

IS THERE A MYSTERY? (Shemitah - Pt. 1)

Opening Text: **Leviticus 25:1-7**

Today we are going to begin looking at something that seems to be persuading many people over the past year or so, and that because of a certain book titled "The Mystery of the Shemitah," by a man named Jonathan Cahn.

Cahn claims to be a Messianic Rabbi that has discovered a 3,000 year old mystery based upon the Sabbatical cycle in Scripture.

I'm not really interested in faming or defaming Jonathan Cahn, but I have been asked by people as to what my thoughts or beliefs are about his claims, as well as... when do the Sabbatical and Jubilee years actually fall? To answer these questions I will have to examine some things that Cahn has said and written. I have listened to his over 6 hour audio book, "The Mystery of the Shemitah," and I've also watched several interviews he has done on various religious and even non-religious programs. You can find many of these interviews on YouTube.

Let me attempt to put what he is saying in a nutshell.

Cahn believes that we are currently - right now - in a Biblical, Sabbatical year. He believes that it began last Tishri 1 on the Hebrew calendar, which is in our September 2014. He believes that it will end on Elul 29 on the Hebrew calendar which will be in September of 2015, this year.

He believes that there is a mystery tied in with the nation of America and this Sabbatical cycle of years. He believes that there could very likely be an economic crash in America this September/October based upon what he calls the "Mystery of the Shemitah."

By the way, the word shemitah is not a well-known word to most people in the world. It is a Hebrew word that you will find in a text like Deuteronomy 15:1, a verse that begins a lengthy section in the Torah concerning the Sabbatical year. The word shemitah means "remission" or "suspension." It is translated in the KJV as "release," and in the HCSB as a "cancelled debt." We will eventually get to Deuteronomy 15 in our study.

Cahn believes that within this Sabbatical cycle, is a mystery that applies to the United States of America, or any nation for that matter, that professes covenant with Yahweh and then later abandons the covenant they professed. When they abandon that covenant, the Sabbatical cycle becomes a curse to them, and bad things happen, such as the bombing of the World Trade Towers in 2001 (which Cahn believes was the end of a Sabbatical year), and the economic downfall in 2008 (which Cahn also believes was the end of a Sabbatical year). Cahn teaches it is likely that something else drastic and dramatic will occur here in America come this September 2015, at the end of what he believes to be the current Sabbatical year.

There have been others in the "prophetic world" (which I often find to be a world of speculation and false prophecies) that have stated things like "This September is the beginning of the Tribulation," or that this is going to be something like the beginning of the end.

I have *not* heard Jonathan Cahn make any remarks as these. I've only heard him stress what he believes to be the Shemitah cycle, and that there is a strong possibility, based upon the pattern of past events, that we should be ready for some sort of calamity come this fall. I have not heard him say that he is prophesying about a particular date of anything in regards to a collapse, or Tribulation, or second coming of Yeshua.

Let me play you a few clips. The first is a climactic introduction to his book, and the next two clips are of Jonathan Cahn explaining his position a little bit. I don't want anyone to think I'm putting any words into his mouth or taking away any words from his mouth.

Play Chan Video Clip (3 Videos)

So, that is kind of an introductory to what I'm going to be dealing with in this sermon as well as the next 3 sermons I teach.

Now, I will admit that what I will be sharing in this lesson, and some lessons to follow, will not be as dramatic as "The Mystery of the Shemitah."

I don't believe that there is a mystery behind the Sabbatical year. And if I was to write a book on my beliefs about the Shemitah, I'm certain that my book would not hit the New York Times best seller list like Jonathan Cahn has done.

This is partly because people love sensationalism. People love bad news, drama, catastrophe, peril, thrills... and they love all this whether it is true or false.

Our current day media plays upon this love of the people, and gives people what they want to here. Why? It brings higher ratings for their shows and more money in their pockets. The same goes for many TV and radio preachers today. If you can get people's emotions stirred up, and then mix in some sensationalism, you can pad your wallet with a lot of 100 dollar bills, but in the process - make a lot of people that listen to you, BROKE.

Well, I'm not in that business. I don't belong to that organization, nor do I want to. I'm more in line with a dying breed of preacher that likes to base what he believes on Holy Scripture first and foremost. And that's where we will begin and end in these lessons - Yahweh's Holy Word.

There comes a time in our lives when we have to make the decision to either believe what man is telling us (to get our emotions hyped), or believe what Yahweh's Word teaches. And we all need to come to grips with this right now, because if you can't accept

Yahweh's Word *now* while times are easy, there isn't a snowball's chance in hell that you'll accept it if/when times actually do get tough in your life.

So I want to encourage you to believe the Bible. Even when it's not as sensational as what everyone else is saying or believing. Just believe the Bible.

So... let's go to the Bible tonight. How many love the Bible? I love to study the Scriptures. We'll be in the book of Leviticus tonight, what some say is my favorite book.
:) Let's begin with our opening text, Leviticus 25:

Verses 1-2

Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai: Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land I am giving you, the land will observe a Sabbath to Yahweh.

One of the foremost principles of Bible study is to determine who is the author or speaker and who is the recipient. This is an easy one with our text tonight because we learn in verse 1 that Yahweh is speaking to Moses and telling him to relay the message to the Israelites.

So Yahweh is the author, and Moses and the rest of the Israelites are the recipients.

Now, I think you would agree with me that we can't insert any other author into the text. If we read that Yahweh is the author or speaker here, then that means --> he is the author and speaker. We can *try* to insert someone else or some other being, but we would be adding to and taking away from what the verse says.

The same goes for the recipients. Moses, which is himself one of the children of Israel (a Levite) and the Israelites. The Israelites are the recipients.

Now, not only do we read about the author and the recipient here, but we have a time and space reference in this first sentence. It says that Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. This is the same Mount Sinai the Israelites were at when they received the 10 commandments. As a matter of fact, they are still there, and haven't left Mount Sinai since receiving the 10 commandments.

We know that the 10 commandments were given in Exodus 20. If we read from there to Exodus 40, we come to the first day of the first month of the second year of the Israelites in the wilderness. You'll find that in Exodus 40:17. The Israelites are still at Mount Sinai at this point.

I've touched on this before in previous sermons where we discussed the sacrifices, but if you read the end of the book of Exodus and then immediately begin in Leviticus you will see that there is no time lapse. Exodus moves right into Leviticus. After the tabernacle was set up in Exodus 40, Leviticus 1:1 says that Yahweh called to Moses and spoke to him *from the tabernacle* that had just been set up.

When we read from the arrival at Mount Sinai around Exodus 20 all the way to Leviticus 25, we cover a span of almost a year, but the children of Israel are still at Mount Sinai receiving laws in addition to the 10 commandments.

One of the laws they receive, as we just read a moment ago, was the law about the Sabbath year, sometimes called the Sabbatical year or year of release, Shemitah.

Now, getting back to Leviticus 25:1-2. Yahweh speaks to Moses on Mount Sinai, and tells him to tell the Israelites this. When you enter the land I am giving you, the land will observe a Sabbath to Yahweh.

What land is Yahweh talking about here?

You know, we can come up with speculation, mystery, sensationalism... we can read the tabloids today or watch CNN and Fox News and interpret the Bible by what they are saying. Or... we can look to the Bible to define the Bible.

When we do this, when we look to the Bible, we find that the answer is: ***the land of Canaan***. That was the land that at this point Yahweh had promised to give to the children of Israel. Let's prove this from a few Scriptures.

Leviticus 14:33-34, same book (about 10 chapters before this, but likely on the same day that Leviticus 25 was spoken) we read: "Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron: When you enter the land of Canaan that I am giving you as a possession, and I place a mildew contamination in a house in the land you possess..."

This chapter is one that deals with laws pertaining to the cleansing of skin diseases as well as contaminated houses. But notice here in verse 34 that Yahweh says when you enter the land of CANAAN that I am giving you as a possession.

Let's look at another verse in the book of Numbers that is even more specific. Remember, Numbers is still during the wilderness journey of the Israelites.

Numbers 34:1-2

Yahweh spoke to Moses, command the Israelites and say to them: When you enter the land of Canaan, it will be allotted to you as an inheritance with these borders...

The chapter goes on to list the borders of the land they are being gifted by Yahweh. For example, let's read one more verse to get the gist of this.

Numbers 34:3

Your southern side will be from the Wilderness of Zin along the boundary of Edom. Your southern border on the east will begin at the east end of the Dead Sea.

