

also called *Arba Parashiyot* (“the four pericopes”), and which occur in spring. *Shabbat Shekalim* is observed on the Sabbath immediately preceding the month of *Adar (in a leap year, the second month of Adar). In addition to the weekly Torah portion, Exodus 30:11–16, whose theme is the duty of donating half a *shekel toward the upkeep of the Temple, is also read. It commemorates the custom according to which on the first of Adar special messengers were dispatched to all Jewish communities to collect these donations (Shek. 1:1). Special *piyyutim* are included in the ritual of the Sabbath.

8) *Shabbat Zakhor*

(Heb. שַׁבַּת זְכוֹר; “Sabbath of Remembrance”), the second of the four special Sabbaths. It is the Sabbath before Purim. The name derives from the additional Torah portion read from Deuteronomy 25:17–19 whose theme is the duty “to remember” what *Amalek did to Israel. The traditional belief is that *Haman the Agagite was a direct descendant of Agag, the king of the Amalekites (e.g., 1 Sam. 15:9 ff.). In some rites special *piyyutim* are recited.

9) *Shabbat Parah*

(Heb. שַׁבַּת פָּרָה; “Sabbath of the Red Heifer”), the third of the four special Sabbaths. It is the Sabbath preceding *Shabbat ha-Hodesh*. An additional portion is read from the Torah (Num. 19:1–22) whose theme is the ritual purification with the ashes of the red heifer. The purification was compulsory in Temple times for all those who had been defiled by contact with a corpse. *Shabbat Parah* commemorates the custom of everyone who would participate in the Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem having to cleanse himself in due time. Special *piyyutim* are also added to the liturgy in some rites.

10) *Shabbat ha-Hodesh*

(Heb. שַׁבַּת הַחֹדֶשׁ; “Sabbath of the Month”), the last of the four special Sabbaths. It precedes, or falls on the first day of, the month of *Nisan. On it, in addition to the weekly Torah portion, Exodus 12:1–20 is also read. It states that the month of Nisan “shall be the beginning of the months [of the Jewish year]” and includes many details on the ritual laws concerning the Passover sacrifice and the interdiction to eat leavened bread (**hamez*) on the festival. Special *piyyutim* are also recited in some communities.

11) **Shabbat ha-Gadol*

12) *Shabbat Hazon*

(Heb. שַׁבַּת חֲזוֹן; “Sabbath of Vision”), the Sabbath that precedes the Ninth of *Av. The name is derived from the initial word of its *haftarah*. “The vision of Isaiah” (Isa. 1:1–27), in which the afflictions which God will visit on Israel in punishment of its sins are prophesied. The Yemenites call this Sabbath “*Shabbat Eikhah*,” and read Isaiah 1:21 ff. for the *haftarah* portion. *Shabbat Hazon* occurs during the period of mourning (see *Nine Days) for the destruction of the Temple, and the *haftarah* is therefore appropriate since its theme is destruction and possible redemption. The destruction is understood as a punishment for the sins of Israel, and repentance is a prerequisite for the restoration of the Temple. It was customary not to dress in

festive garments during that period, including (in a few communities) the Sabbath.

13) *Shabbat Nahamu*

(Heb. שַׁבַּת נַחֲמוּ; “Sabbath of Comfort”), the Sabbath immediately following the Ninth of Av. It is so called after the first word of the *haftarah* “Comfort ye [Nahamu], Comfort ye My people” (Isa. 40:1).

On most of these special Sabbaths the memorial prayer for the deceased (see *Av ha-Rahamim) as well as the prayer *Zidkatkha* in the *Minḥah service are omitted. In the Reform ritual some of these Sabbaths (e.g., *Zakhor*, *Parah*) are not observed. On the other hand, other special Sabbaths (e.g., “Brotherhood Sabbath,” “Sisterhood Sabbath,” “United Nations Sabbath”) have been innovated.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Elbogen, Gottesdienst, 156, 159, 163; E. Levi, *Yesodot ha-Tefillah* (1952²), 308, 244.

SABBATICAL YEAR AND JUBILEE (Heb. שְׁמִיטָה, *shemittah*; יָבֵל, *yovel*). According to the Bible, during the seventh year all land had to be fallow and debts were to be remitted (Ex. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:1–7, 18–22; Deut. 15:1–11). The close of seven sabbatical cycles instituted the Jubilee (Lev. 27:16–25; Num. 36:4; whether the Jubilee Year was the 49th or the 50th see below).

A brief statement in the Book of Nehemiah (10:32) records the post-Exilic community’s firm agreement to suspend all agricultural work during the seventh year and to forgo all debts as commanded in the “Law of God.” The reference is to these three passages in the Torah, each of which dwells on a different aspect of the seventh-year release. The earliest, found in the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 23:10–11), calls on the Israelites to let the land lie fallow and the vineyards and olive groves untouched that the poor people may eat of them, as well as the wild beasts. The second passage (Lev. 25:1–7, 18–22) refers to the fallow year as a “Sabbath of the Lord” and a year of complete rest for the land, promising the divine blessing on the crop of the sixth year to those who suspend their work on the seventh (cf. the double portion of manna on the sixth day; Ex. 16:22 ff.). The Deuteronomist (Deut. 15:1–11) commands the Israelites to observe every seventh year as a “year of release,” when debts contracted by fellow countrymen are to be remitted. At the same time, they are cautioned not to let the recurrence of the seventh-year release harden their hearts against the distressed who seek loans in the hour of their need. While Deuteronomy does not mention the fallow, the passage is clearly connected with that of Exodus by the use of the common verb *šmt* (שָׁמַט). D. Hoffmann argued that the remission of debts is entailed by the fallow – that it is precisely because the debtor cannot work his fields during the seventh year that he is unable to make his payments, and the creditor is enjoined not to dun him for them. The same reasoning, according to Hoffmann, explains why the debts of aliens are not remitted – i.e., the fact that their income is not affected by the Sabbatical Year.

