

THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE

by

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Literature Review	6
Jubilee Implications	12
CHAPTER ONE	15
Dating of <i>Leviticus</i>	15
Narrative Placement	17
Structure of <i>Leviticus</i>	18
Etymology	21
יובל, “Jubilee”	21
דָּרוּר, “release”	23
ἄφεσις, “release”	24
The Sabbath Year (<i>Leviticus 25:1-7</i>)	24
Introduction of the Jubilee (<i>Leviticus 25:8-12</i>)	27
The Concern of Two Fallow Years	28
The Great Return	30
The Financial Implications of the Jubilee (<i>Leviticus 25:13-18</i>)	32
Problems and Questions (<i>Leviticus 25:19-24</i>)	33
The Stages of Destitution (<i>Leviticus 25:25-55</i>)	35
The First Stage of Destitution (<i>Leviticus 25:25-34</i>)	35
The Second Stage of Destitution (<i>Leviticus 25:35-38</i>)	36
The Third Stage of Destitution (<i>Leviticus 25:39-55</i>)	37
Significant Themes	40
CHAPTER TWO	42
<i>Leviticus 27:14-25</i>	42

<i>Numbers</i> 36:1-4	46
<i>Ruth</i>	48
<i>2 Chronicles</i> 36:15-23	53
<i>Nehemiah</i> 5	56
Observations	60
CHAPTER THREE	61
<i>Isaiah</i>	62
<i>Isaiah</i> 5:8	62
<i>Isaiah</i> 58:1,5	63
<i>Isaiah</i> 61:1-3	65
<i>Isaiah</i> 40-66: Yahweh as גאל	67
<i>Jeremiah</i>	69
<i>Jeremiah</i> 32:1-15	69
<i>Jeremiah</i> 34:8-11	70
<i>Ezekiel</i>	74
<i>Ezekiel</i> 7:12-13	74
<i>Ezekiel</i> 11:14-15	75
<i>Ezekiel</i> 34:4	77
<i>Ezekiel</i> 46:16-18	78
<i>Daniel</i> 9:24-27	81
Concluding Observations	83
CHAPTER FOUR	85
Second Temple Literature	85
<i>The Book of Jubilees</i>	85
<i>The Testament of Levi</i>	88
Dead Sea Scrolls	90
11Q Melchizedek	92

Luke 95

Observations 99

CONCLUSIONS..... 101

 Review of Material 101

Leviticus 101

 Old Testament Histories 102

 Prophets and *Daniel* 104

 Second Temple, Qumran, and *Luke* 106

 Summary of Themes 106

 Application to the Exodus 107

 Implications 108

BIBLIOGRAPHY 111

 Reference Works 110

 Biblical Works 111

 Extra-biblical Works (Second Temple and Dead Sea Scrolls) 115

 Ethical and Theological Works 116

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Rhailyn, my thesis is done! Now I can help you work on yours! ☺

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992.
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
BBR	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CJT	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
CurTM	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DOTh	Arnold, Bill T. and H.G.M. Williamson. <i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books</i> . Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.
DOTP	Alexander, T. Desmond and David W. Baker, eds. <i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch</i> . Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
EQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
HALOT	Koehler Ludwig and Walter Baumgartner. <i>The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated by M.E.J. Richardson. 5 vols (electronic edition). Leiden: Brill, 2000.
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary

<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JHebS</i>	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
LXX	Septuagint
masc. pl.	Masculine Plural
masc. sg.	Masculine Singular
<i>m. Roš Haš</i>	Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah
NAC	New American Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	VanGemeren, Willem A., ed. <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> . 5 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: 1997.
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	Kittel, G. and G. Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-1976.

- TDOT* Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Translated by David E. Green. 15 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974-2006.
- TOTC* Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
- TWOT* Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. 2 vols. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1980.
- VT* *Vetus Testamentum*
- WBC* Word Biblical Commentaries

INTRODUCTION

As people shaped by the narrative of Scripture, we must likewise use Scripture to frame our understanding of the world around us. World Vision reveals that the food crisis in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia is affecting twelve million people. Increasing food and fuel costs, on-going conflicts, a lack of investment in small farmers and live-stock rearing, land degradation, and recurring rain failure all combined to ripen the region for a severe famine.¹ Canadian Baptist Ministries estimates that nearly half of the children in the world live in poverty; excluded from essential services like water, basic health care, adequate schools and protection. In extreme cases, their childhood is ripped away from them and they must struggle each day to survive.² Coffee is one of the most profitable and most traded commodities on the planet, second in trade only to oil and gas; but conventional coffee growers only receive 3 cents from a \$1.50 cup of coffee sold in North America. Ninety percent of coffee's profits go to traders and retailers.³ In January 2009, the Fredericton Food Bank served 669 families; by January 2011, that number had climbed to 895.⁴

1. World Vision, "The Worst Food Emergency in the World," available at <http://www.worldvision.ca/Education-and-Justice/Policy-and-Analysis/Pages/TheWorstFoodEmergencyintheWorld.aspx>; Accessed February 14, 2012.

2. Canadian Baptist Ministries, "The Sharing Way: Children," available at <http://cbmin.org/cbm/children>; Accessed February 14, 2012.

3. JUDES, "Learning about Fair Trade: Coffee," available at http://www.judesfairtrade.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Coffee-Case-Study_FT-A-Better-Deal.pdf; Accessed February 14, 2012.

4. Fredericton Food Bank, "Stats: Families Served," available at <http://frederictonfoodbank.com/about-us/stats-2>; Accessed February 14, 2012.

These numbers represent the millions of people in our world that struggle to meet their basic needs. However, the numbers allow us to separate ourselves from the individuals. By focusing on the numbers, we become distanced from the reality that these are people created in the image of God (*Gen 1:27*), people who need release from oppression and injustice, people who need release from cycles of debt and poverty, and people who need to experience the hope that Yahweh calls his people to provide. While the numbers above reflect the reality of a broken world, the Biblical narrative points God's people to respond. This thesis will explore a component of the Biblical narrative that calls for a release-proclaiming response.

I had the opportunity in May 2003 to travel to Albania as part of an educational partnership between Atlantic Baptist University and Canadian Baptist Ministries. This experience was formative for years to come, as it provided me an opportunity to get past statistics like those presented in the previous paragraph, and encounter people who were living in the midst of such situations. It allowed me to see the Albanian church respond to the needs of its fellow citizens, even as many of these Christians themselves lived in poverty. This experience pulled me into an awareness of the release Yahweh envisions for the world: that his people would be instruments of deliverance. Additionally, in summer 2004, I had the opportunity to work with New Life Mission, an inner-city mission in Moncton, that reaches out to high-need and at-risk children and their families, providing hope to local children. That experience opened my eyes to the reality of poverty in our own communities.

Christians have the unique privilege and responsibility to share our resources with the poor in our midst. Ronald J. Sider⁵ notes that the increasingly affluent lifestyle is the “god of twenty-first-century North American,” driven by the advertising industry which reclassifies luxuries as necessities.⁶ He further observes how millions of North Americans see themselves on the ‘edge of poverty’ as they seek to possess many North American ‘necessities,’ such as two cars, a furnished home, new clothes, and most recent devices.⁷ But how do these ‘necessities’ fit into a lifestyle that resonates with Scripture? Unfortunately, answers to this question are often ignored in North American churches. Will and Lisa Samson reflect on their good, religious homes where they were taught the role of a Christian in the world, yet they “grew up with little or no instruction about God’s heartbeat of justice.”⁸ They further note that

The majority of the American church in the twenty-first century preaches a perspective on God that fails to incorporate issues of justice. In this view, God cares for each of us individually and wants to spend eternity with us in heaven . . . Does the God talked about from the pulpit [of the average American church] care about the poor and the marginalized? About how we make and spend our money?

*We need a new view of God.*⁹

A view of God that is shaped by the biblical narrative is essential. Scripture presents the reader with the activities of Yahweh, the God who “laid the foundation of the earth” and created the heavens with his hands (*Ps*¹⁰ 102:25). Yahweh is also the “father of orphans

5. Ronald James Sider is the founder of Evangelicals for Social Action and the Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, USA.

6. Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 24.

7. Sider, *Rich Christians*, 32.

8. Will and Lisa Samson, *Justice in the Burbs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 13.

9. Samson, *Justice in the Burbs*, 15.

10. To differentiate when biblical books and individuals are being discussed, the titles of the text will be italicized in this thesis, and the individual’s name will be left as regular text. For example, in

and protector of widows” (*Pss* 68:5). He provides redemption for his people (*Isa* 43:1) and invites foreign nations to acknowledge him as sovereign (*Jonah* 3:10). It appears that Yahweh is concerned about both the spiritual and physical conditions of a person. How then are his people, the ones who call on his name (*Acts* 2:21), to respond to Yahweh’s concern? My pursuit of an answer to this question, and the situations I witnessed in Albania and Moncton, led me to the Jubilee legislation in *Lev* 25.

Over the last decade I have worked at three summer camps and three churches in two different faith traditions. These positions have included numerous youth events that were marked by contemporary worship songs. One song that seems to have captured the eschatological imagination of our younger generation is Robin Mark’s “Days of Elijah.”¹¹ The song includes references to Elijah, Ezekiel, David, and Moses. Many of the youth who have grown up in the church would be familiar with the stories of David and Moses, but not as much with Elijah and Ezekiel. I appreciate the song with its rich Scriptural imagery, but it is often poorly introduced. What does the songwriter mean by his declaration that these are the days of Elijah or Ezekiel? The chorus continues with its rich imagery as it proclaims:

*Behold He comes riding on the clouds,
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call;
Lift your voice, it’s the year of jubilee,
And out of Zion’s hill salvation comes.*

chapter two, when the לָאֵל is being discussed, the prominent book in that dialogue is *Ruth*; whereas, the primary character of that text is simply rendered “Ruth.”

11. Robin Mark, “Days of Elijah” (1996). The lyrics for this song can be viewed at <http://www.lyricstime.com/robin-mark-days-of-elijah-lyrics.html>, accessed February 14, 2012. Admittedly, this song is becoming “older” and does not seem to be sung as frequently as it was ten or even five years ago.

It has been the chorus of this song that has long captured my imagination, as I have studied the implications of what I have been singing. What is the significance of the trumpet call, the year of Jubilee, and the hill of Zion?

I believe these are powerful images that are often ignored in churches as we study Scripture. It appears from the song that ‘jubilee’ is connected to the return of Christ, yet when one searches the Scripture for ‘jubilee,’ it is only found in *Leviticus* and *Numbers*, and has to do with the release of slaves and return to ancestral property. How does that connect to Christian eschatology?

Furthermore, the idea of a Jubilee has entered popular imagination, as it has become a rallying cry for the oppressed and those who labour to see oppression ended. This scarcely-mentioned event in lesser-known biblical books gained international attention in the decade leading up to 2000, as many ambitious to see international debt eliminated in that year. This campaign began in 1990 with Marvin Dent, a politics lecturer at the University of Keele (Staffordshire, England). As he challenged his students to consider the problems associated with third-world debt, the biblical Jubilee captured his imagination. A small group of his students decided to urge western governments and international finance institutions to declare the year 2000 a Jubilee year.¹² The campaign was endorsed by the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, and later supported by various other denominations. As the ‘Year of Jubilee’ garnered attention, there was an increase in scholarship to see if this biblical legislation of remission was only found in *Lev 25*, or if it was a theme woven through Scripture.

12. Yale University, “Genesis of the Campaign,” available at <http://cases.som.yale.edu/jubilee/>; Accessed February 14, 2012.

Literature Review

Significant scholarly attention has been given to the Year of Jubilee¹³ and its actual implication within Israel's history. While the consensus is that the Year of Jubilee was probably never practiced,¹⁴ there is discussion concerning the origin of the legislation. Some view it as an earlier legislation, while others propose that it is a later insertion by post-exilic priests into the text of *Leviticus*. While Jeffrey Fager¹⁵ suggests that the Jubilee legislation in *Leviticus* went through a series of editions,¹⁶ Jacob Milgrom¹⁷ perceives that the text, regardless of potential strata, is a logical and coherent unit. He maintains that even if the redactor had multiple sources, they were woven into a compelling sequence,¹⁸ demonstrating the redactor's order and theology. This thesis holds to the position that the book of *Leviticus* should be seen as a literary whole, a self-contained unit, primarily composed before the Exile.¹⁹

The introduction noted that there are eschatological expectations attached to the Jubilee. However, the original Jubilee was an economic exodus, as it would have brought

13. It is important to note the use of the term "Jubilee" in this thesis. In discussions concerning the practice as outlined in *Lev* 25, "Jubilee" will be capitalized. When used as an adjective, it will be written as "jubilic." In other discussions, such as the chronology of the Qumran community, when the term is used as a marker of time, it will not be capitalized; rendered simply as 'jubilee.'

14. In contrast to this commonly held view, Fried and Freedman (2001) suggest that the events of *Jer* 32 were the enactment of a Jubilee year, and the release of the Hebrews under Cyrus occurred during the subsequent Jubilee.

15. Jeffrey A. Fager is the Vice President for Academic Affairs at Iowa Wesleyan College, Mount Pleasant, Iowa, USA.

16. Jeffrey A. Fager, *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 123.

17. Jacob Milgrom spent most of his career at the University of California (Berkeley, California, USA) where he headed the Department of Near Eastern Studies. A prominent American Jewish Bible scholar and rabbi, he died in 2010.

18. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27* (AB 3c; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 2150.

19. This is a change from my original position when I began this research. However, as I saw the themes of Jubilee traced through Scripture, it became evident that some form of the Jubilee legislation existed pre-exile. The relationship with chapters 26 and 27 (to be explored later) bears witness to theological congruence. However, it remains likely that it was revised post-exile, in an effort to reflect the new situation facing those who were determined to establish a renewed Yahwist society.

relief to the Israelite's servant.²⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright²¹ develops this idea as he pairs the Jubilee with the Exodus. He maintains that "if the exodus was God's idea of *redemption*, the jubilee was God's idea of *restoration*."²² He insists that the reader of the jubilee legislation must not only pay attention to the details of the legislation, but also to the theological and spiritual principles upon which it is founded.

As an economic Exodus, Milgrom suggests that the Jubilee legislation was crafted in the eighth century B.C.E. as a priestly response to prophetic accusations against the economic and social injustices that were creating vast divides between the ruling and subservient classes.²³ According to Esias E. Meyer,²⁴ the text was crafted post-Exile as a means for nobility to reclaim the lands they possessed pre-Exile. He further suggests that a Jubilee would actually witness an increase in poverty, as the Judean nobles would regain their inherited land from the pre-exilic period, and would therefore displace the pre-exilic landless.²⁵ Raymond Westbrook²⁶ also articulates that the Jubilee legislation is a later document from the exilic or post-exilic era, crafted after the completion of the Deuteronomic code.²⁷ John Sietze Bergsma²⁸ dismisses the purpose of creating a priestly caste, and demonstrates that the legislation would not have been sufficient for the priests

20. Robert L. Hubbard, "The Go'el in Ancient Israel," *BBR* (1991): 13.

21. Christopher J. H. Wright is Langham Partnership's International Director, in London, UK, and was Chair of the Lausanne Theology Working Group from 2005-2011.

22. C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 290.

23. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2244.

24. Esias E. Meyer is Senior Lecturer of Old Testament Studies at the University of Pretoria in Pretoria, South Africa.

25. Esias E. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus 25* (Stellenbosch: LIT Press Berlin-Hamburg-Münster, 2005), 289.

26. Raymond Westbrook was the W.W. Spence Professor in Semitic Languages at The John Hopkins University, in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, at the time of his death in 2009.

27. Raymond Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 56.

28. John Sietze Bergsma is the Associate Professor of Theology at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, in Steubenville, Ohio, USA.

to use in reclaiming land.²⁹ Following the thoughts of Milgrom and Bergsma, a pre-exilic composition of the Jubilee legislation seems the most likely.

Fager also supports the idea of the jubilee legislation being a post-exilic document.³⁰ He suggests that the post-exilic priests used this document and others within their literature to reshape the community as they returned from Exile. There would have been numerous groups seeking to achieve restoration in the post-Exile period; therefore, the priests were laying the foundation for a new community by appealing to inheritance laws, ensuring that the people lived in the land of their ancestors. He suggests the Jubilee legislation demonstrates a development in theology as the Israelites moved from a conviction of Yahweh as the superior deity to a conviction of Yahweh as the sole deity. One potential purpose of the legislation was to ensure that the impoverished exiles were brought back into full economic, social, and cultic participation in the community. Despite Fager's suggestion for a post-Exile composition, the Scriptural evidence suggests that the Jubilee was a known feature of Israelite law prior to the Exile. Later discussion in this thesis will indicate that the Jubilee did not factor into the post-Exile economic reality, as by that period it had become an integral component of the prophets' theology.

As the prophets incorporated the Jubilee legislation into their exilic theology, they recognized the significance of its theological principle that Yahweh owns the land; made clear by the occurrence of ארץ, "land," twenty-one times in the Jubilee legislation. The Israelites were to understand that they were merely tenants and subject to the principles that he had placed upon the land. This became a significant factor in the prophetic understanding of the Exile; the Israelites' violation of the covenant led to their eviction

29. John Sietze Bergsma, "The Jubilee: A Post-Exilic Priestly Attempt to Reclaim Lands?" *Bib* 84 (2003): 246.

30. Fager, *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee*, 61.

from the land. The concept of divine possession was not a unique belief in the Ancient Near East (ANE). The land of Moab was understood to be the property of Kamoš. Both Moab and Israel believed that their deity permitted them to occupy the land.³¹

Yahweh's possession of the land was an important element of the covenant relationship. It was the demands of the covenant that set apart Israel from its neighbours. The nation's transition from slavery in Egypt to Yahweh's covenant nation was reflected in the significance given to the poor and defenseless within their community. Hebrew slaves had rights, and orphans and widows were protected.³² The emphasis given to the poor is another important principle in the Jubilee legislation.

As scholarship has sought to connect the Year of Jubilee with other Scripture passages, it has made a connection with the penalties of *Lev* 26 and the Chronicler's rationale for the Exile in *2 Chr* 36:20-23. Milgrom notes that *2 Chr* 36 appears to be a midrash on *Lev* 26:34, which promises that disobedience will see the land receive its sabbaths while the people are in Exile.³³ Bergsma notes linguistic similarities between *Lev* 25:9 and *2 Chr* 36:22, such as the verb used (עבר) to make the announcements of Jubilee and Cyrus' edict, and how those proclamations were dispersed בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ־כְּנָעַן, "throughout the whole land," or בְּכָל־מְלְכוּתוֹ "throughout the whole kingdom."³⁴ William

31. Hyacinthe-M Dion, "Yahweh, Dieu de Canaan, et la terre des Hommes," *CJT* 8 (1967): 234.

32. George Herbert Livingstone, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 160.

33. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2150.

34. John Sietze Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 210. Bergsma's book is one of the most prominent sources in this thesis, as this book is one of the few resources that systematically traces the Jubilee legislation as a theme through Scripture. Although used as a significant source, this thesis will differ from Bergsma's scholarship as it will show a significant connection between the exodus and the Jubilee; a connection that is not given adequate attention in Bergsma's book.

Johnstone³⁵ observes that the Chronicler's genealogies are structured so that the Exile occurs during the fiftieth, or the Jubilee, generation. He argues for a heightened awareness of the Jubilee, as these concluding words of *Chronicles* form the conclusion of the Hebrew Scriptures.³⁶ The Jubilee legislation has also been connected to *Neh* 5, recounting Nehemiah's efforts to end the oppression of his people; *Ruth*, and its attention to the קַדְמֹן, "kinsman redeemer;" and *Dan* 9, where it is suggested that ten jubilees of national rebuilding would culminate in the inauguration of an eschatological jubilee year of restoration.³⁷

Modern writers give considerable attention to the prophets' understanding of the Jubilee Year. *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and *Isaiah* are each noted for drawing from Jubiliary themes. Bergsma draws attention to two passages from *Jeremiah*, chapter 32:1-15, in which Jeremiah serves as the קַדְמֹן to his cousin, and 34:8-22, when Zedekiah issues a release of slaves. Bergsma notes that the latter passage derives its terminology from the Jubilee legislation, as well as the Sabbath year legislation of *Deut* 15.³⁸ Simeon Chavel³⁹ suggests that a redactor reworked the latter *Jeremiah* passage in light of the Jubilee legislation.⁴⁰ Lisbeth S. Fried⁴¹ and David Noel Freedman⁴² use these two passages in

35. William Johnstone is the Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages at the University of Aberdeen, in Aberdeen, UK.

36. William Johnstone, "Hope of Jubilee," *EQ* 72 (2000): 311.

37. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 212.

38. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 162.

39. Simeon Chavel is Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago Divinity School, in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

40. Simeon Chavel, "Let My People Go!" *JSOT* 76 (1997): 94.

41. Lisbeth S. Fried is a Visiting Scholar for the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.

42. David Noel Freedman held the Endowed Chair in Hebrew Biblical Studies at the University of California (San Diego, California, USA) until his death in 2008.

their claim that the year 588/587 was a jubilee year in Judah.⁴³ These ideas will be taken up again in a later chapter.

The prophetic passage that has garnered the most attention in writings concerning the Jubilee legislation is *Isa* 61:1-3. This passage is claimed to evoke significant jubilic imagery. However, its popularity likely stems from its quotation by Jesus in *Luke* 4:18-19.⁴⁴ Wright insists that behind this Isaiah passage lies a jubilic vision and hope, which signifies that the Jubilee Year had taken on eschatological significance before the Old Testament canon had closed.⁴⁵ Sharon H. Ringe⁴⁶ articulates that the Jubilee is a significant image that assists in understanding Christ as liberator. She notes that the Jubilee (and the passages she connects to it) affirms two things: God's sovereignty, and the necessity of social structures to embody an affirmation of that sovereignty.⁴⁷ She notes two strands of tradition that lie behind the Jubilee legislation: the sabbath-year laws and the royal decrees of amnesty.⁴⁸

As has been noted, the discussion of the Jubilee Year extends into the New Testament, and therefore, an examination of Intertestamental and Qumran literature is warranted. A significant document is the Intertestamental *Book of Jubilees*. *Jubilees* is a retelling of the biblical material from *Gen* 1 through to *Exod* 20, and follows a chronology that divides time into jubilee units (seven weeks of years, or forty-nine

43. Lisbeth S. Fried and David Noel Freedman, "Was the Jubilee Year Observed in Preexilic Judah?" in *Leviticus 23-27* (AB 3B; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 2264.

44. It is important to note that Luke does not quote *Isaiah* 61 directly, as he also draws from *Isaiah* 58:6.

45. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 301.

46. Sharon H. Ringe is Professor of New Testament at Wesley Theological Seminary, in Washington, DC, USA.

47. Sharon Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 32.

48. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee*, 17.

years).⁴⁹ The author of *Jubilees* demonstrates his awareness of the Jubilee legislation both in a direct acknowledgement (*Jub* 50:2-4), and in the outcome of his chronology. His chronology demonstrates an understanding that the Israelites' liberation from Egypt and their entrance into Canaan both occurred in the fiftieth jubilee since creation (the former in the ninth year of the fiftieth jubilee and the latter event transpired in the forty-ninth year of that jubilee).⁵⁰ This suggests that the Jubilee year was a significant image of liberation for the *Jubilees* author. A similar chronological system is noted in other literature, such as *I Enoch* and *The Testament of Levi*.⁵¹ The Qumran documents also suggest that the Jubilee Year was significant in the cultic calendar. *Lev* 25-26 is shown to be significant in the Qumran community's understanding of the eschaton.⁵² The thesis will consider the significance of these documents as it develops an understanding of the Jubilee.

Jubilee Implications

Numerous writers have wrestled with the impracticalities of an actual Jubilee practice. Some have ascribed it as a later development, incorporating various other principles, such as those found in *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*. Robert Gnuse,⁵³ who sees the legislation as a post-exilic document, concludes that it was an exilic vision for utopia that expressed a

49. James C. VanderKam, "Jubilees, Book of," *ABD* 3:1030.

50. James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 95.

51. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 250.

52. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 293.

53. Robert Gnuse is the James C. Carter, S.J./Bank One Distinguished Professor of the Humanities in the Religious Studies Department, Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

vision of hope.⁵⁴ To discern the validity of the Jubilee, and consider whether it was simply a utopian dream, the study will need to consider the text of *Lev 25*.

As one considers the scholarship that has focused upon the Jubilee legislation and the significance it has acquired in recent years, it becomes apparent that there is a discrepancy. Why should an ancient piece of legislation, which assumes the existence of slavery, legitimizes it, discriminates against the landless, and allows individuals to lose their land for fifty years⁵⁵ (an entire lifetime in that day), become an inspiration for liberation?

Furthermore, the Year of Jubilee is specifically a cry for the land to rest, and allows for freedom only to the sons of Israel, and permits perpetual slavery of non-Israelites. These observations leave one wondering whether the Jubilee legislation is misplaced as a rallying cry for the oppressed. Meyer cautions readers of the biblical text to be aware of their own ideologies. He recognizes that one who comes to the text with a “God is on my side” attitude will read *Lev 25* differently than one who reads with an opposing perspective.⁵⁶

One of the more significant writings in recent decades that has led to the legislation’s popularity has been John Howard Yoder’s⁵⁷ *Politics of Jesus*. As he sought to wrestle with the political ethos of Jesus, Yoder devoted considerable attention to Jesus’ sermon in Luke 4, where he quotes a jubiliary passage from Isaiah 61. Yoder maintained

54. Robert Gnuse, “Jubilee Legislation in Leviticus,” *BTB* 15 (April 1985): 46.

55. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus* 25, 3.

56. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus* 25, 293.

57. John Howard Yoder was a Mennonite theologian, Professor of Theology at University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame, Indiana, USA), and a Fellow of the Institute for International Peace Studies until his death in 1997.

that Jesus' intention was to declare a literal Jubilee Year,⁵⁸ arguing that this was the popular understanding of Jesus' day concerning the Jubilee.⁵⁹ However, as will be seen in the course of this research, the popular understanding of the Jubilee in Jesus' day was not a literal Jubilee, but an eschatological 'year of the Lord's favour.'

The ambition of this thesis will be to demonstrate the significant correlation between the Jubilee legislation and the Exodus narrative. It will be recognized that the Jubilee is a legislated response to the Exodus, and thereby has significant implications for Yahweh's followers. The actions of Yahweh's people should be jubilic in response to the numerous times that Yahweh has re-enacted Exodus, both corporately and personally, in the lives of his children. It will be noted that the legislation of *Lev 25* is directly connected to the Exodus. Furthermore, the various passages that contain allusions to the Jubilee legislation will be recognized for their connections to the Exodus.

58. John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Second edition; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 68.

59. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 29.

CHAPTER ONE

LEVITICUS 25 EXEGESIS

In the following discussion, *Lev 25* will be primarily examined in Hebrew with some consideration to the Greek translation in the Septuagint.

Dating of *Leviticus*

There is considerable discussion surrounding the origin of *Leviticus*, and its date of composition. Narratively, it is placed in the middle of the Pentateuch, but the actual construction of the Pentateuch has been a topic of considerable discussion. Many scholars try to pull the Pentateuch apart by assigning to it the categories of Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly, and Deuteronomic, and assuming later redactors brought the various sources together to form the Pentateuch. This school of thought suggests that the book of *Leviticus* is a later construction, coming out of the Priestly source. Some of these scholars suggest that chapters 17-26 represent an earlier corpus of laws, commonly called the Holiness Code, which circulated independently before being inserted into the Priestly material, and then into *Leviticus*. However, the topics covered in the Code are so diverse¹ that the material may never have circulated as an independent unit.² The Jubilee legislation, in particular, is often thought to have been written by post-exilic priests (see Introduction, pg. 5) as they sought to re-establish a Yahwist community following the

1. Topics in this unit include the slaughtering of animals (ch. 17), sexual relations (ch. 18), harvesting (19:9), mixing fabrics (19:19), shaving (19:26), holiness (ch. 20), and festivals (ch.23). It also includes a break in the law corpus, with the narrative about the blasphemous half-Israelite (ch. 24).

2. William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 89.

return from Babylon. In this perspective, the Jubilee legislation would have reached its final form post-Exile.

One issue in the dating of the Jubilee legislation and its accompanying sabbath year legislation is its relationship to the sabbath year material in *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy*. The *Exodus* legislation (21:2-11) is thought to be the oldest, as it stipulates for the release of a slave after six years of service, with no mention of the term ‘sabbath’ or a universal manumission.³ The Deuteronomic legislation (15:1-18) seems to be a later edition of the *Exodus* material as it expands the seventh-year emancipation to cover female debt slaves, and expands the creditor’s responsibility by ensuring that the debtor not leave the household empty handed. Furthermore, while the *Exodus* legislation does not have a formal proclamation, and thus does not institute a seven year calendar rotation, the *Deuteronomy* text does. The phrase כִּי־קָרָא שְׁמִטָּה לַיהוָה, “because Yahweh’s remission has been proclaimed,” from *Deut* 15:2, highlights Yahweh’s role in a formal proclamation of a universal year of release.⁴ In *Leviticus*, while the emancipation is universal, it is only the land that enjoys the seventh-year rest, while slaves are not released until the Jubilee. Schenker’s perspective on the relationship between the three texts is helpful. He writes that *Lev* 25 is a new stipulation added to the existing laws; providing what the previous laws had not yet settled.⁵

3. Although the word Sabbath is not found, Enns suggests that the period of time is an application of the fourth commandment to observe the Sabbath (Peter Enns, *Exodus* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 443.

4. Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy* (NAC; Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1994), 243.

5. Adrian Schenker, “The Biblical Legislation on the Release of Slaves,” *JSOT* 78(1998): 24.

Narrative Placement

Within the narrative of the Pentateuch, *Leviticus* occurs shortly after the Israelites have been liberated from Egypt and while they remain camped at Mount Sinai. By the time of the instructions for the Jubilee, the Israelites have received the Ten Commandments and instructions on their cultic order have been given throughout the book of *Leviticus*.

Although *Leviticus* falls within a series of divine instructions that extends from *Exod* 20:1 and continues into *Num* 10:10, the text of *Leviticus* is marked as its own unit, particularly by its closing statement (27:34).

Throughout the text, Yahweh has been revealing aspects of his character to his people, stressing elements such as his holiness, his ownership of the people and the land, and his mandates to care for the people. Two narrative pericopes occur in *Leviticus*. In chapters 8-10, the first cultic sacrifices are offered to Yahweh, and the narrative ends in tragedy as the sons of the High Priest, Aaron, are killed by divine fire after having offered profane fire to Yahweh. Following the deaths of Nahab and Abihu, Yahweh continued to prescribe the social and ritual laws. The second narrative is located in *Lev* 24, as Moses and the Israelites stoned a half-Israelite man for blasphemy against Yahweh, as required by a divine imperative. This brief narrative occurred after an explanation of the festival calendar given to the Israelites by Yahweh, and it concludes with a significant injunction from Yahweh: “You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the Lord your God” (24:22).

This injunction informs the people that all who dwell within the land are required to submit to the law, not just Israelites. The land is Yahweh’s and all its inhabitants must submit to his authority. Yahweh’s possession of the land (25:23) and his deliverance from

Egypt (25:38) appear to be the central tenets of the Jubilee legislation. As the Israelites had been recently liberated from slavery, the Jubilee's presence within the narrative reminds the reader that Israel's liberation was not to be simply a one-time event. It was to be remembered and legislated within the newly formed community. The Jubilee functions as a legislative remembrance of the Exodus.

Structure of *Leviticus*

Having recognized the importance of the Jubilee legislation to the overall narrative of the Pentateuch, its location within *Leviticus* also needs to be discussed. The structure of *Leviticus* has been the cause of much scholarly discussion, as many have sought to understand why the book, primarily a document concerned with cultic rituals, is twice interrupted by narrative accounts. Although there has been considerable speculation, Mary Douglas's⁶ proposed structure warrants the most attention.⁷ She proposes a literary

6. Mary Douglas was a British anthropologist who was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2006. She taught at University College (London, UK) and Princeton University (Princeton, New Jersey, USA). She died in 2007.

7. The structure of *Leviticus* is one that many commentators have wrestled with. Under the premise of the Documentary Hypothesis, many have discounted the book as a single whole having a literary unity. Kiuchi recognizes that *Exodus* and *Leviticus* are bound thematically, and suggests that the content of Exodus 25 – Leviticus 26 flow from outer to inner aspects of worship. (Kiuchi, "Leviticus, Book of," *DOTP*, 524). However, Kiuchi's structure fails to account for both the narrative placements and the introduction of the book, which clearly sets *Leviticus* out as its own work.

LaSor et.al. propose that the structure of the book has six divisions (LaSor, *Old Testament Survey*, 82). However, their structure fails to pay any attention to the literary distinctiveness of the book, so according to their structure, *Leviticus* appears to be a document with six divisions tacked on to one another. Although Gerstenberger amends the structure to have eight divisions (Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* [OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 19), he also fails to see a larger structure to the book, and simply sees it as a collection of various laws and regulations. He articulates that the process of various scribes and transmissions have lost any coherent structure. In fact, he further states that "the Pentateuchal material is often organized without any order at all" (18).

Although Klawans notes that not all scholars will support Douglas's model, he notes that the structure she suggests is both compelling and important, and further notes that a strong case can be made for reading *Leviticus* as a self-contained whole (Jonathan Klawans, "Review: Rethinking Leviticus and Rereading 'Purity and Danger,'" *AJS Review* 27 [2003]: 94). Cothey also maintains that *Leviticus* should not be dissected into separate parts, and should be viewed as the representation of priestly writers (Anthony Cothey, "Ethics and Holiness in the Theology of Leviticus," *JSOT* 30 [2006]: 133).

form that reflects the physical structure of the tabernacle, and she suggests that the two narrative accounts function as screens, bringing the reader into the next section of the tabernacle. Douglas claims that *Leviticus* is a reader's guide around the tabernacle. Chapters 1-7, which form a literary ring, take the reader along one side of the outer court. Chapters 8-10, the narrative of Aaron's sons, form a screen, and then chapters 11-17, another literary ring, complete the circle around the outer court. Following the movement around the outer court, the reader passes through the screen into the Holy Place, where the screen of chapters 8-10 is mirrored by chapters 18-20. The following chapters (21-24:9) guide the reader through the Holy Place, and then the second screen is formed by chapter 24:10-22, the narrative concerning the man who was stoned for blasphemy. *Leviticus'* reader is left in the Holy of Holies, which Douglas suggests is reflected by chapters 25-27.⁸

Douglas suggests that chapters 25 and 27 provide the frame for chapter 26, which is the treaty formula between Yahweh and his people. Douglas notes that this frame is in a joyous tone, and that chapters 25-27 are significant to the overall message of *Leviticus*.⁹ She reiterates that "Not to wait for them is to miss this message. Chapter 25 gives the great proclamation of liberty ... (using) analogies, making patterns in time with movements across space."¹⁰ Douglas's structure suggests that the Jubilee legislation is a significant component to the book of *Leviticus*. If, in fact, Douglas's model is viable (and it seems to have the strongest case), the Jubilee legislation is a component that brings the reader into an intimate experience with Yahweh; an experience that is paralleled by the

8. Although the entire book builds up to this model, Douglas' diagram and explanation of the textual structure is found in chapter 11, "Inside the House/Book of God," of *Leviticus as Literature*.

9. Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999), 242.

10. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 242.

High Priest's annual foray into the physical Holy of Holies. The Jubilee legislation, therefore, reveals to the reader significant elements of Yahweh's character: his yearning for restoration and release (themes related to justice). As Douglas further notes by reflecting on *Lev 27*, Yahweh himself, "as a creditor, comes under the power of the jubilee laws."¹¹ Jubilee legislation contains significant themes that reveal Yahweh's character, and as this thesis unfolds, these thematic elements will be seen throughout the Scriptures.

Within the larger narrative of the Scripture, the Jubilee legislation recalls past events and anticipates future ones. The imperative to *וּקְרַאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ לְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל*, "proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants," (*Lev 25:10*) marks the territory of Israel as significantly different from Egypt, from where they had just been released as slaves. Jubilee legislation indicates that Israel is to be a nation where liberty and restoration are significant elements of the social fabric. Furthermore, the legislation will point forward to the time when Yahweh intervenes in human history to ensure that all people experience release and restoration. Building on passages such as *Gen 3:15*; *12:3* and *Exod 19:6*, Israel is to be the nation by which Yahweh will bless all people. The themes of the Jubilee legislation are captured in *Isa 61* as the prophet looks ahead to Yahweh's promised future, and then claimed by Christ in *Luke 4*. These theological themes will be explored in later chapters. The remainder of this chapter will explore the legislation as found in *Lev 25*.

11. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 244.

Etymology

יובל, “Jubilee”

Prior to the exegetical work, the etymology of three significant words will be discussed. יובל, “jubilee/ram,” appears 27 times in the Hebrew scriptures. Four instances (*Josh* 6:4,6,8,13) have the phrase שופרות היובליים, “trumpet.” In *Josh* 6:5, קרן היובל, “ram’s horn,” is introduced by משף, “blast,” as well as in *Exod* 19:14. Aside from these occurrences, יובל is found 21 times, always in reference to the year of release, the Jubilee.¹² Similar stems in other ANE languages suggest that the word is associated with a ram. The term is attested in Akkadian, with the word *yabilu*, “ram;” in Punic, *ybl*, “ram;” and in Arabic, *yubla*, “ram,” *wābilun*, “young sheep,” and *yūbīl*, “Jubilee.”¹³ The association of יובל with “ram” leads to the qualifiers noted above, as יובל never appears in the sense of a ram’s horn unless accompanied by a word unambiguously meaning “horn” or “trumpet blast.”¹⁴

Other ANE languages contain words that convey an event similar to *Leviticus*’ Jubilee. The Egyptian *hb šd* is often translated “jubilee year.” *hb šd* was a nationwide jubilation, that occurred over a lengthy period following a solemn proclamation. It could occur after thirty consecutive years by the reigning Pharaoh, and then it could be proclaimed several times after that Pharaoh’s initial *hb šd*. While noted to have occurred during the reign of Horemheb (*ca.* 1320 B.C.E.), the Egyptian jubilation had nothing to do

12. In ten occurrences (*Lev* 25:13,28a,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18b,23,24), יובל is accompanied by שנה, “year.” In the remaining 11 occurrences (*Lev* 25:10,11,12,15,28b,20,31,33; 27:18a,21; *Num* 36:4), שנה is not present.

13. R.H. O’Connell, “יובל,” *NIDOTTE* 2:419.

14. R.D. North, “יובל,” *TDOT* 6:1-6. See also *TWOT* 1:258, *ABD* 3:1025.

with a seven-year cycle or a liberation from social injustice or grievances.¹⁵ The Akkadian *šūdūtu* could have some remote similarity to the Jubilee or more likely to the שמטה, “year of remission.”¹⁶

As the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, the LXX editors used ἄφεσις, “sending away” or “sending back,” to render יובל (except in *Lev* 25:15, where σημασία, “proclamation,” was used). This use of ἄφεσις agrees with the meaning of the verb יבל, “to bring back,” or “to send back solemnly or abundantly.” יבל is used to describe returning exiles (*Jer* 31:9; *Isa* 55:12), victorious armies (*Psa* 108:11[10]), a funeral cortege (*Job* 10:19; 21:32), or solemn offerings (*Zeph* 3:10; *Psa* 68:30[29]; *Psa* 76:12[11]).¹⁷ All occurrences of ἄφεσις have overtones of solemnity or abundance as “the restoration of former well-being.”¹⁸ As the translation for יבל, this understanding for ἄφεσις connects well in understanding the Jubilee. As the exegesis will outline, the celebration of יובל was intended to achieve restoration and release.

15. North, “יובל,” *TDOT* 6:1-6.

16. North, “יובל,” *TDOT* 6:1-6.

17. North, “יובל,” *TDOT* 6:1-6.

18. North, “יובל,” *TDOT* 6:1-6.

דרור, “release”

דרור, “release,” occurs seven times in the Hebrew Scriptures (*Lev* 25:10; *Isa* 61:1; *Jer* 34:8,15,17 [twice]; *Ezek* 46:17).¹⁹ All occurrences reference a release of slaves (*Leviticus*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*) or a release of prisoners (*Isaiah*). Although the *Leviticus* usage refers to an economic emancipation, the prophetic writings refer to a spiritual emancipation, suggesting a shift in using the term over time.²⁰

דרור is cognate to the Akkadian term *andurāru*, “freedom, liberty.” This practice of remission or emancipation is attested in Babylonian documents ranging from 2200 to 600 B.C.E., and primarily appears in a negative sense in cases where an expected remission did not occur.²¹ *Andurāru* refers to the manumission of slaves, the cancellation of commercial debts, and is a practice that was intended to restore the economic equilibrium in the land.²² דרור has also been linked to the Babylonian *mēšarum* practice, which is modelled in the *Edict of Ammišaduqa*.²³ *Andurāru* was a general decree, while *mēšarum* was a royal edict; both were intended to restore economic equilibrium in the country when wealth had become concentrated into too few hands.²⁴ Beyond the Babylonian connections, דרור also appears to be similar to the Arabic *drr*, “to flow (freely),” “run,” and *drr* has also been noted to be a borrowed practice from the Akkadian *andurāru*.²⁵

19. There are also two homonymous words found in *Exod* 30:23, “myrrh,” and *Pss* 84:4[3]; *Prov* 26:2, “a kind of bird.”

20. R.D. North, “דרור,” *TDOT* 3:265.

21. North, “דרור,” *TDOT* 3:266.

22. J.P.J. Olivier, “דרור,” *NIDOTTE* 1:986.

23. Olivier, “דרור,” *NIDOTTE* 1:987. Responding to articles by Weinfeld and Lewy, Lemche (“Manumission of Slaves,” *VT* [1976]) cautions against making a strong correlation between דרור and other ANE practices that appear similar.

24. N.P. Lemche, “The Manumission of Slaves - The Fallow Year - The Sabbatical Year - The Jubel Year,” *VT* 26 (1976): 41.

25. North, “דרור,” *TDOT* 3:266.

The LXX establishes a significant connection between דָּרוּר and יוֹבֵל, using ἄφεσις to translate both words. In *Lev* 25:10-13, the LXX uses the phrase ἀφέσεως σημασία, “proclamation of a release,” to indicate the יוֹבֵל. Noting the significance of ἄφεσις in these passages, the following section will examine the etymology of ἄφεσις.

ἄφεσις, “release”

As a verb, ἀφίημι, signifies “to send off” in every nuance, ranging in force from “to hurl” or “to release,” to “to let be” or “to let go.” As a substantive, ἄφεσις has the legal sense of “release” from marriage, office, obligation, debt, and punishment. In early Greek writings, ἄφεσις never has a religious connotation.²⁶

The LXX uses it to translate a series of Hebrew words, including those that denote release or surrender, and verbs of remission or forgiveness. The choice of this verb significantly modified the concepts of remission and forgiveness, as the original sense of the Hebrew verb denotes cultic removal and expiation of sin, while ἀφίημι has a legal sense.²⁷ ἄφεσις is used to translate יוֹבֵל, שְׁמִטָּה (the year of release in *Deut* 15), דָּרוּר (which as noted above, has an eschatological intent in the prophetic writings), and הַנְּחָה, “release from taxes” (*Esth* 2:18).²⁸

The Sabbath Year (*Leviticus* 25:1-7)

In its initial verses, *Lev* 25 contains an imperative to observe the sabbath year: וְשָׁבְתָה הָאָרֶץ, “then the land will sabbath (rest/observe) a sabbath to Yahweh.” שָׁבַת, “to

26. Rudolf Bultman, “ἄφεσις,” *TDNT* 1:510.

27. Bultman, “ἄφεσις,” *TDNT* 1:510. Note *Lev.* 16:26 where ἄφεσιν is used to denote “forgiveness;” clearly not in a legal sense.

28. Bultman, “ἄφεσις,” *TDNT* 1:510.

cease” or “to stop;” שָׁבַת, “resting,” “observing,” or “celebrating the Sabbath.”²⁹ The sabbath year bears similarities to the fallow year outlined in both *Exod* 23:10-11³⁰ and *Deut* 15:1-2.³¹ Each period of seven years is concluded with a sabbath year, echoing the practice of a weekly sabbath. Just as the people are to rest on the seventh day, so is the seventh year intended as a period of rest. However, the subject for this year of rest is the land, not the people. Since the text does not commission the Israelites to impose rest on the land, the injunction “the land will sabbath” applies to all inhabitants; both Israelite and alien.³²

The fourth verse contains the construction שְׁבֻתֹת שְׁבֻתֹת, “a sabbath of complete rest,”³³ or “a sabbath with special sabbath celebrations.”³⁴ The repetition of שְׁבֻתֹת reveals the significance of this Sabbath, indicating that it is to be strictly observed and celebrated in a special way, markedly different from the normal שְׁבֻתֹת,³⁵ as the “sabbath of sabbaths.” The LXX captures the concept of rest by using ἀνάπαυσις for שְׁבֻתֹת שְׁבֻתֹת (also in verse 2), signifying a “cessation,” “interruption,” or “rest.”³⁶ However, in using this word, the LXX fails to capture the ritual significance and celebratory nature of this sabbath of sabbaths.

29. HALOT, 1407.

30. *Exod* 23:10-11 - “For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard” (NRSV).

31. *Deut* 15:1-2 - “Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbour, not exacting it from a neighbour who is a member of the community, because the Lord’s remission has been proclaimed.”

32. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2152. Milgrom further notes that that the notion of the land resting occurs only in *Lev* 25:26 and in 2 *Chr* 36:21). Otherwise the subject is humanity (*Lev* 23:32; *Exod* 16:30) or Yahweh (*Gen* 2:2,3; *Exod* 31:17).

33. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2158.

34. HALOT, 1411.

35. HALOT, 1411. The term is also used in *Exod* 16:23 where שְׁבֻתֹת שְׁבֻתֹת explained as שְׁבֻתֹת קֹדֶשׁ, “holy sabbath,” attaching great significance to this ‘sabbath of complete rest.’

36. Otto Bauernfeind, “ἀνάπαυσις,” *TDNT* 1:350. Although this word conveys an eschatological “rest” in the NT (as in *Rev.* 14:13; 6:11), in the LXX it commonly refers to “rest,” denoting the Sabbath as a “day of rest.”

The intent then, is for both the people and livestock to observe rest, as the sabbath year enables provision for both the people and the land (*Lev 25:6-7*).³⁷ Although humanity was given authority over creation in *Gen 1:28*, sabbath year reinforces Yahweh's sovereignty over the entire earth. Sabbath year allows for the land to rest from human exploitation; to receive divine justice. It takes precedence over human needs and wants, as the lives of the people must be placed on hold.³⁸

Furthermore, the sabbath year legislation is setting up a cultic calendar. Just as the Israelites were to observe the cultic system of sacrifices and festivals outlined earlier in *Leviticus*, they were also to observe larger blocks of time, a sabbath period, as also outlined in *Exod 23* and *Deut 15*. Although the *Leviticus* legislation occurs in the canon between these two other texts, it was likely written later than the other two legislative passages, because there are significant differences that are reflective of the Jubilee legislation. The *Exodus* passage gives attention to the land, the vineyards, and the orchards, allowing the poor and the wild animals to eat during the fallow year. The *Exodus* legislation begins a sequence of social responsibility, reminding the readers that the basis for their social responsibility is derived from their own history of slavery. Rather than abolishing slavery, the author of *Exodus* is concerned with the proper treatment of the slaves.³⁹ Even though female slaves are not to be released in this legislation, they are still to be well treated. The treatment of foreign slaves is notably absent in the *Exodus* legislation. The Deuteronomic legislation is more concerned with slavery and debts, ensuring that slaves are released and given provision every seven

37. Frank H. Gorman Jr., *Leviticus: Divine Presence and Community*, (ITC 3; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 137.

38. Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, (St. Louis, MS: Chalice Press, 2000), 61.

39. Enns, *Exodus*, 443.

years. It also ensures equal treatment for female slaves. The *Leviticus* version of the sabbath year legislation gives no attention to the destitute or the enslaved, but places emphasis upon the land. The destitute and the enslaved are given attention in the Jubilee legislation, allowing for their release every fiftieth year, not every seventh.

Introduction of the Jubilee (*Leviticus* 25:8-12)

The cultic calendar continues to develop. Following seven Sabbath periods, the Israelites are to observe the year of Jubilee. The key elements of this Jubilee year are restoration and release. The year proclaims release from the burden of debt and restoration to the ancestral property and the family separated by debt servitude.⁴⁰ The year is announced, not on the first day of a new year, but rather on the tenth day of the seventh month. This is the most holy day of the Israelite year, the Day of Atonement (also a *שַׁבַּת שַׁבָּתוֹ*, “a sabbath of sabbaths,” in *Lev* 16:31), when the Israelites are made clean before Yahweh. Therefore, as the Jubilee is declared, the Israelites have been cleansed before Yahweh, and now they are responding to their atonement by liberating their fellow Israelites. This year of release and restoration commences with a sabbath of sabbaths.

Following the purgation of the sanctuary, the year of Jubilee is proclaimed, with the command *קִדְשׁוּהָ*, “you shall sanctify,” or “you shall treat as holy.”⁴¹ Pointing *קִדְשׁוּ* a *piel*⁴² indicates the Masoretes recognized the people’s responsibility to observe the Jubilee. Although Yahweh instituted the legislation, the call to sanctify the Jubilee

40. C.J.H. Wright, “Jubilee, Year of,” *ABD* 3:1026.

41. Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2166.

42. Rendering a verb as *piel* rather than *qal* recognizes that the *piel* is associated with causation. It causes a state rather than an action (B.K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 400). In the case of *קִדְשׁוּהָ*, the people cause the Jubilee Year to be sanctified by its observance, rather than it simply being sanctified because Yahweh has deemed it so.

requires the people to abstain from toiling the land (v. 11). As the people are prepared, the year is announced by blowing the שופר, a ceremonial “horn”⁴³ used through the Old Testament to announce Yahweh’s presence (*Exod* 19:16), ceremonial events, or events related to war (*Josh* 6).⁴⁴ After the שופר was blown, דרור, “release,” was declared. The proclamation of Jubilee was accompanied by a complete and total release of the individuals. As they were released, the people were to return to their ancestral lands. The release meant “that no one can be permanently enslaved, debts are to be cancelled, and land returned to its original owners in the jubilee year.”⁴⁵ The Jubilee legislation was a legislated prevention and ongoing reversal of what had happened to the Israelites in Egypt.

The Concern of Two Fallow Years

Although a means of preventing Israelite slavery, and ensuring release and restoration, the requirement to have two fallow years has led many to dismiss the legislation as utopian and unachievable.⁴⁶ Although intended to be another year of celebration, several scholars maintain that practicing the Jubilee would have resulted in economic disaster for

43. Gerstenberger (*Leviticus*, 378) points out the significance of the horn in conjunction with the Year of Jubilee. As the word Jubilee is derived from the word for ram (יובל, “yobel”), the imagery associated with the ram is significant in the Jubilee legislation. The horn that is used to announce the Jubilee’s arrival comes from the ram.

