

Through the Bible — Leviticus 23-27 — 3/8/2023

Introduction

- Today we are going to talk about the Biblical Holy Days, an eye for an eye, the sabbatical years and the year of Jubilees, and some other topics.

God's Appointed Times

- Leviticus 23:1-2 -- *Moadim*
- [PPT] These are times that Hashem has appointed as holy days, days set aside for worshiping Him and designed to show us what He is doing in the grand scheme of history.
- The *Moadim* form a year-long cycle and are designed to teach us about the nature of God, how He works in the world, and what His plan is for humanity.
- These holidays were given to the Jewish people, the children of Israel, and are integral to their covenant relationship with God. Each *moed* is connected to an important time in the history and life of Israel and is an annual reminder of how important that covenant relationship is to God.
- For those of us who believe in the Messiah, the *moadim* take on even more meaning, because each one of these holy days is also connected to an important event in the redemptive and restorative plan of God. We will talk about these deeper meanings as we go.
- The *moadim* bring the spiritual into the physical, they help us bridge the gap between those two worlds. We are physical beings, and the systems and the cycles of the holidays help us connect with God and understand Him better.
- There are some common patterns that you'll see in the *moadim*.
 - The first day of the festivals (and last day of Pesach and Sukkot) are days with many of the standard Sabbath regulations, which we will talk about in a minute.
 - מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה *melechet avodah* = normally translated "laborious work"
 - However, the main difference between these holidays and the weekly Sabbath is that God removed the prohibition on cooking on these days.
 - Additional (*mussaf*) offerings are added to the normal daily offerings on each day of the holiday.
 - Three of these holidays (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) are pilgrimage festivals: days on which the men of Israel are obligated to appear before God in the Tabernacle/Temple.

Every Day is Special

- Numbers 28:3-8
- [flour and oil]

- A continual burnt offering (tamid) every day, every morning and evening:
 - a male lamb without blemish
 - 1/10th ephah (a.k.a. one omer, about 1.6 kg / 3.5 pounds) of fine flour
 - 1/4 hin (about 1 liter / 30 fluid ounces) of pure oil
 - 1/4 hin (about 1 liter / 30 fluid ounces) of strong drink
- Nothing was offered before the morning *Tamid* or after its evening counterpart. Overnight they would burn the leftovers of the final offerings, giving us three specific times every day when worship was conducted, regardless of whether other offerings were offered in between.
- This עֲלֵה תָּמִיד *olah tamid*, the continual offering, is repeated 14 times in Numbers 28-29.
 - Mishnah, Zevachim 10:1 – “Any offering that is more frequent than another precedes the other offering. Therefore, the daily offerings precede the additional offerings, which are sacrificed only on certain days.”
 - This refers not only to the order of events, but also to the importance. These daily offerings were the most important offerings.
- It is important to note that animal sacrifices were just one part of worship in the Temple. The Talmud says that prayer is the most important service to God.
 - Taanit 2a:11 -- “To love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart” (Deuteronomy 11:13). What is the service of God that is performed in the heart? You must say that this is referring to prayer.
- David also connects these three services in the temple with prayer:
 - Psalm 55:17 -- Evening and morning and at noon, I will complain and moan, and He will hear my voice.
- When the first temple was destroyed, the Jewish people continued to pray at these three times:
 - Daniel 6:10 -- Now when Daniel learned that the document was signed, he entered his house (and in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and offering praise before his God, just as he had been doing previously.
- The Disciples continued following those times of prayer, in the Temple, with the rest of the Jews in Jerusalem:
 - Acts 2:46 -- Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple.
 - Acts 3:1 -- Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. [That is the afternoon prayer]
- The *Didache* (*The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations*) instructs us to pray three times per day, as well.

Sabbath

- Leviticus 23:3

- Shabbat always comes first.
- The text in this passage does not go into detail about how to keep the Sabbath because it is covered in more detail elsewhere. We also don't have time to go into a ton of detail here, but I want to point out a few things.
- First and foremost, Shabbat is a sign of the covenant between Israel and God:
 - Exodus 31:12–14 -- Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Now as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You must keep My Sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, so that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. Therefore you are to keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you.
- We have talked about covenants before. What are the signs of the covenants before the covenant at Sinai?
 - Noah = rainbow
 - Abraham = circumcision
- **[PPT]** The Hebrew word for "work" here, and elsewhere in relation to Sabbath work, is מְלָאכָה *melachah*. This word for work is different than the normal Hebrew word for "work" (עֲבֹדָה *avodah*) and is only used in connection to the Sabbath and to the creative work done in the building of the Tabernacle.
- As a matter of fact, right before God gives the instructions to the Israelites about the building of the Tabernacle in Exodus 35, He starts off by warning them not to do any *melachah* on the Sabbath.
- Because of that, since the time of Moses, *melachah* has been understood to refer to the creative activities used in the building of the Tabernacle.
- **[PPT]** This is the list of 39 major categories of *melachah* based on tabernacle building actions, and all of the restrictions on the Sabbath fall within those categories.
 - In case you think that this Sabbath stuff is not important now, I'd like to point out that Jesus actually upheld these obligations and restrictions. He didn't debate about whether the Sabbath restrictions were valid, only about when it was acceptable to break those restrictions. There was (and still is) a concept called פְּקוּחַ נֶפֶשׁ *pikuach nefesh*, "watching over a soul," that someone is obligated to break any of these commandments if someone's life is in danger. Jesus' argument was that healing people was an acceptable form of *pikuach nefesh*, equating healing the body to saving someone's life.
- The Sabbath is Saturday.
 - Shabbat is the 7th day of the week, the day on which God rested from the work of creation, and Shabbat is and always has been Saturday.
 - In the Bible, the day begins at sundown, not at midnight, so Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday.