I'd say that is pretty specific. I've placed a map of the land of Canaan at the time of Joshua son of Nun on the screen, and you'll notice at the bottom there is the border at the east end of the Dead Sea, and then we have the wilderness below that where Edom and Moab dwelt.

Numbers 35:10 is another good Scripture reference to go to. It says, "Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan." Notice the reference to the Jordan, that's the Jordan river, and then they enter the land of Canaan.

If you read the book of Joshua, chapters 3 and 4, you will see that the Israelites did actually cross the Jordan river to enter the land of Canaan.

For a sample, look at **Joshua 3:17**

The priests carrying the ark of Yahweh's covenant stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed on dry ground until the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

If you'll notice the dark pink line on the map going from left to right on the screen. That is an approximate path of the Israelites journey from Egyptian bondage up to the crossing of the Jordan River. I've got it circled where they crossed over into Canaan land, and shortly thereafter took possession of the city of Jericho.

Here's another passage that speak of them being given the land of Canaan. **Joshua 5:12b** (a passage we will consider in more detail later), we read, "Since there was no more manna for the Israelites, they ate from the crops of the land of Canaan that year."

Why did they eat crops from the land of *Canaan*? Well obviously it's because that was the land Yahweh was giving them.

So, it is clear that when Yahweh says in Leviticus 25:2, "When you enter the land I am giving you," He is talking about the land of Canaan after the Israelites would cross the Jordan river.

That's the land Yahweh's law is talking about. Do not let that go unnoticed.

Now notice what is said next in Leviticus 25:2, let's read verses 1-2 again.

Leviticus 25:1-2

Yahweh spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai: Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the land I am giving you, the land will observe a Sabbath to Yahweh.

Yahweh says that the land will observe a Sabbath, a rest, an intermission to Yahweh.

Does that mean that as soon as they enter, the land will then observe a Sabbath to Yahweh? I can see how just reading these two verses might lead us to that conclusion, but let's read verses 3-4.

Leviticus 25:3-4

You may sow your field for six years, and you may prune your vineyard and gather its produce for six years. But there will be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land in the seventh year, a Sabbath to Yahweh: you are not to sow your field or prune your vineyard.

These two verses help to clarify verse 2. Verse 2 tells us that the land will observe a Sabbath to Yahweh, but verses 3 through 4 begin to teach us HOW this will happen.

Yahweh begins by telling them that they are allowed to sow their field, prune their vineyard, and also gather the produce of the land for 6 years. But when the 7th year comes, it is a Sabbath year for the land. The instructions here in verse 3 say that the Israelites were not to sow their field or prune their vineyard on the Sabbath year.

Now, let's start touching on a key point here. Yahweh told the Israelites, "When you enter the land I'm giving you, you may plant for 6 years, but the land needs to rest on the 7th year." So one question I had when doing my study is this: **when** did the Israelites **enter** the land Yahweh gave them? When did they cross the Jordan and **go into** the land of Canaan?

Well, let's go back to the book of Joshua, chapter 5, to a section I quoted in part earlier. Remember, in Joshua 3 and 4 we read of the Israelites CROSSING THE JORDAN, this is a phrase that is connected to them COMING INTO THE LAND in Numbers 35:10.

We'll read **Joshua 5:10-12**

While the Israelites camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month at evening. The day after the Passover they ate unleavened bread and roasted grain from the produce of the land. And the day after they ate from the produce of the land, the manna ceased, Since there was no more manna for the Israelites, they ate from the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Now, there is a lot involved in these verses, but I wanted to read them to just center in on **one** point that is related to our study of Leviticus 25. The point is this: After the Israelites crossed the Jordan river, they were entering the land of Canaan. One of the first things they did was keep the Passover. In what month is Passover kept? The month of Abib, correct, in the spring of the year. So... when did the Israelites ENTER the land that Yahweh gave them? In the month of Abib.

In the same month that they came out of Egypt, 40 years later, they enter the promised land.

Yahweh tells them in Leviticus 25 that when they enter the land he is giving them they are allowed to plant for 6 years. If they entered the land in the month of Abib, when do you think they began doing any kind of planting? I would say during what we call spring time.

Certainly there would have been some things already in the ground when they entered the land from the previous fall, but they would get some kind of seed in the ground as soon as possible, and this would be during the spring of the year - what we would now call March, April, and May.

This is a point I always bring up to people who believe that the Sabbath year is to be observed from fall to fall. Jonathan Cahn believes that Tishri 1 begins the Shemitah year and that Elul 29 ends the Shemitah year. This is why he stresses September 2014 to September 2015.

Well, we will eventually get to the verses that lead him in that direction, and I will deal with them in detail, but for now as we walk through Leviticus 25, you see why I am led to believe that the Shemitah years begin in the spring, with the month of Abib. That's when the Israelites **entered** the promised land.

And this only makes sense because we know that prior to Leviticus 25 there is Exodus 12 and 13 where Yahweh announces that Abib is the beginning of months for the Israelites. They had been in Egypt where a different calendar was in force, probably solar only. Yahweh was telling his people that things would be different under his leadership. They would begin their year in the spring time, in the moon of Abib. I believe there is more proof than this that the sabbatical years begin in the spring, but this is the first proof we've run into thus far in our study through Leviticus 25.

So, a lot of sensationalism has been stirred up about a proposed economic crash in September of 2015 because of it being the end of the Shemitah.

In reality, we are already seeing that the Bible is teaching us that the Shemitah does not begin and end in the fall, but it rather begins and ends in the spring, which makes sense because that's the beginning of our months or moons according to Yahweh himself.

Let's look at a few more verses in Leviticus 25, to learn some further details about the Sabbatical year.

Leviticus 25:5-7

You are not to reap what grows by itself from your crop, or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. It must be a year of complete rest for the land.

Whatever the land produces during the Sabbath year can be food for you - for yourself, your male and female slave, and the hired hand or foreigner who stays

with you. All of its growth may serve as food for your livestock and the wild animals in your land.

What we have here are some additional instructions for how the Israelites are to treat the Sabbatical year.

First they're told not to reap what grows by itself. What happens in Sabbatical years is that you have something called a volunteer crop pop up. Seeds from the previous years plants fall off and remain in the soil and then produce plants during the sabbatical year without you ever planting anything in that year.

I had this happen with a watermelon plant last year. I didn't plant any watermelon last year, but a seed must have gotten left over from the year before because I had the prettiest watermelon plant pop up out of nowhere and give me a few watermelons.

That's what verse 5 means when it speaks of "what grows by itself from your crop."

We also read in this verse that the Israelites were not allowed to harvest the grapes from their untended vines during the Sabbatical year. During the Sabbatical, an Israelite's grape vines were to be left alone, untrimmed, un-pruned, and un-harvested.

Now, what's interesting is that right after verse 5, verse 6 says that whatever the land produces during the Sabbath year can be food for you, as well as for slaves, hired-hands, and foreigners.

The harmony to verses 5-6 is that normally, during the 6 ordinary years, an Israelite would plant and harvest. During the Sabbatical year he did not harvest what grew of itself to keep and store, but he, along with everyone else in the area, could use the volunteer crop for food.

Verse 7 then tells us that all of the growth during the Sabbatical years may also be food for the livestock (the domestic animals) as well as the wild animals.

So verses 5-7 teach us a little more detail about the specifics of the law regarding the Sabbatical year.

CONCLUSION

Sometimes we form sensationalism and make mysteries out of the things in the Bible that are simply meant to be taken at face value.

There are mysteries in Scripture, and there certainly are texts that are prophetic and judgmental, but we can make the mistake of reading things into the Bible that aren't there. Then, if we claim that we received what we are saying by a revelation from the Lord it gives our words that much more weight with many people alive today.

Here's the problem. It is possible to say, "thus saith the Lord" when Yahweh has not said. It is possible for us to push something sensational because we want to make a name or money for ourselves.

I said at the beginning that I've never heard Jonathan Cahn set a date. Even towards the end of his book he states that the Lord is not obligated to bring judgment on America in September 2015, but would should be cautious that he may.

On one hand I am thankful that he isn't being dogmatic about date setting. On the other hand, I can't help but wonder if the reason some of these self styled "prophets" today do not set specific dates is to give themselves wiggle room if nothing happens.

In other words, "Something drastic may happen economically in September 2015, and here's a mystery the Lord revealed to me that points to it."

But when nothing happens, and after millions of dollars of books and material has been sold, he can pronounce, "Well, I said it MIGHT happen. I never set a date."