Ever since J. Wellhausen, a number of scholars have seen a connection between the surrender of the produce of the seventh year to the poor (Ex. 23:11) and the liberation of the Hebrew slave following the sixth year of his purchase (Ex. 21:2–6; cf. Deut. 15:12–18). Accordingly, they maintain that the Book of the Covenant did not intend the seventh-year fallow to be observed throughout the land on a fixed date any more than the manumission of all of the Hebrew slaves. Each field, vineyard, and olive grove, then, had its own fallow cycle, just as each slave had his own release date. Otherwise, the practice could not possibly have been observed, for there would not have been enough food for all of the inhabitants of the land. Hence, the Deuteronomist, who had to operate within the framework of a fixed, universal, seventh-year release (cf. Deut. 15:9), disregarded the agricultural fallow and called for the remission of debts instead, as well as the release of debtors who had been enslaved (15:12–18). This is why, according to A. Menes, the Deuteronomist also commanded that the Torah be read aloud every year of remission in the hearing of all Israel (31:10ff.). Such an assembly could take place then, after all the Israelite debtors had been set free and were able to appear as equals among their people. The Sabbatical Year, a fixed, universal, seventh-year fallow, as opposed to the year of remission, then, was a later construction of the priestly writers which was never observed in the pre-Exilic period (cf. Lev. 26:34–35, 43; 11 Chron. 36:21), and is attested for the first time during the Second Temple period, and then only in certain parts of the land (cf. 1 Macc. 6:49, 53).

Plausible as it has seemed to many scholars, the theory is not supported by the evidence. In the first place, there is no necessary connection between the manumission of the Hebrew slave and the fallow year other than the fact that both involve a seven-year period. Secondly, Wellhausen failed to see that not only the Priestly Code but also the Covenant Code connect the seventh-year fallow with the weekly Sabbath (cf. Ex. 23:12 with 23:10–11). As M. Noth correctly observes, both commandments require that the animals benefit in some way from their observance – a concern that derives not merely from compassion for dumb beasts but from the recognition that they are part of the nature which man must cease to dominate on the Sabbath. Finally, since Wellhausen claims that the demands of the Deuteronomist were utopian in character, the argument that a universally fixed date for the fallow year is impossible because of its impracticality is inapplicable. It is true that, outside the legislative texts of the Bible, there is no reference to the Sabbatical Year in the pre-Exilic sources. But an *argumentum ex silentio* is of dubious value, especially when dealing with ancient historical materials.

A similar problem exists with regard to the Jubilee Year, which is described in detail in Leviticus 25:8–17, 23–55. Among its provisions are: the dating of the recurrent Jubilee Year, the proclamation of its start with the sounding of the *shofar* on the Day of Atonement, the return of all Israelites to their ancestral lands and families, the observance of the fallow, the fixing of prices for the sale of land (except for houses in cities) in rela-

tion to the occurrence of the Jubilee, the redemption of the land of next of kin, special land regulations for levites, and the freeing of defaulting debtors and all Israelite slaves. The text justifies these prescriptions in terms of two basic principles: God's ownership of the land (25:23) and His undisputed possession of all Israelites as His slaves (25:55).

Two other passages in the Priestly Code refer to the Jubilee Year (Lev. 27:16–25; Num. 36:4), as does possibly Ezekiel (46:16ff.), but it is not mentioned in any historical texts, not even in post-Exilic ones. Evidently, it was not observed in Second Temple times, as is attested by the conditions in the time of Nehemiah (cf. 5:1–13, where there is no mention of the institution), the obscure description of it in Josephus (Ant. 3:280ff.), and the explicit comment of one of the *tannaim* (Sifra 8:2).

Though the Priestly Code clearly distinguishes between the Jubilee and the Sabbatical Years, many scholars consider the former a post-Exilic theoretical reworking of the latter. Thus, they suggest that the manumission of slaves on the Jubilee replaces the one on the Sabbatical Year, and that the notion of the divine ownership of the land is an extension of the claim that all Israelites belong to God. They concede that the Jubilee law does not require the remission of debts. Still, Leviticus 25:24 may be interpreted, they maintain, as a form of debt release, with the alienated property comparable to a foreclosed mortgage. The Jubilee, then, is “an artificial institution superimposed upon the years of fallow regarded as harvest Sabbaths after the analogy of Pentecost” (Wellhausen). In this way, one can explain the impossible demand for a two-year fallow created by the Jubilee following the Sabbatical Year, as well as the directions for the manumission of slaves, which were inconsistent with the earlier ones of the Covenant Code.

That the matter is not so simple is evidenced by the appearance of ancient terms in Leviticus 25 as well as pre-Israelite usages (see next section).