- This is important! The Sabbath has not changed since the time of Creation. The people of God have tracked the seventh day throughout time, despite calendar changes, wars, apocalypses, and persecutions.
- It is not uncommon for Christians to spiritualize the concept of Sabbath, to encourage believers to take "a sabbath" day every week. However, there is no such thing as "a sabbath," there is **[PPT]** "the Sabbath." The Sabbath is actually the only day in the Bible that is given its own name.
- Sabbath is a delight, because God invites us to join Him in His rest, to rest with Him on His rest day.
- Even more than just an invitation to join Hashem and His People on His day of rest, our willingness to join with the Jewish people in honoring God's Sabbath acts as a sign of the future kingdom, a preparation for the day when we will keep it in the Kingdom of Messiah.
 - **[Read Isaiah 56:3–8]**
 - Isaiah 66:22–23
 - “For just as the new heavens and the new earth, Which I make, will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “So will your descendants and your name endure. And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from Sabbath to Sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the LORD.
 - The Mishnah (Tamid 7:4) describes this future Kingdom of Messiah as "the day that will be entirely Shabbat and rest for everlasting life."
 - The writer of Hebrews says:
 - Hebrews 4:9–11 -- Consequently, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let’s make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience.
 - We get to live in that rest today, through the grace of our Messiah, not just metaphorically, but physically. Remember, we are physical beings who need physical rest.

Pesach and Unleavened Bread

- We talked about Passover extensively in our discussion on Exodus 1-13, and I would encourage you to go listen to that teaching for more details.
- Also, come to Venture's Passover Seder on April 11th to learn more and to experience the Passover yourself!
- Leviticus 23:5–8
- **[PPT]** Passover (Pesach) is technically just the name for the first day of this week-long holiday. The actual holiday, as you can see here, is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or *Chag HaMatzot*. Nowadays, most people just call the whole week Passover.

- The celebration lasts a week, but preparations begin the day before the holiday actually starts.
- On the afternoon of Nisan 14 on the Hebrew calendar, around 3pm, the priests in the temple slaughter all of the lambs that are needed for the Passover celebration. Each family, or a small group of families, sends someone with a lamb to the temple, and the lamb is slaughtered as a thanksgiving offering by the priest. Then the person who brought the lamb takes it back home (or to the public roasting pits outside the temple courts set up for this event) and roasts the lamb whole.
- Then, after sundown, the family gathers around the table, eats the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and tells the story of how God redeemed them from slavery.
- Pesach commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people out of bondage in Egypt. It is the first festival of the year, and is, as we know, closely related to the death of Messiah.
- It is a pilgrimage festival, one of the three festivals on which it is required for adult males to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem if they are able to do so.
- The first day and last days of the Festival are sabbath-like days when *melachah* cannot be performed, except cooking.
- Passover is the prototype for the future redemption. Just as God redeemed His people from Egypt, He will do it again in the future.
- Let's talk about the three main elements of the Passover celebration.

The Importance of Passover

- **[READ Exodus 12:14–20]** God tells the people of Israel how important Passover is.
- Note that Hashem twice tells the Jewish people: "you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance" (verses 14 and 17). That phrase is **חֻקַּת עוֹלָם**, *chukat olam*, a prescribed task that applies forever.
- In Exodus 12:42, he says again, "this night is for the LORD, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations."
- And in Exodus 12:47, "All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this."
- These obligations to keep the Passover, and to remove the *chametz* from the home, and to only eat *matzah* for seven days still apply to Jewish people today, even Jewish believers in Jesus.
- Passover is a very important part of the redemptive plan of Hashem.
- Yeshua died on the afternoon of Nissan 14, at the same time that the priests were sacrificing lambs in preparation for the Passover meal. So, the apostles compared Yeshua to a Passover lamb.
- Like the Children of Israel in Egypt took refuge under the blood of the Passover lamb, we disciples of Yeshua take refuge under the merit of his sacrifice.

- Jesus used the Passover seder, the meal eaten on the first evening of Passover, as a teaching aid to help us understand his sacrifice, and it is within the context of Passover that he said, "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19)
- So, the Passover Seder is the context for the Lord's Supper, and the most appropriate time for us to commemorate that reminder of our Master's death. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:23, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He also took **the cup after supper**, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat **this bread** and drink **the cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."
- We Gentiles are not obligated to keep the Passover, but we are encouraged to do so, as well.
- Paul encouraged the Gentile disciples in Corinth to celebrate the feast of Passover.
 - 1 Corinthians 5:6–8 -- Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven [*se'or*] leavens [*chametz*] the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven [*se'or*] so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened [*matzah*]. For Christ our Passover [*pesach lamb*] also has been sacrificed. **Therefore let's celebrate the feast**, not with old leaven [*se'or*], nor with the leaven [*se'or*] of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread [*matzah*] of sincerity and truth.
- As disciples of the Jewish Messiah, we should be encouraged to celebrate Passover and to memorialize our Master's sacrifice as part of that celebration.

The Omer Offering

- Leviticus 23:9–14
- This holiday is sometimes called the Festival of Firstfruits, but technically that's another name for Pentecost, which we will talk about in a minute. It is more accurate to call this the Omer Offering.
- History and life of Israel:
 - The Omer is offered on Nissan 16, the day after the first day of Passover. (Side note: There was a difference of opinion between the Sadducees and the Pharisees in the time of Jesus about the timing of this offering, but we can talk about that when we talk about the Gospels.)
 - On this day, the people bring the first harvest of their grain (typically barley ripens first) to offer it to HaShem. It was prohibited to eat any of the new harvest until after this offering was given.
 - The priest waved the grain sheaves before the Lord in front of the altar, then processed sheaves of barley, separating out the grain and grinding it into flour. It

had to total 2 omers (about 7 lbs) of flour. Then that was mixed with oil and burned on the altar, along with 1 liter of wine.

