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Shemitah:

The Wonderful, Terrible Sabbath Year

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INTRODUCTION: Approximately 3,000 years ago, Moses went up onto a mountain to meet with God. The mountain burned with Holy Fire and smoke rose from it, in a fearsome display of God's presence. In that long meeting with God, Moses received the law, the priestly system, plans for the Tabernacle, and the times of holy days which would represent God's seven top priorities.

You probably know that the Jewish nation was to celebrate a Sabbath DAY every seventh day by doing no work. Rather, they were to worship God and rest. But what you may not know is that they were also supposed to celebrate a Sabbath YEAR. Every seventh year was to be a SABBATH, or in Hebrew, a Shemitah.

Exodus 23:10-11 For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

The very last day of the seventh year, the Sabbath year, all debts were to be cancelled. Deuteronomy 15:1-2 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the Lord's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed.

1. THE SHEMITAH WAS ESTABLISHED FOR PURPOSES OF BLESSING.

The Hebrew people never kept the Shemitah. They religiously kept the Sabbath on the seventh DAY, but never did keep the Sabbath YEAR. It required too much trust in God.

What if you were a farmer and God told you to not plow or plant anything for a whole year? You would wonder, "How will we live? How am I going to pay the bills?"

As I've meditated on this, I've come to believe that God wanted to demonstrate HIS CARE for His people in a very tangible way. If they let the land rest every seventh year, they would have to depend upon God and trust Him to sustain them during that year. God, who gave these commandments, would have to come through for them with special care and provision. In this way, they would KNOW there was a God, and KNOW that He was caring and providing for them.

God wanted them to TRUST HIM instead of trusting in wealth or the work of their hands. If they actually kept the Shemitah, they COULD NOT trust in themselves, or in their wealth, or in the work of their hands.

God also wanted the economy to be cleansed of debt every seventh year. He didn't want His people enslaved by debt. He didn't want His people to enslave their own brethren with debt.

If the people had actually kept the Shemitah, God would have somehow provided for them and they would have delighted in tangible evidence of his watch care over them. It would have drawn them very close to God as they reveled in His miraculous provision and blessing.

2. BECAUSE THE SHEMITAH WAS NOT KEPT, IT TRANSFORMED INTO JUDGMENT.

After many years of growing farther away from God, the nation of Judah actually turned AGAINST God. They sacrificed their children in the fire to demon gods. They served idols. They rebelled and called light darkness and called darkness light. They called righteousness wickedness and called wickedness righteous.

Finally, God allowed the nation to be destroyed. Only a few thousand Jews were left out of several millions. The remaining few were taken captive to Babylon. There they stayed until the land of Israel enjoyed its Sabbath Rests—70 years of unkept Shemitahs were now being kept.

What had been established as a BLESSING for those who would trust and obey had turned into JUDGMENT against those who were faithless and rebellious.

**** God had warned the nation at its very beginning that the Sabbath year, the Shemitah, would turn from blessing to judgment if they didn't keep it.

Leviticus 26:27 If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, then in my anger I will be hostile toward you and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. V31-35 I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the Sabbaths you lived in it.

3. TO MAKE SURE THAT THE LAND DID FINALLY ENJOY ITS SHEMITAHS, ITS SABBATH REST, GOD'S CONTROL AND JUDGMENT PROVED TO BE GLOBAL.

Not just the nation of Judah was affected. Great empires and other kingdoms were affected. God is Lord of the whole earth. First, the Kingdom of Assyria had to be overthrown by the Babylonians. Then the Babylonians overthrew Judah and deported the few surviving Jews. When the 70 years was completed, when the land of Israel had finally enjoyed its Sabbaths, the Persian Empire arose and conquered Babylon. Then, the Jews were restored to their own land.

Jonathan Cahn writes, "The Shemitah lay behind the march of the Babylonian armies into the Promised Land, the burning of the Temple, the removal of the people from the land, and their years in exile. It operated on an epic scale, transcending the boundaries of ancient Israel and involving foreign peoples, nations, and empires.