The etymology of *yovel* (יֹבֵל) is not clear, with some suggesting that it is derived from the root (יָבַל) meaning “to bear along [in procession],” hence *yevul* (יִבּוּל) signifying “produce” or “that which is borne,” and *yuvul* (יִבּוּל), “transfer” (of properties; cf. Ibn Ezra on Lev. 25:10). More likely, the basic meaning of *yovel* is “ram's horn” (cf. Ex. 19:13; Josh. 6:5; cf. also Phoenician *ybl*, “ram,” and the comment of R. Akiva quoted by Bertinoro on RH 3:2). The Jubilee, then, is “the year that is inaugurated by the blowing of the ram's horn” (W.R. Smith). If this is so, then serious consideration must be given to R. North's suggestion that this is an ancient Near Eastern legal requirement for a public proclamation (*Šūdātu*) “as a sort of registration-formality prerequisite to the exchange of property administration.”

Closer inspection of the biblical text, too, proves the arguments of the Wellhausen school to be far from convincing. The assumption that Hebrew slaves were to be released in the Sabbatical Year is, as seen, unwarranted. The Jubilee laws do not refer to mortgaged properties but to those that have actually been sold. And, finally, it is highly doubtful that the belief

in the divine ownership of the land arose at a late period in Israel's history. On the contrary, the evidence seems to point in the opposite direction, i.e., both the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years are rooted in ancient traditions, although some of the prescriptions connected with them, such as the restrictions on the redemption of houses in a city (Lev. 25:29 ff.) and the remission of debts (Deut. 15:1 ff.), were added later. Moreover, the elements basic to both institutions go back to early Israelite, and even pre-Israelite, times. They are the seven- and 50-year cycles, the fallow, the inalienability of ancestral lands (see below), and the maintenance of the integrity of the clan.

As far as the seven-year cycle is concerned, there is reference to it in the Joseph stories (Gen. 41:25 ff.) and in the earlier Near Eastern texts. Thus, the land is blighted for a seven-year period because of the death of Aqhat (Pritchard, Texts 153), just as it flourishes for seven years after Baal defeats Mot (*Poems about Baal and Anath*, 5; Pritchard, Texts, 141). Similarly, Anu warns Ishtar that a seven-year drought would follow the slaying of Gilgamesh (*Gilgamesh Epic*, 6, lines 101–106; Pritchard, Texts, 84–85). As for the existence of a 50-year cycle, this is not as clearly attested, though J. Lewy claims to have discovered a primitive agricultural “pentecontad” calendar among the Amorites of Assyria, Babylonia, Syria, and Palestine near the end of the third millennium B.C.E. His interpretation of the relevant texts is, however, open to question, and note should be taken of a recent suggestion that the Jubilee occurred not in the 50th but in the 49th year, coinciding with the seventh Sabbatical Year (cf. Lev. 25:8–9 and M. Noth on 25:10).

The fallow, as described in the Torah, has nothing to do with crop rotation and does not seem to have had any agricultural value, such as that of replenishing the soil; no other crop was planted that year nor were the fields worked, as this was strictly forbidden during the Sabbatical Year. C.H. Gordon suggests that it was originally connected with Canaanite fertility rites. However, even if this is not so, Noth is undoubtedly correct in considering it an example of *restitutio in integrum*, when the land was permitted to return to its undisturbed rest. G. Dalman makes a similar observation with regard to the release of alienated lands during the Jubilee, seeing in it a recognition by the Israelites that they had no right permanently to set aside the lands allotted by God to the tribes and clans at the time of the conquest of Canaan. The release of Israelite slaves, then, and their return to their ancestral lands may also be considered a *restitutio in integrum*, the restoration of the structure of Israelite society as it had been divinely ordained in ancient days.

Accordingly, A. Jirku concludes that the concept of both the Sabbatical and the Jubilee Years originated under simple economic and social conditions, possibly when agriculture was not yet the major source of the food supply of the Israelites. This relates to a time not long after the conquest, which also provides a proper setting for the idea of the Jubilee. At this early date, tribal solidarity was still strong, the consciousness of the common possession of the ground and soil fresh

in their minds, and the memory of the patriarchal relationships in the desert vivid.

These arguments, however, are not conclusive, since the ideals of the desert period lived on among the people for many centuries, especially outside the large centers. At any rate, neither the Sabbatical nor the Jubilee Year appears in the Bible as a nascent institution. While they drew on earlier Semitic practice for some of their ideas, in their present form they represent a unique Israelite attempt to combat the social evils that had infected Israelite society and to return to the idyllic period of the desert union when social equality and fraternal concern had prevailed.

[David L. Lieber]

Ancient Near Eastern Legal Background

The background of the legal conceptions embodied in the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years is illuminated by ancient Near Eastern evidence of (a) resistance in principle to the alienation of patrimonial lands; and (b) the institution of periodic royal releases from certain kinds of debt and obligation, in connection with which cognates to terms found in Leviticus 25 appear.

(a) Hurrian custom attested in the *Nuzi tablets banned the sale of patrimonial land. The prohibition seems to have been grounded on a feudal system, in which all land belonged to the king, and was held only as a grant or fief by his subjects. They had possession, but not ownership, of the property entrusted to them. In return, each subject owed some service to the king, but he had no right to dispose of or transfer his property to any person other than a male relative of his immediate family (cf. Laws of Hammurapi 36–39; Pritchard, Texts, 167–8). In order to transfer real estate out of the family, the fiction of adoption was resorted to, by which the seller “adopted” the buyer as his “son,” in consideration of the latter’s “gift” – the purchase price (Steele, in *bibl.*, 14–15). The conception of possession without ownership, with its concomitant ban on alienation of property, evokes the biblical notion that the land of Israel is God’s, and that Israel are merely His tenants (“you are but strangers resident with Me,” Lev. 25:23). The time of the Nuzi tablets (mid-second millennium), and the chief region of Hurrian influence (the Khabur River Valley) coincide with the period, and pre-Canaan location, of Israel’s ancestors. This is but one of several indications that Hurrian culture left a mark on Israelite ideas and institutions (see *bibl.*).