- Hashem's Restoration Plan:
 - Messiah rose from the dead on the 16th of Nissan, the day when the Omer offering of first fruits was brought before HaShem.
 - Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:20–23, "But the fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead, **the first fruits of those who are asleep**. For since by a man death came, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming...

Counting the Omer

- Leviticus 23:15–16
- **[PPT]** Hashem says to count out the days between Passover and the next holiday Shavuot, beginning with the day when the Omer offering was brought.
- We are to count 7 weeks of 7 days each, a total of 49 days.
- During this time, it is traditional to focus on preparing our hearts for the giving of the Torah, just like the children of Israel prepared for the giving of the Torah when they approached Mount Sinai.
- In the *siddur* (prayer book) the count for each day is connected with two of the *sefirot*, the emanations or expressions of HaShem, elements of His character that we focus on each day.

Shavuot

- Leviticus 23:15-21
- This festival is called the festival of Weeks (*Shavuot*). The English name Pentecost derives from the Greek word *pentecoste*, which means "fiftieth day."
- History and life of Israel:
 - This day is a Sabbath rest day, with food preparation being allowed. It is also one of the three pilgrimage festivals.
 - The festival memorializes the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, which happened 50 days after the original Passover in Egypt.
 - This festival is also connected with the story of Ruth, because right after God gives the instructions about how to celebrate Shavuot and offer the first fruits of your wheat harvest, in Leviticus 23:22 Go commands the Israelites not to harvest the corners of their fields, which is a key element in the story of Ruth. Also, tradition tells us that King David was born and also died on Shavuot.
 - It is also traditional to eat a meal on the evening of Shavuot that is only dairy, with no meat, and to stay up all night studying the Torah, ending the night by praying the morning prayers and reading the Ten Commandments.

- The giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai was a special time, accompanied by signs and wonders.
- [PPT] Exodus 20:18 tells us:
 - וְכָל־הָעָם רָאִים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת וְאֶת־הַלְפָּידִם
 - And all the people saw the voices and the torches...
- Most English translations try to make that easier to read by saying something like:
 - And all the people were watching *and hearing* the thunder and the lightning flashes, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it all*, they trembled and stood at a distance. (NASB)
- But the ancient sages understood the text literally, that the people of Israel *saw* the voices, and saw torches of fire.
- The sages also say that "the voices" means that the words that HaShem spoke from Mount Sinai divided into the 70 languages of the 70 nations of the earth.
 - b. Shabbat 99b -- The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught with regard to the verse: "Behold, is My word not like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that shatters a rock?" (Jeremiah 23:29). Just as this hammer breaks a stone into several fragments, so too, each and every utterance that emerged from the mouth of the Holy One, Blessed be He, [at Sinai] divided into seventy languages.
 - Exodus Rabbah 5:9 -- And it is stated (Exodus 20:15), "And all the people saw the voices" - it is not written, "voice," here, but rather, "voices." Rabbi Yochanan said, "The voice would go out and divide into seventy voices for the seventy tongues, so that all the nations would hear."
- Hashem's Restoration Plan:
 - I'm sure you all see the connection here between what the sages say happened at the giving of the Torah on Shavuot and the giving of the Holy Spirit on Shavuot in Acts 2:1-4:
 - When the day of Shavuot had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And tongues that looked like fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and a tongue rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out.
 - Just as the people of Israel "saw the voices and the torches," the disciples saw and heard the wind and the flames, and the Word of HaShem went out in all of the 70 languages of the world.
 - Sidebar:
 - The text here in Acts 2:1 literally says they were together "in the it" or colloquially "in the place". Later, verse 41 says: "So then, those who had

received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”

- Where in the city of Jerusalem would there have been room for 3,000 people to not only hear Peter speaking but also get baptized? The Temple! Look at what verse 46 says: "Day by day continuing with one mind in the Temple..."
- Also, note the connection Di made a few weeks ago between the 3,000 people who died not long after Shavuot at Mount Sinai because of the sin of the golden calf, and the 3,000 who came into the Kingdom as a result of the giving of the Spirit on Shavuot 1400 years later.

Rosh Hashanah

- Leviticus 23:23–24
- **[PPT]** Between Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah are the summer months, with no holidays.
- This first Fall holiday actually has two names: *Yom Teruah* (The Day of Trumpets) and *Rosh Hashanah* (the Head of the Year).
- It is the beginning of the civil calendar in Judaism, so it is on this day that the year number changes.
- There is also a modern tradition of eating apples and honey as representation of the desire for a sweet new year.
- However, Rosh Hashanah is not just a new year’s celebration. It actually is the beginning of a 10-day period of repentance called the High Holy Days, or The 10 Days of Awe. During those 10 days, and actually from the beginning of the entire month before Rosh Hashanah, the focus of the entire Jewish community is on repentance, culminating in the Day of Atonement. The High Holy Days are the most important days in the Biblical calendar.
- **[shofar]** The "trumpet" blast is actually the blast of a shofar, a ram's horn.
- The most important part of this holiday is hearing the sound of the shofar blast.
- In our passage this week we are told that the holiday is "a reminder by blowing of the shofar," but a reminder of what? The rabbis point to many references and uses of the shofar in the Bible, all of which this holiday can remind us of:
 - **Repentance:** The shofar blasts that occur on through the month of Elul and on Rosh Hashanah are, of course, a call to repentance.
 - **Coronation:** The shofar was blown on the king's coronation day
 - **Sinai:** The shofar blast was sounded at Mount Sinai, when the Torah was given.
 - **Warning:** Ezekiel 33:4 says, "then someone who hears the sound of the horn but does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head."
 - **The Temple's Destruction:** Jeremiah lamented, "My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot keep silent, Because, my soul, you have heard The sound of the trumpet, The alarm of war. Disaster

upon disaster is proclaimed, For the whole land is devastated; Suddenly my tents are devastated, And my curtains in an instant.