44. HALOT, 1447.

45. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 243.

46. Several scholars have debated the utopian nature of the Jubilee year. They question how the society could have survived had the land been left fallow for two consecutive years. As the Jubilee year followed a Sabbath year, harvests for four consecutive years would have been affected. Scholars have argued that the result would be wide scale famine among the people (Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, 2000). While North (*The Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954]) and others have put forth the concept that the Jubilee was synonymous with the Sabbatical Year, Milgrom dismisses their claims and argues that the Biblical evidence supports the intention of the Jubilee Year falling subsequently to the seventh Sabbatical Year. Milgrom postulates that in keeping with divine grace, the land would have provided adequately for the people. His support for the separation of the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years is supportable within the theology of the Old Covenant. The Covenant between Yahweh and the Israelites directly involved the land and its usage. They were to acknowledge Yahweh as the maintainer of the land. The promises of the covenant tied directly to their possession of the land. Breaking the covenant resulted in their expulsion from the land.

the Israelites.⁴⁷ As the fiftieth year, it would have succeeded the forty-ninth year, a Sabbatical year. The result would have been two years in which the Israelites did not sow or harvest the unpruned vines. Since sowing would not have occurred in the fiftieth year, the harvest of the following year would have likewise been affected. However, remembering the promises of the covenant and assuming Yahweh's provision of the manna, scholars such as Kinsler⁴⁸ believe that the land would have yielded enough for the people to be sustained.⁴⁹

Other scholars have proposed a solution to the concern raised by consecutive fallow years based on the observance of Israel's calendar system. The passage records the Jubilee is to begin on the tenth day of the seventh month, the day of atonement. Data concerning biblical calendars mostly appears in documents that were written during the exilic or post-exilic periods, while an explicit, complete calendar is not found in a Jewish text until the 3rd century B.C.E, in the *Astronomical Book of Enoch* (1 Enoch 72-82).⁵⁰ With this in mind, one is left to speculate how the biblical feasts and festivals were organized into a calendar system during the biblical era. The Hebrew Bible is clear that

47. Kinsler ("Leviticus 25," *Int* 53:4 [1999]: 398) maintains that such a viewpoint neglects the promises inherent in the covenant. Those who view the Jubilee as an economic disaster follow a dualistic separation of religion from the economics of real life. He holds that both must be viewed as intertwined. For the Israelites, the economy was based on the land, which was given to them under the provisions of the covenant. Seeing it as an economic liability, Fager relegates the Jubilee to a post-exilic period, as the reforming priests were envisioning a utopian society. Rather than seeing the Jubilee as an intended practice, he likens it to a principle of ensuring that the land is distributed equally, a concern for those Israelites returning from exile. Likewise, Gnuse sees the passage as a utopian vision for the exiles. For Fager and Gnuse, understanding the Jubilee as a principle, rather than a practice, removes the likelihood of an economic disaster. While the opposing viewpoints hold merit, the text does give an answer to this situation. The text holds confidence in Yahweh's ability to provide for his covenant faithful people.

48. Ross Kinsler and his wife Gloria teach theology at the Latin American University in San José, Costa Rica.

49. F. Ross Kinsler, "Leviticus 25," 397. In *Gen* 41:33-36, Joseph outlines his plan to Pharaoh to save Egypt and store enough food to sustain the nation for seven years of famine. With this narrative in their history, why would the Jubilee be a concern? The people could have stored enough food for two consecutive fallow years.

50. James C. Vanderkam, "Calendars: Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish," *ABD* 1:814.

from early times, seven days constituted a week. Work could be performed on six days, with labour illegal on the seventh (*Exod* 34:21; 23:12; *Deut* 5:12-15).

James C. Vanderkam⁵¹ details several hypotheses relating to the calendrical system. He references *m. Roš Haš.* 1:1 which claims:

There are four ‘New Year’ days: on the 1st of Nisan is the New Year for kings and feasts; on the 1st of Elul is the New Year for the Tithes of Cattle; on the 1st of Tishri is the New Year for [the reckoning of] the years [of foreign kings], of the Years of Release and Jubilee years, for the planting [of trees] and for vegetables; and the 1st of Shebat is the New Year for [fruit] trees.⁵²

The Jubilee complicates the understanding of the Jewish calendar system, as *Lev* 25:8-9 prescribes that the Jubilee years were to begin on the tenth day of the seventh month; nowhere else considered to be the first day of a new year.⁵³ Hoenig suggests that the Jubilee year was a shorter period of time, thus the concern for two fallow years would not be as great.⁵⁴ Given that the Jubilee was to begin later in the year, Hoenig’s suggestion receives attention as a likely solution to the concern of two fallow years.

The Great Return

Beyond assuming divine providence or shorter period of time, the concern of two fallow years cannot be easily resolved. Continuing the discussion of the Jubilee as a reversal of the Egyptian enslavement, notice the rationale for the Jubilee in the tenth verse. יִבֹּל הָאָדָם

50. James C. Vanderkam is the John O’Brien Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame, Indiana, USA), and an editor of twelve volumes of the DJD.

52. Vanderkam, “Calendars,” 817.

53. Vanderkam, “Calendars,” 817. Vanderkam suggests that the month of Nisan would represent the marking of years in the passage, as the text is intended for the priests.

54. La Sor et.al. suggest that the Year of Jubilee may have been a period of time inserted into the calendar, marking the end of the seventh sabbatical year. This may have functioned as a leap year, adding a few days into the calendar, bringing their lunar calendar into phase with the solar year (LaSor, *Old Testament Survey*, 90). Hoenig (“Sabbatical Years and the Year of Jubilee,” *JQR* 59:3 [1969]) supports the notion of a shorter calendrical year, on the basis of the number of promised harvests. Due to the growing seasons, were a full calendrical Jubilee year intended, then the harvest of the last harvest year would need to yield enough for four years, not three, as the first year after the Jubilee would need its own growing season before it yielded a harvest.

וְתִהְיֶה לָכֶם וְשִׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל־אֶחָיו וְאִישׁ אֶל־מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ תָּשֻׁבוּ
 return to his own property and each shall return to his own clan.” The Jubilee is a two-
 fold liberation: those liberated are to return to their families and land. It is of interest to
 note that they are directed to first return to their land, and then to their family. This
 signifies the importance that Jubilee gives to the land. While some have argued that
 translating אֶחָיו as “property” in verse 10 is a mistranslation, as the people are considered
 to be occupants or tenants of Yahweh’s land, *HALOT* maintains that “property” is the
 best translation.⁵⁵ While understood that the land belongs to Yahweh, the land is also
 Israel’s inheritance, given by Yahweh, and thus is Israel’s property.⁵⁶ In returning to both
 the land and the family unit, the Jubilee legislation is affirming the structure of Israelite
 society, affirming the family as the basic unit.

As understood from the Old Testament, society was structured along the lines of
 the family, clan, and tribe. The family was the smallest unit and presided over by the
 head of the household. This person was assigned judicial authority over the family and
 contributed to decisions affecting the community. The clan was a larger unit of kinship.
 As an endogamous institution, individuals had to marry within the clan, and redeemers
 were chosen from the clan. Endogamy was necessary to protect the land tenure, ensuring
 that property stayed within the clan. The land was apportioned among the Israelites by
 clans, and thus it was the clan unit that was most affected by the Jubilee legislation.⁵⁷ As
 various families came into financial difficulties, the Israelite society legislated provisions
 for them to become indentured servants to a member of the clan. This practice would

55. *HALOT*, 32. See also Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2171.

56. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2171.

57. Christopher J.H. Wright, “Family,” *ABD* 2:761.

have led to the compilation of smaller farms into larger estates.⁵⁸ The Jubilee, as anti-latifundal legislation, prevented this compilation every fifty years, i.e., every second generation.

The Jubilee legislation, therefore, would have distinguished Israel from surrounding nations. It was a rejection of the ANE class-oriented system. Among the major surrounding civilizations, there was a development of ruling priestly and military aristocracy. The enactment of the Jubilee would have restored harmony among the classes.⁵⁹ In keeping with the themes of restoration and release, the observance of Jubilee legislation would have preserved a social order in which individuals could be self-reliant and provide for their families.

The Financial Implications of the Jubilee (*Leviticus 25:13-18*)

The Israelites were unable to buy their land permanently. They could only purchase use of the land; thus the value of the land was determined by the remaining number of harvests until the Jubilee. In essence, they were leasing the land.⁶⁰ The land would not become the inheritable property of another family. Rather than purchasing the land, they were purchasing the yields of the remaining harvests.

v. 17: וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת־עֲמִיתוֹ וְיִרְאַתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: “You shall not oppress one of your own people [lit., “the man of his society”],⁶¹ but you shall fear your God; for

58. Fager, *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee*, 112.

59. Gnuse, “Jubilee Legislation in Leviticus: Israel’s Vision of Social Reform,” 43.

60. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2177; see also Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 380.

Milgrom notes that there is no word in Hebrew that conveys “lease,” but the context implies this interpretation of מכר. He further notes that rabbis used the word in a similar fashion.

61. עֲמִית, “the man of his society” (*HALOT*, 845). The term indicates the relationship between two individuals of the same community. Although “neighbour” does not fully convey the notion, it suggests a stronger sense of solidarity than does “one another” (NRSV). Translating the LXX ἄνθρωπος τὸν πλησίον, “neighbouring man,” the NETS chose “neighbour.” Πλησίον conveys an idea of proximity; “neighbour,”

I am Yahweh your God.” יגה, “oppress,” conveys a stronger moral injunction than the NRSV’s “cheat” allows. The NJB’s choice is “exploit,” much closer to the sense of יגה. In Hebrew, the word carries the tones of oppression and violence.⁶² Rather than simply forbidding cheating one’s neighbour, the legislation is forbidding the oppression of one another. If the use of a property is being obtained, the leaser has the obligation to ensure that a fair price is being granted for the land.

There is a moral injunction within the passage for the people to treat one another justly, without oppression. An Israelite is not to oppress another Israelite because of his fear of Yahweh. This phrase protects the underprivileged and unprotected in society, and deters economic exploitation.⁶³ As Yahweh’s people, their conduct is to be above reproach. Their motivation to be concerned about their neighbour stems from their relationship with Yahweh.⁶⁴ As they uphold this command to refrain from exploiting their neighbour, they are granted the privilege to remain in the land (v. 18).⁶⁵

Problems and Questions (*Leviticus 25:19-24*)

When faced with a seemingly overwhelming responsibility, it is natural for questions to rise. This pericope responds to the question of nourishment. Due to the necessity of two

“the person next to one,” and “fellow-man.” In the LXX, it is used 225 times (with only 155 of which can comparison be made, as there is no certain Hebrew original term in the other instances; Heinrich Greeven, “πλησίον,” *TDNT* 6:312). πλησίον translates תַּיְמָן nine times, and denotes fellow-members of the covenant or the community (Greeven, “πλησίον,” 314). In *Lev* 19:16-18, πλησίον is used to translate two different terms: תַּיְמָן and עֲרֵךְ “companion.” In the use of תַּיְמָן in *Lev* 25:17, the term suggests one who is part of the covenant community.

62. *HALOT*, 416.

63. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2179.

64. Note the similar concern in *Lev* 19:18: וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, “you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Yahweh.”

65. As a post-exilic document, the Jubilee legislation also provides rationale for their recent exile. As the Israelite society became corrupted under generations of monarchic rule, the people lost sight of the divine imperative to care for their neighbours. Perhaps if they had heeded these instructions, exile would not have happened.

fallow years, there is considerable discussion of the economic viability of the Jubilee. However, the text provides a response to this concern.

The legislation asserts that the land belongs to Yahweh (v. 23, כִּי־לִי הָאָרֶץ, “the land is mine”). Therefore, it is his prerogative to command the land to yield a crop adequate for three years. The God who provided manna and quail in the desert will ensure his people have adequate food to eat. Yahweh guarantees both economic and political stability in verses 18 and 19.⁶⁶ Whereas the land belongs to Yahweh, the Israelites merely tend it or hold it. A person’s land holding may not be taken permanently.⁶⁷ Since Yahweh is the landowner, he is entitled to require that the land be redeemed as dictated in the Jubilee legislation. Obedience to Israel’s economic system requires faith that Yahweh will provide through his control of nature, as evidenced in his provision of manna (*Deut* 8:3) and quail (*Num* 11:31).⁶⁸

Enforcing Yahweh’s ownership of the land, verse 23 dictates that the land is not to be sold לְצַמְחָהּ. Translated “in perpetuity” (NRSV) or “permanently” (NIV, NASB, CEV), צַמְחָהּ occurs here and in verse 30. *HALOT* notes that the basic meaning is doubtful, but should probably be interpreted to convey that the land is not to be sold with irrevocable validity, meaning that the original seller, or his heirs, cannot lose his territory beyond the Jubilee.⁶⁹ According to the tenets of Jubilee legislation, the land continues to be the possession of the seller, and at the Jubilee, the seller, or his heirs, is restored to his territory.

66. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2180.

67. Gorman, *Leviticus: Divine Presence and Community*, 139.

68. Wright, “Jubilee, Year of,” 1026.

69. *HALOT*, 1036. Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2184) translates the word as “beyond reclaim,” recognizing that the seller’s claim to the land cannot be ended or destroyed.

The Stages of Destitution (*Leviticus 25:25-55*)

The First Stage of Destitution (*Leviticus 25:25-34*)

Milgrom identifies three stages of destitution outlined in the remaining portion of *Lev 25*. To illustrate the stages, he devises the narrative of an Israelite who falls into difficulty and subsequently experiences various stages of destitution. In the first stage of destitution, the Israelite is forced to sell the use of his land to cover his debt. If he is not able to redeem the land, then his redeemer will, and the latter will retain it until the Jubilee.⁷⁰ Land is vital to the Israelite, and so redemption is needed to reclaim it prior to the Jubilee. One should note in verse 25 that the Israelite in question has only sold a piece of land, and not his entire property. Since Israel's identity is connected to its occupation of the land, an Israelite will only sell the use of his land under the most dire circumstances.⁷¹ In this case, he has sold it to someone outside of the clan unit, hence the need for redemption.

In the twenty-ninth verse, the focus of the passage shifts from an agrarian society to one that is urban. Milgrom attests this transition to a later editor attempting to relate the principles to a society that has become increasingly urban.⁷² As a result of the urbanization, the principles of redemption have changed. Walled cities do not have the same value as agricultural land, and therefore are not given the same priority in

70. Milgrom (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2195) maintains that the redeemer maintains control of the redeemed land until the Jubilee. On the other hand, Levine (*Leviticus*, 101) argues that the redeemer must return the land immediately to its original owner. Milgrom claims that the redeemer would have no incentive to redeem the property if he did not have use of the land until the Jubilee (*Leviticus 23-27*, 2195). Since the return to the land is dependent on repayment of the debt or the action of the Jubilee, (*Lev 25:28*), Milgrom's postulation seems the strongest.

71. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2193.

72. This observation acknowledges that there are some components of the Jubilee legislation (particularly the statements regarding cities) that appear to be later insertions; post-exilic revisions. The majority of the legislation appears to be have been composed in a society that was predominantly agrarian.

redemption (*Lev* 25:30).⁷³ However, unwalled settlements (*Lev* 25:31) are more closely connected to the land, viewed as אֲרָצוֹת פְּתוּחוֹת, “arable land,”⁷⁴ or “open country” (NRSV), and are subject to the normal Jubilee legislation.⁷⁵ Unlike the other tribes who receive landed property, the Levites must settle in towns. As their inheritance, Levitical cities are subject to Jubilee legislation.⁷⁶

The Second Stage of Destitution (*Leviticus* 25:35-38)

In illustrating this stage, Milgrom imagines an Israelite who incurred another crop failure on his reduced land. As his land had not been redeemed, he was forced to take out a new loan. With the collapse of his crop, he forfeits all use of the land and becomes a “tenant farmer” for his creditor.⁷⁷ By ensuring that one continues to work the land, the Israelite is less vulnerable to destitution than would be a landless agricultural worker.⁷⁸

Gerstenberger suggests that the prohibition of interest would render indebtedness and bankruptcy impossible.⁷⁹ However, the possibility of successive years of drought would result in the debtor having difficulty to make payments on the principal.⁸⁰ By treating the

73. Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2197.

74. *HALOT*, 1308.

75. Gorman, *Leviticus*, 140.

76. *Num* 35:1-5: “In the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Command the Israelites to give, from the inheritance that they possess, towns for the Levites to live in; you shall also give to the Levites pasture lands surrounding the towns. The towns shall be theirs to live in, and their pasturelands shall be for their cattle, for their livestock, and for all their animals. The pasture lands of the towns, which you shall give to the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the town outwards a thousand cubits all around. You shall measure, outside the town, for the east side two thousand cubits, for the south side two thousand cubits, for the west side two thousand cubits, and for the north side two thousand cubits, with the town in the middle; this shall belong to them as pasture land for their towns” (NRSV).

77. Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2205.

78. Fager, *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee*, 88

79. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 387.

80. Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2209.

dependent Israelite justly, ethics and ritual are tied together.⁸¹ Their shared history is to prevent the Israelites from forcing one another into bondage or slavery.

Although the proclamation nature of the Jubilee legislation has echoes in other ANE documents (see above, p.20), the prohibition against interest would have clearly distinguished Israel from its neighbours. High interest rates in other civilizations forced many people into debt slavery. The laws of Hammurabi called for a twenty percent interest upon money loans, and a thirty-three percent interest upon grain loans.⁸² The expectations placed upon Israel are different than those of surrounding nations.

The Third Stage of Destitution (*Leviticus 25:39-55*)

The scenario Milgrom presents is further developed. The debtor is yet unable to repay his loan, cannot support himself or his family, and now enters the home of his creditor. However, he is not a slave, but a resident hireling. He lives on the land of his creditor and receives wages, which will pay off his debts.⁸³ The indentured Israelite can work as a שכיר, “hired labourer,” working for wages, or a תושב “bound labourer,” working to pay off his debt. While the labour of the Israelite can be sold, neither the Israelite nor his land can actually be purchased; the land can only be leased and then released at the time of the Jubilee.⁸⁴ Both land and person belong to Yahweh, and do not become the permanent possession of an individual. At the Jubilee, he and his family will be released, regardless the remaining indebtedness.⁸⁵

81. Gorman, *Leviticus*, 140.

82. Gnuse, “Jubilee Legislation in Leviticus,” 44.

83. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2213, 2222.

84. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2217.

85. Gorman, *Leviticus*, 141. It is of interest to note the contrast between this passage, and the slavery laws in *Exod 21* and *Deut 15*. Both pericopes call for the release of Hebrew slaves after a period of six years. *Deut 15:12* (NRSV) reads: “If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and works for you for six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free.”

The legislation goes on to remind the Israelites of their history when they worked as slaves (*Lev* 25:42). Therefore, they are not to be treated as slaves. In contrast, it is permissible to make the non-Israelite a slave, and there is no injunction against harsh treatment of these slaves.⁸⁶ Although non-Israelites are not under the same protection as the Israelites, they are under the same obligation to release. If they have Israelite labourers, the non-Israelite is subject to the Jubilee legislation, in the labourer and his family must be released in the fiftieth year. If the labourer can be redeemed prior to the Jubilee, the price is subject to the number of years remaining to the Jubilee.⁸⁷ This requirement for non-Israelites is further evidence that the Jubilee legislation is tied to the

The Jubilee legislation calls for a much longer period of labour. Milgrom (*Leviticus* 23-27, 2223) advocates a distinction between the types of slavery discussed in the contrasting passages and also sees the distinctions as the result of varying authorship. Milgrom suggests that the Jubilee redemption is for land and true slavery. The *Deuteronomy* and *Exodus* passages refer to hirelings who are free people. The Jubilee redemption is for those who have become caught up in debt to the point where they have been forced into slavery. Milgrom recognizes a distinction between the slave and the hireling. Milgrom mentions the rabbinic distinction. The seven-year release is for those who have been sold by the courts to be relieved of their debts, while the Jubilee release is intended for those who have sold themselves to cover their debts. Rather than relying on the Documentary Hypothesis, it is satisfying to see the Rabbinic perspective who attempted to reconcile the differences between the texts. Their suggestion appears to adequately reconcile the texts. It would be appropriate to draw a distinction between the Israelite who sells himself with the Israelite who is sold by the court. For the courts to sell a fellow kinsman as a hired labourer for a period of fifty years (thus selling the subsequent generations) would not be in the best interests of the clan. For the Israelite who sells himself, it is his prerogative to do so. Milgrom, however, rejects this hypothesis, understanding it as a product of harmonization. He outlines Wright's theory, which looks at the difference in terms in each pericope. The *Exodus* passage refers to the עֶבֶרִי, "a Hebrew man or woman" (*HALOT*, 782), while *Leviticus* is referencing the אחִי, "brother" or "blood-relation" (*HALOT*, 29). Wright suggests that the former refers to a landless Israelite while the latter is a landed Israelite. "The former, having lost his land and with no means for supporting himself, is quite willing to become a slave, even a lifelong one" (Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2001; 2252). Hartley (*Leviticus*, 1992, 432) appears to support Wright's hypothesis as he argues that an Israelite had the right to bond himself to a creditor for life. This would enslave the Israelite and his family, and it would be those slaves for whom the Jubilee was intended. Like Wright, he is drawing a distinction between the types of slaves referred to in *Exodus/Deuteronomy* and *Leviticus*. Milgrom suggests that the slave released in the seventh year, without his land, will soon return to indentured slavery. However, the land release in Jubilee will permit the Israelite to regain an economic base. It is hoped that he will not have to re-enter slavery. Milgrom appears to bring up an important point that is missed by Wright and the rabbis! Without any land, an economic commodity, the Israelite would not have been able to support a family. Very likely, it would not be long before he would become indentured again. This would keep his children indentured as well. The land release, while it may not affect the original Israelite (as he may have died by that point), would permit the release and economic establishment of his children.

86. Gorman, *Leviticus*, 141.

87. Gorman, *Leviticus*, 141.

land. All who dwell in the land, whether Israelite or alien, are subject to the principle of release.

Generally, Israel guaranteed better rights for its slaves than did other ANE nations. It was a crime to return an escaped foreign slave,⁸⁸ a capital offense to kidnap an individual into slavery,⁸⁹ and the slave owner could be killed for mistreatment resulting in the slave's death.⁹⁰ The Jubilee connected land release with slave release to permit an economic base of support.⁹¹ Nations surrounding Israel drew a distinction between chattel and debt slaves. A chattel-slave was the property of one person. He was movable property, requiring supervision and used primarily for domestic work. It was possible for him to achieve some form of social improvement.⁹² A debt-slave, in contrast, worked for the creditor, but was released after three years of service. There was no Israelite legislation regarding the release of chattel slaves. Rather than distinguishing between the two kinds of slavery, Israel prohibited all forms of slavery of Israelites by Israelites. There is no chattel-slavery and debt-slavery functions as work for hire.⁹³ An Israelite was not to become the property of another person. However, as Scripture testifies, this principle is idealistic. Most likely, it was never enforced, and slavery of citizens existed in Israel as in other nations.⁹⁴

88. *Deut* 23:15-16 - "Slaves who have escaped to you from their owners shall not be given back to them. They shall reside with you, in your midst, in any place they choose in any one of your towns, wherever they please; you shall not oppress them" (NRSV).

89. *Deut* 24:7 - "If someone is caught kidnapping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnapper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst" (NRSV).

90. *Exod* 2:20 - "When a slave-owner strikes a male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished" (NRSV).

91. Gnuse, "Jubilee Legislation in Leviticus," 44.

92. G. H. Hass, "Slave, Slavery," *DOTP*, 779.

93. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2213.

94. *Jer* 34:9-10 and *Joel* 2:29 speak about slavery existing in Israel. While the prophets advocate for fair treatment of the slaves, they do not prohibit the practice. Their reference to slavery infers that it was common practice.

The alien and the Israelite are subject to the same laws.⁹⁵ However, the Jubilee legislation draws a clear distinction between the groups, as it permits slavery of resident aliens (vv. 44-46). The Jubilee legislation is intended to benefit Israelites. Furthermore, it is apparent that the land bestowed exclusively upon the Israelites takes priority, even over the alien's provisions in the law.⁹⁶ Emphasis is given to the viability of the Israelite families by ensuring the proper distribution of their land.⁹⁷

Significant Themes

One cannot read the Jubilee legislation in *Lev 25* without noting the attention given to land and property. Throughout the chapter, two terms are used that denote a physical territory: ארץ, "land," occurs 21 times; אֲחֻזָּה "property," appears 12 times. As already noted, the land is given attention in this series of release laws, unlike its counterparts in *Deuteronomy* and *Exodus*. There is a clear message to the Israelites that the land is to be seen as Yahweh's possession, and not their property in their own right. They are tenants of Yahweh's land. This is a significant theological claim, particularly in light of the Babylonian conquest. The Exile served to remind the people that the land, which they had viewed as their divinely appointed possession, was actually a gift from Yahweh, dependent on their obedience to the covenant.

Milgrom notes that a significant outcome of Yahweh's ownership of the land is that the land should be recognized as קֹדֶשׁ, "holy."⁹⁸ The land is selected to be Yahweh's and they were to treat it with ethical reverence, as they did the sanctuary. Reminding

95. *Lev 24:22* - "You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the Lord your God" (NRSV).

96. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2231.

97. Wright, "Jubilee, Year of," 1027.

98. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2185.

them that the land was Yahweh's served to inform the people that their obedience and disobedience to the covenant had, and would continue to have, significant repercussions on their possession of the territory.

Beyond ensuring that the people had a proper understanding of the land, the Jubilee legislation also functioned to ensure that the people recognize their moral obligations to care for one another. There is a significant division in the Jubilee legislation between Israelites and non-Israelites, but the people are to ensure that their own אָח, "brother," be cared for. אָח is another commonly repeated word, appearing ten times in the chapter, most often (six times) with a second person suffix attached to it, emphasizing that the reader is to identify their responsibility for their own kin. The kinship responsibility is also emphasized by the term עַמִּי, "the man of my society," which appears four times in the chapter. Along with this observation, there is a strong warning against cheating, or oppressing one's kin, with the appearance of פָּרַד, "violence, slavery," (vv. 43,46,53), preventing an authority marked by harshness over one's kin, and with the appearance of גָּחַ, "to cheat, be violent, to oppress," (vv. 14, 17), ensuring that one does not exploit or oppress their neighbour.

The Jubilee legislation provides a systematic concern for both the land and the neighbour, and is founded on the themes of release and restoration. Just as the people were released from Egypt, so are they to provide a society marked by release for the indebted, and restoration for the impoverished to their inheritable property. In the following chapter, several Old Testament passages that have been linked with Jubilee legislation will be considered in light of these significant themes.

CHAPTER TWO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORIES

Following the discussion of the Jubilee legislation, the focus now turns to other passages in the Pentateuch and the English canon of *Joshua-Esther*. The discussion will address potential allusions, and draw conclusions at the close of this chapter.

Leviticus 27:14-25

Beyond two additional passages in *Lev 27* and *Num 36*, 'jubilee' is absent from the pages of Scripture. The theme of *Lev 27* concerns the implications of vows and offerings made to Yahweh. After details concerning the offerings of people and animals, the legislation's attention turns to property offered to Yahweh, and how that property is dealt with in the year of remission.

Chapter 27 has been subject to much scholarly criticism as many have suggested that this chapter is a later addition to the text. Scholars observe that *Lev 26:46*¹ appears to be an ending to the text, and therefore it is proposed that chapter 27 was appended at a later date. Meyer states that chapters 25 and 26 are a literary unit, and that chapter 27 is "the odd one out."² He notes that there are textual similarities between chapters 25 and 27, but is swayed by the absence of motivational clauses and "I am Yahweh" formulas, to

1. *Lev 26:46* (NRSV): "These are the statutes and ordinances and laws that the LORD established between himself and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai through Moses."

2. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus* 25, 183.

dismiss chapter 27 as an original component of *Leviticus*.³ He further observes that the theme of liberation, so central to chapter 25, appears to be absent from the legislation of chapter 27, the pressing concern for this final chapter being a sanctuary seeking to raise funds.⁴

Douglas, Milgrom, and Bergsma note the textual and thematic similarities between these two Jubilee chapters, and maintain that *Lev 27* is an integral conclusion to the themes covered in chapters 25 and 26. Although Meyer concludes that chapter 27 is a later construction on the basis of the scrutiny of traditional diachronic or historical-critical examinations,⁵ Bergsma acknowledges that the dating of chapter 27 is difficult to establish, because it is void of any references to historically verifiable events or conditions, he concludes that there are no “fatal objections” to understanding this chapter in the same historical context as *Lev 25*.⁶ He further notes that the use of common lexemes and themes for both chapters 25 and 27 point to the same or similar legislator(s) in the same or similar historical-cultural location(s).⁷ Furthermore, Douglas’s proposed structure (see above, p. 17) suggests that chapters 25 and 27 serve as frames to chapter 26. The first side of the frame is concerned with person-to-person obligations. The second side of the frame deals with similar concerns, but from Yahweh’s point of view. She suggests that, according to the stipulations of chapter 27, Yahweh himself submits to the power of the Jubilee laws.⁸

3. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus 25*, 186.

4. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus 25*, 188.

5. Meyer, *The Jubilee in Leviticus 25*, 183.

6. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 108.

7. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 113.

8. Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 244. See also Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*,

This final chapter of *Leviticus* assumes the legislation of *Lev* 25. The concept of Jubilee remission and redemption is very much at the heart of this passage, and the passage is concerned with items that have been consecrated to Yahweh. While ‘jubilee’ is absent from verses 14-15, Milgrom postulates that the Jubilee legislation is taken for granted.⁹ In this portion, the concern is *שקד*, “to make holy,” “dedicate,” “consecrate,” as a person has consecrated a house to Yahweh. Milgrom further defines *שקד* as a transfer from the realm of the profane to the realm of the holy.¹⁰

The concept of *שקד* develops in verses 16-25, where it is not a house in question, but a field. In the scenario presented by the legislation, the question is raised concerning the possession of land consecrated to Yahweh, and the implications of the Jubilee on such land. The conclusion is that the inherited land is always returned to the owner in the Year of Jubilee (vv. 24-25). The value of the land is determined by the requirement for its seeding, not its yield. Therefore, an arable piece of land the same size as an infertile piece of land would require the same amount of seed in planting, even though the yield would not be the same. Thus, both plots of land would have the same value attached to them.¹¹ Since the land has the potential to be redeemed, by consecrating it the owner is selling or leasing the land’s usufruct until the Jubilee. If the land is consecrated after selling it, then the owner is indicating that he does not want the land returned, and so it becomes sanctuary property after the Jubilee.¹²

The chapter’s discussion on *שקד* presents a gradation of redemption laws. A significant dimension of these redemption laws and its implications on Jubilee release is

9. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2382.

10. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2381.

11. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2382.

12. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27*, 2385. Milgrom alerts the reader to Numbers 18:20, which prohibits the priests from owning land, but not the sanctuary.

found in verse 28 which reads: “Nothing that a person owns that has been devoted to destruction for the LORD, be it human or animal, or inherited landholding, may be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the LORD.” The term of note in this verse is *חרם*, “devoted to destruction,” and is typically used in warfare to connote that which is destroyed after conquest¹³ or for cultic use only. *HALOT* suggests that the understanding of this word in this context is “Yahweh’s share in the booty,” as also used in *Num* 18:14 and *Josh* 6:18.¹⁴ Milgrom proposes the following gradation of redemption:

1. *חרם* is most sacred and irredeemable;
2. Offerable animals, are also irredeemable;
3. Nonofferable consecrations, such as impure animals, land, houses, and crops are redeemable.¹⁵

Gerstenberger¹⁶ also notes the difference in holiness, and suggests that *חרם* conveys an elevated sense of holy, or “most holy,”¹⁷ and such items are therefore not to be redeemed. Levine concurs with this understanding as he iterates that items deemed *חרם* are to be either destroyed or reserved exclusively for purposes determined by the sanctuary.¹⁸ The inclusion of *חרם* in the Jubilee legislation gives it a prominent role in *Leviticus*’ holiness code. The Jubilee provisions for *חרם* implies that the Israelites should have accorded considerable attention to it.

Bergsma concludes that the legislation in *Lev* 27 suggests that the Jubilee legislation was at least intended to be practiced, if not evidence for its implication and its

13. Note the account of *Joshua* 22:20 and its mention of Achan, who brought wrath upon the community of Israel for failing to destroy all that Yahweh had instructed them.

14. *HALOT*, 354.

15. Milgrom, *Leviticus* 23-27, 2403

16. Erhard S. Gerstenberger is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Marburg University in Germany.

17. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus*, 445.

18. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: JPS Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: JPS, 1989), 196.

practice.¹⁹ As the chapter concerns itself with the implications of Jubilee upon consecrated land, it suggests that the Jubilee was not simply the utopian vision of priests. Furthermore, it suggests that Yahweh places himself under the Jubilee legislation that he expects his people to uphold. As the study on Jubilee continues, this section will lend weight to the notion that the themes expressed in the Jubilee legislation are significant to understanding Israel's history and identity.

Numbers 36:1-4

The next and final mention of Jubilee in Scripture is also found in the Pentateuch, in the book of *Numbers*. In this passage, tribal leaders approached Moses out of concern for the inheritance of female heirs. Earlier in the text (*Num 27:8*), Moses had decreed that females could inherit land if their father had no male heirs.²⁰ However, the implication of that decree was that in time, the land would pass into her husband's line and tribe if she married outside of her tribe. Therefore, the Jubilee legislation also led to the command that a woman who inherited land must marry into the tribe of her father (*Num 36:8*).²¹ Some have suggested that the inclusion of the Jubilee in this narrative is an intrusion and not relevant to the question posed by the leaders of Gilead. After all, the property in question is inherited and is not sold property, which is the concern of the Jubilee legislation.

However, one needs to trace the possibility this narrative raises. If the daughters of Zelophehad marry outside of their tribe, and in time become impoverished, and need to

19. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 114.

20. Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 21-36* (AB 4a; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 575. Levine notes that *Num 36* appears to be an addendum to the text of *Numbers*, qualifying the legalities of *Num 27:1-11* on the matter of inheritance.

21. P. A. Barker, "Sabbath, Sabbatical Year, Jubilee," *DOTP*, 702.

sell the land, at the Jubilee the land would be returned to their descendants. Depending on when the land is sold, the daughters would be deceased, and the land would be returned to their descendants, who would be members of her husband's clan, and therefore the land would become the property of another clan. Thus, additional legislation is needed to safeguard the intent of the Jubilee; that is, the restoration of property to the clan.²²

The Jubilee, which was to be the catch-all legislation to rectify land alienations, would not have prevented the passing of the land to another tribe, and this is the concern of Zelophehad's daughters, as noted by their use of *יִהְיֶה* (יהיה), "to be." In his discussion of *יִהְיֶה*, Levine notes that it seems to express a qualifying condition, projecting a negative outcome: "even if, even though." On this basis, the present verse means that even though the Jubilee is scheduled to occur, that event would not affect the status of land inherited by daughters according to *Num 27:1-11*.²³ This particular piece of legislation concerning tribal inheritance would have had little significance to the post-exilic community, as the territory in question (Manasseh) was not part of the land settled by the Judahites post-Exile. Furthermore, the clan itself was nearly a dead institution in the post-exilic period.²⁴ This suggests an earlier date to the Jubilee legislation.

Therefore, this account in *Numbers* likely preserves ancient material and provides a "tantalizing reference" to the Jubilee.²⁵ Furthermore, *Num 35* deals with themes common to the Jubilee: apportionment of land, setting aside cities for the Levites, and the responsibilities of the *גֹּאֵל*, "redeemer" (see below for discussion on *גֹּאֵל*).²⁶ Bergsma also notes the development of an afterlife concept in Israelite thought. For the daughters in

22. K. D. Sakenfeld, "Zelophahad's Daughters," *PRS* 15 (1988), 45.

23. Levine, *Numbers 21-36*, 578.

24. Arndt Meinhold, as referenced by Bergsma, 116.

25. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 114.

26. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 119.

this narrative, their primary concern is for the perpetuation of their father's name (*Num* 27:4).²⁷ Litke also observes this theme as he writes that “life is represented as having possession among YHWH's people, particularly when we remember that a common expression for death or being killed is to be cut off from among the people.”²⁸ The Jubilee legislation played a role that ensured the quality of this afterlife through progeny. *Numbers*' development of the legislation indicates potential eschatological application of the Jubilee,²⁹ a theme that will be picked up again later in this discussion.

Ruth

In developing a theology derived from the Jubilee legislation, it is important to address the concept of גאל, “redeemer,” a significant word in *Lev* 25. The legislation outlines the basis for the redemption of family members who have fallen into poverty. Verse 25 introduces the kinsman-redeemer, an answer for provision for the Israelite who has had to sell his property. This verse reads: “If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem (גאל) what the relative has sold.” The legislation continues to lay the groundwork for this significant role. Should the impoverished Israelite sell himself to a resident alien, the kinsman redeemer has the responsibility to redeem them, paying for their purchase according to the number of years remaining until the next Jubilee (vv. 47-51).

Ruth is a narrative that is largely concerned with the role of the גאל. The account in *Ruth* begins with Elimelech from Bethlehem, who seeks to provide for his family at a

27. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 125.

28. J. D. Litke, “The Daughters of Zelophadad,” *CurTM* 29 (2002): 210.

29. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 125.

time of famine. In what Daniel I. Block³⁰ identifies as a likely last resort,³¹ the man moves to Moab, leaving behind his ancestral land. It is significant to note that the text indicates that Elimelech's stay in Moab was intended as temporary, as indicated by the infinitive construct לָגַר, meaning "to dwell as alien or dependant," or translated "to live for a while" (NIV), or "to sojourn" (ESV; NASB; ASV). The NRSV's "to live" does not convey Elimelech's temporal intentions. His temporary status rendered him a גַּר, "resident alien;" a position that was intermediate between a native and a foreigner. He would have had some status as a protected citizen,³² but with no blood relationship or tribal affiliation, he had only the rights and status that hospitality of the Moabites would have afforded him.³³

30. Daniel I. Block is the Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College.

31. D. I. Block, *Judges, Ruth* (NAC 6; Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 1999), 710, suggests that Elimelech's departure for Moab was a last resort, likely proceeded by the selling of his family land to provide for his family. Once the money earned from that sale was gone, Elimelech's next option according to the Jubilee legislation would have been to sell himself into slavery. Block suggests that Elimelech chose the lesser of two evils, even though moving his family would have been a shameful action.

Sasson suggests that Elimelech's land was likely not sold, but simply worked in his absence. He suggests this based on his understanding of ancient Israelite irrigation practices, and maintains that a field left absent for over ten years would have had canals ditches that had fallen into disrepair. Therefore, upon her return, Naomi was seeking to sell Elimelech's land, as suggested by the initial reading of the verbs קָנָה and קָנָה in *Ruth* 4:3-4.

However, Block maintains that Naomi was not selling, but rather should be read: 'she has decided to give up the right of usufruct.' This argument is based upon the verb's perfect form, and he interprets it as a 'perfective of resolve.' Furthermore, Bush (*The Book of Ruth*; WBC 9, 200) notes that neither "to sell" nor "to transfer" convey the proper context. He similarly notes that Naomi is "disposing of her right" to the land. Therefore, when the other kinsman redeemer is considering 'buying' the land, he is in fact 'acquiring the rights of usufruct,' or the right of enjoying the uses and advantages of the property. Noting the significance that *Ruth* is giving to the role of the kinsman redeemer in its narrative, it seems suggestive that this interpretation carries more weight, as it lends itself to the larger boundaries of kinsman redemption as outlined in *Leviticus* 25.

The *TDOT* recognizes that מָכַר signifies a transfer of possession which can, but not necessarily, amount to a sale. In the case of the Jubilee legislation, a land parcel is "handed over" (מָכַר) but does not constitute a sale (similarly, a man in serious financial difficulties hands himself over to his creditor for six years in *Deut* 15:12; in neither instance is a sale constituted) (E. Lipiński, "מָכַר," *TDOT* 8:292). The root מָכַר means "to give away," "to hand over," "to transfer," or "to deliver." The action resulted in legal possession or ownership, and in earlier Hebrew sources refers mostly to a simple transfer of possession (Lipiński, "מָכַר," 296).

32. Robert L. Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 86.

33. Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC 9; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1996), 63.

Tragically, in a span of only five verses, we learn that Naomi, the man's wife, "was left without her two sons and her husband." In fact, although the narrator has provided her name prior to this statement, she goes nameless in this instance. In losing her male relatives, it seems that she has lost her hope and even her identity. As Block suggests, Naomi does not even have land left in Israel to return home to.

As *Ruth* continues, Naomi urges her two daughters-in-law to return to their families as she sets in her mind to return to Judah. While one daughter turns home, the other, Ruth, commits herself to Naomi, and Ruth the Moabitess arrives in Judah. As the two women seek out Elimelech's kinsman redeemer, they devise a strategy that will see Ruth married and both women provided for. Naomi urges Ruth to propose to Boaz, whom she mistakenly believes is her closest redeemer. Although there is a brief episode in which a closer kinsman redeemer appears, in the end, Boaz marries Ruth, they give birth to a son, and the marriage leads to provision for Naomi.

Ruth's narrative ties together two Israelite legislations: the kinsman redeemer, גאֵל, (*Lev* 25) and the levirate marriage (*Deut* 25), suggesting that the two legislations had become integrated social customs.³⁴ This lends further support to the idea that the Jubilee is an earlier piece of legislation as its adaptation suggests an awareness of its intention, albeit not a direct application.

Helmer Ringgren³⁵ identifies five aspects of the גאֵל's redemptive role in Scripture. The גאֵל is to ensure that the hereditary property of the clan never passes out of

34. J. Ketchum, "The Go'el Custom in Ruth: A Comparative Study," *ResQ* 52 (2010): 237-245. Campbell (*AB* 7; *Ruth*, 1975) suggests that *Ruth* was composed after the codification of the Deuteronomic and Holiness codes, and brought together legislations from both codes in his narrative. This approach likewise suggests that both legislations were well known and accepted in Israelite tradition.

35. Helmer Ringgren was a Swedish theologian who last taught at Uppsala University in Uppsala, Sweden. An editor of the *TDOT*, he died on March 26, 2012.

the clan (*Lev* 25:25-30); maintain the freedom of individuals within the clan by buying back those who have sold themselves into slavery (*Lev* 25:47-55); track down and execute murderers of near relatives (*Num* 35:12, 19-27); receive restitution money on behalf of a deceased victim of crime (*Num* 5:8); and ensure that justice is served in a lawsuit involving a relative (*Job* 19:25; *Ps* 119:154; *Jer* 50:34).³⁶ None of these roles contains any reference to marriage, thereby indicating that Boaz's marriage to Ruth is derived from the Deuteronomic levirate marriage.³⁷ The first role has the most bearing on *Ruth*,³⁸ but Boaz is also concerned for the freedom of Naomi and Ruth. Although they have not sold themselves into slavery, their destitution is a concern. According to the above noted (see p. 33) stages of destitution, Naomi and Ruth may soon find themselves in that position.

The connection between the גאֵל and levirate marriage seems to have been an established social custom, as it proved to be the obstacle for the closer גאֵל in chapter 4.³⁹ At no point did this unnamed potential redeemer suggest to be the גאֵל and not commit to the levirate marriage. Likely his initial desire for the land was due to a knowledge of Naomi who would have been past child-bearing years, and an ignorance of Ruth the Moabitess, who was not past her child-bearing years.⁴⁰ The potential redeemer was able

36. Helmer Ringgren, "גאֵל," TDOT 2:352.

37. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 675.

38. Bush, *Ruth*, 136.

39. The author of *Ruth* identifies the potential גאֵל as פְּלוֹנִי אֶלְמוֹנִי. The translation of these words has proven to be difficult, with variations from "friend" (NIV; NASB; ESV; NJB), to "so-and-so" (NJPS). Other translations (REB; NAB) follow variations on the text and read the phrase as "He called to him by name." The rhyming of the words (*pelsoni almoni*) creates the impression of an artificial creation; one in which the meanings of the individual words may be unrelated to the meaning of the phrase. The word פְּלוֹנִי means "someone or other," "someone not known," and is used when the proper name cannot or should not be used (*HALOT*, 934). אֶלְמוֹנִי is unknown, and is always paired with פְּלוֹנִי (here in *Ruth*; also *1 Sam.* 21:3; *2 Kings* 6:8). Although the other two references do not use the phrase discussing an individual, the use in those two instances appears to indicate an indefinite person or place. The phrase "so-and-so" seems to be a better understanding of the phrase than does "friend" (see also Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 706).

40. E.W. Davies, "Ruth 4:5 and the Duties of the Go'el," *VT* 33 (1983):233.

to opt out of his responsibility, allowing Boaz the opportunity to redeem both the land and Naomi. The phrase *וְגַם יֵשׁ גֹּאֵל קָרוֹב מִמֶּנִּי*, “but there is a redeemer more closely related than me,” in 3:12 indicates that there is a hierarchy from which the *גאֵל* is chosen,⁴¹ allowing for the closer *גאֵל* not to assume this responsibility.

The book of *Ruth* provides a narrative examination of a legal system that originates out of the Jubilee legislation. While there are no direct ties, such as a reference to the Jubilee, the *גאֵל* is a significant theme in the book and demands consideration in this examination of the Jubilee. As Scripture develops the concept of the *גאֵל*, the word becomes linked with Yahweh.

Yahweh is first identified as a *גאֵל* in *Exod* 6:6: *וְגֹאֲלֹתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָהּ*, “I will redeem (*גאֵל*) you with an outstretched arm.” In the period of the Exile, Yahweh vows to redeem the people of Israel.⁴² The identification of Yahweh with the role of the *גאֵל* suggests that this word carried significant legal and theological implications for the people. As a nation, their identity was formed around their reverence and worship of Yahweh. Their legal processes followed their understanding of how Yahweh related to his people. In his observations on *Isa* 35:9-10,⁴³ which is the first appearance of the *גאֵל* concept in *Isaiah*, J. Alec Motyer⁴⁴ notes the use of this term speaks “of the Lord as the only one who can redeem his people; it is his inalienable right; it is he who identifies with

41. Bush, *Ruth*, 175.

42. See *Isa* 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6, 22-24; *Jer* 31:11; *Hos* 13:14; *Mic* 4:10. Although these are just a sampling of the verses in which Yahweh identifies himself as the *גאֵל* there are many verses in which Yahweh makes this declaration.

43. *Isa* 25:9-10 (NRSV): No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

44. J. Alec Motyer is a former principal of Trinity College, in Bristol, UK.

them as their Next-of-kin.”⁴⁵ The use of גאל in *Isaiah* indicates that the prophet viewed the release from Babylonian captivity as a new Exodus, similar to Yahweh’s role in *Exodus* 6:6.⁴⁶

The ongoing use of גאל in Israel’s theological language suggests that at least this element of the Jubilee legislation was prominent to the prophets and religious leaders of Israel. The language associated with redemption grew particularly strong as Israel faced the need of a national Redeemer, as they experienced the divine judgment of Exile. In the midst of hopelessness, they recognized a concept from their legal corpus that provided an image for the hope of return.

2 Chronicles 36:15-23

The Chronicler pays significant attention to the land of Israel and its connection to God’s people. Throughout the text, he draws the reader’s attention to the two offices of king and priest, and suggests a true Israelite is one who adheres to worship at the temple and hope for a Davidic heir.⁴⁷ Israelite identity is determined by faithfulness to the covenant, and the covenant is tied to the land (*Lev* 26:33-35). As his text concludes, the Chronicler

45. J. A. Motyer, *Isaiah* (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 246.

46. Ringgren, “גאל,” *TDOT* 8:354.

47. In an earlier paper (written for BIBL 7873 at Acadia Divinity College, for Dr. R. Glenn Wooden), I noted how the Chronicler draws the reader’s attention to the Davidic line and the mark of an acceptable king: the observance to the Yahwist faith. The Chronicler portrays Hezekiah as a favourable king, in the tradition of David/Solomon. Hezekiah is noted for having restored the temple (*2 Chr* 29) and extending an invitation על־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיְהוּדָה, “to all Israel and Judah,” to congregate at the temple as a reunified people of God. Only Hezekiah (*2 Chr* 29:2) and Josiah (*2 Chr* 34:2) are given the commendation וַיַּעַשׂ הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה, “he did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh,” and compared to David. As Hezekiah is noted for restoring the temple, Josiah is noted for implementing the forgotten book of the law of Yahweh.

According to the Chronicler, the king is held responsible for the nation’s faithfulness or apostasy. Furthermore, the Chronicler points to Jerusalem, as the location of the temple, as the locale for proper Yahwist worship (see *2 Chr* 30:1).

The Chronicler asserts that Israel’s identity is tied to the land. *2 Chr* 7:14 establishes that the Chronicler understood a tie between covenant and land. Yahweh promises that upon the people’s repentance, וְאָסַלַח לְחַטֹּאתֵם וְאָרַפָּא אֶת־אֲרָצְכֶם, “I will forgive their sin and heal the land.” Furthermore, the Chronicler’s conclusion uses Cyrus’ decree to draw connection between the cult and the land, as Cyrus is commissioned לְבַנוֹת־לִי בַיְת בִּירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בִּיהוּדָה, “to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.”

quickly takes the reader through the reign of the last four kings, suggesting the “increasingly unstoppable threat of the exile,”⁴⁸ and concludes by drawing attention to their connection between disregard for the land and Exile. An observation that is missed in our English Bibles is that these words of the Chronicler are the last words of the Hebrew canon, drawing the readers’ attention to the obligation of providing a sabbath for the land. While the Chronicler references *Jeremiah*, the legislation for this land-sabbath is initially found in the Jubilee legislation.

Johnstone notes significant parallels between the Chronicler’s conclusion and the text of *Leviticus*, particularly the last pericope, chapters 25-27. He observes that the Judean Exile was attributed to the מַעַל, “disloyalty, infidelity,” of the people; that is, their “failure to accord to God what is due to him.”⁴⁹ It denotes unfaithfulness toward human beings or toward God, but is most commonly used to convey disloyalty against Yahweh. It is used to describe the violation of cultic laws (*Ezek* 14:13-20), iniquity (*Ezek* 18:24), defamation or blasphemy (*Ezek* 20:27), following other gods (*I Chr* 5:25), and seeking guidance from a spirit (*I Chr* 10:13).⁵⁰ This term is significant in *Leviticus* as it is first used in *Lev* 5:14-16,⁵¹ where unfaithfulness can be remedied through sacrifice.