Old Babylonian legal writings contain a law (Eshnunna 39; Pritchard, Texts, 163) and a number of contracts showing the right of an owner of real property to redeem it after he had been forced by financial need to sell it. One of the contracts suggests that the right may have existed even when the property was not up for sale (as in Lev. 25:25–32).

(b) In their first full regnal year, Old Babylonian kings were accustomed to issue an edict of “justice” (*mīšarum*) throughout their realm, referred to in date formulas and inscriptions as “establishing the freedom” (*andurarum*, cognate with Heb. *deror* (Lev. 25:10, etc.)) of their subjects. The one extant exemplar – attributed to Ammi-šaduqa (second half of the 17th century B.C.E.) – consists mainly of remissions (for

a limited period) of specific kinds of debts and obligations, including the release of persons held in debt-bondage. Such edicts were demonstrably enforced, and were issued at intervals of seven or more years – the periodicity being as yet unknown (Finkelstein). Property (real and human) for which the full price had been paid, however, was not subject to the *andurarum*-release (Levy); such property is described in a Ras Shamra (Ugarit) document as *šamit ana... ana dariti*, “finally transferred [lit. yoked] to... forever” – compare Leviticus 25:30, *lizmitut le-X le-dorotaw*. Y. Muffs has suggested that the theory of Leviticus 25 is that the full price of land was never paid: only crop years are bought (25:15–16), hence land could never be finally transferred but was always subject to the release. Similarly, in the case of self-sale of persons, no sale could be final since title to every Israelite is vested solely in God (25:42).

The Sabbatical and Jubilee Years thus adapt, elaborate, and synthesize pre-Israelite elements. In the new creation, the Divine King, having liberated His people and made them free men in His land, provides for the preservation of their liberty through periodic corrections of the economic imbalances that, sundering men from the land, would turn them into slaves again. His authority flows from His ownership of both people and land, and is, in turn, brought to mind through the execution of His decrees.

[Moshe Greenberg]

Post-Biblical

Whereas the Sabbatical Year was in force during the Second Temple period (and is applicable, in theory, to the present day), the Jubilee was no longer observed. The two subjects are therefore treated separately.

Jubilee in the Second Temple Period

HALAKHAH AND DEVELOPMENT. The relevant laws in the literature of the Second Temple period are primarily the interpretation of the biblical precepts of the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee, and of the law of emancipation of the Hebrew slave whose ear was pierced, since *le-olam* (“forever”; Ex. 21:6) was interpreted to mean “until the Jubilee” (Mekh., Nezikin 2). The laws of the Jubilee were not in practice in the time of the Second Temple (see below), but since the laws of the Jubilee and the calculation of the years of the *shemittah* are linked with the laws of the Sabbatical Year, which were in force, one can find in these *halakhot* something of the life and customs of that period. According to the *halakhah*, all rules applicable to the Sabbatical Year, with regard to the prohibition of land cultivation, the renunciation of ownership of produce, and the obligation of the householder to remove all produce gathered for his needs when that species is not found in the field, apply also to the Jubilee: “What applies to the Sabbatical Year applies equally to the Jubilee” (Sifra, Be-Har 3:2). From the verse, “For it is a Jubilee, it shall be holy to you” (Lev. 25:12), the tannaim derived that the sanctity of the produce of the Sabbatical Year was such that, if the householder sold it and bought meat with the proceeds, the stringencies of the Sabbatical Year applied

both to the produce itself and to the meat, i.e., they deduced the laws of the Sabbatical Year from verses dealing with the Jubilee and vice versa. Thus, in the verse applying to the Jubilee, “Ye shall eat the increase cleared out of the field” (*ibid.*), they taught, “As long as you eat from the field you may eat from your house. If what is in the field has been consumed, then you must clear out what is in the house” (Sifra, Be-Har 3:4), applying it to the Sabbatical Year. The *halakhah* also combined the Jubilee with the Sabbatical Year with regard to their applicability during the Second Temple period; the opinion was even expressed that, since the Jubilee does not apply “at the present day,” so also the observance of the Sabbatical Year is not a biblical precept, but merely rabbinic (TJ, Shev. 10:3, 39c). This conception probably served Judah II (Nesiah) as a theoretical basis for many of the relaxations in the law which he inaugurated in respect of the Sabbatical Year (TJ, Shev. 6:4; Hül. 6b and parallel texts).

Only the law on the remission of debts which comes into force at the end of the Sabbatical Year (Sif. Deut. 111) does not apply to the Jubilee; against this, however, there are, according to the *halakhah*, two precepts of the Jubilee which do not apply to the Sabbatical Year – that land sold returns to its owners during the Jubilee Years (Lev. 25:23, 24) and that slaves go free (Sifra, Be-Har 3:6). The verse, “And in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing” (Ex. 21:2), was interpreted as referring not to the seventh year, which was the Sabbatical Year, but to the seventh year from the date on which he was sold (TJ, Kid. 1:2, 59a); if the Jubilee came in the middle of his six-year term, however, the slave went free then (Kid. 1:2). This law was also applied to the Hebrew bondswoman, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah, and was apparently an innovation of the *tannaim*. A Hebrew slave sold to a gentile did not go free in the seventh year but only in the Jubilee (Sifra, Be-Har 8:4). In addition, the Hebrew slave who refused to go free in his seventh year went free on the Jubilee (Mekh., Nezikin 2; cf. Jos., Ant. 4:273).