I don't know the heart of Jonathan Cahn, and I'm not passing an eternal judgment upon him, but I am told in Scripture to test the spirits and to be wise and discerning.

I'm also told in the Scriptures that if someone foretells an event and it doesn't happen that I'm not to fear that man or listen to what he says. You can read about that in Deuteronomy 18.

So please be cautious about people who give dates. There's nothing wrong with being ready for hard times, nothing at all wrong with that. But just be ready, spiritually first - physically second. Don't fall for the date-setting, especially when it comes not from the Bible, but from a revelation somebody claims to have had.

Thus far we've seen nothing in the Biblical text that would lead us to believe that there exists a mystery about the SHEMITAH that applies to America today.

It's as though many people today are watching the news and reading the headlines, and then running to the Bible to see if there is anything in there that is even faintly similar to what they saw on the news.

Don't get me wrong, there are things that have happened throughout the ongoing history of the world that the Bible foretold, but that's just it, let's look to the Bible FIRST to see what it says.

It's easy for me to say that the Lord showed me something, he gave me a new revelation, and that's why it's not spelled out in Scripture. That's easy to do. And then you get to make up all your own definitions and requirements and criteria, and all that stuff.

We've been through the first 7 verses in Leviticus 25, and there is nothing in there about America today or the economy collapsing.

Maybe Cahn would say, "Well that's why it's a mystery Matthew." Well... he may say that, but I choose to remain with what the Word actually teaches. I'm not interested in running to theories or mysteries that I can't find first in the Word.

The Sabbatical year begins in the Spring, on the same schedule as the other appointments of Yahweh.

There is more involved in proving this, but we saw that Yahweh instructed the Israelites in Leviticus 25:1-2 to begin their 6 years of planting and harvesting - WHEN THEY ENTERED THE LAND He was giving them.

When did they enter the land? Joshua 5:10-12 shows that they entered the promised land in the month of Abib, 40 years after they left the land of Egypt - also in the month of Abib.

This one simple, biblical point trumps any and all American or economic points that Cahn may bring up in his book about September/October.

That is, if we choose to trust Yahweh's Word rather than what appears to sound weighty to our ears. I know that men may make things sound good. And if a man repeat something long enough and loud enough people start believing it. But that doesn't make it true. Instead, do your best to trust in Yahweh's Word with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.

That's all I've got for today, but I'll pick this subject back up next time as we continue to go through Leviticus 25. Next time I'll try to go into verse 8 through 13.

THE JUBILEE YEAR IS KEY (Shemitah - Pt. 2)

Let's take our Bibles today and open up to the book of Leviticus, chapter 25. We will begin by reading verses 1-12. In my last sermon, I taught through verses 1-7. Today, I'll be teaching on verses 8-12. No frills, no rhymes, nothing extravagant, just straight Bible teaching. I hope and pray that you will learn something and find encouragement from Yahweh's word.

Read: **Leviticus 25:1-12**

In our last lesson we began to look at some of the claims made by a man named Jonathan Cahn regarding a mystery about the shemitah. If you'll remember, the word shemitah is a Hebrew word that means "release" or "remission," and is in reference to the releasing of debts during the Sabbatical or Sabbath year. You can read all about it in Deuteronomy 15, a text I will cover in a later part of this series.

In Leviticus 25:1-7, we didn't find any hint of a mystery about the Sabbatical year, but we did find inspired information directly from Yahweh through prophet Moses about the Sabbatical year.

One of the things we found was a point that leads me to believe Sabbatical years begin in the Spring and not in the Fall. Jonathan Cahn's claims are based upon a fall-to-fall year and not a spring-to-spring year. Thus I believe his claims are based upon a faulty foundation to begin with. Remember, Yahweh instructed the Israelites that when they entered the land He was giving them (which we saw from several Bible verses was the land of Canaan) they were allowed to sow their fields and prune their vineyards for six years. On the seventh, that stopped.

When did the Israelites enter the land Yahweh gave them? In the month of Abib, in the spring. So when did they begin their yearly cycle of sowing and pruning? In the Spring time. Sure, there are crops that are planted in the fall, but that's not when the planting year begins according to what we've covered thus far, and according to some further information we will learn about today.

Before we begin looking at verses 8 through 12 in Leviticus 25 I do want to make one comment, just in case I may have been misunderstood last week.

I want to make it clear that I am not condemning anyone who is keeping some kind of land Sabbath this year. Do I believe that the land Sabbath began last fall? No. Do I believe that the land Sabbath began last spring? That's debatable, but obviously my answer is NO, because anyone can come to my land and see that I've planted various crops. Does this mean I am condemning the Torah observant brothers and sisters who are keeping a land Sabbath this year? No, it does not.

While I am against what Jonathan Cahn is teaching in regards to this supposed "mystery" of the Shemitah, I am not against people who seek to obey Torah to the extent of the

knowledge given to them at a certain time in their walk with the Father. I respect anyone who makes an attempt or effort to keep a law of Yahweh even if I disagree with them on certain particulars or interpretations within that law.

Sometimes we are far removed from the unadulterated truth about a commandment, and we study and seek to get back to that truth. Along our path, we walk in the light that we have been shown.

For example, when I first began to keep the Sabbath I celebrated it from Friday evening to Saturday evening because that's what I believed to be the 7th day. I was raised worshipping on the Gregorian 1st day of the week, Sunday. I later had the choice of the 1st day of THAT week or the 7th day of THAT week. When I began studying the Torah, I picked the 7th day of that week because the commandment specified the 7th day.

Now I realize that there are lunar Sabbatarians out there who condemn all Saturday Sabbatarians. I'm not comfortable doing that. Why? Because there are many Saturday Sabbatarians in the world today who are (like I once was) walking in the light that they have currently, and in that current light they are keeping a 7th day of a week. Do I believe it is the 7th day of Yahweh's week? No, but they aren't fighting the 4th commandment. They desire to keep the commandment, they just currently understand the particulars of that commandment differently than myself.

There is a MAJOR difference (and I stress the word MAJOR) between an unintentional sin and a high-handed defiance against Yahweh's law. You can read about it in Numbers 15, and other passages in the Torah. It's a given that I, right now, am engaging in unintentional sins in my life. If I knew what they were I would work on them, but that's just it, I don't know what they are.

By Yahweh's grace, over the past 18+ years of my life there are areas I've been shown, that used to be unintentional sins, but now they are not because of Bible reading and study and teaching. I've grown in knowledge. Things I did not know about 18 years ago, I know fully about now. I've found out ways to be more obedient, and I slowly apply them to my life as I mature in the faith.

I'm actually thankful that Yahweh doesn't plop everything down on my lap at one time. I'm thankful he works on me slowly, and gives me time to understand and to progress. That's a gracious Mighty One. I'm thankful for Him.

This is totally different from high-handed sinning. I do not even here refer to intentional sins. We all commit intentional sins. We know to love our neighbor as our self, yet we mess that one up all the time. That's an intentional sin. But, when I do that, I ask for forgiveness, repent, and strive all over again. I'm not even talking about that kind of sin. I speak of high-handed sinning. Unrepentant sinning. Knowing something is a sin, and getting to the point where you don't care anymore and you practice that sin. When you are on "that road," you are in extreme danger. You are headed for destruction.

So... I don't want to get too far off track here, but my point is that I do not condemn the men and women who are keeping a land Sabbath this year, even if they are doing it from fall-to-fall. I'm willing to discuss the particulars with them, as they are part of my family in Yahweh, but I'm not throwing them under the bus in these lessons. I'm simply sharing with you what I believe Yahweh is teaching us about his land Sabbath, in His teachings, and what I believe to be an error in the supposed "mystery" that Jonathan Cahn is teaching.

So let's get to it. We'll begin with **Leviticus 25:8**.

You are to count seven sabbatical years, seven times seven years, so that the time period of the seven sabbatical years amounts to 49.

Ok... we are given some information here. Verses 1-7 teach us about what *TO* do and what *NOT* to do on the Sabbatical year, as well as *WHEN* to begin the land Sabbath.

The Israelites came into the land of Canaan, according to Joshua chapters 3 through 5, in the spring time, and then they began to plant, prune, and then harvest. They did that for 6 years and then on the 7th year they let the land rest. They could eat from the volunteer crop on the Sabbatical year, along with their slaves, hired hands, the temporary residents, and even the animals, but no planting and harvesting or pruning was to be done.

Now in verse 8, the additional instructions tell them to count seven sevens. Seven sabbatical years, and we know that $7 \times 7 = 49$, but the verse actually spells that out for us. At the end of verse 8 we see that the time period of seven sabbatical years amounts to 49.