48. Andrew E. Hill, *1 & 2 Chronicles* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 642.

49. Johnstone, “Hope of Jubilee,” 309. Johnstone notes the following verses in this observation: *I Chronicles* 2:7, 5:25, 9:1. HALOT (613) offers this explanation of the term: ‘disloyalty, infidelity (always against God).’ Its root as a verb suggests that one is being untrue, or violating one’s legal obligations.

מַעַל is therefore a legal term, and bound up in the covenant obligations of the people towards Yahweh. Should they prove to have מַעַל, then they have broken the terms of the covenant, the foundation of their national identity. Dyrness (120) writes ‘their continued existence as a nation is made to rest on their faithfulness to their covenant obligations.’ By breaking the covenant, by committing מַעַל, Israel would void the terms of the covenant, which included Yahweh’s promise of a homeland.

50. Ringgren, “מַעַל,” 462.

51. The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: When any of you commit a מַעַל, “trespass” and sin unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, you shall bring, as your guilt-offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, convertible into silver by the sanctuary shekel; it is a guilt-offering. And you shall make restitution for the holy thing in which you were remiss, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. The priest shall make atonement on your behalf with the ram of the guilt-offering, and you shall be forgiven (*Lev* 5:14-16, NRSV).

Lev 26:27-33 points to the consequences should the מעל of the people continue to escalate.⁵² Yet, in the midst of this text, Yahweh offers hope. Note verses 30-33 of

Lev 26 (NRSV):

But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that they committed מעל, “treachery,” against me and, moreover, that they continued hostile to me— . . . then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. For the land shall be deserted by them, and enjoy its sabbath years by lying desolate without them, while they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they dared to spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred my statutes.

It is significant to recall the observations of Douglas that *Lev 25* and *27* provide a frame and thereby draw attention to the covenant blessings and curses contained in chapter 26.

The requirement for the land to observe sabbaths provides the connection between the Jubilee legislation and the covenant blessings and curses.

Johnstone further draws attention to the repetition of the verb עבר, “to pull along/pass over,” “to cause an announcement,” in both *Lev 25:9*⁵³ and *2 Chr 36:22*.⁵⁴ He suggests that this reinforces the connection between the omitted practice of the Jubilee and Yahweh’s imposition of Exile upon the Israelites.⁵⁵ The Chronicler states that the land needed to lay desolate for seventy years, to make up for the unobserved sabbaths.

52. Yahweh frequently used the land as a way to draw the people’s attention back to Yahweh. Williamson (“Land,” *DOTH*, 641) notes the increasing severity of using the land to punish the people. While their disobedience was initially punished via military incursion and economic disaster, the expulsion of the people from their land was the final act.

53. Then you shall have the trumpet sounded (עבר; Hiph Perf; 2 masc. sg.) loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded (עבר; Hiph Imperf; 2 masc. sg.) throughout all your land. (*Lev 25:9*)

54. Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation (עבר; Hiph Impf; 2 masc. sg. + קול “noise”) throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing. (*2 Chr 36:22*, NRSV)

55. Johnstone, “Hope of Jubilee,” 311.

With an intended land sabbath every seven years, the people of Israel had failed to observe the sabbath for 490 years, approximately the period of the monarchy.⁵⁶

Following Yahweh's imposed land-sabbath, Cyrus issues his decree (*2 Chr* 36:22), which draws attention to two significant Jubilee motifs: return to ancestral land and restoration of the proper cult.⁵⁷ The Jubilee was an institutionalized restoration to the land, ensuring that the people of God retained their inheritance. In a similar fashion, Cyrus' decree allowed the exiled Judeans the opportunity to return to their territorial allotment. Cyrus also allowed provision for the restoration of the temple; the restoration of the Judean religion in Jerusalem. The Jubilee legislation reinforced the importance of the proper cult by its repeated affirmation of Yahweh's identity. The return to ancestral land and the redemption of relatives was to be accomplished in the context of the nation's relationship to Yahweh. Furthermore, the subsequent chapter in *Leviticus*, which contains the blessings and curses, emphasizes the nation's obligation to keep sabbaths and revere Yahweh's sanctuary (*Lev* 26:2).

Nehemiah 5

The Jubilee discussion is picked up in *Nehemiah* in the context of the people's return to Judah. In the midst of building the wall,⁵⁸ Nehemiah has been confronted by the people,

56. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 210.

It is significant to note the correlation between the period of the monarchy and the nation's failure to observe Yahweh-ordained statutes, such as the Sabbath year. It is significant given Yahweh's reluctance to establish the monarchy, as observed in *1 Sam* 8, particularly his dismay that the people have rejected Him as their king in their desire to establish a human king. Heim ("Kings and Kingship," [*DOTh*], 610) observes that the monarchy's "tragedy is that for most of its history it was concerned with its own importance rather than with God and his people." The period of the monarchy led the people through more periods of apostasy than it did through faithfulness.

57. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 211.

58. While some commentators (Croatto, "The Debt in Nehemiah's Social Reform") have claimed that the change of focus in *Nehemiah 5* (interrupting the conflict Nehemiah is having with Sanballat in chapters 4 and 6), Allen (*Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NIBC 9; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 113) insists

claiming they are enduring economic hardship at the hands of their Jewish brethren.

Nehemiah responds to their claims and leads the nobility to שׁוּב, “restore,” the obtained property and interest to the people from whom it had been taken. At first glance, Nehemiah appears to be carrying out the Jubilee legislation among his people.

There are some significant connections between this chapter and the Jubilee legislation. Nehemiah leads the nobility in *Neh* 5:11 to שׁוּב, “restore,” which is the same word used in *Lev* 25:10.⁵⁹ There is also discussion in both passages about debt slavery. The Jubilee legislation establishes a framework for the release of debt slaves, and the responsibility of owners towards their debt slaves. Nehemiah, however, takes a step beyond this legislation and terminates the practice. He is outraged by the practice of Judean nobility keeping other Judeans as slaves. The theme of kinship is important in both texts. In *Lev* 25, the kin have responsibility for one another (*Lev* 25:25), and Nehemiah chastises the nobility for the enslavement of their kin (*Neh* 5:8). Both texts use אָח, “brother,” “blood-relation;” however, the *Leviticus* passage seems to suggest a closer relationship than Nehemiah intended. The Jubilee’s intent seems to focus upon close

that *Neh* 5 fits within the chronology of chapters 4 and 6, and thereby occurred within the 52 day period of rebuilding the wall.

59. שׁוּב in *Neh* 5:11 is translated as “restore” (NRSV, ASV, NLT), “return” (ESV, NJB), or “give back” (NIV, NASB). In *Lev* 25:10, it is broadly translated as “return” (NRSV, NJB, ESV, ASV, NIV, NASB, NLT). שׁוּב is a common verb in the MT, appearing in some form in 956 verses. It carries a range of meanings, “to turn around,” “repent,” “restore,” “abandon.”

שׁוּב is found in almost all the Semitic languages, and is likely that it originally represented this basic meaning: to move in an opposite direction from that toward which one previously moved (M. Graupner and H.-J. Fabry, “שׁוּב,” *TDOT* 14:464). The verb has over 1050 occurrences and ranks twelfth in frequency among words in the OT (Fabry, “שׁוּב,” 472). With this many occurrences, שׁוּב has a wide variety of meanings, particularly related to motion, religious repentance, and varying legal concepts. Fabry notes its prominence in the Jubilee legislation, as people and land are ‘returned.’ (Fabry, “שׁוּב,” 484).

The LXX translates שׁוּב in *Neh* 5:11 with ἐπιστρέφω, but ἀπέρχομαι is used in *Lev* 25:10 for שׁוּב. Forms of στρέφω dominate the LXX translation of שׁוּב, used in about 70 percent of all occurrences (Graupner, “שׁוּב,” 514). The compound ἐπιστρέφω is used 408 times for שׁוּב, and in narratives, the Greek term denotes movements, turnings, changes of place. It can mean “give back” (2 *Esdr* 15:11) or “repay” (*Judg* 9:56, 57). It is often used to describe the “turning back” of the people to God, and is connected with the exile (2 *Chr* 6:24) (Georg Bertram, “στρέφω,” *TDNT* 7:723).

blood relatives, within the same clan, whereas Nehemiah takes a broader stance and recognizes all of the Jews as kin or brethren. Guillaume⁶⁰ notes the development of אָח, which he refers to as a “brotherhood.” He notes that the expectations for Nehemiah’s אָח are similar to what described in the Jubilee legislation: both ‘brotherhoods’ are to grant interest free loans to one another.⁶¹ A further connection to the Jubilee is noted as Nehemiah exhorts the nobility to act בְּיִרְאַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ, “out of fear of our God.” Similarly, the Jubilee legislation compels its adherents to respond: וְיִרְאַתָּ מְאֹד לַיהוָה “you shall fear your God.”⁶²

Although there are lexical similarities to the legislation, it is significant to note that Nehemiah does not directly reference the Jubilee legislation in his enactment of social reforms. Nehemiah’s omitting the Jubilee likely stems from an acknowledgement that the Jubilee did not fit his goals.⁶³ Jacob M. Myers⁶⁴ also notes that the pressure of events required an immediate response; there could not be a delay until the subsequent Jubilee.⁶⁵ While Nehemiah was seeking to legislate a restoration (שׁוּב) for his people, he was also seeking to abolish debt slavery, not regulate it as the Jubilee does. While it could be possible that the Jubilee legislation was written because of the economic hardship and subsequent response that Nehemiah enacted, this is unlikely due to the antiquity of *Lev 25* and the lack of any concrete reference to the Jubilee in *Nehemiah*.⁶⁶

60. Philippe Guillaume is a professor at the University of Bern, Switzerland.

61. Philippe Guillaume, “Nehemiah 5: No Economic Crisis,” *JHebS* 10:10 (2010): 20.

62. The difference in construction reflects Nehemiah’s own self-sacrifice in amending the situation. He involves himself in the problem, and thereby in its solution.

63. So Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 206.

63. Jacob M. Myers was Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA, until his death in 1991.

65. Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (AB 14; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 131.

66. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 207.

Another connection between *Ezra-Nehemiah* and the Jubilee legislation is noted on the basis of *Lev 25:38* in which Yahweh establishes a connection between the legislation and the Israelites' experience in Egypt as slaves. Yahweh establishes the legislation as a means of preventing oppressive slavery, as the Israelites experienced under the Pharaohs. The return from Exile in *Ezra 1* is portrayed as a second Exodus. Myers notes the prophetic messages connecting the Exodus and the return from the Exile (*Isa 41:17ff, 43:16ff, 48:21*), and recognizes thematic elements connecting the Exodus account (*Exod 12:33-42*) and the departure from Babylon (*Ezra 1:1-11*), such as the commission from the kings (*Exod 12:31-32; Ezra 1:3*), and the contributions from the surrounding people (*Exod 12:35-36; Ezra 1:6*).⁶⁷ The phrase וְכָל-סְבִיבֵיהֶם, “and all their neighbours,” is understood by Myers to refer to other people than Jews, and he understands this to be an Exodus allusion.⁶⁸ F. Charles Fensham,⁶⁹ however, disregards the Exodus allusions, and suggests וְכָל-סְבִיבֵיהֶם simply refers to the Jewish neighbours who chose not to return to Jerusalem.⁷⁰ However, the broad audience of Cyrus' edict, indicated by כָּל מְמַלְכוֹת, “all the kingdom/dominion,” and his appeal that the returnees וְנִשְׂאוֹהֵרוּ אֲנָשֵׁי מְקוֹמוֹ, “be assisted by the people of that place,” suggests that Cyrus' intention for assistance was broader than simply Jews.

Following Myers' approach, the Exodus allusions seem strong in *Ezra's* account of the return from Exile. The observed connections between the Exodus narrative and *Ezra's* narrative, coupled with Nehemiah's jubilic response, suggests a potential means of

67. Myers, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 9.

68. Myers, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 9.

69. F. Charles Fensham was Professor of Semitic Languages at Stellenbosch University, in Stellenbosch, South Africa. He died in 1989.

70. F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 44.

understanding the link between the Exodus and the Jubilee. It seems as though Nehemiah was motivated by the return from Exile, just as the Jubilee was given significance by its connection to the Exodus.

Observations

The above analyses of Old Testament writings suggests that there are prominent themes from the Jubilee legislation that are found within the Old Testament history: redemption, restoration, and reverence for the cult (fear of Yahweh). The Jubilee legislation appears to bring these themes to prominence, but the absence of the term יובל indicates that the legislation was not referenced by the Israelites in canonical history. While both *Ruth* and *Nehemiah* contain significant passages with strong allusions to jubilic themes, they contextualized these themes without referring to the יובל. *Ruth* shows the reader how two Scriptural legislations (Levirate marriage and the role of the גאל described in the Jubilee legislation) were combined in social practice. *Nehemiah* shows how one governor went beyond debt slavery by abolishing it, rather than merely regulating it.

It is significant to reiterate the connection between the Exodus and the Jubilee, and *Ezra-Nehemiah*'s allusions to both. Nehemiah's jubilic actions suggest he was responding to his people's recent liberation from captivity. Just as they had been permitted to return to Jerusalem, the people should demonstrate concern for their fellow Jews, for their brethren. The connections between Exodus and Jubilee shall be further observed in the subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER THREE PROPHETS AND DANIEL

The focus of this chapter will be to examine suggested correlations between the Jubilee legislation and passages in the major prophets (*Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel*), and *Daniel*.¹ It will be observed that the Jubilee legislation enhanced the prophetic imagination, and became a tool to urge the people to repent and to renew their hope in Yahweh. While there was no direct appeal to observe the Jubilee, they pulled themes from the legislation that became foundational as they spoke to audiences experiencing the threat and then the actuality of Exile.

1. Ringe (*Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*, 29-30) connects *Psalm* 146 with a jubilic tradition. Bergsma, in his discussion, on Ringe's work (*Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 7), notes that this connection is established due to Ringe's understanding that the Jubilee legislation is a later writing, and thereby contains scriptural motifs. However, on the basis that the legislation is an older document, it becomes apparent that this psalm may contain jubilic themes, but lacks significant language to link it directly to the legislation. This conclusion is drawn out below.

Psalm 146 begins the conclusion of the psalter. The final five psalms are characterized by the repetition of הַלְלוּ־יְהוָה, "Praise Yahweh." This psalm contrasts the frailty and transitory nature of humanity with the power and beneficence of Yahweh (Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III 101-150* [AB 17a; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970], 340). It is classified as a song of Zion, as it is marked by Zionist content (particularly its conclusion: אֱלֹהֵינוּ צִיּוֹן, "your God, O Zion"). It is suggested to have been composed post-Exile, as evidenced by the inclusion of later Hebrew terms, such as צִיּוֹן, the pronoun שׁ, "whose," (v. 3,5), עֲשֵׂתָנָה, "thoughts, plans," (v. 4), שִׁבְרָה, "hope," (v. 5), and זָקָה, "lifter," (v. 8). Dahood (*Psalms III 101-150*, 341) suggests that עֲשֵׂתָנָה is an Aramaism, witnessed in eighth-century Sefire inscriptions, and therefore concludes that the psalm cannot be automatically dated post-exile.

As noted above, the psalm lacks significant lexical connections. In the NRSV, verse 7 is translated "who executes justice for the oppressed." Based on our earlier discussion, one may expect the term פָּרַךְ for oppressed. However, the psalmist uses עָשָׂק, "to oppress, exploit (a debtor unable to pay)" (*HALOT*, 897) Although also found in *Leviticus* (5:21, 23; 19:13), the term is not found in any other passage that we have considered. It does share נָחַר with *Isa* 58:6. *Ps* 146:7: יְהוָה מְתִיר אֲסוּרִים, "Yahweh releases the prisoners." *Isa* 58:6: הַרְצִיבוּ רֶשַׁע הַתָּר, "to release the bonds of wickedness." Beyond those occurrences, עָשָׂק is only found in *Ps* 79:11; 105:20 (*HALOT*, 897). The psalm also contains a reference to the גֵּר, "resident alien," "protected citizen." This word was discussed in connection with *Ruth* (see above, p. 48). In this context, Yahweh offers protection for the גֵּר: יְהוָה שֹׁמֵר אֶת־גֵּרִים, "Yahweh watches over the resident aliens" (v. 9). רֶשַׁע appears in both *Ps* 146:9 (וַדְרֹךְ רֶשָׁעִים יִעֲגוּת), "the way of the wicked ones [רֶשַׁע; Adj. masc. pl.] he bends), and in *Isa* 58:6 (הַרְצִיבוּ רֶשַׁע הַתָּר), "to release the bonds of wickedness [רֶשַׁע; Noun masc. sg.]."

Isaiah

Isaiah has been dubbed the “Paul of the Old Testament” as he calls his Old Testament readers to rest their faith in Yahweh’s promises. *Isaiah* is a complex book, made more so by the lack of scholarly consensus over its authorship and place in history. The general scholarly consensus is that the text of *Isaiah* is the compilation of two (if not three) authors. Scholars note the thematic differences between *Isa* 1-39 and 40-66 and attribute these to different authors at different periods in Judah’s history. Other scholars, such as Motyer, do not hold to these divisions, and he suggests that chapter 37 is the final chapter in a pericope. Regardless of one’s convictions regarding authorship and dating, perhaps the most helpful approach is one that maintains, “we need continually to attempt to grasp the significance of the book as it has been given to us and leave as an open question the process of its composition.”² With this in mind, *Isaiah* will be treated as it has been passed to us, and Isaianic allusions to the Jubilee will be considered together.

Isaiah 5:8

This verse begins an oracle directed against the abuse of power by the wealthy who exploit the poor by driving them off their land.³ The oracle denounces the practice of land accumulation, leaving the general population with no place to live; a practice the Jubilee sought to undo.⁴ The consequences of this behaviour are בָּתִּים רַבִּים לְשֵׁמָה, “desolate houses” (v. 9), וְזֶרַע הֶמֶר יַעֲשֶׂה אֵיפָה, “a homer of seed will only make an ephah” (v.10),

2. LaSor, 282. John N. Oswalt (*Book of Isaiah 1-39*, (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 154) and Ronald Clements (“The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” *Interpretation* 36 [1982]: 117-129, 117) also recognize the value of treating the book as a whole. In particular, he notes how the theme of redemption is carried through the book, linking the pericope of judgment (chs 1-39) with the pericope of hope (chs 40-66).

3. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001), 47.

4. Gordon Brubacher, “Principles of Jubilee in the Old Testament, and for the Enduring Community of Faith,” in N. Ateek and M. Prior’s *Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee* (33-54; Ann-Arbor, MI: Melisende, 1999), 40.

and גָּלָה, “exile” (v.13). Furthermore, they will be וְהוּשַׁבְתֶּם לְבַדְכֶם, “caused to live alone,” suggesting a divine punishment.⁵ Yahweh accuses his people of bloodshed instead of justice, and a cry instead of righteousness. While lacking any specific language that would explicitly link this oracle to the Jubilee, the echoes of covenant disobedience from *Lev 26* and the accumulation of land—a contrast to Jubilee—provide the reader with some initial echoes of jubilic thought. The prophet links the absence of justice and righteousness with the practice of land accumulation. As other passages in *Isaiah* will suggest, justice and righteousness connect with the observance of the Jubilee.

Isaiah 58:1,5

Bergmsa identifies this passage as another jubilic passage, based on its use of three significant terms or concepts: the trumpet, an acceptable day, and its inclusions in Jesus’ Nazareth reading (*Luke 4:16-18*).⁶ Yahweh compels Isaiah to lift up his voice as a שׁוֹפֵר “trumpet,”⁷ the instrument used to proclaim the Jubilee (*Lev 25:9*) and thus to announce the sins of the people. The שׁוֹפֵר was used to gain community-wide attention; it was a sign to stop all other activity and pay attention (*Exod 19:6; 20:18; Josh 6:20; Judg 3:27; 1 Kings 1:34*).⁸

Although not frequently noted in scholarship, there is a significant correlation between the acknowledgment of sins and the Jubilee. The Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 25:9*), the high day of Israel’s cultic calendar, which was intended to make atonement for the sins of the people and for the sanctuary, which was in the midst

5. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah 1-39*, 155. Oswalt notes that the MT has the verb in hophal perfect form, meaning “caused to dwell.” If the subject is Yahweh, then the suggestion of punishment would be fitting.

6. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 195.

7. The LXX renders the Hebrew בָּקַעַן as ἐν ἰσχύϊ, signifying Yahweh’s appeal to the prophet to cry at the top of one’s voice, so that the people’s hypocrisy is fully revealed (Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:415.

8. John N. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:495.

of the people and their uncleannesses (*Lev* 16:16). The last connection made from this passage to Jubilee is the phrase *וְיוֹם רִצּוֹן לַיהוָה*, “and a pleasurable day to Yahweh.” This phrase has lexical similarities to one in *Isa* 61:1, *שָׁנַת רִצּוֹן לַיהוָה*, “the year of Yahweh’s pleasure,” the common phrase being *רִצּוֹן לַיהוָה*,⁹ which signifies that which is pleasing to someone; in these verses, Yahweh.¹⁰ As one reads *Isa* 58, significant ethical injunctions are present that bear similarity to *Lev* 25. *Isaiah* chastises the people for their failure to release the oppressed (v. 6), provide shelter for the homeless (v. 7), and hiding themselves from their own kin (v. 7). The ethical requirements of this passage echo the expectations of Jubilee observance, but then pushes this ethical expectation forward in significant ways.

First, it is important to recall that the Jubilee was only to be practiced every fiftieth year, thereby releasing slaves. However, the concern and provision for one’s kin was to happen on an ongoing basis, with their redemption happening in the Jubilee. Here, *Isaiah* is not assigning different measurements of time to various components. Secondly, it is significant to note how *Isaiah* expands the ethical expectations. The people of Israel were to be living lives characterized by releasing the oppressed, loosening the bonds of injustice, and sharing bread with the hungry. While some of these expectations are not explicitly covered within the Jubilee legislation, they are certainly in line with its spirit. The Jubilee legislation was to be observed out of fear of Yahweh (*Lev* 25:17), and these fasts of release and loosening bonds were to be a means of attracting Yahweh’s attention

9 H.M. Barstad, “רצה,” *TDOT* 13:618-630. The noun *רצון* appears 56 times in the OT, and is best translated as “pleasure, goodwill, favour, goodness, love, understanding,” or “will, wish, desire.” It appears in *Leviticus* in the cultic sense denoting God’s favourable acceptance of sacrificial offerings (*Lev* 1:3). Similar to its appearance in *Isa* 61:1, *רצון* appears in *Isa* 60:10 where it stands for Yahweh’s favour toward people. In *Isa* 49:8, the prophet speaks of the “time of favour,” and refers to the “time of grace and mercy” after the catastrophe, when Yahweh promises to come to the aid of his people once again (Barstad, “רצה,” 626).

10. *HALOT*, 1282.

so that He would respond to them (*Isa* 58:9). There is a clear correlation between reverence of Yahweh and ethical treatment of fellow Israelites.

Isaiah 61:1-3

This passage draws attention to Yahweh's anointing and sending of the messenger.

Following the punctuation of the MT, the following translation of *Isa* 61:1-3 is presented:

The spirit of Adonai Yahweh is upon me;
 Yahweh has anointed me
To bring news to the poor ones.
 He has sent me
To bind up the brokenhearted;
To proclaim to the captives: Release!
 Liberation! To the prisoners;
To proclaim Yahweh's year of pleasure
 And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all the mourners;
To provide for the mourners in Zion
To give them a turban instead of ashes;
 Oil of joy instead of mourning.

John N. Oswalt¹¹ notes that at first glance, being "sent" appears to be more significant than being "anointed," as "sent" has six complementary infinitives attached to it.

However, he suggests that being "sent" functions as an explanation of what preaching good news to the poor means; thereby restoring attention to the appointment of "the anointed one."¹² As noted above, this *Isaiah* passage gains its jubilic significance from the line שְׁנַת־רִצּוֹן לַיהוָה, "the year of Yahweh's pleasure." These verses contain significant terms already associated with the Jubilee. Isaiah has been commissioned לְבַשֵּׁר עֲנָוִים, "to announce good news to the poor ones,"¹³ and לְקַרְא לְשִׁבוּיִם דְּרוּר "to proclaim release to the

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12. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 3:565.

13. The עֲנָוִים, "poor ones," is derived from the verb עָנָה, "to be wretched," "to oppress." The prophetic emphasis on this category of people (*Isa* 3:14; 10:2; *Amos* 2:7) is a significant contribution to the

captives.” A proclamation of release is also found in *Lev 25:10* (וּקְרַאתֶם דְּרוּר), making the combination of קרא, “to proclaim,” and דרור “release, liberty,” significant to the conversation. Isaiah is also to proclaim וְלְאַסְוִיּוּרִים פְּקֻחֵי-קוֹחַ, “release¹⁴ to the captives.” In the second verse, Isaiah is commissioned לְקַרְא שְׁנַת־רִצּוֹן לַיהוָה, “to proclaim a year of Yahweh’s pleasure.” The release that Isaiah has proclaimed is specifically the manumission of slaves, and thus links the ministry of the anointed one with the Year of Jubilee.¹⁵ Isaiah’s oracle is similar to edicts of release proclaimed by ANE sovereigns (see above, p. 20); in this case, the divine sovereign, Yahweh.¹⁶

The reference to the year of Yahweh’s pleasure is contrasted with יוֹם נָקָם לְאַלְהֵינוּ, “the day of vengeance of our God,” with the terms שנה, “year,” and יום, “day,” standing against one another in parallelistic contrast,¹⁷ suggesting not a particular event, but a new era.¹⁸ A ‘day’ is a short period of time, providing the sense that Yahweh’s vengeance will be sharp but fast. The ‘year’ allows the listener to recognize that Yahweh’s period of favour is a season of time to be enjoyed; a period significantly longer than the ‘day’ of vengeance. Brubacher¹⁹ notes that *Isaiah*’s good news recognizes “a reaffirmation that

moral tradition of Judaism and Christianity. The term assumes a religious connotation blended with a sense of economic deprivation, marginalization, and exploitation (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, [AB 19b; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003], 223).