THE CALCULATION OF THE JUBILEE. Both in the tannaitic literature and in the Apocrypha two different systems of calculation for the Jubilee and the Sabbatical Year are found. A *baraita* declares that the Jubilee year is the 50th year, after the completion of the seven sabbatical cycles, the following year being the first of the ensuing *shemittah* (Ned. 61a; TJ, Kid. 1:2, 59a). This cyclical system also occurs in the *Seder Olam in respect of the First Temple period. Judah, however, holds that “the Jubilee year enters into the calculation of the heptad,” i.e., the Jubilee Year is the 50th year after the previous Jubilee and thus also the first of the ensuing *shemittah* and Jubilee (Ned. 61a). According to Judah’s view there was a widespread tannaitic tradition that, with the exile of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, the laws of the Jubilee fell into desuetude. According to the *geonim*, not only were the laws of the Jubilee not in force from the time of the exile of these tribes (see later), but after the destruction of the First Temple the Jubilee Years were not even calculated; only those

of the *shemittot* (A. Harkavy, *Teshuvot ha-Ge'onim*, in: *Zikkaron la-Rishonim ve-la-Aharonim*, 14 (1887) 20 no. 45; Responsa of Maimonides, ed. J. Blau, 2 (1960), 666 no. 389). Whether in accordance with the view of Judah or with the tradition that the Jubilee was not calculated in the period of the Second Temple, the fact is that only Sabbatical Years were counted from the Second Temple period onward. Whether to chronicle the years or to determine the Sabbatical Year, the author of the Book of Jubilees, which gives the chronology from the creation by Jubilees, counts a Jubilee period as 49 years only; the 127 years of Sarah's life are specifically referred to as "two Jubilees, four heptads, and one year" (19:7), and this applies throughout the book. According to the Book of Maccabees, Simeon the Hasmonean was murdered in the month of Shevat, in the year 177 of the Seleucid era, corresponding to 135 B.C.E. John Hyrcanus sought to avenge his father's murder and besieged the fortress of Dagon in which Ptolemy, the murderer, had shut himself. The siege dragged on, but as a result of famine due to the fact that it was a Sabbatical Year, he was compelled to raise the siege (1 Macc. 16: 14ff; Jos., Ant. 13:228–35). The Sabbatical Year nearest to that date was in the year 3724 of the creation, i.e., 37 B.C.E., since Josephus tells that in Herod's conquest of Jerusalem in the summer of that year, the besieged in the city suffered from a food shortage because of the Sabbatical Year (Jos., Ant. 14:475). That the 98 years between those two dates are equivalent to 14 *shemittot* without an intervening Jubilee Year is confirmed from other references. The Samaritans also reckoned only according to *shemittot*, and even where they divided periods into Jubilees, it was a Jubilee of 49 years (see A. Neubauer, *Chronique Samaritaine* (1873), 3, 8ff.).

According to the Talmud, the Jubilee Year did not come into effect automatically, with the advent of the 50th year, but the *bet din* had to see to its implementation and officially proclaim it by sounding the *shofar* (cf. Lev. 25:9). It was the duty of the *bet din* to count the years of the *shemittah* as one counts the days of the *Omer, but whereas the latter was the duty of every individual Jew, the Jubilee Years were counted only by the *bet din* (Sifra, Be-Har 2, 106c). According to the majority of the sages, if land was not returned to its owner, slaves not freed, and the *shofar* not sounded, the sanctity of the Jubilee Year did not obtain. Judah, however, made the sanctity of the Jubilee dependent solely on the emancipation of the slaves, while Yose made it dependent only on the sounding of the *shofar* (TJ, RH 3:5, 58d; RH 9b; Sifra, Be-Har 2, 107a). The *shofar* had to be sounded by every individual, even on the Sabbath (Sifra, Be-Har 106d). Although, according to the Bible (Lev. 25:9), the release of slaves and the return of land took effect on the Day of Atonement, the Jubilee was regarded as starting on Rosh Ha-Shanah (Sifra, *ibid.*). At the beginning of the Jubilee Year, in addition to the sounding of the *shofar*, a special prayer was recited which included **Malkhuyot*, **Zikhronot*, and **Shofarot*, as on Rosh Ha-Shanah (RH 29a).

THE JUBILEE IN HISTORY, That the Jubilee did not apply during the period of the Second Temple was deduced from the

verse "unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Lev. 25:10), with the corollary that "from the time that the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh were exiled the Jubilees were discontinued" (Sifra, Be-Har 2:3). The Talmuds, also, in discussing the various problems relating to the observance of the precepts of the Sabbatical Year in the Second Temple period (such as the laws of walled cities and of the Hebrew slave), assume it as a fact that the Jubilee did not apply at that time (TJ, Git. 4:3, 45d; Kid. 69a). It is difficult to determine when this conception had its origin, since a number of precepts which according to tradition depend on the observance of the Jubilee (such as the laws appertaining to the Sabbatical Year, the canceling of debts (TJ, Git. 4:3, 45d), or walled cities), continued to apply throughout the Second Temple period (Ar. 29a). According to this view, all the precepts bound up with the Sabbatical Year and the Jubilee are regarded as a whole, with the result that, where the precepts of the Jubilee cannot be observed, the other precepts do not apply; nevertheless, it is certain that the precepts of the Sabbatical Year, such as the remission of debts at the close of the Sabbatical Year and the redemption of houses, were practiced, as is shown by numerous references in both tannaitic and other sources. However, while there is evidence of the observance of the other precepts and of various regulations made to modify their severity, there is no evidence throughout the whole Temple period of the actual observance of the Jubilee, reflecting the difficulties involved in observing it. The *halakhah* provides, for instance, that only the Sabbatical Year is not to be made a leap year, etc.