- **The Binding of Isaac:** Genesis 22:13 tells us about a ram. "Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in the place of his son."
- **Fear:** Amos 3:6 says, "If a trumpet is blown in a city, will the people not tremble?"
- **Judgment:** The sages describe Rosh Hashanah like the end of a heavenly fiscal year, when the balance is weighed, and the deeds of the people are written down in the books of judgment. If someone is completely righteous, their name is then written in the Book of Life. If they are completely wicked their name is written in the Book of Death. For the rest of us, over the next ten days the heavenly court examines the deeds, and on Yom Kippur our name is written in one of those books. The Ten Days of Awe are a chance for us to sway the heavenly court's decision through prayer, repentance, and acts of charity. The shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanah remind us of the coming judgment.
- **Ingathering of the Jewish Exiles:** Isaiah 27:13 says, "It will come about also on that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem."
- **Resurrection:** Isaiah 18:3 says, "All you who inhabit the world, and live on earth, As soon as a flag is raised on the mountains, you will see it, And as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear it." The rabbis interpret the phrase "all you who inhabit the world" as referring to those who are dead, and that when the shofar is blown to gather the exiles, the dead will rise, too.
- Hashem's Restoration Plan:
 - The Feast of Trumpets has some very clear connections to the future redemption and the return of the Messiah.
 - Yeshua prophesied about that return in Matthew 24:29-31, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels **with A GREAT TRUMPET BLAST**, and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."
 - Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:51–52, "Behold, I am telling you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

- Revelation 11:15 also tells us about that last trumpet, "Then the **seventh angel sounded**; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah; and He will reign forever and ever.""
- One very important picture we have from the High Holy Days is the picture of the Book of Life.
 - The first mention we see of the Book of Life is in Exodus 32:32-33, where Moses is interceding for the people of Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf:
 - "...But now, if You will forgive their sin, very well; but if not, please wipe me out from Your book which You have written!" However, the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will wipe him out of My book..."
 - The Ramban, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman, a leading medieval Jewish scholar from the 1200's CE, wrote this explanation of this verse:
 - In my opinion [the interpretation of the verse is as follows]: Moses said, "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin in Thine mercies [— well and good]; but if not, blot me out in their place from the book of life, and I will share their punishment," it being similar to what Scripture says, *But he was wounded because of our transgressions, he was crushed because of our iniquities; the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his stripes we were healed.* And the Holy One, blessed be He, answered Moses: "I will erase from My book [of life] whosoever sinned, but not you, for you have not sinned."
 - David talks about the Book of Life in Psalm 69:28, where he complains about those who hate him without cause and are afflicting him:
 - May they be wiped out of the book of life, and may they not be recorded with the righteous.
 - And Daniel carries on the theme of the books of judgment in a vision of the future given to him by HaShem.
 - **[READ Daniel 7:9-14]**
 - The Talmud, in Rosh Hashanah 16b, explains about the Book of Life:
 - R' Kaspodai said in the name of R' Yochanan: Three books are opened on Rosh Hashana. One of absolute sinners, one of absolute tzadikim, and one of beinonim (in-betweeners). ... Absolute tzadikim--written and sealed immediately for life. Absolute sinners--written and sealed immediately for death. Beinonim are held in the balance and stand from Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur. ... If they succeed--written for life. If they do not succeed--written for death.
 - By the time of the Apostles, this picture of the Book of Life and the judgement at the end of days was firmly established in Jewish theology. John the Apostle sees the Book of Life play an extensive role in the Revelation given to him by God.
 - In Jesus' letter to the congregation at Sardis, He says, "The one who overcomes will be clothed the same way, in white garments; and I will not

erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Revelation 3:5)

- About Satan, John says, "All who live on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written since the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slaughtered." (Revelation 13:8)
- And the culmination of the judgement vision comes in Revelation 20:11-15, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, **and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books,** according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them; and they were judged, each one of them according to their deeds. Then Death and Sheol were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."
- After the judgment, John sees a vision of the new earth, with the new city of Jerusalem at its center, and he says, "and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:27)
- The prayer services throughout the 10 Days of Awe includes this petition:
 - In the book of life, blessing, peace and abundant maintenance, good decrees, salvations and condolences, may we be remembered and inscribed before You; we and all Your people, the House of Israel for a good life and peace.
- That is an auspicious prayer for us to pray during the days of awe that lead up to the Day of Judgment.

Yom Kippur

- Leviticus 23:26–32
- Ten days after the trumpet blasts of Yom Teruah, after the call to repentance has been clearly made, we come to the Day of Atonement.
- On the Day of Atonement the people of Israel are commanded to keep a complete fast. The phrase "humble yourselves" is actually better translated as "afflict your souls," and is interpreted to mean that the day is to be a complete fast: no food and no beverages for the full 25 hours from sundown to the next sundown, but also refraining from washing, bathing, grooming, anointing oneself with perfumes, and even brushing your teeth.