14. The word/phrase פְּקֻחֵי-קוֹחַ is a hapax logomena. *HALOT* (960) describes it as “creative writing for פְּקֻחֵי-קוֹחַ” and connects it to “opening” or “liberation.” Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah*, 219) notes that 1QIsa writes it as one word, but that 4QIsa supports the MT’s rendering as two words. The LXX (and also *Luke 4:18*) substitutes τῶν ἀνάβλεψιν, “recovery of sight to the blind,” on the basis that the Hebrew word refers to opening eyes.

15. J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah* (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 426. This connection is particularly significant when one considers that Jesus quoted this *Isaiah* passage in *Luke 4* as his inaugural sermon in Nazareth.

16. Sharon Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 30.

17. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:460. He notes how Isaiah uses the same contrast in 34:8 and 63:4.

18. Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), 367.

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God will not turn a blind eye to those who wield force in violation of the jubilee standards for action.”²⁰ While much of the message is good news, as a means of providing hope for the exiles, there is the clear expectation that an attempt to impede Yahweh’s intentions will lead to נקם, “vengeance.”²¹

Isaiah 40-66: Yahweh as גאל

A significant Isaianic metaphor for Yahweh is גאל, Israel’s redeemer. Continuing the discussion in the previous chapter concerning *Leviticus*’ and *Ruth*’s portrayal of גאל, this metaphor for Yahweh will be considered. This description of Yahweh is particularly prominent in *Isa* 40-66, in which it appears that the book’s audience finds itself in Babylonian Exile. Yahweh is considered Israel’s redeemer in 22 different occurrences.²² He is either labeled as the one who redeems or his actions are said to be redeeming.

Throughout this second pericope of Isaiah, Yahweh speaks through the prophet to outline his plan to redeem his people from their captivity, making an important allusion to the Exodus from Egypt.²³ Just as Yahweh had brought his people out of Egypt, he vowed to restore them from Babylon, in a mighty act of redemption. Isaiah’s identification of Yahweh as Israel’s גאל is primarily used with reference to redemption from captivity.²⁴ In a significant break from Israel’s גאל legislation, their תגאלי, “redemption,” will occur without money (52:3). Yahweh gives Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba

20. Brubacher, “Principles of Jubilee,” 48.

21. The notion of Yahweh as the avenger derives from an ancient Semitic concept, expressed in personal names, and conveys an understanding of a unique relationship between the deity and the believer. In the OT, Yahweh is seen as one who intervenes to avenge the desecrated covenant (*Lev* 26:25), the destroyed temple (*Jer* 50:28), and his people (*Deut* 32:41) (E. Lipiński, “נקם,” *TDOT* 10:8-9).

22. *Isa* 41:14; 43:1,14; 44:6,22,23,24; 47:4; 48:17,20; 49:7,26; 52:3,9; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 62:12; 63:9,16.

23. Bernard W. Anderson, “Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah,” in B. Anderson and W. Harrelson’s *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg* (177-195; New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 189.

24. LaSor, et. al, *Old Testament Survey*, 304.

as קִפְּרוֹת, “[your] ransom,” for Israel (43:3). He pursues them to Babylon and breaks down the bars (43:14). Their Redeemer acts out of love, after a moment of wrath (54:8).

Drawing a connection to the לֵאלֹהֵינוּ legislation, Yahweh is reaffirming to his people that they are his people, by identifying himself as their Kinsman-Redeemer, “the Next-of-Kin of the people he had created.”²⁵

The imagery of the Exodus is a significant motif for the prophet, and an important connection in a discussion concerning the Jubilee. As Isaiah presents the image of Yahweh as the Redeemer, he is doing so in a way that draws from two significant components of Israel’s past: the memory of the Exodus and the Jubilee legislation. As has been suggested throughout our analysis of Jubilee, there remains to be drawn a significant correlation between the Exodus and the Jubilee, and the prophet Isaiah assists us in reaching those conclusions. In presenting a new Exodus from Babylon (note particularly *Isa* 43:16-17), *Isaiah* teaches that the Jubilee captures the intention of the Exodus from Egypt as well as Babylon.

The final item to note from the discussion from the *Isaiah* oracles is that they are not merely envisioning a historical event (the return from Exile), but anticipating the advent of Yahweh’s eschatological reign.²⁶ In fact, all of the prophetic material considered in this chapter would advance this claim. While the prophets berate the people for their failure to observe jubilic principles of behaviour, if not the Jubilee itself, there is also a growing expectation that Yahweh’s eschatological reign will be characterized by the Jubilee. Language such as ‘the year of the Lord’s favour,’ proclamations to release the oppressed, recognizing the harshness of Judean nobility over the peasants, and

25. Motyer, *Isaiah*, 302.

26. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*, 31.

Yahweh's portrayal as גאל all suggest that the Jubilee legislation, as utopian in nature as it may have been, did capture the prophetic imagination and provided a framework for understanding Yahweh's anticipated reign.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah 32:1-15

Although the writings of the prophet Jeremiah bear no direct reference to Jubilee legislation, the prophet's actions in chapter 32 echo the land redemption legislation of *Lev 25*. In this account, the prophet has been imprisoned by the Judean king Zedekiah, in the midst of Nebuchadnezzar's siege on Jerusalem. The king demands that the prophet inform him why he continues to proclaim that the king will be deported to Babylon and ultimately fail against the Babylonian siege. Jeremiah's response avoids a direct response to the king, and he explains how Yahweh is directing him to obtain a field from his cousin Hanamel.²⁷ While the background of the story ties into the period for which the Chronicler provided the earlier-discussed rationale for Exile, it is the means by which Jeremiah obtains the property that merits consideration. Jeremiah is given access to the land by משפט הגאולה לקנות, "right²⁸ of redemption by purchase" (32:7). *Lev 25:25* articulates that in the event of economic misfortune, in which a piece of property is sold, ובא גאולו הקרוב אליו ונגאל את ממכרת אחיו, "then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold." In both verses, the property in question is obtained through the process

27. Thompson (588) suggests two reasons for Hanamel's desire to sell his land. Either Hanamel had fallen into debt and was in danger of losing the land to a creditor, or he grew dismayed at the future's prospect and was prepared to sell up and leave his village.

28. משפט in this instance refers to one's legal right, based on a status of power or authority. Hence it is also used in *Deut 21:17* משפט הבכרה, "right of the firstborn," *Jer 32:8* משפט הירושה, "right of possession," *1 Sam 8:9,11* משפט המלכה, "right of the king," and in *1 Sam 10:25* משפט המלכה, "right of kingship" (B. Johnson, "משפט," *TDOT* 9:92).

of גאֵל, “redemption.”²⁹ Jeremiah has the legal right to redeem the property. The concept of redemption in both texts is translated from גאֵל, and both texts use the term קנה, “to acquire, buy, transfer ownership.”³⁰

Jeremiah 34:6-15

The passage from *Jer 34* also gives a strong echo of the Jubilee legislation. In this passage, King Zedekiah has released the Hebrew³¹ slaves, after issuing a “proclamation of liberty” (לְקַרְא לְהֵם דְּרוּר). Note the term דרוּר, “release,” which first appears in the Jubilee legislation (*Lev 25:10*).

Fried and Freedman suggest that these Jeremiah passages are evidence of the observance of a Jubilee year prior to the Exile, during the Babylonian siege. They maintain that the sale’s label as a הִגְאָלָה, “redemption,” and not a simple purchase, suggests that the land is being transferred from a non-rightful owner to the rightful one (from Hanamel to Jeremiah). This transfer of land, coupled with Zedekiah’s slave release, along with noted jubilic language, leads these authors to conclude that these events

29. Recall the discussion on Boaz (above, p. 51), which suggested that there was an established hierarchy of redeemers. The LXX notes that there is no reason listed in the MT as to why Jeremiah should have the right of redemption. The LXX translators added the phrase καὶ σὺ πρεσβύτερος, “and you are the eldest.”

30. *HALOT*, 1111. The root קנה is used seven times in *Lev 25* (vv. 14, 15, 28, 30, 44, 45, 50) and four times in these verses from *Jeremiah* (vv. 7, 8, 9, 15).

31. Zedekiah’s proclamation references the ‘Hebrew’ slaves, which is significant. Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 610) notes that the term (עִבְרִי) was not normally used by the Israelites as a self-descriptor. Rather, it appeared in periods of their history in which they were in a position of servitude, as in pre-Exodus Egypt and under Philistine domination. It appears that the use of this term is drawing a distinction between free and enslaved Israelites. In a sense, enslaved Israelites were referred to by a more generic term that discredited their heritage as Israelites. *HALOT* (782) notes its infrequent use and observes that the word is most commonly used in the presence of or from the lips of foreigners (as in *1 Sam 14:11*, when the Philistines encounter Jonathan, and in *Jonah 1:9*, when Jonah speaks to foreigners). Lipinski (121) concludes that prior to the exile, the term refers to an inferior class of Israelites who were servants/slaves “On en conclura que le terme *ibrî* désignait avant l’Exil des Israélites de condition inférieure qui pouvaient être asservis.”

Within pre-exilic Israel, it seems apparent that a particular class of enslaved Israelites had risen, designated by the term “Hebrew.” Zedekiah, under the threat of Babylonian conquest, seems to have been convicted about the treatment of this class, but his conviction was short-lived.

occurred in a Jubilee year.³² However, their argument does not stand up to a significant observation in comparison to the Jubilee legislation. The *Jeremiah* text maintains that the redemption purchase occurred at a price of seventeen shekels. However, there is nothing in *Leviticus* 25 that suggests money needs to change hands in the Jubilee Year to ensure a successful transaction. Furthermore, Anathoth is a Levitical town (*Josh* 21:8), making it exempt from Jubilee legislation. Thus the situation in *Jeremiah* does not seem to be in accord with the Jubilee legislation.³³ If Fried and Freedman are correct about the year of this purchase being a Jubilee year, it would be further evidence that the popular understanding and application of the Jubilee legislation has changed. If Levitical towns have become subject to redemption laws, then the application of sabbath laws has strayed from the original writing.

Furthermore, the narrative of *Jer* 34 would suggest a different situation than the Jubilee year. After Zedekiah releases the slaves,³⁴ he and the nobility reverse their decision and reclaim the slaves. Yahweh denounces the leaders and vows to make them לְיָזְעוּ לְכָל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ, “a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth” (v. 17). His rationale for this vow stems from the leaders’ failure to observe the sabbath year (vv. 14-16) as he reminds the leaders of his requirement for a seventh-year slave release, not a fiftieth year

32. Fried & Freedman, “Was the Jubilee Year Observed?” 2264.

33. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 159.

34. It is important to recall that slaves were permitted in Israelite society (*Exod* 21:2-11; *Lev* 25:39-43; *Deut* 15:12-18). Slavery was a common occurrence in the ANE, with the prominent reasons being debt and famine.

Furthermore, slaves were often released en masse in times of national emergency. Slaves could not be drafted into the army, but liberated citizens could. Furthermore, the nobility would no longer be responsible for feeding the freed individuals, thus easing the burden in times of national emergency (such as a siege by an invading kingdom) (Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 559). Although slavery was acceptable under Israelite legislation, it is significant that slaves were to be treated well, recalling Israel’s identity as liberated slaves. Slaves were to be given rest on the sabbath (*Exod* 20:10), participate in ceremonial expressions of worship (*Deut* 12:18; 16:10), and there were prescriptions protecting the slave’s personal dignity (*Exod* 21:20-27) (G.H.Hass, “Slave, Slavery,” *DOTP*:781).

release. Although the word *דָּרֹר* is connected to Jubilee legislation,³⁵ and not sabbath year legislation, Yahweh's anger is clearly caused by the failure to observe the sabbath years.³⁶ Jeremiah appears to be reacting to a situation that reflects an evolution of the laws of *Exod 21*, *Lev 25*, and *Deut 15*, but the phraseology in *Jeremiah* does not directly reference any one of these legislative texts.³⁷

Furthermore, Zedekiah's proclamation of liberty seems to be a reaction to the events occurring around him. Prior to his proclamation, the nation has almost succumbed to the Babylonian invaders. Only three cities are left independent (Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah). Jeremiah has spoken Yahweh's word to the king, in which Yahweh promises to hand Jerusalem over to King Nebuchadrezzar.³⁸ Perhaps the proclamation of liberty is the king's attempt to avert Yahweh's wrath. If the nation is being punished for its ill treatment of fellow Judeans, then releasing the slaves may save the nation. Regardless his rationale, Zedekiah soon changes his mind, and the slaves are reclaimed. As J. A. Thompson³⁹ observes, "there was no depth of conviction, and a reversion to complacency and injustice was evident as soon as the crisis had passed."⁴⁰ Furthermore, Zedekiah's initial proclamation of emancipation was devoid of any reference to Yahweh. The slaves were released, but apparently not by any compulsion to abide by Yahweh's standards of slave release in *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, or *Deuteronomy*. His issuing of *דָּרֹר*

35. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* (AB 21b; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2004), 558. Lundbom notes that the use of *דָּרֹר* is a reference to the Jubilee legislation.

36. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 261. Lundbom observes that that Zedekiah's purpose in enacting the *דָּרֹר* was to remedy the nation's past disregard of sabbatical release laws.

37. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 26-52* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1989), 238.

38. "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Go and speak to King Zedekiah of Judah and say to him: Thus says the LORD: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire" (*Jer 34:2*, NRSV).

39. John Arthur Thompson worked in the Department of Middle-Eastern Studies at the University of Melbourne, in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia until his retirement in 1978. He continued to write and lecture and died in 2002.

40. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 611.

seems to bear greater similarity to other ANE proclamations than to the Jubilee legislation.⁴¹

Yahweh's response to Zedekiah's move to reclaim the slaves can be seen as a reversal of the Exodus. Yahweh recalls the Exodus in *Jer* 34:13: כְּרַתִּי בְרִית אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּיוֹם הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים, "I made a covenant with your ancestors on the day I led them out from the land of Egypt; from the house of slavery." Then Yahweh appeals to sabbath release laws as he reminds Zedekiah the Israelites were to release slaves every seventh year (*Jer* 34:14; see *Exod* 21:2).⁴² Verse 17 is a reversal of the Exodus as Yahweh declares his דְּרוֹר for Zedekiah: הִנְנִי קֹרֵא לָכֶם דְּרוֹר נְאֻם־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־הַתְּהָרָב אֶל־הַדְּבָר דְּרוֹר, "I proclaim to you a release (דרור), an announcement from Yahweh: to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine."

While these two events in *Jeremiah* echo various aspects of Jubilee legislation, they seem to be merely echoes of that legislation, and not evidence of a Jubilee observance. The events discussed in the *Jeremiah* pericopes (land-redemption and slave-release) seem to be driven by the larger events of the era (the Babylonian threat) as Hanamel and Zedekiah appear to be responding to the threat of Babylonian conquest. While the events would suggest that the Jubilee legislation was known (particularly the reference to דְּרוֹר), the two events should not be assumed to be a literal observance of Jubilee.

41. Chavel, "Let my People Go," 75. Chavel's article draws attention to the significant similarities between Jeremiah's emancipation in *Jer* 34:14 and the Sabbath year release of *Deuteronomy* 15:12. He notes the extensive verbal parallels between those passages, and concludes that Jeremiah used an earlier form of the Deuteronomic code as a basis. Therefore, if there is any intended correlation between a legislated emancipation and this passage in *Jeremiah*, it is with *Deuteronomy* and not with the Jubilee legislation of *Leviticus*.

42. The LXX changes מִקֵּץ שִׁבְעֵי שָׁנִים, "at the end of seven years," to Ὄταν πληρωθῆ ἕξ ἔτη, "when six years are complete." The sabbatical law of *Exod* 21:2 states that in the seventh year, at the end of six years, the slaves are to be released. Lundbom suggests that the LXX changed the number to clarify the connection to the sabbath release laws (Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 563).

Ezekiel

While the prophet Ezekiel does not use the term “Jubilee,” his message and theology seem to allude to the Jubilee legislation. Indeed, a close relationship between *Ezekiel* and the holiness code has long been speculated;⁴³ therefore, it stands to reason that *Ezekiel* would reference the Jubilee. Indeed, *Ezekiel*’s message does reference the דרור in a way that can only be taken to refer to the Jubilee legislation.

Ezekiel 7:12-13

The first noted connection to Jubilee legislation occurs in *Ezek 7*.⁴⁴ This chapter prophesies the impending end for the land of Israel. It is significant to note that this oracle devotes considerable attention to the land, a prominent theme in Jubilee legislation. Yahweh speaks through the prophet, chastising the land for what has grown there. Rather than a place of fruitfulness and blessing, “what has been growing in this fertile soil has been something other than what God intended.”⁴⁵ The land is a place where “pride has budded. Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness” (*Ezek 7:10-11*, NRSV).

The oracle seems to be informing the hearers that any hope of a Jubilee will be dashed by the impending doom of the “day (which) draws near.”⁴⁶ Under Jubilee legislation, it would have been the hope of an individual to be able to return to their land.

43. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 177). Furthermore, Gile (“Review: From Law to Prophecy,” *BBR* 21 [2011]: 112) notes the recent work of Michael Lyons, who suggests that *Ezekiel* uses the holiness code to interpret current events.

44. While most commentators (Block, Bergsma) would note the connection between Jubilee and *Ezekiel 7*, Zimmerli states there are no allusions to the Jubilee in this passage (Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1* [2 vols.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1979], 1:207).

45. Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 118.

46. Block calls this a “grim parody of the Jubilee” as the prophet proclaims that lost patrimonial property will not be returned; in essence, the Jubilee is cancelled (Daniel Block, *Ezekiel 1-24* [NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997], 259).

One could expect a Jubilee to occur within a lifetime, were it practiced as Yahweh intended. However, the prophet is informing the people that the “sellers shall not return to what has been sold as long as they remain alive” (*Ezek 7:13*). The significant word in this phrase that draws attention to the Jubilee legislation is מִמָּכָר, “what has been sold,” which appears throughout the Jubilee legislation, as the property which one has sold, to be redeemed in the Jubilee. It is an uncommon word in the Old Testament, only used 3 times outside of the legislation (*Ezek 7:13, Deut 18:8, Neh 13:20*). However, it appears 7 times in *Lev 25*. The context of the oracle suggests an allusion to the practice of Jubilee or at the least a familiarity with the Jubilee. While Bergsma suggests that the Jubilee was likely never practiced, he concedes that land redemption occurred often enough (as in *Ruth*), that an Israelite could hope to return to his property.⁴⁷

Ezekiel 11:14-15

In this passage, the term גֵּאֲלֵתֶךָ appears. It is a construct noun derived from גָּאֵל, found also in the passage describing Hanamel’s land sale to Jeremiah (*Jer 32:7*), Boaz’ speech at the town square (*Ruth 4:6*), and most significantly in the Jubilee legislation (*Lev 25:25*).⁴⁸ *HALOT* provides the definition of this term as the “right and obligation of repurchase.”⁴⁹ The NRSV’s translation (“fellow exiles”⁵⁰) is misdirected, but the ESV’s “your brothers, even your brothers, your *kinsmen*” captures a better understanding of the phrase. Block,⁵¹

47. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 182.

48. Like Bergsma points out, the use of this word cannot assure a connection between this oracle and the Jubilee legislation. However, it does lead the reader to conclude that ‘the term is certainly one very much at home in the jubilee legislation’ (Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 183).

49. *HALOT*, 170.

50. The NRSV follows the LXX, which reads αἰχμαλωσίας, “captivity.” The αἰχμαλωτος, “prisoner of war,” in both the OT and NT is a “miserable person who stands in special need of God’s help” (*Ps 79:11*). The national disaster of the exile made the αἰχμαλωσίαν Σιων, “captive Zion,” a destiny that was particularly understood in religious terms (*Ps. 126:1*) (Gerhard Kittel, “αἰχμαλωτος,” *TDNT 1:196*).

51. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 341.

Greenberg,⁵² and Duguid,⁵³ vary from standard translations, which follow the LXX, and note that גאלתך should be translated as “kinsmen/kinfolk,” “next of kin,” or “redemption men.” They note that the LXX reading (see note 50 below) destroys an important nuance and progression. Greenberg suggests that that threefold repetition of kinship expressions, followed by וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, “and all the house of Israel,” underlines the extent of the diaspora.⁵⁴ For the Israelites of Ezekiel’s time, the expectation of reclaiming their land once the Exile ended was a means of providing hope to the exiles. Their identity was tied to their land.

This concept is recognized in the final phrase of *Ezek* 11:15, לְנוּ הָיָא נְתֻנָה הָאֶרֶץ, “to us this land is given for a possession.” In the Pentateuch, as Yahweh was preparing to lead the Israelites into the land, they were reminded that the land was given to them by Yahweh. Note the blessings that the land would provide to the people, were they to remain faithful to Yahweh (*Lev* 26:3-4). Furthermore, Yahweh promised to dwell in the land with the people, promising to be their God while they were his people. As noted above (pg. 18), the Jubilee legislation provides an important framework for the blessings and curses that are tied to the land. The land given to the Israelites is a significant theme woven through *Lev* 25-27 and picked up in this oracle from *Ezekiel*.

52. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20* (AB 22; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 189. Moshe Greenberg was professor emeritus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel until his death in 2010. He was awarded the Israel Prize by the State of Israel in 1994.

53. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 150.

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54. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 189. Greenberg notes that this phrase וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל appears twice more in *Ezekiel* (20:40; 36:10). All of these instances occur as restoration prophecies, pointing to the time when Israel would reclaim its land.

Ezekiel 34:4

Ezekiel 34 is an oracle proclaiming both judgment and salvation. Yahweh condemns the shepherds of his flock (v.2) for their failure to care for the sheep and also condemns the fat sheep (v.20) for driving away the weak sheep. As shepherd, Yahweh promises to intervene on behalf of the flock, particularly the weak sheep. He vows to rescue his flock; to rescue them “from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness” (v.12). He will provide מטע, “splendid vegetation,” so that they will no longer be victims of famine in the ארץ, “land” (v.29).

While there are echoes of the covenant blessings and curses (*Lev 26*) in this passage (safety, rain in its season, fruitfulness, and peace⁵⁵), the clause at the end of verse 4 attracts the reader’s attention to Jubilee legislation. וּבְקִזְקָה רָדִיתֶם אֹתָם וּבְכָפָר בּוֹ, “but with force and harshness you have ruled them,” echoes *Lev 25:43* לֹא־תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בְּכָפָר, “You shall not rule over them with harshness” and *25:46* בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ בְּאֶחָיו לֹא־תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בְּכָפָר, “but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness.” The repetition of the verb רדה, which suggests an oppressive rule,⁵⁶ coupled with פָּרַךְ, meaning “violence or slavery”⁵⁷ provides a link between Yahweh’s oracle of judgment and the Jubilee legislation. These words are only connected in *Lev 25:43, 46, 53* and *Ezek 34:4*. פָּרַךְ only appears one other time; in *Exod 1:13*, describing the labour expectations the Egyptians placed over the Israelites. וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָפָר, “the Egyptians forced the sons of Israel to work in violence.” The use of פָּרַךְ draws a further allusion to the Exodus narrative.

55. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 396.

56. HALOT, 1190.

57. HALOT, 968; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2:278*.

The Jubilee legislation includes guidelines for ethical treatment of fellow Israelites. While it does draw clear boundaries between Israelites and non-Israelites, there is a significant ethical mandate for treatment of Israelites. The Jubilee legislation recalls the treatment that the Israelites suffered in Egypt (*Lev 25:42*), and uses this as motivation to prevent maltreatment of one another. In the oracle of judgment, the Israelite leaders are condemned for their oppressive rule and violence against the flock of Israel.

While this oracle does not directly reference the Jubilee legislation, its choice of vocabulary permits the reader to recall the ethical treatment of one Israelite over another and provides a significant verbal connection to the Israelites' enslavement in Egypt. The Jubilee has been noted to be a reversal of that enslavement and a legislated, ongoing commemoration of the Exodus. In this passage from Ezekiel, Yahweh's rationale for the Exile stems from the fact that the Israelite leaders have not heeded that legislation as they ruled *פָּרַךְ*, harshly, over their fellow Israelites, i.e., their brothers and their kin.