From Alexander's conquest and during the period of Roman rule, there is evidence that foreign rulers took into account the problem of tax payments on agricultural produce in the Sabbatical Year, when the Jews did not cultivate their fields. Either they freed them from taxes, as did Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, or insisted on payment, as did Hadrian after the Bar Kokhba war. There is, however, no echo of the complex problems which would have been raised by the Jubilee in this regard either in the Talmud or in other contemporary documents. Nevertheless, although the Jubilee was not in force for as long as the *shemittah*, the problems which it raised were of greater gravity than those of the Sabbatical Year. The commandment of the Jubilee brought in its train complicated questions concerning the commercial laws of the sale and hiring of land; yet there is hardly an echo of the existence of the Jubilee either in the *halakhah* which deals with it or in any reference in the various passages dealing with practical life, whether in the talmudic literature or in documents revealed by archaeology. Despite this fact the ideas contained in the precepts of the Jubilee were of considerable influence, both on the *halakhah* and on events of the Second Temple period.

In the *halakhah* and in various traditions reflecting ancient custom, there is evidence of the concern over keeping the patrimonial estate in the family, the farmer's concern to safeguard the ownership of his plot of land, and the obligation to redeem land that had been sold. Although the *halakhah*

did not forbid the absolute sale of land, it viewed it unfavorably: “One is not permitted to sell his property... unless he become impoverished. If he does sell it, however, the sale is valid” (Tosef., Ar. 5:6). A public ceremony even took place in order to shame a person who sold his patrimony, and he was praised when he redeemed it: “When a man sold his field, his relatives would take jugs filled with roasted grains and nuts and smash them in front of the children, who would gather them and say, ‘So and so has cut himself off from his possession.’ And when the field returned to him they should do the same and say, ‘So and so has returned to his possession’” (TJ, Ket. 2:10, 26d; see **Keḏaḏah*). Similarly the *halakhah* laid down that when a man inherited land from his wife, her relatives paid him for it in order to get it back from him (Tosef., Bek. 6:19). In contrast to the situation prevalent in the Orient, where extensive land belonged to the temples, the Jewish Temple possessed no landed property of its own. Even if one consecrated his land, it would be sold, and it was the duty of the former owner to be first in its redemption (Ar. 8:1). These *halakhot* and practices exercised a decisive influence, which accounts for the fact that in the last generations of the Temple period and for a considerable period afterward, most of the land in the country was not in the hands of large landowners but remained in the possession of smallholders.

THE JUBILEE IN THE AGGADAH. Mention has already been made of the link which the sages saw between the precepts of the Jubilee and those of the Sabbatical Year. It is certain that in every period they saw a link between the laws of the emancipation of slaves, remission of debts, and prohibition of land cultivation in the Sabbatical Year, which are the capstone of these laws, and the precepts of the Jubilee, since the Jubilee involves them all. The sages emphasized the practical and social connections between the various precepts of the Jubilee, as well as the religious and metaphysical connection between them. They reckoned the historical order and the end of time by Sabbatical Years and Jubilees: “Israel counted 17 Jubilees from the time they entered the land to the time they left it” (Ar. 12b). Elijah told Judah, the brother of Sala Ḥasida, “The world will endure not less than 85 Jubilees, and on the last Jubilee the Son of David will come” (Sanh. 97b). The precept of the Jubilee is often regarded as one of the basic precepts of the Torah. “And its seven lamps thereon” (Zech. 4:2) is interpreted as referring to the seven precepts – “offerings, tithes, *shemittot*, Jubilees, circumcision, honor of father and mother, and study of the Torah, which excels them all” (PR 8:4). The continued dwelling in the land was dependent upon the observance of the *shemittah* and the Jubilee (Shab. 33a).

[Shmuel Safrai]

Sabbatical Year in Post-Biblical Times

According to the exposition of the Talmud, the precept of the Sabbatical Year includes three positive commandments and six prohibitions (see **Commandments, The 613*). The three positive commands are that in “the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow” (Ex. 23:11); “the seventh year shall be a Sab-

bath of solemn rest for the land” (Lev. 25:4); and “At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbor” (Deut. 15:1–2). The six negative precepts are “[1] Thou shalt neither sow thy field [2] nor prune thy vineyard. [3] That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, [4] and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather” (Lev. 25:4–5). [5] “He shall not exact it [the loan] of his neighbor” (Deut. 15:2). [6] “Beware that there be not a base thought in thy heart, saying: ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand’; and thine eye be evil against thy needy brother, and thou give him nought” (Deut. 15:9).

The laws of the sabbatical remittance of debts are applicable both in Erez Israel and in the Diaspora. However, the obligation to let the land lie fallow is limited to the boundaries of Erez Israel in accordance with the verse that these laws begin only “When ye come into the land which I give you” (Lev. 25:2). Whether the sabbatical laws are still biblically relevant after the destruction of the First Temple, when the Jubilee Year is no longer operative, is disputed in the Talmud. According to Judah II, it is only observed today because of rabbinic enactment to “perpetuate the memory of the Sabbatical Year.” However, the rabbis held the operation of the Sabbatical Year nowadays still to be biblical (MK 2b; Git. 36a–b). Later commentaries and codes remained divided on this issue; Maimonides seemingly ruled in accordance with the viewpoint of Judah (Maim. Yad, Shemittah 9:2, 3 and Kesef Mishneh ad loc.; cf. Kesef Mishneh to Shemittah 4:29).