Ok, let's look at **Leviticus 25:9**.

Then you are to sound a trumpet loudly in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month; you will sound it throughout your land on the Day of Atonement.

Alright, follow along with me here. You come to year 49, which is a sabbatical year, and the commandment is to sound a trumpet (that is the shofar in Hebrew, the ram's horn), and the command is to sound this trumpet in the 7th month, on the 10th day of the month, which is Yom Kippur, the Day of Covering or Atonement.

Now, this is one of the reasons that many people believe the Sabbatical years are from fall-to-fall. They say that since the ram's horn is sounded in the fall, the sabbatical year and the jubilee year (which we'll discuss in a second) must begin in the fall.

Well, number 1, we've already determined that the Sabbatical *cycle* began when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan and that happened in the month of Abib.

Secondly, notice what verse 9 calls the month in which the shofar is sounded. What is this month called here? ... The SEVENTH month. In this context about the Sabbatical

cycle and years, the month in which the shofar is sounded is not called the FIRST month, but the SEVENTH month. This shows that the cycle of months under consideration here is the same cycle of months that Yahweh gave to his people back in Exodus 12.

Nowhere in this context is a new cycle of months spoken of. Just because you blow a shofar on the Day of Atonement during the 49th year of a Sabbatical cycle does not mean that a new year begins on the Day of Atonement.

To believe such is adding to the text, just like many Jews today do when calling the new moon of the 7th month Rosh HaShaneh. Rosh = Head, Ha = the, and Shaneh = year. So they are calling the new moon of Tishri the "head of the year." Yet there is not one single verse in the entire Hebrew Bible that calls Tishri 1 Rosh HaShaneh.

Yet there is a verse that refers to the month of Abib as Rosh HaShaneh, and that verse is Exodus 12:2.

What I find astonishing is that the majority of commentaries in commenting on verse 9 say that the 7th month is actually the 1st month. Now, I've read Leviticus 25:9 many times and I can't find anywhere in that verse that says the 7th month is actually the 1st month. Yahweh (remember he is the one speaking here according to Leviticus 25:1), Yahweh calls this month in which the shofar is blown - THE SEVENTH MONTH. This again shows that the yearly cycle being referred to began previously with the month of Abib - the first month.

Furthermore, notice even more carefully that the shofar is not blown on the 1st day of the seventh month, but the 10th day of the seventh month.

I've watched many Jonathan Cahn interviews and I've listened to his entire audio book. He says time and time again that the Shemitah begins on Tishri 1 and ends on Elul 29. Yet the shofar is not commanded to be blown on either Elul 29 (the last day of the 6th month) or Tishri 1 (the first day of the 7th month). The shofar is to be blown on the 10th day of the 7th month. What does that teach us?

Well, it should show us that the blowing of the shofar is not to say a new year is beginning right there on the Day of Atonement, but rather there is a proclamation being made that something is coming. In this final Sabbatical year in the cycle, year 49, Yahweh is giving everyone a "heads-up" so to speak that the Jubilee year is approaching this coming Abib.

This makes all the sense in the world to me because of what takes place in the Jubilee year regarding how every man returns back to their original family property. Preparations could begin in the fall for what would happen in the upcoming spring.

Look at **Leviticus 25:9-10** together.

Then you are to sound a shofar loudly in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month; you will sound it throughout your land on the Day of Atonement. You are to consecrate the 50th year and proclaim freedom in the land for all its inhabitants. It will be your Jubilee, when each of you is to return to his property and each of you to his clan.

Now as we've been over, the shofar is blown on the Day of Atonement in the 49th year (the seventh land Sabbath) and it is a proclamation and consecration of the Jubilee year, or 50th year, that will begin when the current 49th year is completed. When that shofar is blown they would be in the 7th month as we read in verse 9. This means they would have the 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th months of the year to get ready for what would take place in the Jubilee year.

So you have seven sevens equaling 49, and then you have year 50. So this is a 50 year cycle, within which is another cycle of seven sevens or seven land Sabbaths.

As verse 10 tells us, the 50th year is freedom in the land for all its inhabitants. It's called a Jubilee or in Hebrew a YOVEL, which is a word referring back to the shofar blast that proclaimed the upcoming 50th year.

Notice in verse 10 that the 50th year was a unique year. It was a year in which the Israelites would all return to their original family property.

During the course of each 50 year cycle, land would be sold and bought, sometimes numerous times, kind of like what happens today. The only difference was that Yahweh required the land of Canaan that He specifically gave to the nation of Israel to remain in the original way He gave it to them in each 50th year. We see this several verses later in this chapter in **Leviticus 25:24** where we read:

The land is not to be permanently sold because it is Mine, and you are only foreigners and temporary residents on My land.

Yahweh is saying, "I own the land, so you must do with it what I command you to do with it."

Notice what else takes place in the YOVEL or Jubilee year. **Leviticus 25:11-12**.

The 50th year will be your Jubilee; you are not to sow, reap what grows by itself, or harvest its untended vines. It is to be holy to you because it is the Jubilee; you may only eat its produce directly from the field.

Ah... so now we are seeing a correlation between the Sabbatical year and the Jubilee year. The Jubilee year is a Sabbatical year, its not a seventh year Sabbath, but it is nonetheless a Sabbath year for the land. The same laws about not planting and harvesting and not pruning apply for the 50th year just like they did for year 49.

So you have two years in a row, years 49 and 50, when no planting, harvesting, or pruning was done. Two Sabbath years in a row. This is KEY.

I've heard Jonathan Cahn (and many other people) say over and over again that the Shemitah or the land Sabbath is *every* seven years. Well, I say to you today that I do not agree with that statement. I do not believe that the land Sabbath is every seven years.

What is significant here (before I explain myself) is that Jonathan Cahn's supposed "mystery" is based upon an unending 7 year cycle. A Sabbatical cycle that has no stopping point, pause, or interruption.

Such a cycle cannot be found in Scripture. Let me explain.

We've learned that when the Israelites came into the land there was to be how many years of planting, pruning, and harvesting? 6.

After that was the 7th year, the first land Sabbath.

What followed then was another 6 years of planting, and then another land Sabbath on the 7th year, which was also the 14th year. Then you had land Sabbaths fall on year 21, 28, 35, 42, and 49. All of those seventh year land Sabbaths are consecutive. 6 years of planting, followed by a 7th year of resting.

Then comes along year 50. Another land Sabbath year where there is no planting, pruning, or harvesting. Now let me ask you, after the final 49th year Sabbath and the 50th year (Jubilee year) is OVER, what do you do when you begin, let's call it - the 51st year? Well, you start to plant again. How many years do you plant? 6. That's easy right?

Well, I think it's easy and quite Scriptural, but the key is that you have a back-to-back land Sabbath on years 49 and 50. Year 50 stops the cycle of seven. That seven year cycle pauses for 1 year, and then begins again. 6 plant, 1 no plant.

Jonathan Cahn, and most of the other teachers that I've heard teach about the land Sabbath and Jubilee year, count right through year 50. In other words when year 49 is over they start with 1 again. So year 50 is counted also as year 1. What's the problem with that?

Here's the problem. If you count year 50 as also being year 1 of your next cycle, you will only have 5 years of planting, pruning, and harvesting, instead of 6! And where in Leviticus 25 does it ever mention 5 years of planting? Never. It always mentions 6.

This is why when someone comes to me and says, "We are in a Shemitah year right now Matthew from fall to 2014 to fall 2015," I have to ask them the question: how do they know? And I need a better answer than "Well, the Jews have kept up with it." That answer is not sufficient for me.

I do not question their genuineness in wanting to obey the land Sabbath of Yahweh, and I'm not trying to just be disagreeable, but if the cycle you are following has not taken the Jubilee year into account then there is no way that your cycle is correct, because you're just counting right through the Jubilee year.

And when you listen to Jonathan Cahn you'll see him do this. He will mention a Sabbatical in the early 1900's and then he'll mention one in 2001, and what he's done is count 1 through 7 with no stopping or pausing.

But in order to know when the Sabbatical year is you must know when the Jubilee year is, so that you know when to keep that double, back-to-back land Sabbath before you start your next 6 years of planting.

Do you see how there's more to this when we start digging into the text of Scripture? We have already seen a few points in the first 12 verses of Leviticus 25 that people are ignoring, yet now we have a man who wants to say he's uncovered a mystery about the sabbatical year that you can't even find in Scripture! And people are flocking to it by the droves.