"In order for the land to rest and keep its missing Sabbaths, the Jews people had to be removed from the land. In order for the Jewish people to be removed from the land, the Babylonian Empire had to ascend to the world stage. In order for the Babylonian Empire to ascend, the Assyrian Empire had to fall.

"Once the land kept its Sabbaths, the Babylonian captivity could come to an end. In order for that to happen, another empire had to rise—that of Persia. Thus the Babylonian Empire happens to rise at the time that the seventy years of the Shemitah must commence. Then when the seventy years of the Shemitah are complete, it falls. It falls because the empire of Persia rises. Thus the Persian Empire happens to rise at the same time the Shemitahs draw to their end. The mystery of the Shemitah thus becomes GLOBAL, affecting the course of nations beyond and far removed from Israel and causing the rise and fall of powers, kingdoms, and world empires." (Page 49, The Mystery Of The Shemitah)

4. WHILE ONLY ISRAEL WAS COMMANDED AS A NATION TO OBSERVE THE SHEMITAH, IT WAS GIVEN TO OTHER NATIONS AS A

PROPHETIC SIGN.

God had intended that the people of Israel would KEEP the Sabbath YEAR so that He could demonstrate His care for them to the whole world. What other nation could possibly survive if they didn't plow or plant for a whole year?

But since they did not keep it, God used it as a prophetic sign of judgment to the whole world, to show that He is Lord of all and in control.

**** Judgment has been coming to America during the Shemitah or seventh year. The last two great stock market crashes occurred on the last day of the Shemitah year, Elul 29 on the Jewish religious calendar.

**** "The first Shemitah of the new millennium fell in the period of 2000-2001, the years of the Dot-Com Crash, a deepening recession, the attack of 9/11, and one of the greatest stock market day crashes in history. The Shemitah year took place entirely within the overall financial and economic collapse. Its overlap with the crash of 2000-2001 is thus 100 percent." (Page 81)

A few days before the last day of the Shemitah, when all debts were to be cancelled, America suffered the terrorist attack against the twin towers in New York City. That day was a Tuesday, and the stock market did not open until the following Monday, Sept. 17, 2001. The market plunged 684 points in one session, the greatest stock market point crash in American history up to that day. On the Jewish calendar, that was Elul 29, the last day of the Shemitah year, the very DAY when debts were to be cancelled, the appointed time to cause mass nullification in a nation's financial realm.

What happened in the NEXT Shemitah? After the attack on Sept. 11, 2001 Americans went back to churches, for only about three weeks. Then as a nation, they returned to their former ways, and became even more perverse, immoral, and unbelieving. A second great shaking of our nation came again in the Shemitah year, seven years later.

The crash of 2007-2008 is known as the "Great Recession," "the Global Financial Crisis," and the "Second Great Depression." It was the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. It wiped away trillions of American dollars, threatened the collapse of several major financial institutions, helped trigger the European Sovereign-Debt Crisis, and launched a global recession that would last into 2009. By its end, more than half of the stock market had been wiped out.

The stock market had been in a continual period of expansion for several years, but less than thirty days from the Shemitah's beginning in September 2007, the momentum began to change. The stock market began to collapse. The Shemitah reached its climax one year later in Sept. of 2008. The crash reached its greatest intensity the same month. Then on Sept. 29, which on the Jewish Calendar was again the last day of the Shemitah, Elul 29, the Day when debts were to be cancelled, the market dropped 777 points in one day, and broke the record for point drops in one day set seven years earlier. On our calendar the days were Sept. 17 in 2001 and Sept. 29 in 2008. But on the Jewish calendar, both crashes occurred on Elul 29, the last day of the Shemitah year, when all debts were to be cancelled. It's not a coincidence. It is a sign of God's control. It is a warning from God of coming national destruction if America doesn't repent and return to God.

