

September 2, 2019

Leviticus 25:1-17

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The biblical book of Leviticus is summed up in terms of the first verse in which “¹The Lord summoned Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying: ²Speak to the people of Israel and say to them:...” Leviticus 1:1-2 It’s a collection of teachings and explanation to the Israelites of how to eliminate the obstacles that could impede their communion, or relationship, with God, who brought them out of Mitzrayim [מִצְרַיִם] the Hebrew word for Egypt, means “straits,” “narrow place,” or “blockages.” It’s a collection of teachings, commandments, or “laws” of how to live in order to fully live, how to relate to God and to each other in order to be fully alive as an image of God (Genesis 1:27).

Observe - שָׁמַר [shamar]: to keep, watch, preserve. It’s related to the notion of a watchman, staying awake, to keep guard at night for protection of oneself, the community, or ones’ captives. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the verb is increasingly connected to the covenant, the notion of keeping God’s covenantal promise/relationship with Israel. Here the use of the word implies that preserving the Sabbath, by observing and keeping the practice is related to keeping the covenant, preserving the holy, special relationship the God known in the community-creating miracle of the Exodus.

Sabbath (Hebrew: שַׁבָּת *sabbath* is a day set aside for rest and worship. According to the Book of Exodus the Sabbath is a day of rest on the seventh day, commanded by God to be kept as a holy day of rest, as God rested from creation [Exodus 20:8-11] as the Israelites were not allowed to rest under the constant work imposed by the gods of Egypt and their oppressive leader the Pharaoh [Deuteronomy 5:12-15].

REST - In Hebrew שַׁבָּתוֹן *shabath*- meaning “rest” in the sense of sabbath observance, sabbatism

Jubilee (Hebrew: יוֹבֵל *yōbelis* the year at the end of seven cycles of shmita (Sabbatical years) and, according to Biblical regulations, had a special impact on the ownership and management of land in the Land of Israel; rabbinic literature mentioning a dispute between the Sages and Rabbi Yehuda over whether it was the 49th year (the last year of seven sabbatical cycles, referred to as the Sabbath's Sabbath), or whether it was the following (50th) year. The Jubilee (“Year of Release”) deals largely with land, property, and property rights. According to Leviticus, slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven, and the mercies of God would be particularly manifest. It’s described in Leviticus 25:8–13.

¹The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: ²Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall **observe** a *sabbath* for the Lord. ³ Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a *sabbath* of complete rest for the land, a *sabbath* for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. ⁵ You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete **REST** for the land. ⁶ You may eat what the land yields during its *sabbath* —you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; ⁷ for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.

⁸ You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. ⁹ Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim *liberty* throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a *jubilee* for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family. ¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a *jubilee* for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. ¹² For it is a *jubilee*; it

shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

¹³ In this year of *jubilee* you shall return, every one of you, to your property. ¹⁴ When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. ¹⁵ When you buy from your neighbor, you shall pay only for the number of years since the *jubilee*; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop years. ¹⁶ If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. ¹⁷ You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God.

Luke 4:16-22

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹⁶ When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the *sabbath* day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
The Lord has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention in this reading?**
- **How is rest the nature of God? How do these scriptures portray creation (or the world) as a place of sabbath rest?**
- **Do you identify sabbath rest as an individual or communal thing? Why?**

liberty : In Hebrew לִירוּת or deror meaning a flowing, free run, liberty, pure. From an unused root (meaning to move rapidly); freedom; hence, spontaneity of outflow, and so clear -- liberty, pure.

The gospel, or book, of Luke tells the story of the life, death, teaching, mission and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Like Matthew, the book of Luke follows the structure and format of Mark. Luke differs in that it has both a prologue that includes a dedication to Theophilus (He/She who loves God) and is believed to be the first of two narrative parts (the second being the book of Acts) which makes a narrative connection between the life of Jesus, that of the disciples, the early church all the way up to the life of those who are reading and hearing the gospel today. Luke takes pain to explain Israelite or Jewish traditions for readers who might not be familiar with them, indicating that it was most likely written for a Gentile (non-Jewish) audience, maybe of Rome.

the year of the Lord's favor."- verses 18-19 are a direct quote from the Septante (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) of Isaiah 61. Could this be referring to the Year of Jubilee, or the Jubilee of Jubilees?

¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;

³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

Isaiah 61:1-3.