

Why The Land-Sabbath?

The law of the land-sabbath is not new to most students of the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life.

But many questions may arise as to how to apply it in today's society.

Did God neglect to give humans agricultural instruction?

Most Christian farmers read the Christian Bible with one eye searching for instructions from God about food production.

They discover that God's specific instructions to food producers appears to be little more than a few notes on firstlings, a few verses on mingled seed, the land-sabbath and the jubilee!

Beyond these points God appears to have considered it unnecessary to offer anything very much in the way of specific guidelines for producing human's most important physical commodity, food.

But is that really the situation?

God in fact did give humans agricultural guidance, but He gave it in such a way that it could **not** be neglected by an obedient nation.

God did not have to expound principles of food production in detail because the law of the land-sabbath does it for Him.

When humans apply their mind to the consequences of this simple law, they realise that out of sheer economic necessity, they need to obey it.

Here is listed why:

1. They need a cheap and effective source of feed for their milk and meat producing animals other than grain.
2. They are shown how to prevent soil erosion and the formation of deserts.
3. Shown how to avoid water pollution by nitrates washed off the land by the rain into rivers.
4. Shown how to overcome any problem of unneeded grain surpluses.
5. Will realise what constitutes a logical approach to layout out towns, villages and smallholdings.
6. Realise the true "value" of long-term highly-mechanised farming.
7. Begin to understand the general implications of protein quality and quantity in a good diet for both animals and humans.
8. Realise that "factory-farming" is detrimental to livestock and humans and doesn't work economically.
9. Will find out what is the most efficient system of producing and marketing vegetables, fruit, milk, meat and eggs.
10. Experience the importance of livestock in any permanent system of agriculture.

11. Realise that soil fertility cannot be maintained without a regular return of organic matter to the land and that ultimately each acre of land must be the source of its own fertility.

12. Understand that there is a definite limit to the amount each acre can produce without deterioration of soil quality, and this level will only be constantly reached if humans are prepared to limit the amount they take from the soil for their own use.

All the above may appear to be reading rather much into one single law of God.

If so, then read on in this article and others that will follow and see for yourself.

Understanding God's Laws

The best way to discover the purpose and meaning of any of God's Laws is to put the particular law into action in your life.

Only by keeping the sabbatical year law can we learn the meaning, the intent and the full importance of God's command to human beings to rest the soil every seventh year.

What the land-sabbath involves:

1. No grain may be harvested for commercial purposes.
2. No crops may be sown specifically for harvesting.
3. No vineyards or orchards may be pruned.
4. No fruit, vegetables or grain may be stored.
5. No hay, or winter fodder may be collected in barns.
6. No fresh fruit, or vegetables would be available for sale.
7. Pasturing cattle, sheep or poultry is **not** restricted.

Some of the implications:

Visualise yourself as an adult man with wife and three children.

The civil government of your country has made the sabbatical year part of the enforced law of the land just as God intended.

Your responsibility is to provide food, clothes, shelter and a good way of life for your family.

The provision of clothes, shelter, fuel and recreational amenities would be unaffected by the sabbatical year.

But what about food?

Leviticus 25:20-21 [NIV] *"You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years."*

This scripture indicates every seventh year you could expect a temporary shortage of certain basic commodities, even if there had been bumper crops the previous year.

Milk, eggs and meat:-

Would be more plentiful than normal, because under God's civil government the sabbatical year applies to all food producers in the same year.

Leviticus 25:2-7 [NIV] *“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. **Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you, for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.**”*

Grain:-

Could still be available to all, because it is stored easily.

Vegetables and fruit:-

This would be a different matter. Undoubtedly some could and would be stored by either drying, freezing or bottling. But it would be extremely difficult, if **not** impossible, to effect national bulk storage, sufficient to last over a year, until the next harvest season.

Even if it could be done, the cost would be high and the food much less nutritious and less enjoyable than fresh fruit and vegetables.

The only families who could have fresh produce would be those who have their own orchards and gardens.

Such families could eat the fresh fruits and vegetables that were the result of volunteer growth.

Notice that there is an incentive for diversification to lengthen seasonal production of fruit and vegetables available to each self-supporting family.

By God giving Ancient Israel the land-sabbath law, it made it far more profitable for each family to produce their own fruit and vegetables rather than relying on the efforts of others.

This land-sabbath law makes it unattractive, economically and nutritionally, to rely on a few specialist producers selling to millions of non-producing consumers, like we have today.

Under God's system, there would be **no** local greengrocers operating anywhere in the nation during the year of land rest.

The law prevents anyone selling to a greengrocer during the seventh year, but people would have a free supply directly from their own garden.

For the family to have volunteer growth in their garden during the seventh year they must have planted a garden at least during each sixth year, so this rules out vegetable retailers in the sixth year also.

Volunteer growth

A properly managed garden will have a surprising amount of vegetables that will volunteer in the seventh year.

For example one method of growing potatoes enables a family to have fresh potatoes from July to December, without digging, weeding or sowing.

Benefits of the land-sabbath

The family will benefit as follows:-

1. Consumption of higher quality animal protein will be encouraged by making it the most plentiful food every seventh year.
2. By forcing humans to become self-sufficient God is encouraging us to have the blessing as mentioned by the prophet Micah.

Micah 4:4 [NIV] *“Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, and no-one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.”*

Planting fruit trees early in the seventh year cycle will give each family many blessings.

3. Becoming the source of produce, the garden will keep the family together with one important common goal during at least the sixth and seventh year.

Though this will be more physical work than most city dwellers are used to, there will be undeniable benefits for adults, children, the local community and the whole nation.

Consider some of the national benefits

1. Our modern animal-less farmers would be out of business every seventh year, while those who pasture stock on grass would be unaffected.

The land-sabbath law will protect the nations’ most precious physical commodity, its soil.

It will do this by giving the soil a needed rest and it will be fertilised by animals feeding on the volunteer growth.

2. Today’s system of marketing produce would be uneconomic. The nations’ market-gardeners would be totally out of business in the sixth and seventh years of every seven year cycle.

Greengrocers would be out of business in the seventh year and limited to sale of fruit during the sixth year.

Orchardists would **not** be able to sell their produce in the seventh year.

3. As today’s miles and miles of monotonous grain fields become a memory, more cattle, sheep and poultry will be bred.

4. Grain surpluses would cease because monoculture would be discouraged.

5. Less bare ground through reduced monoculture of grain would greatly decrease the hazards of erosion and desert formation.

Land well covered with grass is nearly immune to damage from wind and water.

6. Factory farming would be ruled out through a lack of cheap grain.

Grass would be the cheapest and best feed for cattle as it probably is even today.

Regular years of rest would raise soil fertility and grass quality would improve to the point that protein supplements of grain would be unnecessary in animal feed.

7. The ramifications of increased soil fertility can be easily traced through plant, animal and human health.

This fact alone would save every modern western nation millions of pounds annually for pharmaceutical products and landowners the cost of chemical sprays and dusting agents.

In conclusion then, it is obvious that in the sabbatical-year God gave Ancient Israel a vast amount of agricultural and environmental guidance.

Modern nations could also reap these great benefits and blessings if the same landownership and land-sabbath laws were to be applied nationally.

These two God-given laws appear to be two of the most rejected of all laws given to humanity.

We hope that this series of articles will show national leaders how vital they are to the health and prosperity of any nation.