5. WHY WOULD GOD BRING JUDGMENT TO AMERICA IN SEVEN YEAR CYCLES DURING THE SHEMITAH YEARS? WHY WOULD GOD BRING A FINANCIAL JUDGMENT UPON AMERICA ON THE LAST DAY OF THE SHEMITAH, WHEN DEBTS WERE TO BE CANCELLED?

I cannot explain it better than Jonathan Cahn, who writes, "America is a civilization established on the Word of God, dedicated to His purposes, and consecrated to His glory from its very inception. But more than that, it is a civilization specifically established after the pattern of ancient Israel.

“Most would find it surprising to learn that America was consciously, intentionally, and specifically founded and formed after the pattern of ancient Israel. Its founders saw it as a new Israel, the Israel of the New World. It was their exodus from Europe like the Hebrew exodus from Egypt. The New World was their new promised land, and the Massachusetts Bay Colony was their New Jerusalem.

As for the legal system of the new American commonwealth, the Puritans sought to incorporate the Law of Moses. They instituted a day of rest after the pattern of the Hebrew Sabbath. And the American holiday, Thanksgiving, was formed after the pattern of the Hebrew Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles.

They named the mountains of America after the mountains of Israel: Mount Gilead, Mount Hermon, Mount Ephraim, Mount Moriah, Mount Carmel, and Mount Zion. They called their towns and cities, Jericho, Jordan, Salem, Canaan, Goshen, Hebron, and Beersheba. They named their children Joshua, Rachel, Ezra, Zechariah, Esther, Jeremiah, and a host of other names derived from the people of ancient Israel.

They even taught Hebrew in their schools and universities. On the seal of Yale University appear the Hebrew words from the breastplate of the high priest. On the seal of Columbia University appears the ancient Hebrew name for God. And on the seal of Dartmouth University appear the Hebrew words translating to ‘the Almighty God.’

“America’s link to ancient Israel has undergirded its national identity, in one form or another, consciously or unconsciously, from the time of its inception onward. It is clearly evident at the time of American independence when Benjamin Franklin proposed that the new nation’s Great Seal should feature the image of Moses parting the Red Sea, while Thomas Jefferson proposed that the of the Israelites journeying through the wilderness.

The connection is unique, deep, and intrinsic. The pattern of ancient Israel is embedded in the DNA of American civilization. It’s in the root from which America sprang. One observer wrote this:

‘No Christian community in history identified more with the People of the Book than did the early settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who believed their own lives to be a literal reenactment of the Biblical drama of the Hebrew Nation.’

There is no other nation in the modern world so deeply linked to ancient Israel as America. There is, therefore, no stage or platform on earth so well suited for the manifesting of the mystery of the Shemitah as America.” (Page 57-58. *The Mystery of the Shemitah*)

6. SHEMITAHS MARK THE RISING AND FALLING OF AMERICA

America began its rise to SUPER POWER during the First World War. The Shemitah year had begun on September 28, 1916 and concluded September 16, 1917. America entered World War 1 on April 6, 1917. That was right in the middle of the Shemitah. Because America, as a whole, was honoring God in those days, the Shemitah proved to be an uplifting time of victory and exaltation to world leadership.

When the war broke out, America was a debtor nation. But when the war was over, America had not only ceased to be a debtor nation, but had become the greatest creditor nation in the world. The British Empire, along with other world powers, was not heavily indebted to America. The war had caused a massive transference of global power. The center of the world’s financial realm had shifted from the Old World to the New, from the British Empire to the United States. The world’s financial center was no longer London, but New York City—the same city that now boasted the earth’s highest towers.

Four Shemitahs later, the world was engaged in the Second World War. The year of the Shemitah would begin at summer’s end 1944. In its approach, American and Allied forces would launch the invasion of Europe. At the same time, there was a transformation of the global economic and financial order. During the Shemitah, the World Bank was formed, as was the International

Monetary Fund. The agreements signed in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire set up a new world economic and financial order in which world currencies would be tied to the US dollar. This was ratified in the middle of the Shemitah, in the summer of 1945 and took effect after the war's end, in the Shemitah's wake. It heralded the end of the era of the British sterling's reign in world trade and the collapse of the British Empire. The year of the Shemitah had again brought the collapse of powers.