In other words people are more preoccupied and worried about some mystery that Scripture doesn't even mention than they are with what the text of Scripture actually does say.

As I've said many times before, it is easier to get people to believe something the Bible doesn't say that to get them to believe something it does say.

CONCLUSION

1. Upon entrance to the land of Canaan, Israel was to plant for 6 years and rest the land on the 7th year, 7 times equaling 49.
2. During the 49th year (a land Sabbath), on the 10th day of the 7th month (the Day of Atonement), a shofar was to be blown to proclaim and consecrate the upcoming 50th year, the year of freedom and Jubilee. This is further proof that the Sabbatical and Jubilee years DO NOT begin in the fall, because the context calls Tishri the 7th month, not the 1st.
3. The Jubilee year, the 50th year, was a sabbatical year in the same way as the previous 7 land Sabbaths when it came to no planting, pruning, or harvesting. Thus you cannot count year 50 (a rest year) as year 1 (a planting year) of the next cycle. This in turn disproves all those who are basing their calculations of when the Shemitah is upon an unending 7 year cycle with no pause.
4. In order to find out when the Sabbatical years were for the nation of Israel, we would have to know the year in which they entered the land of Canaan. If we knew that we could count seven sevens, coming to 49, and then come to year 50, the Jubilee. We'd then

begin another cycle of 6 years of planting after year 50, and we would know when the Sabbatical cycle was to be... AT LEAST up to the point of their expulsion from that land. You might now ask, "Brother Matthew, you don't believe that the same cycle continued after they were expelled from the land?" Well...

Come back for part 3 of our study on the Sabbatical cycle. :)

A 70 YEAR PAUSE (Shemitah - Pt. 3)

Opening: **Leviticus 26:3-35**

In my past two sermons I've been teaching about the Sabbatical year, sometimes called the land Sabbath or in Hebrew, the Shemitah (meaning release or remission). In this lesson today I will continue to look at the land Sabbath, in particular how the Israelites treated this commandment from Yahweh when they entered the land He gave to them.

We have learned from Leviticus 25 that when the Israelites entered the land Yahweh was giving them - the land of Canaan - they were instructed to plant, prune, and harvest for 6 years, but on the 7th year they were to cease from planting, pruning, and harvesting. This was to be done 7 times. $7 \times 7 = 49$.

After the 7th land Sabbath (the 49th year) there was to be a 50th year known as the year of Jubilee. The year of Jubilee was not a 7th year land Sabbath, but it was certainly a land Sabbath. No planting, pruning, or harvesting was to be done during the Jubilee year. One instruction unique to the Jubilee year was that during that year (every 50th year) the land allotment in Canaan (which was now the land of Israel, seeing Yahweh gave it to Israel), that land would revert back to the original family tribe and clan.

Remember, Yahweh says in Leviticus 25:24 that the land is not to be permanently sold because it belonged to Him.

While Israel was at Mount Sinai they received the 10 commandments along with many other laws. Many of these laws were already in existence prior to Mount Sinai. Laws like don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal... these laws existed prior to them being written down on stone or parchment. However, some of these existing laws were inflated or expanded upon by Yahweh.

One of these was the Sabbatical year (which falls under the Sabbath commandment or 4th commandment). Did the patriarchs in Genesis rest their land on a 7th year? Well, we aren't really told. I lean towards them probably doing so, but I can't point you to a specific verse that shows what we have been studying in Leviticus 25 outlined anywhere prior to Mount Sinai.

Remember, Leviticus 25:1 has Yahweh saying, "When you enter the land I am giving you, the land will observe a Sabbath to Yahweh."

Once the Israelites settled in their Yahweh given land there was to be some order and stability in how they were to live. It was theonomic. It was to be a government, governed by Yahweh's commandments, statutes, and judgments.

Some laws could be observed on an individual level. Others were designed on a corporate level, as a community, as a society.

Such is the case with the land Sabbath and Jubilee cycle. Sure, and individual Israelite could observe the land Sabbath on his farm by himself even if everyone in that area was neglecting it, but Yahweh designed that it be observed nationally. Yahweh designed the land Sabbath law to be observed by everyone in the nation at the same time.

Thus, when the Jubilee year arrived, everyone was on the same schedule, and all the land reverted back to how it was in year 1. The cycle then began again after the 50th year was complete.

As our opening text we read a large portion of Leviticus 26, and that is considered to be one of the chief chapters of the national blessings and curses for the nation of Israel. Once again, individual Israelites could be and would be blessed for obeying Yahweh's laws, but Leviticus 26 (right along with Deuteronomy 28) is really centered on national Israel. Israel as a whole.

Both Deuteronomy 28, and Leviticus 26 speak of Yahweh blessing the nation of Israel for obedience and cursing the nation of Israel for disobedience. Blessings for obedience did not mean that the Israelites never sinned, it simply meant that overall as a nation they did not practice sin. When they did sin, they confessed and repented, and continued seeking to follow the perfect law that Yahweh gave through Moses.

When Israel as a nation decided that Yahweh's law wasn't the way they wanted to go, Yahweh says He would send curses. We read about these curses a few minutes ago. If after the first cursing Israel still refused to repent, Yahweh said he would send more cursing. Seven times as much. Let's look again at **Leviticus 26:31-35**.

Now, keep in mind, this is Yahweh talking *before* the Israelites ever enter the land. Remember back to part 1 of this series where I showed that the book of Leviticus was given through Moses while the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai. They had not even sent spies to the land of Canaan at this point, to scope it out.

Yahweh is speaking about all of this before it ever happens. He is saying, "If... when you enter the land I'm giving you... you are stubbornly, unrepentantly disobedient, I will cause all hell to break loose upon you."

And in the midst of the curses that Yahweh gives He mentions that He will devastate the land He gave them and scatter His people Israel among the nations (verse 33).

At this point Yahweh says that when the Israelites are gone from Canaan land, the land will rest. He says it will make-up for the land Sabbaths that it did not have when the rebellious dwelt there.

I hate to tell you this, but all the Biblical evidence points us in this direction... that the children of Israel NEVER kept the land Sabbath nationally. They never let the land rest on the Sabbatical years and they never kept the Jubilee.

Now, as I'm meditating on this and putting this teaching together, I'm thinking, "Why? Why in the world did they not obey Yahweh?" And then I get off my high horse and I think about all the times I've disobeyed Yahweh too, whether pertaining to a greater commandment or a lesser commandment. I've known to do good, and I've disobeyed.

For us to jump all over the Israelites for not observing the land Sabbath nationally is just dismissing what goes on in our own lives, and what is going on in our own nation today. I believe many of the children of Israel live in the United States of America and Britain today. I understand that many non-Israelites live in these nations too, but I'm just saying that just because you have a large population of Israelites in a country... that doesn't automatically mean that they are going to serve Yahweh on a national level.

Evidently Yahweh knew this could happen, therefore He outlined the blessings and the curses in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

So, let me show you the correlation between the Israelites captivity and the land Sabbath. Look with me first to **Daniel 9:1-3**.

So this passage shows that Daniel was reading a scroll of the prophet Jeremiah while in captivity, and through that reading and study, Daniel saw that Jerusalem (which was part of the land of Canaan Yahweh gave to Israel) - Jerusalem would lay desolate for 70 years. **Jeremiah 25:1-12**.

This, brothers and sisters, is what Daniel was reading while in Babylon. Lets look at a key passage that links this 70 years with the land Sabbath in **2 Chronicles 36:15-21**.

Jeremiah prophesied it. Yahweh used him to show what would come to pass before it ever happened. Daniel read about it in Jeremiah while in captivity, and 2 Chronicles shows when it started. And notice how this last verse points out the correlation between the 70 years in captivity and the land enjoying rest during those 70 years.

This is exactly what we read about in Leviticus 26 to begin this lesson. Yahweh would send His people away, scatter them throughout the nations so the land could make up for its Sabbath years. Evidently the land needed 70 years to make up for all the times the nation of Israel BROKE the land Sabbath commandment. This means they BROKE that commandment 70 times! SEVENTY LAND SABBATHS HAPPENED, and they broke every single one of them. That's around a 500 year period without keeping a land Sabbath nationally.

We may not think certain commandments are a big deal. We may limit the commandments to the ones we don't really have struggles with. But saints, all his commandments are true and they stand fast forever and ever and are done in truth and uprightness. Holy and reverend is Yahweh's name, and every point of guidance He gives is righteous, and just, and beneficial to our well-being.

