinction is made between a “walled city” and a village.

**31** But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubile.

We believe that the intent of the law here is that if there is a group of homes—a small community—which is located out in the country away from the areas of commerce, then it is treated like the rest of the country land. It returns to its owners in the year of jubilee. Perhaps the reasoning is that in a small community, the basic occupation is still agricultural and the farmers simply chose to live closer to neighbors, but they all go out from the village and work the fields each day. As such, villages do not have much, if any, commerce.

There is an exception to the exception concerning urban homes, but it only applies to the tribe of Levi. The Levites were the tribe whose members pro-

vided the governmental and religious services for the rest of the nation. Unlike the other 11 tribes of Israel, the Levites were given no land inheritance in Israel. Instead, the Levites were given 48 designated cities for their dwellings. Thus, these following special provisions are for their sake.

**32** Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, and the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time.

**33** And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in the year of jubile: for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel.

**34** But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession.

The “field of the suburbs” of the Levites was probably their expanded gardening areas just outside the city walls. In reviewing the provisions for redeeming the land, let us note that the present economic system in America (and most of the world) is based on a usury banking system. It is theft and fraud on a gargantuan scale. But there is another large trade group that is also largely out of step with God’s laws for the land—the real estate industry. In God’s kingdom, there will be no Coldwell Banker, no Remax, no Century 21’s. They thrive on the speculation of land values. In God’s system, there will be no such speculation.

However, those currently employed in this industry (most of whom are personally very honest) need not fret about what they will do for a living. That concern is along the same line as “what shall we eat during the sabbath year.” God’s system will provide abundantly and everyone will be much richer and happier for it. Everyone will benefit tremendously. The nation’s money supply will be absolutely stable and honest. The price of land will be fixed based on the valuation according to the laws of jubilee. The implementation of God’s laws of jubilee by any nation will “fast-forward” that nation toward a Utopian society. God speed the year of jubilee! We will continue our discussion in the next issue.

*Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James W. Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.*