***** Here's something else that is very interesting. The rise of the Nazi's lasted from one Shemitah to another, seven years. October 5, 1928 was when Jewish passports were invalidated. This was just after a Shemitah had ended. Seven years later, in the spring of 1945 was another year of the Shemitah. In that year the Nazi death camps were liberated. The war against Japan lasted longer than the war against Germany.

As the Shemitah neared its climactic end, so did the Second World War. With one-month left to the end of the seventh year and the time of nullification, the greatest destructive force ever devised by man was unleashed on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, the dropping of the atomic bomb. The official end of the Second World War came on Sept. 2, 1945, aboard the USS Missouri, as the Japanese Empire issued its formal surrender to the Allies. The war ended in the Shemitah's last week, within days of Elul 29.

Just days after the Japanese surrendered, there was an official procession that involved all four of the Allied armies. This took place in Berlin. It happened on Sept. 7, 1945 but on the Hebrew calendar it was Elul 29, the last day of the Shemitah.

Because America was basically serving God, the Shemitah brought exaltation and world supremacy. Four Shemitahs, 28 years, occurred from the end of World War 1 to the end of World War II. What would happen at the end of four more Shemitahs?

The year would be 1973, a watershed year in America's spiritual and moral descent. The Supreme Court legalized the killing of unborn children. Ancient Israel was destroyed for this sin, and they only killed a few thousand. America has killed something like 50 million babies!

The Shemitah had begun in September of 1972 and would continue until September of 1973. The Supreme Court decision was issued in the midst of the Shemitah on January 22, 1973. The Shemitah can be linked to a nation's rise—or to its fall. The Shemitah that ended in 1917 and 1945 were turning points in America's rise. But The Shemitah of 1973 marked the turning point of America's fall.

Eleven days before that fateful court decision, the stock market hit its peak. But after that decision, it began a long decline that lasted into the autumn of 1974. Almost half of the value of the stock market was wiped away, 48%.

Also, in the spring of 1973 the bonds tying the world's currencies to the dollar were irrevocably severed. In 1973, America lost its first war in history, the Vietnam War. America's greatest triumph in war had taken place in a Shemitah year 28 years earlier. Now, in a Shemitah year, it suffered its greatest military defeat.

At Bretton Woods, 28 years earlier, the World Trade Center had been conceived. In 1973, 28 years later, in another Shemitah year, it was completed. And four cycles of seven years later, 1973 plus 28 brings us to Sept. 11, 2001 when the World Trade Center was destroyed—near the end of the Shemitah year. The World Trade Center towers stood for exactly 28 years.

7. WE ARE IN ANOTHER SHEMITAH YEAR.

This Shemitah year will end on Sept. 13, 2015. Since our nation is in great sin and rebellion against God, the Shemitah year should be a significant year of decline with something very traumatic

happening by the end of the Hebrew month of Elul, on Elul 29 (which will be September 13, 2015). Will it be a complete collapse of the US dollar?

This Shemitah year began with our courts overthrowing the state laws for the protection of marriage. Our federal courts and the Supreme Court have made it impossible for states to say that marriage has to be between one man and one woman.

We have witnessed our President issuing decrees that amount to making law, granting amnesty to five million illegal aliens. This is going to open the floodgates for more and more to cross our open borders. With them are coming terrorists and Mexican Drug gangs.

Meanwhile, our negotiations to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear bomb have broken down, and basically failed. Iran will soon have a nuclear weapon. Israel knows this, and cannot wait much longer to attack.

When that happens, America will be drawn into another war in the Mid-East. Indeed, we are already being drawn back into Iraq because of ISIS, the newest and most vicious Muslim terrorist group which has taken over a large part of Syria and Iraq. More troops are being sent besides our air strikes.