At the time of the Temple, it was also biblically forbidden to work the land during the 30 days prior to the start of the Sabbatical Year. The rabbis extended this pre-sabbatical prohibition until the preceding Shavuot for orchards, and Passover for grain fields. After the destruction of the Temple these additional restrictions were no longer in force, and today it is permissible to work the land until Rosh Ha-Shanah of the Sabbatical Year (MK 3b–4a).

Produce which grows of itself during the Sabbatical Year is considered holy and its usage is restricted. It is forbidden to harvest this growth solely for commercial purposes (Shev. 7:3) or to remove it from Erez Israel (Shev. 6:5). It may only be eaten or utilized in its usual fashion, so that items such as wine and vinegar may only be used for nourishment and not for anointing purposes (Shev. 8:2). The sabbatical produce may only be eaten as long as similar produce is still available in the field for the consumption of animals (Shev. 9:4). Once such produce has been consumed, all remaining sabbatical products of the same species must also be destroyed (Shev. 9:8).

The sabbatical money release was intended to free the poor from their debts and to enable them to attempt again to achieve financial stability. However, when Hillel later saw that people refrained from lending money before the Sabbatical Year, he instituted the **prosbul* (Git. 36a). The following are excluded from cancellation by the Sabbatical Year: wages, merchandise on credit, loans on pledges, a note guaranteed by mortgage, a note turned over to the *bet din* for col-

lection, and the debtor's waiving the cancelation of his debt (Git. 36a–b, 37a–b).

Observance

POST-BIBLICAL PERIOD. Among the commitments which the Jews took upon themselves at the famous assembly described in Nehemiah was a promise to observe the Sabbatical Year (Neh. 10:32). There is evidence that during the whole of the Second Temple period they rigidly adhered to this commitment. When *Alexander the Great reached Jerusalem during his march through Erez Israel, he acceded to the high priest's request that the Jews be exempted from paying tribute during the Sabbatical Year, when they did not work their land (Jos., Ant. 11:338). During the Hasmonean War, the fall of Beth Zur to the forces under Lysias and Eupator was attributed to a famine within the city since it was a Sabbatical Year (I Macc. 6:49, 53–54). Julius Caesar later reaffirmed this privilege of tax exemption during the Sabbatical Year since "they neither take fruit from the trees nor do they sow" (Jos., Ant. 14:202).

Following the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.), the observance of the sabbatical prohibitions imposed ever-increasing economic hardships upon the agrarian society of ancient Israel. It became a constant source of challenge to the religious tenacity of the farmers. The rabbis constantly exhorted the masses to continue to observe properly the sabbatical restrictions, declaring that exile (Shab. 33a), poverty (Suk. 40b), and pestilence (Avot 5:9) result from the transgression of these laws. Immediately following the destruction, most of the land was left in Jewish hands and the Sabbatical Year was observed. Permissible organized distribution of sabbatical produce was arranged by the rabbis in order to ease the burden of the farmers, although there was some opposition to this procedure (Shev. 4:2; and see S. Safrai in bibl., 312–18). However, after the unsuccessful *Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 C.E.), the Roman government abrogated its previous tax exemption (Safrai, 320f.). Many Jews now compromised their observances due to the new economic pressures engendered by the demand for taxes during this year (Mekh., Shabbata 1). Some gathered sabbatical crops in order to pay these taxes, while others even traded in the produce (Sanh. 3:3, 26a). An entire city was described in which all the residents transgressed the sabbatical laws (Tosef., Dem. 3:17). An instance was even recorded where a proselyte retorted to the reproaches of a native Jew by exclaiming, "I will merit divine reward since I have not eaten the fruits of the Sabbatical Year like you" (Bek. 30a; Git. 54a). Nevertheless, even during this period, there were individuals who resolutely observed the sabbatical restrictions. R. Eleazar b. Zadok remarked about such a person, "I have never seen a man walking in the paths of righteousness as this man" (Suk. 44b).

As a consequence of the hardships now encountered in sabbatical observances, the rabbis relaxed many of the prohibitions. Their actions were probably also prompted by the viewpoint of *Judah II that the institution of the Sabbatical

Year was only rabbinic during the Second Temple period when the Jubilee was not operative because the land was not fully occupied by Israel (Git. 36a–b; Rashi and Tos. ad loc.; S.J. Zevin, in bibl., 105–12). Areas such as Ashkelon (Tosef., Oho. 18:4), Beth-Shean, Caesarea, Bet Guvrin, and Kefar Zemaḥ (TJ, Dem. 2:1, 22c) were exempted from the restrictions of the Sabbatical Year. Judah ha-Nasi also permitted the buying of vegetables immediately after the close of the Sabbatical Year (Shev. 6:4) and the importing of produce from the Diaspora during the Sabbatical Year (TJ, Shev. 6:4, 37a; 7:2, 37b), both transactions which were previously forbidden. Many Jews still transgressed the sabbatical prohibitions which remained in force since they knew that their institution was only rabbinic (TJ, Dem. 2:1, 22d). It was related that an individual disobeyed the sabbatical laws but carefully observed the **ḥallah* rules, since the latter was still a biblical commandment (TJ, Shev. 9:8, 39a).