We may not think the land Sabbath was that big of a deal, but it was. It was such a big deal that Yahweh took his big mighty right hand, scooped the children of Israel up out of the land of Canaan, scattered them off among the heathens elsewhere, and let *His land* rest for 70 years to make up for the time they kept working the land with no rest.

Now... Daniel also read another passage in Jeremiah where there existed a promise from Yahweh the compassionate Mighty One, and we need to be thankful that He is compassionate. Look at **Jeremiah 29:10-14**.

See, this is why when you read Daniel 9 you see Daniel weeping, in sackcloth, fasting, and praying a prayer of repentance. He knew that Yahweh would restore His people back to their land if there was repentance. Look back with me to where we began, **Leviticus 26**, but this time let's center in on **verses 40-45**. And remember, this is the chapter where He's telling the Israelites how bad He will curse them for their disobedience.

What a merciful Mighty One we have! What compassion He has upon His children! No matter what we have done, no matter how much we have turned our back on Him, if we will confess our sin and repent of our sin He will forgive us and remember the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! OH PRAISE HIS GLORIOUS NAME!

So, after 70 years were completed, Yahweh did just that. He remembered His people, He heard Daniel, and the other Israelites who cried out confession and repentance, and He brought His people back to the land of Canaan and restored them. You can read all about it in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was a time of much restoration and reformation.

I'd like you to read the entire chapter of **Nehemiah 9** to show you what was discussed among the children of Israel when they were brought back to the land.

Then -- Nehemiah 10:1-27 speaks of the names on the document. And look at **Nehemiah 10:28-31**.

Notice right at the end there. Part of the signed agreement included keeping the land Sabbath. Isn't that wonderful?!

Now, I don't know how long that went on, but at least the Israelites in Nehemiah's day got the picture. They knew they could not continue to do the sins that their nation did prior to the Babylonian captivity.

So... In my last lesson I ended with a question. When the Israelites first came into the land of Canaan, a cycle was to begin. $7 \times 7 = 49$, and then a 50th year. After that another $7 \times 7 = 49$, and then a 50th year. That's how it was supposed to be. We've now learned that it was never that way, but that is how it was supposed to be.

My question was this: when the Israelites were deported, scattered throughout the nations, with the House of Judah predominantly going into Babylonian captivity for 70 years, did that cycle continue on through those 70 years?

I believe the answer is: NO. Here's why.

Remember how that the Jubilee year, the 50th year made a double land Sabbath? The 49th year was a land Sabbath, and then the 50th year was another land Sabbath before the planting, pruning, and harvesting began again. After those 2 Sabbaths were over then the next cycle could begin.

Well, when the Israelites were in captivity, we are told that the land of Canaan rested, "sabbathed" for *70 years in a row*. Yahweh let it lay rest for 70 years to make up for the time it did not rest while the Israelites worked the land.

I believe that the 70 years in a row work the same way as the 2 years in a row. Once those Yahweh ordained 70 years were over with, and many Israelites like Ezra and Nehemiah were brought back to the land Yahweh gave their fathers, then the cycle again commenced, $7 \times 7 = 49$, then year 50.

The land Sabbath is a national commandment. It is kept properly as a nation under Yahweh's government.

Then, when Yahweh chooses to have multiple land Sabbaths concurrent with one another, His clock pauses. Whether it's for 2 years or whether it's for 70 years. Then, when He's ready, He starts the cycle back up.

That's what I believe.

I'll be teaching one more part in this series of lessons in a couple of weeks. In that part, we will cover some portions of Deuteronomy 15, a little more about Jonathan Cahn's "mystery of the Shemitah," and we will wrap everything up with looking at whether or not the land Sabbath commandment has application to us today.

Cancelling Debts (Shemitah - Pt. 4)

Opening Text: **Deuteronomy 15:1-6 and 7-11**

Well here we are today, in the last part of this Shemitah series. I could stretch this out and cover more aspects regarding the subject, but I think I've hit enough highlights as well as details in what will be these 4 sermons total, to get people to *think*.

And *think* - Biblically - is what I want you all to do. My prayer all the time is that everyone in here would - with all they are getting - get understanding. I realize you receive a lot of teaching here each week, but I think that's a good thing. It's certainly seems to be a rarity these days... in church I'm speaking of. I think most people have never really heard an actual sermon from the Bible. So when they hear one for the first time it seems a bit odd; there's a lot of Biblical texts read, Biblical information, and practical application.

I'm thankful to go to a church like this one, that believes in teaching from the Bible.

I know I've given you a lot to chew on in these lessons, so I pray that with all that you're getting - you'll get understanding.

Now, before we move into our Biblical text this evening I want to give a brief review of what we've been through and what we've learned.

I did these teachings because I was being asked by people, what I thought about the book by Jonathan Cahn titled "The Mystery of the Shemitah." Jonathan Cahn believes that there's a mystery attached to the Shemitah, and that here in America - for at least the last 100 years - there have been economic (or other) downfalls happen during a Sabbatical year, or at the end of each Sabbatical year. Sometimes nothing happens even on his proposed Sabbatical cycle, but he just kind of brushes that aside and focuses in on the big things that happen according to his cycle. Remember, he believes 9/11 is tied to this "mystery of the Shemitah," as well as other economic crashes.

He believes that there will likely be a major crash or downfall this September-October, but he does place in his warning a caveat. He always makes sure he says, "I'm not saying it *has* to happen like this, but it could." How convenient.

He has tied these downfalls to what he considers to be the Sabbatical cycle. During each 7th year, or at the end of each 7th year he seeks to find bad things that have occurred in our nation, and also around the globe.

The problem is... well, the problems with his theory are many.

#1. Cahn believes the Shemitah year begins in the fall. Yahweh, in the Bible, teaches that it begins in the spring - in the month of Abib, which is the beginning of the Biblical months.

#2. Cahn believes the Shemitah is every 7 years without pause. Yahweh, in the Bible, teaches that the Shemitah cycle comes to a pause on the 50th year, after the 7th land Sabbath or 49th year. There are back-to-back land Sabbaths, and then the years of planting, pruning, and harvesting start back up.

#3. Cahn believes the cycle never stops. Yahweh, in the Bible, stopped the cycle himself. Not just at the Jubilee pause, but during the Babylonian captivity. The land of Canaan - the land Yahweh gave to Israel - rested for 70 years in a row. That's a BIG pause, or we could say *a stop* to the cycle. No planting, no pruning, no harvesting, for 70 years in a row. After the Judahite-Israelites returned to the land of Canaan in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. The cycle started back up.

#4. Cahn believes the Shemitah cycle is somehow tied to the nation or land of America. Yahweh, in the Bible, ties the Shemitah to the land of Canaan. Men may try to add other lands in there, but there is not one single verse in the Bible that says anything about the land Sabbath applying - nationally - to any other land but the land of Canaan.

#5. Cahn believes the curses Yahweh brings are during or at the end of each of his proposed 7 years. Yahweh, in the Bible, brought the 70 year captivity (the curses of Leviticus 26) upon the Israelites after a 500+ year time frame. He never sent curses on them during or at the end of each 7th year.

So, when you place what Jonathan Cahn is teaching up against what Yahweh teaches in the Bible, it doesn't mesh. It doesn't harmonize. It can be made to look somewhat good. It can be made to sound dramatic. People may flock to it by the droves. But it certainly is not Biblical.

But... and this is the sad part. People will still believe sensationalism and hype, rather than the Word of Yahweh.

I speak this out of love for you as a pastor - I want to encourage you to trust the Word of Yahweh. When we open up our Bibles each week to see what Yahweh has to say, recognize that we are reading out of a book that has been inspired by the Almighty. This is not the whims and ways of man. This **is** what Yahweh has sent down from heaven by His very breath.

No matter who you hear - and no matter how loud and crafty they say it - you are to always, always, ALWAYS, examine what a man tells you by Holy Scripture. That takes time, and study, and diligence, but if you love Yahweh you will seek His face in these matters.

Now, let me follow that up with this. Do I believe our nation is currently a holy nation? No, of course not. As a nation, we murder babies in the tummy's of their mothers. We say it's legal for two men or two women to get "married." We have banned prayer from school. We have removed the 10 commandments from courtrooms. We call evil good and good evil, light darkness, and darkness light.

Do I believe that our nation is under a curse of Yahweh? You bet I do. Do I believe that economic downfall could come upon this nation soon? Of course it could. Any nation can't dig their way deeper and deeper and deeper into debt and expect wealth to appear out of thin air.