- The rituals that were conducted in the Temple on the Day of Atonement are described in detail in the Mishnah, tractate Yoma. It is only 8 chapters long, but a very interesting read if you ever get the chance. (https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Yoma.1?lang=en)
- The holiday is called Yom Kippur, but the word *kippur* does not just mean atonement or forgiveness. It has the sense of purging or cleansing from us the things that offend God and that keep us from being able to enter His presence. Without purging those things from our souls, we cannot draw near to God.
- An important point to know about the Day of Atonement is that the sacrifices offered on this day were not for just one person. These sacrifices were offered on behalf of the nation of Israel, as a corporate entity. Atonement is not just personal, it is corporate, and God judges the people for corporate sin, too. We see that judgement throughout the prophets.
- On the Day of Atonement, two goats were chosen and brought into the temple. Using a system of lots, one of the goats was chosen to be sacrificed to Hashem as a sin offering, and the other was chosen to "go to Azazel." The Mishnah says that if the lot for Azazel came up in the priest's right hand, the people took it as a bad omen.
- The Septuagint translated the Hebrew word *azazel* as "one carrying evil away." This has been brought into English in the concept of a "scapegoat."
- After drawing the lots, the high priest would tie a piece of red yarn to the horns of the goat that was being sent to Azazel to differentiate it and would tie a piece of the same yarn above the door of the temple.
- **[PPT]** Then the High Priest would sacrifice the other goat as a sin offering and would enter the tabernacle with its blood. The high priest would splash the blood seven times on the ark of the covenant, **[PPT]** seven times on the curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and seven times on the altar of incense inside the temple.
- These rituals provided the purgation needed to allow God's presence to remain in the Temple for another year among the people of Israel.
 - This idea of purification may not make a lot of sense outside the context of the spiritual and ritual purity laws that the Torah requires, but once you understand those purity rituals there are a ton of things that make much more sense both in the Torah and even in the New Testament.
 - If you are interested in digging into that more, I encourage you to sign up for the Group I am leading with Pastor Brandon called Context. I'll be talking about ritual purity laws at some point this spring, along with a bunch of other contextual topics that make the Scriptures come alive and make much more sense.
- Once he was done cleansing the temple with the blood of the sin offering goat, he would go back out to the scapegoat. Leviticus 16:21 says the high priest will "confess over it all the wrongdoings of the sons of Israel and all their unlawful acts regarding all their sins; and he shall place them on the head of the goat."
- Once the sins of the people have been laid on the head of the goat, it is led out into the wilderness.

- According to the Mishnah, in the time of the Second Temple the goat was not merely released in the wilderness, because then it could wander back into town and might be mistakenly eaten or slaughtered as a sacrifice. The scapegoat was not a sacrifice, it was supposed to wander forever in a dry place, with the sins of the nation on its head, separate from the holiness of God and His Temple.
- So, the Mishnah says that the priest tasked with leading the scapegoat out into the wilderness would take a piece of the red yarn and tie it to a rock, then "release" the goat over the side of a cliff, where it would die from the fall.
- As the goat fell to its death, the red yarn on top of the cliff and the red yarn hanging above the doors of the Temple would turn white indicating that the rituals the Torah required had been efficacious, and purification of the Temple had been achieved for another year.
- A common misunderstanding in Christian circles is that the sacrifice on Yom Kippur somehow took away sin before Jesus came, but after he came it stopped working that way. However, if that were true, then Jesus changed the unchanging Torah of God. The problem is that we don't understand what the rituals of Yom Kippur are doing.
- When you read the Torah's description of these rituals you see that the Yom Kippur rituals are about cleansing, about purifying the temple from the things that make it impossible for God to dwell there. Leviticus 16:16 says, "He [the High Priest] shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their unlawful acts regarding all their sins; and he shall do so for the tent of meeting which remains with them in the midst of their impurities."
- Remember, this is a corporate sacrifice, a sacrifice for the entire nation of Israel, do cleanse the Temple so that God can continue to dwell among them.
- The blood of the sacrifice itself does not take away the sin. The writer of Hebrews (10:3-4) explains that it has always been "impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." Hebrews says in the Yom Kippur sacrifices we have "a **reminder** of sins every year."
- The sacrifice of the goat in the temple is a cleansing process, and a visceral reminder to us individually that the sins we harbor are what separate us from God, what keep Him from being able to dwell in us. Like the temple, we need to be purified, cleansed of all the things that separate us from God, and just like the people of Israel in the desert or later in the Temple, our purification comes through the grace of God as a reaction to our pure-hearted repentance.
- Leviticus 16:29-30 makes the connection super clear: (paraphrased) Hashem says, afflict your souls, that is, repent, because Yom Kippur is the day that you will be cleansed from your sins.
- So, what did Jesus' sacrifice do?
- The Messiah provides heavenly cleansing for us. His atonement of our sin did not happen here on earth in the realm of space and time, His cleansing happened in the heavenly temple, the place outside of time and space. He entered the Holy of Holies in heaven, the throne room of Hashem, and applied the merit of his own righteousness as

a sacrifice to accomplish atonement. The difference is that in doing that purification with His own blood in that place outside of time, he provided a permanent purification from our sins in the heavenly court, thus providing a way for us to enter the presence of the Master of the Universe, with our sin no longer in the way.

- He is also our scapegoat, the one on whom our sins were placed, who was sent to the ultimate wilderness, the grave (*Sheol*).
- There is actually a prayer in the traditional Yom Kippur service that is said to have been written by the Apostle Peter. It is called *Oz Milifnei Beresheet* (based on the first few words of the prayer in Hebrew).
 - Before He created anything, He established His dwelling—the lofty armory He established from the beginning, before any people or language. He inspired His divine presence to rest there, that those who err may be guided into the path of rectitude. Though their wickedness be flagrant, yet has He caused repentance to precede it, when He said, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean.” Though He should be exceedingly angry with His people, yet will the Holy One not awaken all His wrath. We have been cut off until now through our evil deeds, yet you, our Rock, have not brought us low.
 - Our righteous Messiah is departed from us: horror has seized us, and we have none to justify us. He has borne the yoke of our iniquities and our transgression, and is wounded because of our transgression. He bears our sins on his shoulder, that we may find pardon for our iniquities. We shall be healed by His wounds, at the time that the Eternal will create Him as a new creature. Bring Him up from the circle of the earth! Raise Him up from Seir, to assemble us the second time on Mount Lebanon [i.e., Jerusalem], by the hand of Yinon.
 - [According to Sanhedrin 98b, “Yinon” is the Messiah’s name based on Psalm 72:17, which could be translated, “May His name be forever; before the servant, Yinon is his name; men will bless themselves by him, all the nations will praise him.”].
- Yom Kippur, and the rituals and practices related to cleansing, purgation, and atonement it provides, are a powerful annual reminder of our need to repent and of the power of the Messiah's work of cleansing. While the atonement made by the Messiah in the heavenlies secures us for eternal life, we are still very much living in this world, marred by imperfection, still prone to sin, and still in need to repentance and reconciliation.
- 1 John 1:9–10 -- “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”
- The good news, the Gospel, is relevant to all of us, even those of us who are already disciples of the Master: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”
- Now that we have repented, let's move on to the Kingdom.