President Obama has said he is granting amnesty to those Hispanics who work and pay taxes. But he doesn't mention that most of them do not make enough money to pay Federal income taxes. Because of our tax system, most of them will actually get earned income credit—and will be PAID thousands of dollars, which comes from the middle class of America. The middle class is being taxed very heavily to fund this new block of voters who, it is supposed, will continue to vote for the Democratic Party.

**** At this writing, the decision in Ferguson, Missouri has not been announced. But protests have been planned in 86 American cities. Will we see race riots and marshal law?

***** What about Ebola? I am reading news reports that the CDC is covering up Ebola cases and “disappearing” people who appear to have it, calling it malaria and taking these people someplace. Will this die down, or will it increase in this country due to foolish policies?

My point is this: In this Shemitah year, we will see more and more decline in America, more and more oppression, and less and less freedom. We will see more and more chaos, less and less order. We will see more and more insecurity, and less and less safety. If America betrays Israel in a coming war with Iran and forces the division of Jerusalem, a huge catastrophic judgment will come upon this nation. Seven prophetic people have seen visions of God splitting America in two pieces up the New Madrid fault. All said it would happen if America betrays Israel and forces them to divide Jerusalem. Something climactic and traumatic is going to happen by the middle of September of 2015. The Shemitah's end comes exactly on the fourth blood moon in a rare “tetrad” of lunar eclipses that includes an eclipse of the sun, a solar eclipse.

8. MY EXPERIENCES IN THE SHEMITAH YEARS HAVE BEEN GOOD.

**** I didn't know that 1973 was a year of judgment upon the United States. I was too busy having fun living for God. In 1973 I had a job in a veneer mill and made \$1,000 a month. That was a good wage back then. But I took a 40% cut in pay. I got a part time job at a church for \$100 a month and worked a split shift with another man, so that instead of 50 hours a week at the veneer mill I only worked 25. That got me into ministry part time. During this Shemitah year my ministry took off!

After six months of working part time I went full time in the ministry for only \$400 a month. That meant I'd taken a 60% cut in pay. But God kept us, and as I showed that I was trusting God and obeying Him, He prospered us.

At that time I became the church's bus director, and from 1973 through August of 1978 I signed up thousands of kids to ride our buses. We visited 1,200 kids a week and brought in 500 to 600 each Sunday the last three years I was on staff there.

The next Shemitah was in 1980. I resigned from Goshen Assembly of God August 1, 1979 just before a new Shemitah began. Now, with no job at all, and with our first child due in October, it seemed crazy. But God helped me get meetings. In the next 18 months I traveled in 14 western states, starting bus ministries and holding revivals. I published three books. I gave myself a 20% raise from what I made at the church—and God helped me earn it each month!

That period was marked by the terrible high interest rates during Jimmy Carter's presidency. It was a time of national judgment again, but I didn't notice. I was having too much fun following God, winning souls, and bearing fruit for His kingdom. He took care of me, just fine.

**** *Now we are facing another year of great national turmoil and decline.*

What will happen to us believers during this Shemitah?

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED! Think of what God originally wanted. He wanted His people to have a year of rest, where they would rely on Him to care for them, when it seemed impossible. He intended to care for them in profound ways, and would have drawn them close to Himself. They would have grown in intimacy with Him because of their total dependency upon Him. They would have been sanctified from trusting in the work of their hands and trusting in money and trusting in themselves. They would have been freed from the burden of debt.

So if you are serving God faithfully, if you have repented of sin, if you love to please Him, if you are walking in close fellowship with God—then the Shemitah year is going to be a year where God's care and protection and provision will be especially evident. It will be a year when you HAVE to trust God, because it will seem impossible without Him. But He likes that!

When I started a church in a Holiday Inn, back in Nebraska in 1981 I said to God, "I would feel so much more secure if we had our own church building." *God spoke to me, "You are never more secure than when you have nothing to trust in but Me."*

Would the Jewish people have been LESS secure if they had kept the Shemitah? No, they would have been MORE secure, because they would not have been trusting in the work of their hands or in their money. They would have been trusting totally in God, and thus would have been safer and more secure than at any other time.

