

Deuteronomy 15:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

Analysis

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. The sabbatical year principle extended rest and release beyond the weekly Sabbath to a seven-year cycle. This mandated periodic economic reset protected the poor and prevented permanent poverty classes from developing.

The release (shemitah) involved forgiving debts, freeing Hebrew servants, and letting land lie fallow. These interconnected provisions created comprehensive social and economic renewal every seventh year. God's concern for justice and mercy permeates His economic legislation.

The seven-year cycle mirrored the seven-day weekly cycle, establishing that both individuals and society need periodic rest and renewal. Just as persons need Sabbath rest, economic systems need sabbatical reset to prevent exploitation and injustice from calcifying into permanent structures.

Reformed theology sees here divine concern for comprehensive flourishing - spiritual, physical, economic, and social. God's law promotes holistic shalom where relationships are regularly restored and economic disparities periodically corrected.

Historical Context

The sabbatical year was fundamental to Israel's covenant economy. Observance demonstrated trust in God's provision, as leaving land unfarmed required faith that

God would provide sufficient crop in the sixth year to sustain through the seventh.

Israel's failure to observe sabbatical years contributed to the Babylonian exile's length - the land received its neglected Sabbath rests during the seventy years of desolation (2 Chronicles 36:21).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does the sabbatical year reveal about God's concern for economic justice?
2. How does periodic debt release prevent permanent poverty from developing?
3. What faith is required to let land lie fallow and trust God for provision?
4. How might sabbatical principles apply to contemporary economic systems?
5. What does Israel's failure to observe sabbatical years teach about consequences of ignoring God's social legislation?

Interlinear Text

מִזְמָרָה:	שְׁמִיטָה:
תִּשְׁמַטֵּה	שָׁנָה יְמִינָה
שְׁבָעָה	שָׁנָה שְׁבָעָה
מִזְמָרָה	מִזְמָרָה
At the end	of every seven
H7093	H7651
years	thou shalt make
H8141	H6213
	a release
	H8059

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 31:10 (Parallel theme): And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles,

Exodus 21:2 (Parallel theme): If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

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