Sukkot

- Leviticus 23:33–36, 23:39–44
- Five days after the Day of Atonement, a very different holiday begins.
- **[PPT]** A *sukkah* is a booth or a hut, so the Festival of Sukkot [plural form of *sukkah*] is a reminder of the how the Children of Israel lived in booths or huts in the desert after the Exodus.
- The Torah commands the Jewish people to live in a sukkah for seven days. This means at least eating meals in the sukkah, but some people also sleep in their sukkah.
- Deuteronomy 16:13–15 -- 3 “You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths for seven days when you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; 14 and **you shall rejoice** in your feast, you, your son and your daughter, and your male and female slaves, and the Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow who are in your towns. 15 For seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be **altogether joyful**.”
- We learn from these passages **when** the festival of Sukkot is supposed to happen (15th day of the 7th month, and last 8 full days), **why** it is supposed to be celebrated (to commemorate the sustenance of Hashem in the wilderness), and **what** we are supposed to do during the festival.
 - 1. Rejoice! Be happy! Be "altogether joyful"!
 - 2. Build a sukkah, and if you are Jewish, "dwell" in it
 - 3. Take specific fruit and branches and celebrate with them.
- Sukkot is a harvest festival.
 - The Pilgrim festival of Thanksgiving could have been based on Sukkot. Before coming to the New World, the Pilgrims lived for a short time among Sephardic Jews in Holland.
- Sometimes in the scriptures Sukkot is just called "the feast" or "the festival" because it is the most extravagant festival of the calendar, and the capstone of the entire festival cycle.
- And extravagant it was! As we saw, the Torah commands the Jewish people to rejoice on Sukkot.
 - It is called *zeman simchateinu*, "The time of our rejoicing."
 - The sages used to say, "He who has not seen the rejoicing during the festival... in the Temple has never seen true joy in all his life."
 - While the people came from wherever they lived to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival, they also came with their tithes for the year. And Hashem told them to use those tithes to purchase things that would help them celebrate!
 - Deuteronomy 14:26 -- And you may spend the money on whatever your heart desires: on oxen, sheep, wine, other strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.

- Solomon dedicated the temple on Sukkot: 2 Chronicles 7:8–10 -- So Solomon held **the feast** at that time for **seven days**, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly that came from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. And **on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly**, because they held the dedication of the altar for seven days, and the feast for seven days. Then **on the twenty-third day of the seventh month** he sent the people to their tents, **rejoicing and happy** in heart because of the goodness that the LORD had shown to David, to Solomon, and to His people Israel.
- Festival of Clouds
 - Sometimes called the Festival of Clouds because the Aramaic word used in the Targums in place of the word *sukkah* is *metalaya*, which can also be translated as "clouds."
 - This is connected to the cloud that led the people of Israel through the wilderness.
 - It is also related to the prophecies Isaiah makes about the age to come.
 - Isaiah 4:5–6 -- 5 then the LORD will create over the entire area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a **cloud** by day, and smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. 6 And there will be a **shelter [sukkah]** to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.
 - Notice a connection here? What event in the life of Yeshua involved clouds and sukkot?
 - Mt 17:1–8 -- 1 Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James, and his brother John, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. 2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter responded and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If You want, I will make three tabernacles here: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!" 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. 7 And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Get up, and do not be afraid." 8 And raising their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.
 - Yeshua's return: Matthew 26:64 -- Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- Festival of the Nations
 - In Numbers 29 Hashem instructs the priests to offer 70 bulls on the altar during Sukkot. The rabbis interpret these 70 bulls as an offering for the 70 nations of the earth.

- It is also called that because of the prophecies that connect it to the end of days, when the nations will join with the Jewish people and celebrate Sukkot.
 - Zechariah 14:16–19 -- Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of armies, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of armies, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.
- b. Avodah Zarah 3a -- [In the end of days] The gentiles say before Him: Master of the Universe, give us the Torah afresh and we will perform its mitzvot. The Holy One, Blessed be He, says to them in response: ... The opportunity for performing mitzvot has already passed, and it is now too late to ask to perform them. But even so, I have an easy mitzva to fulfill, and its name is sukka; go and perform it.
- Gog and Magog
 - also related to Sukkot through the connection to Zechariah 14
- The Sukkah itself
 - The Sukkah walls can be made of pretty much anything you want, as long as they are stable.
 - Most important thing is the *schach*, the covering, which has to be made of detached vegetation/foilage. Bamboo is pretty common.
 - We beautify (*hiddur*) the mitzvah by decorating the sukkah.
- **[PPT]** Arba Minim = Four species
 - Fruit of splendid trees (etrog/citron), branches of palm trees, a thick-leaved branch (myrtle), and willows of the brook.
 - Etrog looks like a heart, palm is shaped like a spine, myrtles are shaped like an eye, willows are shaped like a mouth. We gather together the different parts of our body to worship Hashem.
 - When you shake the *arba minim*, think of the Unity of the people of the world.
 - Possibly intended as building materials (see Nehemiah 8:14-18, where he instructs the people to use these to make their sukkot).
 - Not a sacrifice, so the wave offering can be done today!
- Guests / Ushpizin
 - Torah obligates us to provide for the poor during the festival. That led to the tradition of inviting guests (Aramaic = *ushpizin*) into your sukkah.
 - The liturgy includes invitations for seven different guests, one each night: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David.
- Ceremony of the House of the Water Pouring

