

May 1, 2022

## 9. A Sabbath for All Creation — **Leviticus 25:1-13, NRSV**

### Jubilee: the ultimate trust

*I cannot find any examples of this practice in any historical books. These instructions are specific. God keeps God's promises. We are always under God's care. Do you remember after the Israelites were freed from Pharaoh how the people received manna from heaven? Each family was to gather what was needed for one day. No more, no less.*

*We do not trust God. God presents a practice that promotes trust. Sure, we could rest on our seventh day. Most people don't. Yet never have I seen allowing one year for the land to heal. Maybe in pieces, but never as a whole. So to have the fiftieth year be the resetting of all commerce back to its original standing is something we have made impossible. Of all the directions given in the Bible to which we hold others to account, why is this one so overlooked?*

*We deceive ourselves. We try to show faithfulness in our walk with God, yet this celebration of Jubilee has never been seen.*

- *Why do we only want to do the simple things?*
- *Why don't I trust God with the hard stuff too?*
- *Where is your faith?*
- *Where is your trust?*

—Greg Battle, [battlegregory1@gmail.com](mailto:battlegregory1@gmail.com)

### Seventh-year fallow: small steps, profound protection

For more than 70 years, agricultural technicians and rabbinical inspectors have been helping Israeli farmers honor the seventh-year fallowing practice of *shmita*. Some farmers prune early or plant in containers, not touching the soil to be in compliance.<sup>1</sup> Visionary young Jewish farmers in the US want to reintroduce this observation. A 2014 manifesto called for intellectual, emotional, creative, and spiritual engagement with Hebrew Bible texts relating to *shmita*.<sup>2</sup>

Sustainable farming pioneers Sharon and Dick Thompson of Boone, Iowa, applied Christian stewardship in their farm research. They designed a seven-year rotation of cereal and grain crops. Their beef cattle grazed a nonfarmed, seventh-year grass-legume cover crop. Dick championed a “giving principle” in which we should be ready to give to the land rather than take from the land.”<sup>3</sup>

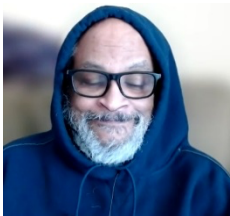
An urban Mennonite pastor wrote last year that Yahweh's sabbath law “serves to protect servants and slaves, women and the vulnerable, the earth and the animals from exploitation and abuse. The Hebrew people were traumatized people, wounded and hurting from their

generations of exploitation, oppression and enslavement. And this commandment is a corrective to any future possible exploitation and abuse.”<sup>4</sup> Sabbath as fallow thrusts us into new ways of thinking.

—Greg Bowman, [GMBowman33@gmail.com](mailto:GMBowman33@gmail.com)

## Sources

1. Abigail Klein Leichman, “The farmers giving their land a year off: In Israel, every seventh year is supposed to be a sabbath year when farmers don’t raise crops. It’s a great rest for the fields, but a huge test of faith,” Israel21c., August 26, 2021. <https://www.israel21c.org/the-farmers-who-are-giving-their-land-a-years-rest/>
2. Yigal Deutscher, et al. *The Hazon Shmita Sourcebook*. Sept. 2014 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c5e1aef2727be28e94b59f4/t/6027f92e66c7153c9753ee59/1613232453529/Shmita+Sourcebook+-+Sept+2014.pdf>.
3. Teresa Opheim, “Farming with ‘The Source’: Thompsons’ Alternatives in Agriculture,” Practical Farmers of Iowa, December 12, 2013. <https://practicalfarmers.org/2013/12/farming-with-the-source-thompsons-alternatives-in-agriculture/>.
4. Jason Allan Storbakken, “A Liberation Theology of Sabbath,” project thesis, 2021, Boston University School of Theology, ProQuest Dissertation #28317095, pp. 4–5. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/bc10cefa62edfd3123d612070d7d84cc/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.



**Gregory Edwin Battle** is a 66-year-old Black American elder and AV minister at Lee Heights Community Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He is a proud father, son, husband, brother, uncle, and neighbor. Greg’s favorite Scripture is Micah 6:6–8 and his favorite saying is, “Everything I know is subject to revision, especially what I know to be the truth” (*Narcotics Anonymous* textbook). We do recover.



**Greg Bowman** and his wife, Ellen, live as active retirees in the northeastern Ohio community and congregation where they were reared. Previously living in other rural, suburban, and urban communities has humbled and challenged Greg as to God’s ways of working in and beyond “the church.” He is alert for God’s transforming moves in his community as he keeps on gardening.

## Resources for this session

Darcy Larum, “What Is Fallow Ground: Are There Any Benefits of Fallowing Soil?”  
<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/soil-fertilizers/what-is-fallow-ground.htm>

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