

Exodus 23:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

Analysis

But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

The seventh year 'rest and lie still' (תִּשְׁמַטְנָה וְנָטַשְׁתָּה, tishmettenah untashtah)—release and abandon it. Why? 'That the poor may eat' (וְאָכְלוּ אֶבְיֹנִי עִמָּךְ, ve'akhelu evyonei ammekha)—whatever grows wild is public property. This provides for poor, demonstrates trust in God, and gives land rest. The command extends to vineyards and olive groves. Leviticus 25:5-7 clarifies all can eat from the voluntary growth. This is built-in wealth redistribution without socialism—land ownership continues but poor access God's provision. Jesus feeds multitudes and says 'I am the bread of life'—He is the ultimate Sabbath provision.

Historical Context

The Sabbath Year's volunteer crop provision for the poor was unique in the ancient world. It required landowners to sacrifice seventh-year income, trusting God for sufficient provision in years 6 and 8.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the Sabbath Year's provision for the poor demonstrate God's heart for economic justice?
2. What would observing a Sabbath Year teach about trust in God's provision versus self-reliance?

Interlinear Text

וְהַשְׁבִּיעַ ת	תִּשְׁמַטְּ נָה	וְנִטְשָׁתָּ הַ	תֹּאכַ ל	אֲבִינִי י	
But the seventh	year thou shalt let it rest	and lie	may eat	still that the poor	
H7637	H8058	H5203	H398	H34	
עַם בְּ	וְיִתְּרָם	תֹּאכַ ל	חַיֵּת	הַשָּׂדֶה ה	בְּ
of thy people	and what they leave	may eat	the beasts	of the field	H3651
H5971	H3499	H398	H2416	H7704	
תַּעֲשֶׂה ה	לְכַרְמְךָ	לְזֵיתָבְּ:			
In like manner thou shalt deal	with thy vineyard	and with thy oliveyard			
H6213	H3754	H2132			

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