- The celebration in the Temple included a water libation ceremony. At the pinnacle of the festivities each morning, after a full night of festivities and after the morning prayers, a priest would go down to the pool of Siloam, draw out water in a silver pitcher, walk it back to the Temple, and pour it on the altar. All the while, the people of Israel people waved their *lulavim* and circled the altar crying out "*Hoshi'ah na*", "Please save now!"
- Hoshanah Rabbah - the great salvation
 - 7th day of the festival, not technically a sabbath, but still important.
 - The people circled the altar 7 times on that day, shouting *Hoshi'ah na* and waving their *lulavim*.
 - Then the crowd would go silent as the priest on top of the altar would pour out his pitcher of water for the last water libation.
 - John 7:37–38 -- Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"
- The Kingdom
 - More than any other festival on the biblical calendar, Sukkot prefigures the coming Messianic Era.
 - Amos 9:11 says, "On that day I will raise up the fallen sukkah of David, And wall up its gaps; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old."
 - The Disciples used this verse as a proof text for the new era of the Messianic Age that is coming and the inclusion of Gentiles into the Kingdom of God.
- Birth of Yeshua at Sukkot
 - "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us"
 - The time of our rejoicing, "good news of great joy"
 - There is no Biblical basis for Jesus' birth to be celebrated on December 25th or January 6th. Those dates arose in the Western and Eastern churches in the middle of the 4th century. There might have been some associations in the minds of some Christians of that time between the 25th of Kislev when Chanukkah, the Festival of Lights, begins, and the 25th of December. But we really don't know.
 - A midrashic interpretation:
 - There are a lot of correlations between the story of John's birth and the story of Isaac's birth (elderly couple, barren woman, Hashem speaks to the man and promises a son, Zechariah and Sarah are both skeptical). The Talmud (b. Rosh Hashanah 11a) says that Isaac was born at Passover because the angel told Abraham, "At the appointed time I will return to you, and Sarah will have a son." Likewise, Zechariah was told that John's birth would happen "in the appointed time" (Luke 1:20).
 - Even more compelling: John the Immerser came in the Spirit of Elijah, and Passover is the appointed time connected to that coming of Elijah.

- So, if John was born at Passover, and Jesus was born 6 months later, then Jesus was born on Sukkot.
- There is also book of anti-Christian folklore, possibly from the 2nd or 3rd century, that preserves a tradition of Christians celebrating the birth of Yeshua at Sukkot.

The Menorah

- **[PPT]** After talking about God's appointed times (*moadim*), the Torah now includes a short reminder to the people of Israel about two implements in the Tabernacle. These seem slightly out of place.
- OrHachaim asks the question, "Why is this section about the menorah and the showbread included in the text of the Torah here, when they were already discussed in Exodus 25 and 27?"
 - Perhaps the fact that the Torah here deals with commandments whose common denominator is the number seven, i.e. 7 days of Passover, 7 days of Tabernacles, the New Year and Day of Atonement which occur in the 7th month, prompted the Torah to add laws about the 7-armed Candlestick. [And the mystical connection to the number seven in the showbread table.] The number seven is always considered as completing a cycle. You also had the legislation of the Omer in this portion; that commandment also involved the counting of seven times seven days, i.e. seven weeks. You have a reference to the commandment of the Sabbath, another commandment which features the number seven.
- The menorah is pretty well known, even today.
- It has even been recreated by the Temple Institute, an organization in Jerusalem that is preparing for the eventual rebuilding of the Temple.
- In this passage, Hashem gives a short reminder to the Israelites that they are they are to keep the lamps of the menorah lit continually.
- In synagogues today you will see a single light above the cabinet where the Torah scrolls are kept that is left on day and night. That is done as a reminder of this command.

The Showbread

- **[PPT]** The Showbread Table was one of the three vessels located in the Holy Place. It symbolized the material blessing God gives the world. On the Table of the Showbread, twelve loaves were constantly arranged. The loaves of the previous week that were taken off, were distributed on the Sabbath between the outgoing watch and the incoming watch that began its week of service in the Temple.
- The sages also relate that after eating only a small portion of the bread (the size of an olive) "the kohen would eat and become satiated" as if he had eaten an entire meal.
- Around the top of the table was a garland of gold, representing the "crown of royalty."
- The Table stood in the northern part of the Holy Place near the curtain. The base of the table was made of wood and was overlaid with gold. Its dimensions were one cubit by

two cubits, and it was one- and one-half cubits high. On both sides of the table were four branches. These were like tall columns made of gold and split at the top. There were two rows of six shelves each (including the table base). These shelves were formed by the golden half-tubes that connected between the branches opposite one another.

- Once a week, on the Sabbath, the twelve new loaves of the Showbread were arranged on the Table. The Showbread remained there the entire week, until the following Sabbath, when new loaves were placed on the table.
- As we see in this passage, the bread was considered *kodesh*, holy, and was only able to be eaten by the priests who were in a state of ritual purity.
- The showbread will come up again in 1Samuel 21, in a story about David and his men who were running from King Saul, and who went to the tabernacle looking for food. The high priest, Ahimelech, saw their need, and used the principle of *pikuach nefesh* to warrant giving them the bread, even though they would not have been permitted to eat it under normal circumstances.

Blaspheming the Name

- [PPT - blank] Leviticus 24:10-16
- This passage shows the deep importance of the Name of God and how much He desires for us to honor it.
- This story is not here randomly. Let's look back a few chapters to Leviticus 22:32–33:
 - “And you shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the LORD who sanctifies you, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the LORD.”