**** I remember the Shemitah of 2008. The stock market had collapsed at the end of the Shemitah, and the nation was in hard times. I held a meeting in a Midwest town, and a strange thing happened. I was booked to speak Sunday morning through Wednesday night. But the pastor, without my knowledge or agreement, gave the Sunday morning service to a visiting musician! He let him sing and perform for 45 minutes, and then had me preach for about 20 minutes. But he gave the Sunday morning offering to the singer! I was stunned. The Sunday morning offering is the main offering of any revival/seminar. It had been my booking, an agreed upon date, but he gave it away to someone who showed up last minute. Unheard of!

I just kept quiet and gave the people the best ministry I could. God watched out over me. A man who didn't agree with what the pastor had done to me gave me a \$1,000 check to make up for the missed offering!

**** HERE'S WHAT I BELIEVE. I believe God really enjoys providing and caring for and protecting those children of His who will truly TRUST Him. So I am going to be praising the God of the Shemitah. He wanted His people to enjoy a year of rest, a year when He would miraculously care for them and demonstrate how real and present He is to help His people. They never co-operated, and because they trusted in themselves and their wealth they were eventually brought to ruin and destruction.

Surely God would be delighted to help those who are right with Him and trust Him, even if this Shemitah is bringing another lurching downward in the nation's freedom, safety, and economy. We are serving a God who can sustain us through a Shemitah! He won't be judging His own who love and serve Him. Rather, He will be doing for them what He wanted to do fore the Israelites in every Shemitah. He will be showing Himself as the God who provides, who releases them from debt, and who makes a way where there seems to be no way. He will be helping His people REST in His protection and provision. ***Thus, it will be wonderful for some, terrible for others.***

The Shemitah was supposed to be WONDERFUL for God's people, a special year of rest, worship, and release from debt. It was to be a delightful year of renewal to God, closeness to Him, a year when God would carry His people.

To the nation of America, the Shemitah is now a prophetic sign of judgment. For God's people, it can be a year of great spiritual increase. WILL YOU TRUST GOD?

1 Chronicles 5:20 **He answered their prayers because they trusted in Him.**

Proverbs 3:5-6 **Trust in the Lord with all your heart and learn not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.**

John 14:1 **Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. V27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**

ONE MORE THING: After every 49 years, or seven Shemitahs, God said there was to be a Jubilee year when LAND was returned to its owners and all slaves were set free. We don't know exactly when the Jubilee year is, but we have an idea. At the end of World War I, England had taken Palestine away from the Muslim Turks. England declared that they were making it a home for the Jewish people. Although Israel wasn't officially a nation, that year, 1917 may have been a 50th year. It occurred right after a Shemitah, and the land of Israel was restored to the Jewish people as they began to return. At the end of seven more Shemitah's the 50th year brought the Six Day War in 1967. In that war, the Jews took back the City of Jerusalem. This occurred, if I understand it rightly, exactly 50 years after England declared Palestine a home for the Jews. Now we are coming up on a time when seven more Shemitahs will have occurred, and thus, another YEAR OF JUBILEE. I know that the current Shemitah ends on Sept. 13, 2015 or on the Jewish calendar, Elul 29. What great thing will happen then, in regard to Israel? Could some new war give them back the TEMPLE MOUNT?

God is in control, that's for sure. His appointed times are set, and even the universe declares His control, with the last of four blood moons in a tetrad of four lunar eclipses occurring on September 13, 2015, exactly on the last day of the current Shemitah. While all this is too big for my little brain to comprehend, my heart can know this: Through whatever storm comes as empires fall and rise, I will hold to my Father's hand. He is Lord of the Sabbath, Lord of the Shemitah, and I am in an everlasting covenant of love where in He has stated He will never stop doing good to me. (See Jeremiah 32:40) So let us lift up our heads and rejoice! The redemption we look for in the return of Christ must be very near!

I LOVE YOU. GOD BLESS YOU.