

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

May 12th – 10:30 AM Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Discussion



"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai. Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 11

B'Har Leviticus 25:1 - 26:2

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי לֵאמֹר:

Va-y'daber Adonai el-Moshe b'har Sinai lemor.
And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai, saying

דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כִּי תָבוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ

Daber el-b'nei Yisra'el v'amarta alehem ki tavo'u el-ha'arets

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and say unto them, 'When you come into the land,

אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לָכֶם וְשַׁבְּתָה הָאָרֶץ שַׁבָּת לַיהוָה:

asher ani noten lachem v'shav'tah ha-arets Shabat l'Adonai.

which I shall give you, then Sabbath the land, a Sabbath unto the Lord."



The Sabbatical Year - Physical & Spiritual Renewal

As God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai, one of His instructions for His people, when they arrived at their "promised land," was that they would acknowledge His ownership over the land. Every seventh year was to be a "**Shabat Shabaton**," a Sabbath of Sabbaths. Just as God had demanded a weekly Sabbath of rest and spiritual reflection, He required His people every seven years to cease from their agricultural labors and depend solely on His provision for their sustenance. Every seventh year, there was to be a "**sh'mee tah**," a sabbatical year, a release of their hold on God's land. From Deuteronomy 15:1-18, we find there was also a release of debts and a freeing of slaves among their countrymen.

For one year out of every seven, God's land upon which His people sojourned would revert back to His ownership. **Among all of God's commandments for His people that illustrate for the world His distinct relationship with them, His command for His people to rest from their labors (one day each week, one year every seven years, and one year every fifty years), might be the most instructive.** By their obedience, the people would be acknowledging their total dependence on Him. How unnatural of humankind! Every seven years, everyone quit working in the fields for a whole year.

The fields, however, "miraculously" produced enough food on the 6th year to sustain the total population and their animals until they were again allowed to sow crops. While the people ceased their labors, they observed God working for them, growing their crops. Everyone shared equally according to their needs. Even the animals are allowed to freely graze. For one year there was no landowners versus servants. Everyone was equal before their God, whom they acknowledged owned everything. Equality reigned! How unusual! What did the people do with their year of free time? Today, some university professors are given a period of time for a "sabbatical," where they study and write. What would you do with a year "off" every seven years, while all your physical needs were being met by God? Would you take the time to renew your relationship with Him? Would you consider taking some time each Shabbat with God to renew your relationship with Him?

As our physical needs are being met by God, should we not also use this "sabbatical" to renew our spiritual relationship with God? As Jewish and Gentile believers in the finished, atoning work of redemption provided by Messiah, we can recall our journey to faith. Perhaps we should do so during this time of spiritual renewal. This would mean recalling the simple truths of scripture that once shaped our spiritual lives but may not be central to our thinking today. Returning to these central truths of who Messiah is and what He accomplished for us can rejuvenate our love for Him and re-energize our zeal to serve Him. As Messianics, we understand the Levitical model of Messiah as the perfect lamb of God whose shed blood is sufficient to cleanse us from sin and our consciences from dead works (**Hebrews 9:14**). We understand that without the shedding of blood, there is no atonement from sin (**Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22**). The renewed relationship all believers have

with Messiah deepens as we realize that by His death for us, He has set us apart as His "**kedoshim**," His "**holy ones**," to be **His distinct people** among all the people groups of the world (**Hebrews 10:10**).

As non-believers around us observe us going through the same trials of life as they, yet with the reflection of God's Spirit on our faces, they receive the gospel message of Messiah. Surely as our spiritual lives are reawakened and our zeal to be God's bondservants (**Romans 1:1**) is rekindled, we again become enthusiastic in our support of one another and even more deeply committed to bring Yeshua to both Jew and Gentile.

The Year of Jubilee - A Once A Lifetime Miracle

Perhaps only once in a person's lifetime will he participate in the Year of Jubilee. After seven Sabbaths (sevens) of years, on the first day of the seventh month (**Tishri**), the Day of Atonement (**Yom Kippur**), the "**Shofar T'ruah**" (a long, loud blast of the trumpet) was heard throughout the land. The Year of Jubilee proclaimed "**d'ror**," a release (**liberty**) for both the land and its inhabitants. Slaves were set free, and each person returned to occupy his family property. Like a sabbatical year, everyone ceased from their agricultural labors, and allowed God to supply their needs. Following the Sabbatical Year (the 49th year), the Year of Jubilee required an additional year without the normal sowing, reaping, and gathering of crops. Of course that meant that God performed an even greater miracle every fifty years. For on the sixth year of the Sabbatical cycle (the 48th year of the 50 yr. Jubilee cycle), God brought about a tremendous "bumper crop", which supplied the needs of the people until they could again sow and harvest crops in the 51st year. One might consider that after five years of planting and harvesting crops, the land could have become depleted by the 6th year, actually producing less than a normal crop. Yet the working scriptural principle we find is that when we obey God by following His law, God causes the miracle crop to become the normal crop **every 6th year and every 48th year**. Those us today, who follow Godly principles of scripture allow God to work miracles in our daily lives as well. For those who are God's distinct, holy people, God supplies all our needs...sometimes in creative ways through others sometimes in ways that can only be deemed miraculous. And why not in ways miraculous? After all, as is stated by God as our basis for obedience (vs. 17 and 55), "**Ani Adonai elohechem**," "I am the Lord."

The second primary thrust of the year of Jubilee is a return of the people to their tribal, clan, and family land. With only a few exceptions, "On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property" (vs.13). During the 50 year cycle, most property could have been "sold" to pay debts or for business reasons. In actuality, though, land was being leased rather than sold for up to 50 years. Perhaps only once in a person's lifetime, he might reclaim his property and return to his land. Why would God institute such a principle on a regularly occurring basis? Possibly because it could be seen by His people as the outworking of the principle that God owns everything. We humans tend to hold tightly to our possessions. Yet from God's prospective, He owns everything (vs. 23). We are merely aliens and sojourners occupying His land for a time. Because the land reverted back to its original owners every 50 years, God's people were always aware that God was in control over their daily lives. If they desired to "sell" their land, they can only sell it for the value of the crops it would produce until the Year of Jubilee, when it would revert back to its original owners. Therefore the total financial ruin of the debtor was eliminated, enabling all God's people to live together before Him in liberty and dignity without dynasties of wealthy, land-owners versus poor, slave tenant-farmers. The object lesson for us **today** is that we should hold loosely God's possessions that He has allowed us to use for a time. **Rather than seeking to acquire wealth, we should seek to acquire God's wisdom. Rather than seeking earthly property, we should instead seek to do God's will on earth. Rather than seeking to meet only our own needs, we might ask God how to meet the needs of others both spiritually and through the giving of tsdakah (charity).**

The last scriptural principle I would emphasize from this Torah portion on the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee is that a miracle year of rest and reflection only occurred as a result of the obedience of God's people, keeping His commandments and working for 6 years. Then came a year of rest on the 7th year. We appreciate our weekly Sabbath rest only because we have worked for 6 days

preceding it. So let us do our due diligence each day of the work week, honoring our God through our work, so that we can appreciate the weekly day of worship and rest He has provided us.

Shabbat Shalom