Eye for an Eye

- Mishnah, Bava Kama 83b:
 - One who injures another is liable to pay compensation for that injury due to five types of indemnity: He must pay for damage, for pain, for medical costs, for loss of livelihood, and for humiliation.
- The Gemara explains:
 - The Merciful One states in the Torah: “An eye for an eye” (Exodus 21:24). You might say that this means that the one who caused injury shall lose an actual eye rather than pay money. The Gemara responds: That interpretation should not enter your mind. The principle implicit in the mishna is derived from a verbal analogy in the Torah, as it is taught in a baraita: Based on the verse: “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot” (Exodus 21:24), one might have thought that if one blinded the eye of another, the court blinds his eye as punishment; or if one severed the hand of another, the court severs his hand; or if one broke the leg of another, the court breaks his leg. Therefore, the verse states: “One who strikes a person,” and the verse also states: “And one who

strikes an animal,” to teach that just as one who strikes an animal is liable to pay monetary compensation, so too, one who strikes a person is liable to pay monetary compensation. And if it is your wish to say that there is an objection to this derivation, there is an alternative derivation: The verse states: “And you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, for he shall die” (Numbers 35:31). This indicates that it is only for the life of a murderer that you shall not take ransom; but you shall take ransom for one who severed another’s extremities, which is analogous to the death of a limb, as severed limbs do not regenerate.

Sabbatical Year (Leviticus 25:1-7)

- What does "Shabbat" mean? Rest
- What is Shabbat? The 7th day of the week, the day of rest.
- Why do we observe the Shabbat? Because God observed it when he created the world, and He commanded the Jewish people to keep and honor the Shabbat, to rest with Him.
- What do we learn about the Shabbat from the story of the manna that Hashem gave to Israel? That we need to rely on Him for provision, especially when we are obeying His commands.
- In addition to the weekly seventh-day Shabbat, God commands the Israelites to give the land rest every seventh year. This is called the Shemittah, or the Sabbatical Year.
- Shemittah is one of the most powerful pictures of the fact that material success is not determined by mankind's worthiness.
- Leaving your fields fallow forces you to rely on Hashem for your sustenance.
- Notice also that the Lord says, "For six years **you shall** sow your field, and for six years **you shall** prune your vineyard and gather in its produce" (Leviticus 25:3)
- The command is that we are to work during the six years. We are not allowed to just sit back and do nothing. This requirement infuses holiness into the work we do.

Jubilees (Leviticus 25:8-24)

- The **יובל** *yovel*, jubilee year is the 50th year. It appears to get its name from the ram's horn that is blown on the Day of Atonement to declare the beginning of the year.
- The Yovel serves as a kind of sabbath of sabbaths of the years.
- In addition to letting the land lie fallow for another year, the people of Israel are told to release all of their slaves and give all of the land back to its original owners.
- Leviticus 25:23 -- The land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, because the land is Mine; for you are only strangers and residents with Me.
- In practical terms, this sets up a social and economic reset. It protects the people from allowing all of the land to be bought up by a few powerful people.

- Leviticus 25:10 says, "proclaim a release throughout the land **to all its inhabitants.**" The sages understood this as meaning that if all of the 12 tribes are not living in the land the yovel cannot be observed.
- The Yovel was kept during the time of the first temple. Rambam says that it was counted, but not kept during the time of the second temple, and it is not counted at all today. When the Messiah returns, He will restart the shemittah and yovel year cycles.

Redemption of Land

- Related to the yovel, the people of Israel are commanded to ensure that they redeem the land when it has to be sold to someone else.
- If you had a relative who was better off than you, and you lost your ancestral land, your relative is required to assist you and buy the land back before the jubilee year.
- This is another example of God's perspective that the land is His.

Redeeming the Poor

- The same redemption applies to people.
- This is indentured servitude. However, the rules about how the master is required to treat the servant are so strict that the Talmud (Kiddushin 20a) says, "One who buys himself a slave buys himself a master."
- Hashem says that a Jew cannot be sold as a servant in perpetuity.
 - For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 25:42)
 - For the sons of Israel are My servants; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 25:55)
- The Jewish people are God's people, he already owns them, and there's no changing that.
- What about non-Jewish slaves?
 - Non-Jewish slaves did have certain rights, and they were not to be mistreated.
 - Slavery in the Torah is nothing like chattel slavery in the USA in the 1800s. As a matter of fact, these rules about slaves were not like the other nations, either. They provided for the limitations and the realities of the world they lived in, while still holding the nation of Israel to a higher standard.
 - Remember what God told Abraham: "A slave who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall certainly be circumcised; so My covenant shall be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant." (Genesis 17:13)
 - A Gentile slave who consented to be circumcised had the status of a God-Fearer. He had to forsake idolatry and worship the God of Israel. He had to keep the commandments that were incumbent on God-fearers. He became like an adopted son to his master and could not be treated merely as merchandise. The female slave became like a daughter, and had rights, as well.

- If the slave was freed, either by purchasing their freedom or by being set free in another way, they immediately became a full-fledged Jew, with all of the rights and responsibilities that came with that status.
- This picture of servitude should show us something about God. What do you think we can learn from this? [Discuss]

Obedience and Disobedience

- Leviticus 26:3–4 -- **If** you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, **then...**
- Leviticus 26:14–15 -- But **if** you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, **if, instead,** you reject My statutes, and **if** your soul loathes My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, **but rather** to break My covenant, **[then...]**
- God is looking for obedience from His people.
- What does it mean to Fear the Lord?
 - To believe that He exists, and that He rewards righteousness and punishes evil.
- God is really concerned about His land.
 - Leviticus 26:34 -- Then the land will restore its Sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and restore its Sabbaths.
- The Grace of God is evident in the Torah!
 - Leviticus 26:40-42 -- But **if they confess** their wrongdoing and the wrongdoing of their forefathers... **then I will remember** My covenant

[PPT] These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Leviticus 26:46)

חַזַּק חַזַּק וְנִתְחַזַּק

Chazak Chazak v'nitchazeik!

Be Strong, Be Strong, Let Us Be Strengthened!