Ezekiel 46:16-18

The final passage to be considered from this prophet is perhaps the most significant in establishing a connection between *Ezekiel* and the Jubilee legislation. In this passage, there are two ideas that firmly connect Ezekiel's vision back to the legislation of *Lev 25*. In the final chapters of *Ezekiel*, the prophet receives a vision from Yahweh that places him in the midst of a new temple structure. The vision begins in *Ezek 40:1* where it is read: "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me there" (NRSV). The timing of this vision would have great significance for the people in exile. This vision takes place in the

twenty-fifth year of the Exile, on the tenth day of the first month; placing it at the midpoint of a Jubilee year. Were the people to see their Exile as happening within a Jubilee cycle, they would anticipate an end to their Exile in the fiftieth year, on the tenth day of the seventh month. As the midpoint to the next Jubilee, it “was a natural time of looking forward to the release that the Lord had announced in chapters 34-37.”⁵⁸

Prior to this passage, Yahweh promises *עֲתָה אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת יַעֲקֹב*, “now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob” (*Ezek* 39:25). He vows to return them from Exile; *וְלֹא־אֲחִיר עוֹד מֵהֶם*; *וְאֶשָׁר*, “I will leave none of them behind” (39:28). The following nine chapters (40-48) are a vision from Yahweh, granted to Ezekiel of the cultic structures and rituals for Israel post-Exile. It is significant to note that the inner structure of the temple is built on the numerals 25 and 50 and their multiples (e.g. *Ezek* 40:21,33; 41:13; 42:2,20; 45:1). The date of the vision and the measurements of the temple symbolically point to the Jubilee, the great liberation.⁵⁹

Beyond the timing of the vision, the prophet alerts his hearers to two significant themes in chapter 46. First, he announces a *שְׁנַת הַדְּרוֹר*, “year of release” (v. 17). Coupling *דְּרוֹר* with *שְׁנָה*, the prophet’s reference can only be to the Jubilee. As the vision is concerned with a new Israel, Yahweh’s intention is for the year of release to be an institutional foundation. The prince who oversees the land can only pass on land to his children. No longer will he be able to acquire vast amounts of land. The new Israel “will

58. Quote from Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 471. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel* 2:346) and Block (*Ezekiel* 25-48, 512) both recognize an allusion to the Jubilee in this passage. They both note that Jubilee language was appropriated after the exile, becoming a means of understanding their captivity in Babylon.

59. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2:346.

be reconstituted as a nation of free peasants with an inalienable claim to their own land.”⁶⁰

The people of the new Israel will be entitled to their own land with inalienable claims, as was the intention for the Jubilee legislation. The prophet insists that the people will לא־יִכָּצוּ עַמִּי אִישׁ מֵאֲדָתוֹ, “not be dispossessed of their holding” (46:18). The Hebrew for “holding” is אֲדָתָא, a significant term in the prophet’s vision, as it appears 14 times between *Ezekiel* 44-48. The use of this term connects the reader again to *Leviticus* 25, where the term is used 12 times to denote property (see above, p. 38). The connections serve to remind the reader of Yahweh’s possession of the land. Even as the land is envisioned to be re-divided in the prophet’s vision of the new Israel, the people are reminded that Yahweh is retaining possession. Even in the new Israel, land continues to be a prominent theological theme.

The language of this vision clearly establishes a connection to the Jubilee legislation, lending credibility to the suggestion that the Jubilee legislation was an earlier document, as Ezekiel’s reference to the “year of release” suggests that the people were already familiar with the legislation.⁶¹ The prophet Ezekiel appears to have been familiar with the Jubilee legislation, and thereby his listeners, as it appears to have figured significantly into his visions and becomes a significant theme in the prophet’s eschatology; his visioning of the new Israel post-Exile.⁶²

60. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 520.

61. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 186.

62. This point will become significant in the following chapter, where the Year of Jubilee figures significantly into Intertestamental eschatology. For now, it is sufficient to note Duguid’s observation, as he writes:

“Unlike most eschatological visions in the Bible, which are essentially static tableaux, frozen in time, Ezekiel envisages a place where the year of Jubilee rolls around and the prince has children. In Ezekiel’s reordering of the festival calendar, time itself is brought under the discipline of the new age” (Duguid, 524).

Daniel 9:24-27

This passage in *Daniel* is subject to much scrutiny as it appears to give a timeline for eschatological events. Commentators through history have sought to make sense of the numbers, and have attempted to adjust the numbers to coincide with particular events (such as the death of Christ).⁶³ It is not the purpose of this paper to add to further speculation, but to point out the significance of this passage. The calendar system that *Daniel* uses is based on a Jubilee. It is general consensus that the שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים, “seventy weeks,” שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעָה, “seven weeks,” and הַשְּׁבַעִים וְשָׁנִים וְשִׁשִּׁים, “sixty-two weeks,” is a periodization of history built around Sabbath and jubilee years.⁶⁴ The smaller measure of time, seven sevens, is a jubilee, and the whole period, seventy sevens, is ten jubilees.

The author of *Daniel* appears to be basing his prophecy on the words of the Chronicler in 2 *Chr* 36 (see above, p. 52). The author seems to profess that just as ten jubilees (490 years) of national degeneration resulted in the seventy years of desolation, there was now expected to be a period of ten jubilees of national rebuilding that would culminate in an eschatological Jubilee, a Jubilee year of restoration.⁶⁵ The number seven is significant in the Hebrew Bible as it is associated with completeness, totality, and perfection. A span of seventy weeks (10x7) signifies a symbolic period that concludes with the ultimate deliverance from oppression.⁶⁶ This ‘seventy weeks’ period recalls a

It suggests that the new Israel is not only concerned with the land and its people, but also with the way that their time is spent.

63. Paul L. Redditt, *Daniel* (NCBC; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 158. See Redditt’s and Lucas’ commentaries for a quick overview on the various theories of Daniel’s timeline.

64. Redditt, *Daniel*, 159. The rationale for seeing the measuring of weeks as a reference to the Jubilee stems from *Lev* 25:8, in which the Israelites were directed to count years to the Jubilee as measurements of weeks. (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.[*Lev* 25:8, NRSV]).

65. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 212.

66. Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel* (AOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 248.

Levitical understanding (*Lev* 26:28), but also has overtones of apocalyptic determinism.⁶⁷

This emphasis on release from oppression signifies the connection between the Jubilee year and the Jewish eschatological imagination.

An earlier portion of this *Daniel* chapter also leads the reader to Jubilee connections. In verses 4-19, Daniel pleads with Yahweh on behalf of his people, culminating with these words:

Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, and for your own sake, Lord, let your face shine upon your desolated sanctuary. Incline your ear, O my God, and hear . . . O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! (*Dan* 9:17-19, NRSV)

Daniel's prayer seems to be taking into consideration *Lev* 26:34-46, particularly verses 40-42 (NRSV):

But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that they committed treachery against me and, moreover, that they continued hostile to me—so that I, in turn, continued hostile to them and brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

The placement of *Lev* 26 between the two Jubilee chapters draws the reader's attention back to the correlation of covenant blessings and curses and the Jubilee legislation, as Douglas outlined.

Therefore, it becomes apparent that *Leviticus* features prominently in the theology of *Daniel*, particularly as it seeks to understand the situation of the Jews post-exile.

67. J.J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1993), 352. Collins points to *Peshar on the Periods* (4Q180, 181) in which Azazel leads Israel astray for a 70 week period, *The Testament of Levi* 16:1, which contains a reference to erring for 70 weeks, and the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (*I Enoch* 93) which divides all of history into ten weeks. This latter document understands the exile to occur at the end of the sixth week, and the entire seventh week is the post-exilic period. It maintains that the turning point of history will come at the end of the seventh week.

Largely considered to have reached its final form in the second century B.C.E.,⁶⁸ the jubilic allusions in *Daniel* become even more significant in the following chapter, as we consider extra-biblical documents.

Concluding Observations

It has been observed that the concept of the Jubilee was significant in the prophetic imagination of the Jewish exiles. In each of the major prophets considered, and in *Daniel*, there were significant correlations between their material and the Jubilee legislation. As the Jubilee was concerned with restoring people to their land, it was natural that the Jubilee would factor into the anticipated end of the Exile. After all, the people had been separated from their land; the land that had been a gift, an inheritance from Yahweh, and that factored heavily into their religious practices and thereby their identity as the people of Yahweh.

The prophets' apparent dependence on the Jubilee legislation lends weight to the view that some form of the legislation existed pre-Exile. It seemed to become a lens through which they viewed the Exile. They recognized, as did the Chronicler, that Yahweh's imposed Exile was punishment for their failure to give the land its rest and their failure to show concern for the poor among them. They failed to provide for their kin. Rather than issuing proclamations for the actual observance of the Jubilee, the prophets pulled key themes out of the legislation (such as concern for kin, restoration, redemption, a measure of time) and used these themes as they prepared their audiences for a return to the land.

68. John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 303; Lucas, *Daniel*, 289. These commentators observe that *Dan* 11 is a commentary on the conflict between the Jews and Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

They established correlations between the Exodus from Egypt, the Jubilee, and their anticipated Exodus from Babylon. The Jubilee allowed the Jewish exiles to hope and trust Yahweh, to be assured that as he first redeemed them from Egypt, his character would ensure a second redemption from Babylon. The prophets called the exiles to learn from the sins of their ancestors and to atone for the failure to amend situations of injustice and oppression; situations where fellow Israelites were deemed to be Hebrew slaves and established as a subservient class of citizens. As people of Yahweh, their conduct was to be characterized by ethical treatment of one another.

CHAPTER FOUR SECOND TEMPLE, DEAD SEA SCROLLS, & NEW TESTAMENT

As the previous chapter noted, the concept of the Jubilee was prominent in the prophetic imagination of the exilic period. *Ezekiel*, *Jeremiah*, and *Isaiah* all interpreted the Exile (its causes and duration) in light of Jubilee themes. Their concept of the term *דָּרוֹר* bears evidence of a spiritualizing of an emancipation that had originally been economic.¹ The apocalyptic *Daniel* established a calendar system that envisioned the complete restoration of Israel after a period of seventy jubilees or 490 years. As post-Exile Israel continued to make sense of its identity, the concept of the Jubilee continued to inspire the imaginations of some of their communities, in particular, the community that produced the *Book of Jubilees*. The focus of this chapter will be to consider this Intertestamental text, along with other relevant Second Temple literature and the DSS, and any potential relationship they may have to the Jubilee legislation of *Leviticus 25*. Following that analysis, some attention will be given to the teachings and actions of Jesus of Nazareth.

Second Temple Literature

The Book of Jubilees

The *Book of Jubilees* is a document composed in the second temple period. Although the date of composition is uncertain, it seems likely to have been written in the period of 160-

1. R. North, “*דָּרוֹר*,” *TDOT* 3:265.

150 B.C.E.² Various elements of the book suggest that it was composed as a reaction to the growing Hellenization of the Jews. The emphasis on *Halakhah* (teachings and ordinances of biblical law) suggest not only this opposition, but also an affinity with the Qumran community.³ Passages such as *Jub.* 3:31⁴ suggest an opposition to the Greek habit of stripping for athletic competitions. The *Book of Jubilees* claims to be dictated to Moses by angels while he was on Mount Sinai (*Jub.* 1:1-3) and is a reworking of biblical material covering the beginning of *Genesis* through to the Exodus.

Its significance for this thesis stems from the calendar system into which it fits all of history from creation until the Exodus. The *Book of Jubilees* (as its title suggests) measures time in blocks of 49 years, a jubilee.⁵ Its system further divides into weeks (a period of seven years) and years (following a solar calendar of 364 days).⁶ The Essene community, who ascribed importance to the text, followed this solar calendar, as outlined in other documents, such as *1 Enoch*.⁷ Although none of the Qumran documents gives

2. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 21. Davenport (*Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees* [Leiden: Brill, 1971], 16) attributes a later date to its final composition (c. 140-104 B.C.E.), but this is on the basis of his theory of composite authorship. Vanderkam dismisses this theory based on a probable scribal error, allowing for an earlier date. Nickelsburg (*Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009], 102) maintains an earlier date as well, recognizing that the book seems to be a response to the Hellenizing influences to which Jews were succumbing. It is among a collection of books that exhort pious, Torah-abiding Jews to remain faithful in the face of persecution.

3. W. Barnstone, *The Other Bible* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1984), 10.

4. "On this account, it is prescribed on the heavenly tables as touching all those who know the judgment of the law, that they should cover their shame, and should not uncover themselves as the Gentiles uncover themselves." (*Jubilees* 3:31).

5. Note the difference from the jubilee outlined in the Pentateuch. Although the legislation clearly articulates the observance of the fiftieth year, in pseudepigraphal literature, a jubilee period is 49 years.

6. E. Wiesenber, "Jubilee of Jubilees," *RevQ* 3 (1969): 4.

7. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 99. In his "Calendars" article (ABD 1), Vanderkam notes that the author of *Jubilees* appears to have adopted the calendar of *1 Enoch* 72-82. *1 Enoch* is a collection of different works attributed to Enoch but composed over a period of a few centuries. It shares the concern for a solar calendar with *Jubilees* but is otherwise quite different in content. *1 Enoch* (particularly its "Apocalypse of Weeks," *1 Enoch* 93:1-10; 91:11-17) also bears some resemblance to *Daniel* 9:24-27 (in that it also has a schematization of history based on sevens and tens), but has a chronological structure that is quite distinct from either *Daniel* or *Jubilees* (Bergsma, *Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 241).

any indication of Jubilee observance,⁸ its basis as a calendar system does give some indication of the community's awareness of, and vested importance in, this tradition. The Qumran calendar had 52 weeks, 364 days, and thereby their festivals always fell on the same day of the week each year.⁹

As has been noted, the prophets began to use the Jubilee legislation as an element of their eschatology. The *Book of Jubilees* suggests that the author of this text followed a similar vein of thought.¹⁰ The Israelites' release from slavery and entrance into the promised land take place in the "Jubilee of Jubilees" (the 50th jubilee since creation). The author claims that the Exodus from Egypt occurred in the 9th year of the 50th Jubilee (49th Jubilee, 1 week, 2 years) and the entrance into Canaan took place in the 49th year of the 50th Jubilee.¹¹ While this historical revision is not evidence of a development in eschatological thought, it does demonstrate that the author was seeking to understand events in light of jubilee periods of time. *Jubilees* recounts that the nation of Israel experienced their great release (the Exodus) in the fiftieth jubilee cycle. The author attributed significance to the Jubilee by using his calendar to correlate Jubilee themes with historical events.

Although eschatology is not a significant theme for the author of *Jubilees*, there are a few lines that suggest that he understood the future to be measured according to a

8. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 282.

9. F. Stendebach, "הַיָּבֵי" *TDOT* 15:339. Vanderkam (*ABD* 1; "Calendars," 818) notes that the adoption of the 364 day solar calendar allowed the author of *Jubilees* to provide a precise date for the festival of weeks (always 3/15) and further argues that the covenants made with Noah (*Jub* 6:17-22), Abram (*Jub* 14:20), and Moses (*Jub* 1:1) each occurred on this date.

10. It is clear that *Jubilees* regards a jubilee period as 49 years, but it is also clear that the book associates that number fifty with the Jubilee Year; as evidenced by the occurrence of the exodus and entrance into Canaan in the fiftieth year. This raises the question as to how the competing numbers of Jubilee observance (49 or 50) can be reconciled. Bergsma notes R. Judah in the Mishnah (*b. Ned.* 61a) who claims that the Jubilee Year is simultaneously the fiftieth year of the old cycle and the first year of the new. It seems that this is the principle followed by the author of *Jubilees* (*The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 236).

11. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 95.

jubilee calendar. *Jub* 1:29¹² references the anticipation of a new creation and the angel's role in measuring the years leading to that event. Furthermore, *Jub* 50:5¹³ articulates that future events will continue to unfold, divided into jubilee periods. Clearly, *Jubilees* anticipated an eschatological recreation of human nature, which will be marked by a permanent dwelling in the land.¹⁴

The Testament of Levi

The *Testament of Levi*, from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, is another pseudepigraphal document that follows a jubilee calendar. In it Levi recounts the events of his life (chs. 1-12), gives moral instruction to his children (ch. 13), predicts the future of his descendants and Israel (chs. 14-18), and dies (ch. 19).¹⁵ Levi's prediction of the future (17:1-11) provides a brief history of the priesthood, assigning a jubilee period to each priest:

Because you have heard about the seventy weeks, listen also concerning the priesthood. In each jubilee there shall be a priesthood: In the first jubilee the first person to be anointed to the priesthood will be great, and he shall speak to God as father; and his priesthood shall be fully satisfactory to the Lord, and in the days of his joy, he shall rise up for the salvation of the world. In the second jubilee the Anointed One shall be conceived in sorrow of the beloved one, and his priesthood shall be glorified by all. The third priest shall be overtaken by grief, and the fourth priesthood shall be with sufferings, because injustice shall be imposed

12. "And the angel of the presence who went before the camp of Israel took the tables of the divisions of the years--from the time of the creation--of the law and of the testimony of the weeks, of the jubilees, according to the individual years, according to all the number of the jubilees [according to the individual years], from the day of the [new] creation when the heavens and the earth shall be renewed and all their creation according to the powers of the heaven, and according to all the creation of the earth, until the sanctuary of the Lord shall be made in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, and all the luminaries be renewed for healing and for peace and for blessing for all the elect of Israel, and that thus it may be from that day and unto all the days of the earth."

13. "And the jubilees will pass by, until Israel is cleansed from all guilt of fornication, and uncleanness, and pollution, and sin, and error, and dwelleth with confidence in all the land, and there will be no more a Satan or any evil one, and the land will be clean from that time for evermore."

14. D. Lambert, "Did Israel Believe the Redemption Awaited its Repentance? The Case of *Jubilees* 1," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 641.

15. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 245.

upon him in a high degree, and all Israel shall hate each one his neighbour. The fifth shall be overcome by darkness, likewise the sixth and the seventh. In the seventh there shall be pollution such as I am unable to declare in the presence of human beings, because only the ones who do these things understand such matters. Therefore they shall be in captivity and will be preyed upon; both their land and their possessions shall be stolen. And in the fifth week they shall return to the land of their desolation, and shall restore anew the house of the Lord. In the seventh week there will come priests: idolaters, adulterers, money lovers, arrogant, lawless, voluptuaries, pederasts, those who practice bestiality.¹⁶

As an element of his eschatology, the author of the *Testament of Levi* predicted that the people of Israel would go astray for a period of seventy weeks in the seventh jubilee, probably from the time of the Exile to the coming of the *Testament of Levi's* eschatological priest (18:1-3).¹⁷ It is significant to note the similarities between the eschatology in *Daniel* and the *Testament of Levi*, as both have system of weeks, years, and jubilees that allow the authors a means of organizing the collective history of their people. Both *Daniel* and the *Testament of Levi* foresee the coming of a messianic figure, although the figure from *Testament of Levi* is not envisioned to be cut off, like *Daniel* 9:24-27 predicts. Furthermore, the association between jubilee periods and priesthoods is unique to *Testament of Levi*.¹⁸

In studying the jubilee calendars of the second temple period, Collins postulates that the system follows the rhythm of the week, with each 'week' of years culminating in a Sabbath, as does the week of days, thereby seeing a larger block of time in a pattern similar to a week.¹⁹ This observation is supported by the lengthy treatise Yahweh provides in *Jubilees* 50:1-13 regarding the necessity of observing the Sabbath.²⁰ It

16. *Testament of Levi* 17:1-11, as printed in Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 247.

17. A.Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden, The Netherlands: EJ Brill, 1996), 70.

18. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 248.

19. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 71.

20. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 72.

appeared to be a common expectation that a messianic figure would appear, allowing for connections to be made between jubilee periods and eschatological hope.

Dead Sea Scrolls

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed that *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, and *Daniel* were popular works in the Qumran community. Therefore, it is not surprising to find several references to the jubilee scattered throughout the Scrolls.²¹ Its primary use is as a means of dividing time, similar to the Jubilee's function in *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Levi*. There are three purposes attributed to the jubilee as a division of time: *historiographical*, i.e., for charting the chronology of past events; *cultic-calendrical*, i.e., for calculating cultic activities such as the rotation of priestly service; and *eschatological*, i.e., for predicting the arrival of the final era of history.²²

The *Book of Jubilees* is shown to have influenced the Qumran community, as suggested by the number of copies discovered in the Qumran caves. Fragments from fifteen or sixteen copies of *Jubilees* have been found in five caves, placing it behind *Psalms*, *Deuteronomy*, *Isaiah*, and *Exodus*, and tied with *Genesis*.²³

The *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Qap Gen ar) reflects a jubilic calendar. Observe col. vi:

9 [...] the Highest one to the sons of man. *Blank* And in my days, when there had been completed for me – according to the calculation that I calculated – 10 [...] ten jubilees, then my sons finished taking wives for themselves for ...²⁴

21. The Hebrew term יובל appears 55 times. In 1QM 7:14 and 4Q285 frg. 3 L.3 the term refers to a ram. In most other occurrences, יובל is used as a measurement of time.

22. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 251.

23. James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 153.

24. The translation for all DSS passages in this thesis are reproduced from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), here from 1:33.

This text presents an account of Noah, using jubilee periods to measure time. Another example of jubilees being used to measure time is found in *4QCalendrical Document* (4Q320). It is the largest and most diverse calendrical scroll attested at Qumran.²⁵ It contains an enumeration of the seventy-two solar months in the six-year cycle (frgs. 3 ii-4 i), and a well-preserved list of the biblical festivals in the six-year cycle (frg. 4 iii-vi). The calendrical formula (frg. 4 ii) bears similarity to calendrical texts in *Lev* 23:37-38, *Num* 29:39, *1 Enoch* 75:3, 82:10, *Jub* 2:9, and in another significant Qumran document, the Rule of the Community.²⁶ 4Q320 used the jubilee measure as a summary for large periods of time, as evidenced by frg. 3 i l. 13: “[...the y]ear of the second jubilee.”²⁷

4QApocryphon of Joshua (4Q379) contains a reference to the jubilee that corresponds significantly to the account of history in the *Book of Jubilees*. Frg. 12 ll. 3-6:

3 [... the sons of Israel cr]ossed over when it was dry, in the 4 [fi]rst month of the forty-fi[rst] year of their departure from the la[nd of] 5 Egypt; it was the year of the Jubilees at the start of their entry into the land of 6 Canaan; and the Jordan was full with wat[er] toward all its banks and it flooded²⁸

The *Book of Jubilees* implies that the entrance into Canaan occurred in a Jubilee year, a date explicitly claimed in 4Q379.²⁹

The DSS also use jubilees to measure the period of time that Yahweh will punish his people. *4QNarrative D* (4Q463) includes a quotation from *Leviticus* 26:44 (frg. 1 ll.

25. Shemaryahu Talmon, Jonathan Ben-Dov, and Uwe Glessmer, *Qumran Cave 4. XVI: Calendrical Texts* (DJD XXI; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 37.

26. S. Talmon, DJD XXI, 41.

27. S. Talmon, DJD XXI, 51. The editors note that no summation is provided for the first jubilee. The summary of years pertains to the second jubilee.

28. Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2:751.

29. G. Brooke, J. Collins, T. Elgvin, P. Flint, J. Greenfield, E. Larson, C. Newsom, E. Puech, L.H. Schiffman, M. Stone, and J. Treballe Barrera, *Qumran Cave 4. XVII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 3* (DJD XXII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 271.

2-3) and a reference to the end of a jubilee (frg. 2 l. 2).³⁰ *4QApocryphon of Jeremiah C* (4Q387) describes a specific period, calculated in jubilees, during which Yahweh's wrath will be directed towards Israel (frg. 3 col. ii ll. 1-6):

1 [...] ... to serve me with all your heart 2 and with a[ll your soul ...] ... in their distress, But I will n[ot] search them 3 because of their disloyalty [with whi]ch they were disloyal [to me], until ten 4 jubilees of years are complete. And ... with ma[dness] and with blindness and confusion 5 of heart. And at the completion of that generation I [will liberate] the kingdom from the hand of those who have power 6 over it.³¹

The period of ten jubilees may be calculated as lasting 490 years, similar to the *Book of Jubilees*, which is the same period as the seventy weeks of years specified by *Daniel* 9:24.³² Another version of this document is found in 4Q390, which notes only a specific point in the sequence of punishment, the seventh jubilee (instead of describing the entire ten jubilee period):³³

But I will speak to them and send them a precept and they will understand all that 7 they have abandoned, they and their fathers. And ever since that generation *Blank* has been completed, in the seventh jubilee 8 of the devastation of the land (4Q390 frg.1 Ll. 6-8).³⁴

11Q Melchizedek

11QMelch is a jubilic midrash, as each scripture passage quoted develops a theme based on the eschatological year of Jubilee.³⁵ It weaves together passages from *Isa* 52:7

30. M. Broshi, E. Eshel, J. Fitzmyer, E. Larson, C. Newsom, L. Schiffman, M. Smith, M. Stone, J. Strugnell, and A. Yardeni, *Qumran Cave 4. XIV: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (DJD XIX; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

31. Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2:777.

32. Devorah Dimont, *Qumran Cave 4. XXI, Parabiblical Texts, Part 4* (DJD XXX; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 182.

33. Dimont, DJD XXX, 236.

34. Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2:783.

35. J. Sanders, "The Old Testament in 11Q Melchizedek," *Gaster Festschrift* 5 (1978): 374.

(referring to the messianic herald of the ‘good news’), *Isa* 61:1-3, *Lev* 25, and *Deut* 15.³⁶

The author places the motifs of restoration and release (from *Lev* 25 and *Deut* 15) in the context of the anticipated end of days,³⁷ which is described as the tenth and final jubilee, which works out to be the same period of time predicted in *Daniel* (490 years), although calculated in a different fashion. Note *11QMelchizedek* (11Q13 col. ii. ll. 2-7):

2 [...] And as for what he said: <<In [this] year of jubilee, [you shall return, each one, to his respective property]>>, concerning it he said: Th]is is 3 [the manner of the release:] every creditor shall release what he lent [to his neighbour. He shall not coerce his neighbour or his brother, for it has been proclaimed] a release 4 for G[od]>>. Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [...] and whose 5 teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, fo[r ...] ... and they are the inherita[nce of Melchise]dek, who 6 will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] 7 in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee³⁸

It is significant to note in the above passage that the word used for “release,” is שׁמט, borrowed from *Deut* 15. This passage suggests that the Qumran community combined the Jubilee legislation with the release laws from *Deut* 15. The end of the passage looks ahead to the final jubilee, which will witness the end of the Exile and the return of the diaspora (col ii. 1.7).³⁹ The author also attributes great significance to the figure Melchizedek, substituting his name for the divine name,⁴⁰ and attributing to Melchizedek

36. R. Sloan, “Jubilee,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 396.

37. M.P. Miller, “The Function of Isaiah 61:1-2 in 11Q Melchizedek,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 467. *11Q Melch.* (11Q13 Col. ii ll. 7, 9) reads: “And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee...for it is the time for the ‘year of grace’ of Melchizedek and of [his] arm[ies, the nat]ion of the holy ones of God, of the rule of judgment.” This passage connects the theme of jubilee with Yahweh’s final judgment, and views Melchizedek as the one who carries out that judgment (Note also line 13: “But, Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of Go[d’s] judgments) (Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2:1207).

38. Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2:1207.

39. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 61.

40. Miller, “The Function of Isaiah 61:1-2,” 468. Delcor (116) recognizes the name as being the combination of two terms (*mlk* and *šdq*), and notes the name could be interpreted as ‘My king is *Šdq*’ (*Šdq*

the roles of extending favour and destruction (as in *Isa* 61:1-2),⁴¹ including the inauguration of the eschatological Jubilee. Melchizedek does not simply proclaim liberty; he achieves it by releasing the captives.⁴² There is considerable discussion over Melchizedek's identity, but to the author of *11QMelch* he represented what early rabbis called the "second power in heaven," and thereby shared God's throne.⁴³ Since there was no record of his birth or death, there was no hesitation about viewing Melchizedek as eternal, present in the heavens, and an integral person in eschatological events.⁴⁴

11Q Melch is a significant Qumran document that signifies that the year of Jubilee featured heavily in this community's eschatology. This document pulls together a number of Messianic expectations (such as the figure of Melchizedek) and uses the Jubilee as the means by which Yahweh's favour and judgment are unleashed. However, the above discussion yields no information as to whether a literal Jubilee was observed by the Qumran. The LXX's translation of both דָּרֹר and שְׁמִטָּה as ἄφεσις may yield insight into this possibility. Bergsma suggests that the Septuagint translational equivalence may have led to a conflation of the Jubilee and the שְׁמִטָּה release of *Deuteronomy* 15 in the wider Jewish community, which was also followed at Qumran. He suggests that this latter community's attempts to observe the שְׁמִטָּה removed the legal significance from the Jubilee legislation, but left the eschatological and chronological applications.⁴⁵

being the name of a Canaanite god), or 'My king is justice' (noting a parallel to the name Jehozadak, meaning 'Yahweh is justice').

41. Miller, "The Function of Isaiah 61:1-2," 468.

42. R. van de Water, "Michael or Yhwh? Toward Identifying Melchizedek in 11Q13," *JSP* 16 (2006): 79.

43. Van de Water, "Michael or Yhwh?" 86.

44. M. Delcor, "Melchizedek from Genesis to the Qumran Texts and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *JSJ* 2 (1975): 125.

45. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran*, 282.

The above discussion concerning the DSS reveals that the jubilee was a significant concept in establishing a chronology of significant historical events (i.e., creation, the Exodus). It furthermore contributed to an understanding of eschatology, as the period of Exile was measured in a similar jubileic calendar. The Jubilee factored significantly in the Qumran community.

Luke

Connecting the Jubilee with eschatological theology was not limited to the Qumran community. Jesus expanded upon and envisioned himself in a role similar to Qumran's Melchizedek. Observe Luke 4:16-21 (NRSV):

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, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

As established by looking at *11Q Melch* and *Jubilees*, there was an expectation⁴⁶ that the arrival of the levitical Messiah (in the tradition of Melchizedek) would correlate with an

46. R.B. Sloan (*The Favorable Year of the Lord: A Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (University of Basel: Schola Press, 1977), 77) expands further on this concept as he considers additional documents. He observed that an element of Jewish hope involved the combination of two eschatological roles: the Prophet like Moses and the Davidic Messiah. Therefore, Jesus' self-declaration was not a novel idea, but one that had been expected by the populace. Their reaction, however, indicates that they did not see Jesus as the one to fulfill those eschatological functions.

eschatological year of Jubilee; a period of Yahweh's favour when דָּרוּר,⁴⁷ "release," would occur. Boldly, Jesus takes these traditions, encourages this train of thought, and then applies it to himself. He declares that he is Yahweh's anointed one and that he is proclaiming the Year of the Lord's Favour.

As Jesus makes this proclamation, he further informs the people that its fulfillment will not take place in the way that they anticipate. Although the Jubilee legislation and much of the prominent eschatological hope focused on Israel, Jesus insisted that Yahweh's favour would be beneficial for the pagan nations.⁴⁸ He appealed to the stories of Elijah and Elisha interacting with non-Israelites, such as the widow at Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian (*Luke* 4:24-26). The synagogue's response to Jesus' message indicates that his vision was not what the people anticipated.

Jesus' reading in the synagogue is primarily from *Isa* 61:1-2, but also mixes in an allusion to *Isa* 58:6: "to let the oppressed go free." While there is much debate about why Jesus' reading combined these two passages, Bock suggests that the mixture may simply represent a Lukan summary of a larger reading or a set of remarks.⁴⁹ Ringe suggests that the passages were combined due to the common elements of the Greek text, because both employ the term ἄφεσις.⁵⁰

47. Recall the earlier discussion (p. 22) on the LXX's use of ἄφεσις to translate דָּרוּר.

48. N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011), 75; Sharon Ringe, *Luke* (WBC; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995), 70. Ringe notes how the redeeming work of both prophets began outside of Israel. She suggests that Jesus is telling the people that the fulfillment for which they are longing may not come to them first. They have no priority or privilege. Yahweh's fulfillment is for all people, gentiles and Israelites.

49. D.L. Bock, *Luke* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 136. Ringe (*Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*; 39) notes that an abbreviated and composite reading would not have been acceptable in Jesus' day and further suggests the abbreviated reading may have been a factor in provoking the anger of the townspeople. I follow Bock's suggestion that the passage recorded in Luke is more likely a Lukan summary of Jesus' readings and remarks.

50. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*, 38.

Much has been written about Jesus' claims in this passage and his understanding of the Year of Jubilee.⁵¹ Sharon Ringe has written extensively about the connections between Jesus and the Jubilee and she traces a Jubilee theology throughout much of Jesus' teachings, noticing a strong connection in *Matthew's* version of the Lord's Prayer. As noted above (p. 13), John Howard Yoder, in *Politics of Jesus*, suggested that Jesus' "Nazareth Manifesto" is a proclamation of the Jubilee year. In that chapter's epilogue (added in the second edition), Yoder clarifies that Jesus was not issuing a Jubilee that would be proclaimed again in fifty (or forty-nine) years. Rather, his proclamation was to be a "permanently defining trait of the new order ... It would fit with what actually turned out to be practiced in the community he created."⁵²

Furthermore, Ringe concludes her work by stating:

Each generation must take responsibility for responding to God's decree of liberty, and for doing justice We cannot, from our human perspective, design structures and social organizations that will be eternally appropriate, and that will always and everywhere support concerns of justice and liberation.⁵³

Both writers suggest that Jesus is inaugurating a community that must be marked by jubilic principles, seeking to proclaim release for its successive generations.

It is significant to note that Jesus never declares a Jubilee in the sense of *Lev 25*.

He never declares that all Israelites should return to their ancestral land; nor does he

51. See in particular Ringe, Sloan, and North.

52. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 71.

Yoder devotes a chapter to tracing Jubilee imagery throughout Jesus' teachings. In his first edition, that chapter with this bold statement: "Such a redistribution of capital [after having discussed Luke 12:30-33], accomplished every fifty years by faithfulness to the righteous will of God and in the expectation of the kingdom, would today be nothing utopian. Many bloody revolutions would have been avoided if the Christian church had shown herself more respectful than Israel was of the jubilee dispositions contained in the law of Moses" (Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 70).

Yoder's clarification in the second edition that it was not Jesus' intention to reinstate the fifty-year pattern of the Jubilee legislation lends support to the concept that the Christian community is to be hallmarked by jubilic principles.

53. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*, 98.

demand the release of debt-slaves. Jesus embodies the intent of the law, rather than the letter of the law. He recognizes those who are oppressed in his day. Jesus highlights the πτωχός, “poor” (עניים in *Isa* 61:1). While the term certainly includes those who live in socially and economically limited environments, the Hebrew term also conveys “pious poor,” the humble whom God will exalt. These are the ones who are open to God and recognize how much they need him.⁵⁴

Like the prophets before him, Jesus chastises the leaders for their roles in creating oppression.⁵⁵ He contextualizes Jubilee-release and דרוֹר for his era and calls his followers to do the same. Yoder highlights one of the significant ways that Jesus sought to fulfill this mandate. *Luke* 12:30-33 (NRSV):

For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms.

Yoder notes that there are two solutions to the command, “sell your possessions, and give alms.” Either Jesus directed this to all Christians in all times, or it was just a ‘counsel of perfection’ directed to the saints. He observes that the church has traditionally chosen the second solution, maintaining that this command is applicable to only those with a special vocation, such as a monk.⁵⁶ He also observes how Jesus declared that the tithe was insufficient (rather than unnecessary) in *Luke* 11:42 (NRSV): “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others.” Jesus is not

54. Bock, *Luke*, 136. See also *HALOT* (855) where the term suggests one who bows or crouches before Yahweh in a humble and pious sense.

55. Three times in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus calls the leaders a ‘brood of vipers’ (3:7; 12:34; 23:33). He condemns them for their participation in the mistreatment of prophets and for being concerned with their words, rather than their actions.

56. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 69.

seeking to abolish tithes, but to go beyond the level of easy fulfillment that can be achieved by giving the tithes.⁵⁷ In this passage Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees for their failure to be generous stewards of that which Yahweh has entrusted to them.

Ringe notes that Jesus' economic principle of *Luke* 12:33 indicates that the kingdom's reign is marked by an abundance that flows out of Yahweh's own sufficiency and generosity, rather than poverty or deprivation that arise because of the competitive accumulation of possessions.⁵⁸ Yoder further suggests that this commandment was a jubilee ordinance, to be put into practice in 26 C.E., "as a 'refreshment,' prefiguring the 'reestablishment of all things.'"⁵⁹ Jesus seems to have been contextualizing the thematic elements of the Jubilee, and establishing a community that was hallmarked by jubileic themes. He has taken the developed eschatological hope concerning the Jubilee and expressed how he is fulfilling those expectations. He is addressing how Yahweh anointed him to be the long-awaited Messiah, whose reign is inaugurated by the eschatological Jubilee, not the legislation of *Lev* 25. Jesus is the Herald of God's Jubilee.

Observations

This chapter has followed the development of jubileic thought through the Second Temple Period, witnessed its prominence in the Qumran community, and suggested its connection to the life and practice of Jesus of Nazareth, as indicated in *Luke*. It was noticed how the LXX translated both דָּרוֹר and שְׂמִטָּה as ἄφεσις, increasing the eschatological interpretation of the Jubilee, and ignoring its legal function. This development was observed in both Second Temple literature and in Qumran, where the

57. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 69.

58. Ringe, *Luke*, 179.

59. Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, 70.

Jubilee featured prominently in the calendar of both past events and anticipated future events. It was associated with the arrival of the expected Melchizedek figure, and the Jubilee was anticipated as a prominent feature in the Messianic age, a theme picked up by Jesus in *Luke 4*.

CONCLUSIONS

Review of Material

Leviticus

The material that has been surveyed has run from *Leviticus* through the Old Testament, into the Second Temple literature, the DSS, and concluded with Luke's account of the life of Christ.

The study began with the legislation as written in the book of *Leviticus*. In the legislation, it was apparent that the Jubilee was intended to be a means of economic redistribution, ensuring that Israelites were released from slavery and restored to their ancestral land. Yahweh's possession of the land was a prominent concern of the legislation. The Israelites were to recognize that their claim on the land came from being tenants, and not owners of the territory. They were to recognize themselves as Yahweh's people, privileged to live on the land that he had granted to them. Their possession of the land was dependant on how they upheld the covenant established between them and Yahweh. If they failed to adhere to the covenant stipulations, then Yahweh would evict them from his territory.

It was noted that the legislation afforded privilege to those of Israelite descent. While non-Israelites were bound by the commandment to release their Israelite slaves,

non-Israelites were not granted release in the Jubilee. The legislation clearly favoured the Israelite over the non-Israelite.

The Jubilee was pronounced by the sounding of the trumpet, and was connected to the Day of Atonement. The legislation established a correlation between the forgiveness of the people's sins, their legislated release of slaves and restoration to ancestral property. Terms such as *דָּרוּר* and *גֹּאֵל* were noted to be jubilic terms. *דָּרוּר*, "release," was to be proclaimed as the Jubilee began, and the legislation laid the framework for the concept of the *גֹּאֵל*, "redeemer."

It was also observed that Jubilee was legislated as a response to the Exodus, the pivotal event in Israel's history, when Yahweh rescued them from slavery in Egypt. The connection to the Exodus is noted in two significant ways: Yahweh's self-identification as the one who brought them out of Egypt (*Lev 25:38*); and the injunction against ruling over slaves ruthlessly (*Lev 25:43*). This injunction against ruling ruthlessly over slaves was connected to the Exodus by the common term *פָּרַךְ*, "violence or slavery," which had been used to describe the Egyptians' treatment of the Israelites. The Jubilee was to be a response to the people's deliverance from slavery, and it was to be a means of ensuring that similar treatment did not occur in the nation Yahweh was establishing.

Old Testament Histories

Beyond the legislation recorded in *Lev 25*, we noted that the Jubilee is only directly mentioned in *Lev 27* and *Num 36*, as updates to the legislation in *Lev 25*. Beyond those two passages, only indirect references to the Jubilee are found in the Old Testament. In *Ruth*, the concept of the *גֹּאֵל* is given significant attention. However, it has become connected to the Deuteronomic levirate marriage. In the narrative, Boaz commits to

levirate marriage and to being a גאל. In this narrative, the idea of the Jubilee has been recontextualized within Israelite society. Despite its adaptation of the Jubilee legislation, *Ruth* does show an awareness of the legislation; however, its application has changed from what was set out in *Leviticus*. Beyond its function in *Ruth*, we noted how the גאל concept became a way of understanding Yahweh's history with Israel. As the Jubilee legislation made provision for the redemption of one person by another, Israel recognized how Yahweh had acted as its redeemer in two crucial moments: the Exodus from Egypt and the return from Exile in Babylon.

It was recognized that the concept of מעל, “disloyalty, infidelity,” was significant in both *Leviticus* and *Chronicles*. The מעל of the people led to their Exile to Babylon, a prominent cause in the Chronicler's theology of the Exile at 2 *Chr* 36:22. According to that passage, the Exile was Yahweh's intervention to ensure that the land received its required rest. It was a reminder to the people that the land was Yahweh's possession. The מעל of the people and their apparent disregard for the land brought them to the experience of Exile, two themes that factor significantly in the Jubilee legislation and the subsequent covenant obligations of *Lev* 26.

The last allusion to the Jubilee in the Old Testament histories comes from *Neh* 5, as Nehemiah is responding to the concern of the people. In the post-exilic efforts to rebuild Jerusalem, it became apparent that the wealthy were exploiting the poor; people were being sold into slavery and separated from their land. As a means of economic redistribution, Nehemiah required that everyone be restored to their land, out of fear of Yahweh. The command to restore and the compulsion of divine fear are both themes that

hearken back to the Jubilee. It is significant to note that Nehemiah did not issue a דָּרוֹר for the people.

The allusions to the Jubilee in the historical writings suggest that the Jubilee legislation was contextualized to new situations through the various eras, but there is no direct reference to a literal Jubilee proclamation.

Prophets and Daniel

In this section, it was noted how the prophets developed an eschatological understanding of the Jubilee (referenced through the use of the term דָּרוֹר). They came to anticipate the expected end of the Exile as a Jubilee that would be enacted by Yahweh. As people who needed דָּרוֹר again, the prophets expected that Yahweh would act. *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, and *Ezekiel* all contained elements in their writings that contained significant allusions to the Jubilee.

It was noted how *Isaiah* rebuked the practice of land accumulation and how he anticipated the year of Yahweh's pleasure. With the expectations attached to that eschatological year, it was suggested that the year was a jubilic allusion. There were significant ethical expectations for Yahweh's people that recalled the Jubilee, such as the mandates to release the oppressed and the captives and provide shelter. Furthermore, *Isaiah* was compelled to raise attention to his message by issuing a summons by the trumpet, an instrument connected to the Jubilee's proclamation, and recognized in Israel's history for summoning the community's attention. The trumpet was to proclaim דָּרוֹר, a word first introduced in the Jubilee legislation.

Jeremiah's account of pre-exilic Judah included two events that significantly recalled the Jubilee legislation: his act of redemption for his cousin Hanamel, and King

Zedekiah's proclamation of דָּרוֹר for the slaves. Jeremiah was entitled to redeem the land of his cousin, on the basis of functioning as a גֹּאֵל. Zedekiah issued release for the slaves, only to recall them into slavery. Zedekiah's blatant disregard for Yahweh's standards resulted in an anti-release; a דָּרוֹר that would see the people of Judah "released" into slavery. Although neither event was directly attached to the Jubilee legislation, they suggested a familiarity with the mandates of *Lev 25*.

Ezekiel included further allusions to uses of the Jubilee, as its writer chastised people for their maltreatment of fellow citizens. *Ezekiel* drew a connection among the Israelites' treatment in Egypt, the expectations of the Jubilee, and the maltreatment in that age, by its use of the term פֶּרֶךְ, describing the violent and oppressive working conditions of slaves. Finally, the concern in the last pericope of *Ezekiel*, the vision of the new temple, contains numeric allusions to the Jubilee; the day on which Ezekiel received his vision and the measurements of the new temple. The number fifty factored significantly into that vision and brought forward a suggestion that the return from Exile and restoration to the land would be seen as a new Exodus, or Yahweh initiating a new Jubilee for his people.

The final passage we considered was from *Daniel 9*, as that prophet laid out an eschatological calendar that was based upon a jubilic understanding, and supported by the Chronicler's understanding of the Exile. *Daniel's* prayer seemed to be a response to *Lev 26*, and further supported the notion that the covenant blessings and curses were significantly attached to the people's implementation of *Lev 25*. The prophetic and poetic allusions to the Jubilee suggest a further development in understanding the implications of the Jubilee, as it seemed to lose its economic focus and take on an eschatological

application. As Yahweh's people sought to understand their experience of Exile, the Jubilee became a means of expressing their confident hope in Yahweh's deliverance.

Second Temple, Qumran, and *Luke*

Following the conclusion of the Old Testament writings, the Jubilee continued to gain momentum in the eschatological imagination of Yahweh's people. Writings from the period between the two testaments reveal that the Jubilee legislation was adopted into a calendrical form that explained both the people's past and anticipated their future. They rewrote their histories and drew connections between significant events and periods of history that were dubbed "jubilees." Thus, the Exodus from Egypt and entrance into the Promised Land was understood to have happened in the fiftieth jubilee since creation.

This jubilic calendar is referenced in works such as the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Testament of Levi*. It appeared to be widely adopted in the Qumran community, as evidenced by the numerous copies of *Jubilees* and the appearance of a jubilic calendar in several documents. The eschatological understanding of the Jubilee grew in significance, with the connection of apocalyptic Melchizedek to the eschatological Jubilee.

Finally, it was observed how Jesus' inclusion of *Isa 61* in his sermon at the Nazareth synagogue suggests his understanding of an eschatological Jubilee. Rather than suggesting Melchizedek is the herald, Jesus proclaims that he is the herald of Yahweh's final jubilee. What remains to be noted is how Jesus' statement applies to his followers.

Summary of Themes

This summary demonstrates that the Jubilee legislation is concerned with the people's treatment of the land (in its command to grant rest to the land), the release of those

burdened by debts and subsequent slavery, and the restoration of people to their ancestral land. The Jubilee legislation is founded upon a commitment to Yahweh, recognizing that their obedience to Jubilee legislation stems out of their obedience to him, as well as recognizing that the land is Yahweh's possession and that the Israelites are merely tenants on the land. The Jubilee grants a favouritism to the Israelites, supporting their status as Yahweh's covenant people.

As the history of the Israelites continued, the economic focus of the Jubilee shifted to an eschatological focus. The community came to understand its history in light of the Jubilee as a measurement of time and as an expression of expectation that Yahweh would return them to the land and release them from captivity. The Jubilee was identified for its connection to the Exodus, and allowed Yahweh's people to anticipate a second Exodus.

Application to the Exodus

The thesis has also noted the significant connection between the Exodus from Egypt and the Jubilee legislation. It would appear that the Jubilee is a legislated response to the Exodus. As the people were released from slavery, they were to ensure that ongoing, perpetual enslavement was not to be characteristic of Yahweh's people. The Jubilee was a cyclical dismantling of the conditions that precipitated the Exodus: lack of inheritable land and oppressive enslavement. It ensured that people had a means of self-provision by returning to the land, and it reaffirmed Yahweh's role as the deity of the nation.

As the history of the Jubilee was traced, it was further noted how the Exodus continued to be a significant theme. The return from Exile was seen to be a second Exodus, a second liberation by Yahweh, and a second return to the land. As the

eschatological meaning was attached to the Jubilee, Yahweh's actions led to the release from sin, accomplished by the jubilic work of Christ.

It is significant to note that this attachment between Jubilee and Exodus is not frequently established. While writers such as Bergsma and Milgrom do note a connection (by referencing Yahweh's recollection of the Exodus in *Lev 25:43*), they fail to give adequate attention to that connection. Support for this Exodus observation comes from rabbinic observations¹ and C.J.H. Wright's *The Mission of God*.² Wright understands that the Jubilee and the Exodus are the response and the action of Yahweh, as he accomplishes his mission of redemption in the world.

Implications

This thesis opened by highlighting the disparity of wealth and brokenness of our world as we are confronted by extreme poverty, both globally and locally. It traced the recent development of jubilic thought in the interdenominational campaign, *Jubilee 2000*, which sought to eliminate the national debts of third-world countries. It traced the Jubilee through Scripture and into prominent writings outside of Scripture. It noted the transition of the Jubilee from an economic institution to an eschatological expectation. It rested in the words of Christ, who proclaimed a "year of Yahweh's pleasure;" a period of time in which Yahweh would fulfill his mandate of blessing the world.

Despite the expectations and hopes of his closest followers, Jesus only carried out his ministry in Judea for an estimated three years. Following his death and resurrection

1. Rabbi Saul J. Berman, "The Jubilee Year and the Exodus," *Edah* (May 19, 2006 / 21 Iyar, 5766); available at <http://www.edah.org/behav.pdf>; Accessed February 14, 2012. He writes that "the jubilee year is the periodic, national reenactment of the exodus."

2. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 290.

and prior to his ascension into heaven, he commissioned his followers to continue his mandate of proclaiming a period of Yahweh's favour. Jesus sent his followers into the world to continue the work that he had begun and compelling them to act in his name.

As Christ's followers, we share that mission that was begun so long ago. We celebrate the Exodus from sin that Christ accomplished, so our response should be jubilic. As twenty-first century Christians, we must consider how we can invite other people to share in this spiritual Exodus; we must consider how we can share Jubilee with those in need.

The English term 'jubilee' is often used to refer to significant anniversaries, such as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee of 2012. While the English word (and its French and Latin origins) are derived from יובל,³ its popular application fails to capture the intentions of the Hebrew term. Instead of seeing Jubilee as only a celebration of thankfulness, we should begin to proclaim Jubilee in the biblical sense: a period of Yahweh's favour that invites people to experience restoration and release; a period of favour that is carried out by the church. Finally, we should also pay attention to the examples of *Ruth* and *Nehemiah* that contextualized Jubilee for their eras. It was noted that the Jubilee has become a rallying cry for the oppressed, yet also favours one nationality, assumes and legitimizes slavery, and permits the loss of land for a fifty-year period. These are significant themes that would not provide necessary liberation in the twenty-first century. Jesus' understanding and reapplication of these themes provides a framework that enables us to pursue an application of the Jubilee legislation. Jesus strikes out the ethnocentric concern of the legislation, inviting all people and nations to participate in

3. Oxford University Press, "jubilee," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, available at <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/jubilee>; Accessed February 25, 2012.

Yahweh's year of favour. He proclaims release and preaches to the poor. In the twenty-first century, there is a growing number of people who are poor and need release.

We live in an economy that is founded upon the accumulation of possessions. Our capitalist society tells us to pursue the growth of wealth, and rampant individualism directs us to be self-focused. A literal application of the Jubilee would not be appropriate because it would assume Divine provision of the land, could promote the accumulation of property by the wealthy, and could prohibit the elimination of debt. Its mandate for ethnic superiority is unsettling in a post-Civil Rights and post-Apartheid society. Fortunately, we recall the words of the apostle Paul: "no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."⁴ The community that Christ founded breaks down those traditional boundaries.

As Yahweh's people, it is our mandate to proclaim the release that Yahweh envisions for the world through Jesus Christ. As Christ has provided the means for a spiritual Exodus from sin and hope of an eschatological restoration, it becomes our priority to proclaim a Jubilee for our world. We must give attention to those who are in debt or need release (whether spiritual, physical, or emotional) and we must seek the restoration of those in need.

4. *Gal 3:28* (NRSV).

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