But, am I going to then set a date, or try to concoct some kind of mystery that's nowhere found in the Bible and teach people this thing all because I claim the Lord spoke to me and showed me such a mystery? No way.

I'm no prophet, but I don't expect anything to happen this fall. I expect the economy to ebb and flow as it always does. Some people will have hard times, others will have prosperous times. But what we will see, for those with eyes to see, is another false prophet who's become rich (or popular) from a book that got everybody hyped up.

Edgar Whisenant did it back in the 80's. 88 reasons why the Lord will come back in 1988. Hal Lindsey pretty much taught the same thing in his book "The Late Great Planet Earth. I was 7 at that time. I'm 34 now.

Harold Camping stirred everybody up back in 2011, saying emphatically that the end of the world was May 21, 2011. He had all his numbers and figures showing how he just had to be right. May 21st 2011 came, and now here we are in 2015.

Back in the year 2000 we had the Y2K scare. Even in the year 2012 we had a lot of talk about the end of the world and the Mayan calendar.

Here we are, still trucking along.

You know what? Yahweh... teaches us... to be ready. Yes, we should study Bible prophecy. It's not as important as studying Law and Gospel, but yes, we should seek to understand prophetic texts. But in all of that Yahweh teaches us to - fear Him, keep His commandments, have the testimony of his Son Yeshua... and always be ready. Always be ready. Don't be fearful of what man says. Don't be fearful of what so called prophets tell you. Just stay close to Yahweh, and follow Him. Be ready for... not just the end of the world (if it happens in your life time), but the end of YOUR life. Which could be any day. Life is but a vapor.

I don't really want to go any further than that with the end of the world stuff. I've got some more Scriptures to teach today, so I want to get to them. I said in part 1 of this series that we would begin with the Scriptures, and end with the Scriptures. So, let's get into our opening text.

Deuteronomy 15:1-2

1 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. 2 This is how to cancel debt: Every creditor is to cancel what he has lent his neighbor. He is not to collect anything from his neighbor or brother, because Yahweh's release of debts has been proclaimed.

I've been saying and saying that we would get to Deuteronomy 15 in this series, and we've finally made our way here. :)

You'll probably notice, just from reading this in English, why this passage is important in our study about the Shemitah year. It mentions a 7 year cycle right there in verse 1.

A Bible reader, before getting to the book of Deuteronomy, would have already read the book of Leviticus, specifically Leviticus 25 where Yahweh talks about the seventh year land rest, and a cycle of 7 years - 7x7 to be exact.

A Bible reader would have also read Exodus 23:10-11 which says, "Sow your land for six years and gather its produce. But during the seventh year you are to let it rest and leave it uncultivated, so that the poor among your people may eat from it and the wild animals may consume what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove."

My point is that the phrase "at the end of every seven years" would be a familiar phrase by the time you read up to the book of Deuteronomy. It would likewise have been a familiar phrase to the Israelites who had heard the words recorded in both Exodus and Leviticus uttered before the words of Deuteronomy.

Now, some have pointed out that Deuteronomy 15:1 lends proof to a continuous, unbroken 7 year cycle with no pauses. They say that "every seven years" proves that you count every seven years without stop.

I take issue with that because of what we've already covered in Leviticus 25 in regards to the pause at the double-land-Sabbath of the 49th year (a seventh year Sabbath) and 50th year (Jubilee year). The cycle pauses at year 50 and starts back up after the 50th year is over.

So, how are we to understand the phrase "at the end of every seven years." Simple. You understand it just like it says. During 49 years, you have an end of seven years, seven times. You then have a 50th year pause. Then you start back up and have 7 more ends of seven years, and at the end of every one of the those seven years, the Israelites were commanded to cancel debts.

So Deuteronomy 15 is easily understood when we consider the more detailed Leviticus 25 to drive our understanding.

Now, verse 1 says to cancel debts. Verse 2 says "this is how you do it." Every creditor is to cancel what he has lent to his neighbor. The word creditor here is literally "ba'al" or we say "bail." It refers to a lord or master over someone else. The phrase is "ba'al maseh" in Hebrew, and literally means "holder of a loan."

So we have one man who has loaned his neighbor or brother some wealth, money, probably silver in that day (which was the common currency). This can't be speaking of

money that was GIVEN to your neighbor. That wouldn't make any sense, because the entire context is about LENDING money to your neighbor with the understanding that he will pay it back.

Psalm 37:21 says, "The wicked man borrows and does not repay, but the righteous one is gracious and giving." So what we have here in Deuteronomy 15:1-2 is someone who was in need, probably poor (according to verses 4, 7, and 11) and needed a money loan. The more well-off financially Israelite lent his poor brother some money.

Notice that Deuteronomy 15:2 says that the holder of the loan is "not to collect anything from his neighbor or brother, because Yahweh's REALEASE OF DEBTS has been proclaimed."

The phrase - release of debts - is the Hebrew word SHEMITAH, meaning "release or remission of debt."

Now, before we move to the next verse, I want everyone to consider something. There are various views among scholars and commentators of how this release of debt works.

1. One view is (and I take this from Benson's commentary) that "this cannot be meant of money lent to those who had borrowed it for the purchase of lands, trade, or other improvements, and who were able to pay; for nothing could have been more absurd than to have extinguished such debts, whereby the borrower was enriched. But it must be understood of money lent to an Israelite who was in poor circumstances, as appears from the verses." So that's one view. Lending to Israelites in poor circumstances, but not for lending, let's say to buy a home.

So, for illustration, let's say I wanted to buy a home for \$20,000 and brother Tim lent me the money to buy the home. I use the \$20,000 to buy the home and then owe Tim his money over a period of time. It really doesn't make sense for me to ever be released from that debt I owe Tim. The loan was given to me to enrich my life. I own the house. If I'm released from paying Tim on the seventh year, I still have my \$20,000 house, I'm able to pay over more time, and Tim is gipped. I agree with Benson's view here. I think this applies to Israelites who are in poor circumstances. Needy. They need a loan to get through hard times. They remain poor, so when the seventh year comes, they are released from their debt. We will see more about the poor in this context as we continue.

2. Here's another view. Listen carefully. Let me quote from Matthew Poole's commentary. Poole believes that the debt is released for THAT YEAR. In other words, during the seventh year, the borrower's debt is suspended, but after the seventh year, he has to pick back up owing (by law) what he borrowed. Poole writes this:

Shall release it; not absolutely and finally forgive it, but forbear it for that year, as may appear,

a. Because the word doth not signify a *total dismissal or acquitting*, but an

intermission for a time, as Exodus 23:11. *He shall not exact it*, as it here follows, i.e. force it from him by course of law or otherwise, to wit, that year, which is easily understood out of the whole context.

(My Comments: So Poole is equating Deuteronomy 15:2 with Exodus 23:11. Exodus 23:11 is definitely speaking of only a one year time span [we know that from Leviticus 25]. I think Poole is saying just like the poor are free to come in and take anything from the volunteer crop on the 7th year, their debt is released during the 7th year. I'm not sure I see the equation here though. Deuteronomy 15:2 seems to me to be saying cancel the debt. Can it really be called a cancellation if it's picked back up after the 7th year is over with? Furthermore, why would any Israelite have a stingy heart towards his poor brother if he would be repaid after the 7th year was finished? *Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 9, 10-11*. Notice all through it's the POOR of the land being discussed. It would make no sense for anyone to be stingy towards his poor brother, if the one lending the money would get paid back anyway after the Shemitah year! The command against stinginess makes the best sense if the loan was remitted on the 7th year and not just suspended.)

Matthew Poole continues...

b. Because the person releasing is called a *creditor*, and his communicating to him what he desires and needs is called lending here and Deu 15:8; whereas it were *giving*, and the person giving it were no *creditor*, but a *donor*, if it were to be wholly forgiven to him.

(My comments: I don't agree. The reason the lender is not called a giver is because for the time up UNTIL the seventh year, the money is lent in order to be paid back. In other words, if I LEND a poor brother \$1,000 dollars during the 1st year, he is to seek to pay me back that \$1,000 during the 6 years leading up to the Shemitah. Remember Psalm 37:21 - "The wicked borrow and pay not again." The poor Israelites would seek to pay back their loan, it's just that sometimes they were unable to pay it in full. Yahweh is here giving some leeway to the poor Israelites.)

Matthew Poole's 3rd point.

c. Because the reason of this law is temporary and peculiar to that year, wherein there being no sowing nor reaping, they were not in a capacity to pay their debts.

