

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' (תִשְׁמַטֵּה וְתִטְשְׁפֹּת, tishmettennah untashtah)—release and abandon it. Why? 'That the poor may eat' (וְאֶכְלֶה אֶבְיֹנִי עָמָקָה, 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

אָבִין וְתַאֲכֶל וְנִטְשַׁת הַתְשִׁמְטָה וְשָׁבֵע תְּאַכֵּל
But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie may eat still that the poor
H7637 H8058 H5203 H398 H34

עַמְּךָ מַיְתַּךְ לְתַאֲכֶל תְּאַכֵּל הַבְּשָׂדֶה הַמִּלְחָמָה
of thy people and what they leave may eat the beasts of the field H3651
H5971 H3499 H398 H2416 H7704

לִזְרָמָה תְּعַשׂ הַכְּרִמֵּךְ וְתַאֲכֶל
In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard and with thy oliveyard
H6213 H3754 H2132

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