(My comments: Poole is making the point that because the poor Israelites weren't allowed to sow or reap during the seventh year they had no way to pay back their loan. Not totally true. Sowing and reaping wasn't the only way to make money or pay back a loan. They could work a job just as easily for paying back a loan during the 7th year (if it were not released by

Yahweh's command in Deuteronomy 15:2. This point doesn't "hold water" with me, because the Israelites, if allowed, could pay back a loan with planting and harvesting as work.)

Matthew Poole's 4th and final point.

d. Because it seems unjust and unreasonable, and contrary to other scriptures, which require men to pay what they borrow, as Psalm 37:21. Yet I deny not that in case of poverty the debt was to be forgiven; but that was not by virtue of this law, but of other commands of God.

(My comments: I disagree with his reasoning here. I do agree that it is unjust to not pay back what one borrows, but that would apply to a poor brother *who made no attempt* to try to pay back his loan during the 6 years that were not the Shemitah. I don't think this is a good point to prove the release wasn't a full remission of the debt. So I don't agree with Matthew Poole's view that the debt was only suspended during the 7th year. I believe it was completely cancelled for the poor brother.)

3. Here's a third view. I'll take this from John Gill's commentary.

"Some think this was only a release of debts for this year, in which there was no plowing nor sowing, and so a poor man could not be in any circumstances to pay his debts, but might be exacted afterwards; but it rather seems to be a full release, so as the payment of them might not be demanded, neither this year nor afterwards..."

(My comments: I think this is the best way to understand the law. The law (1) applied to the poor Israelites in the land, and (2) was a full remission of their debt on the Sabbatical year.)

I also found where Philo (a first century Israelite) commented on the law in Deuteronomy 15:1-2 in his writings titled Special Laws 2, parenthesis 71. I quote from CD Yonge's translation of Philo:

"On every seventh year he ordains a remission of debts (notice that sounds like a cancellation, not just a suspension), assisting the poor (notice he specifically mentions the poor), and inviting the rich to humanity, that so they, from their abundance, giving to those that are in want, may also look forward to receiving services from them in the case of any disaster happening to them."

My point in bringing up this writing in Philo is just to show that he interpreted (in the first century) Deuteronomy 15:1-2 as speaking of loans to poor Israelites, and also a remission or cancellation (FH Colson Translation) of debt rather than a suspension.

I think that's the best way to understand this law in Deuteronomy 15:1-2. In light of all the points I've made, and especially in light of verse 7-11 in the same chapter. Let's look at the next verse here in Deuteronomy 15.

3 You may collect something from a foreigner, but you must forgive whatever your brother owes you.

Now this sermon's purpose is not to give a detailed study of the word foreigner or stranger (Hebrew = nokriy). *I believe* there is more than one definition of the word nokriy in the Hebrew language (maybe I'll do a teaching on that one day). For now, in what we are discussing, it should be apparent that the meaning of foreigner here is non-Israelite.

Verse 2 talked about releasing the debt of your neighbor or brother, and verse 3 goes on to say that you may collect your debt from a foreigner (the context is "during the seventh year").

This is similar to what we read in Deuteronomy 23:19-20 - "Do not charge your brother interest on money, food, or anything that can earn interest. You may charge a foreigner (same word, nokriy) interest, but you must not charge your brother interest, so that the Yahweh your Mighty One may bless you in everything you do in the land you are entering to possess."

Clearly here then, the Israelites were differentiated from the foreigners. They were allowed to charge the foreigners interest (usury), and they were allowed to collect debts from foreigners on the seventh year.

Now, look at verses 4-6.

4 "There will be no poor among you, however, because Yahweh is certain to bless you in the land Yahweh your Mighty One is giving you to possess as an inheritance— 5 if only you obey Yahweh your Mighty One and are careful to follow every one of these commands I am giving you today. 6 When Yahweh your Mighty One blesses you as He has promised you, you will lend to many nations but not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

There will be no poor among you? Didn't we just finish verses 1-3 that talked about the poor among Israel? And what about verses 7-11 that also talked about not being stingy towards your poor brother? There were certainly poor among the Israelites, so how do we understand verse 4?

It could be that the HCSB is not the best translation here. Notice to other translations of the first part of verse 4:

KJV: "Save when there shall be no poor among you..."

JP Green: "Except when there shall be no one in need among you..."

And there are other translations that say the same. The understanding would then be that the law of the remission of debts doesn't apply when Yahweh is blessing the entire nation and there is no poor person among them. That's at least one way to interpret it.

Another way of looking at this text is as "to the end that there be no poor among you." That is one way to translate the Hebrew into English literally. The point would then be that Israel was to keep this law towards their poor brother, to the end (or for the purpose) of their being no one in need among the nation. Once the rich brother lent to the poor brother, the poor brother was no longer in need. This law was for that purpose or to that end or goal.

And then we see verses 5-6 speaking of Yahweh blessing the nation if they are obedient. In other words, all of this will work out wonderfully, if **AS A NATION** you obey my commandments, statutes, and judgments. You will be a nation that lends to many people, instead of borrows, IF you obey my law.

And that kind of brings me to my final point or consideration. How does this all apply to us today?

Much of this land Sabbath law and release of debt law applied to Israel **as a nation**, in the land of Canaan. How are we, if at all, to apply it to ourselves today in different lands, scattered throughout the entire earth under man's government rather than a theonomy?

I mean think about it. Think about the Jubilee year. In the year of Jubilee, the land returned back to the original family tribe. The only way for that to work is (1) everybody is on the same 50 year cycle schedule, and (2) if it's the original land of Canaan that Yahweh apportioned to each of the tribes of Israel. There's no other way to keep that law.

Think about Daniel in Babylon. Do you believe that Daniel while living in Babylon, was able to keep the law of the land Sabbath and Jubilee, and even the release of debts? Certainly he could keep laws that were individualistic. We know he kept the dietary law in Babylon because he refused to eat the king's meat. I'm sure there were many other laws he kept personally, like "don't steal" "don't kill" "don't commit adultery," "don't bow to idols," and I'd say even the keeping of the Sabbath.

But there were other laws that were designed for national Israel.

Maybe, while in Babylon, Daniel had a small garden. My guess is that if he did, he probably didn't plant for more than 6 years in a row on his land. That's my guess. We're not told one way or the other though.

I bring this all up so that we ponder upon this as individuals as we study. I realize as a student of Yahweh's law that there must be a reason Yahweh did not want His land worked for more than 6 years in a row. I realize that the land must rest in order to not get

depleted of its nutrients. It's healthy to rest farm land, so it seems to me that would apply to any garden anywhere, therefore I choose to never plant on my land more than 6 years in a row.

But, is that really keeping the land Sabbath that Yahweh gave in Leviticus 25? After studying this subject, I really don't believe it is. I believe I should continue my practice, (you'll have to decide that for yourself). I think it respects Yahweh's natural law in principle, but I cannot say that it is a complete following of the law in Leviticus 25. I believe Yahweh's law in Leviticus 25 applied to Israel as a nation and to the special land that Yahweh gave to Israelites, and that He brought some of them back to, after the Babylonian captivity.

Does this mean the laws in Leviticus 25 are abolished? Not at all. Were the laws of Leviticus 25 abolished when Daniel and the House of Judah were in Babylon and the House of Israel was in Assyria? Not at all. It's just that certain laws call for certain particulars and parameters.

Do I believe we should lend to our poor brothers? Absolutely. Should our poor brothers pay us back? Absolutely, unless we tell them it is a gift, but there's nothing wrong with lending. A poor brother that borrows money should seek to pay back the money he borrows.

Could we keep track of him owing us for 6 years and then forgive him on *A* seventh year that we count? Sure, we can do that, and that is a good principle that looks to Yahweh's law as a guide. But again, that's not the fullness of Yahweh's Shemitah law in action.

We've got to submit to what Yahweh's law actually says, and then believe it when we read and study it. Many laws are easy to apply individually. I named several earlier and there are several more, but some laws are more difficult because they were given to a nation in a land that was a theonomic government. We can still look to those national laws as a guide and follow their principle individually, but we cannot say that we are observing them in their exactness, as Yahweh originally intended.

I hope that these lessons have been a blessing to you. I've enjoyed studying for each of them. My prayer is that you received a lot, and with all your getting, you get understanding. Continue to meditate upon all of these points in the 4 lessons as Yahweh allows. Go back over them. Listen to them again, and again if needed. Learn what the Scriptures say. Then, next time someone asks you about the Sabbatical year, or even this so-called "mystery of the Shemitah," you will be ready to give them a Biblical answer.