Rabban *Gamaliel, the son of Judah ha-Nasi, continued his father's policies, and also relaxed sabbatical restrictions. He permitted the previously forbidden actions of tilling the fields until the actual start – Rosh Ha-Shanah – of the Sabbatical Year (MK 3b; Tosef., Shev. 1:1), and the preparation of olives with an olive-crusher during this year (Shev. 8:6; Tosef., Shev. 6:27). During the third century, conditions worsened for the Jewish farmers. Taxes were increased, so that the constantly changing Roman rulers could support their armies and military expeditions. The rabbis therefore permitted the actual sowing of the seeds that produced the necessary food for the foreign armies (Sanh. 26a; TJ, Sanh. 3:6, 21b; Maim. Yad, Shemittah, 1:11). They also extended the time that fruits could be harvested and eaten during the Sabbatical Year (Shev. 9:3; Pes. 53a). Even during this difficult period, individuals continued to be meticulous in their observances. It was related that R. Safra investigated the rules governing his removing a barrel of Erez Israel sabbatical wine to the Diaspora before he did so (Pes. 52b). The rabbis declared that the verse "Ye mighty in strength, that fulfill His word" (Ps. 103:20) refers to those who leave their fields and vineyards untilled for a full year and still do not complain when they pay their taxes to the Roman government (Lev. R. 1:1). The observance of these laws remained sufficiently widespread so that the gentile nations were able to mock the Jews by stating, "The Jews observe the law of the Sabbatical Year and therefore have no vegetables. Consequently, the Jews sadden camels by eating the thorns which otherwise would have been consumed by the camels" (Lam. R., Proem 17).

MODERN PERIOD. For centuries, *shemittah* remained a theoretical problem, discussed solely by talmudic scholars. However, with the dawn of modern Zionism and the subsequent settlement of Erez Israel, it became a practical problem for the settlers. Before the *shemittah* of 1889, the leading rabbis of the generation debated whether it was permissible to enact a formal sale of all the Jewish-owned fields and vineyards to non-Jews in order to permit the working of the land during

the Sabbatical Year. R. Isaac Elhanan *Spektor of Kovno issued the following statement permitting this transaction:

I was asked several months ago to express my opinion concerning Jewish colonists, who live on the produce of the fields and vineyards of our Holy Land, as the *shemittah* year is approaching in 1889. If we do not find a *hetter* it is possible that the land will become desolate and the colonies will turn into wasteland, God forbid. Hundreds of souls will be affected by it. Although I am very much preoccupied and very weak, yet I find it necessary to deal with this important problem and permit the work in the fields, by selling them to the Muslims for a period of two years only. After that period, the vineyard and the fields go back to the owners; and the sale must be to Muslims only and may take place during the coming summer. I prepared, with the help of God, a special brochure dealing with this subject, but in practice I never came out with a *hetter* because I did not want to be the only one in this new matter, as is always my practice in such things.

But now that I received a letter informing me that my good friends, the rabbis: R. Israel Joshua of Kutna, R. Samuel Mohilewer of Bialystok, and R. Samuel Zanwil of Warsaw gave due consideration to this problem and came out with a *hetter*, and wait for my approval, I am greatly pleased to find that I am not alone in this great issue. My opinion is, therefore, to follow my above mentioned suggestion [sell the land to non-Jews]. Furthermore, the work in the fields and vineyards is to be done by non-Jews, but in the case of poor people who cannot afford to engage non-Jewish labor, let them consult the aforementioned honored rabbis; and may the Lord grant us the privilege to come joyously to our land, and observe the mitzvah of *shemittah* as it was originally ordained for us and in accordance with all its rules and regulations.

It must be explicitly stated that this *hetter* is only for the year 5649 (1889) but not for future *shemittot*. Then further meditation will be necessary, and a new *hetter* will be required; and may the Lord help His people so that they should not need any *hetter* and should observe *shemittah* in accordance with the Law, as I have fully explained it in the special brochure, with the help of God (E. Shimoff, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor (1959), 134f.).

Spektor's lenient decision was opposed by the Ashkenazi *kehillah* of Jerusalem and its rabbis, Moses Joshua Judah Leib *Diskin and Samuel *Salant. Many of the colonists originally refrained from work during the Sabbatical Year in accordance with the stringent ruling. However, with the continued growth of the new settlements, many more farmers abided by the lenient decision during the next *shemittah* of 1896.

Before the Sabbatical Year of 1910, the controversy regarding the sale of the land to Muslims revived. Rabbi Abraham Isaac *Kook, then the chief rabbi of Jaffa, was the leading proponent of the sale, while Rabbi Jacob David *Willowsky of Safed opposed it. During the ensuing *shemittah* years, the chief rabbinate of Erez Israel continued to abide by the lenient ruling, although there was always opposition to its decisions. Most prominent among the opponents has been Rabbi Abraham Isaiiah *Karelitz of Bene-Berak. In Kibbutz Hafez Hayyim attempts to grow vegetables in water (hydroponics) have met with some success as a method of observing the restric-

tions of the Sabbatical Year. Various Israel institutes devoted to studying agriculture in light of *halakhah* also experiment with methods suitable to growing fruits and vegetables during Sabbatical years.

Sabbatical Years during the second half of the 20th century fell during 5712 (1951/52); 5719 (1958/59); 5726 (1965/66); 5733 (1972/73); 5740 (1979/80); 5747 (1986/87); and 5754 (1993/94).

[Aaron Rothkoff]

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SABBIONETA, town in Lombardy, Italy, in the former duchy of *Mantua. Jewish settlement in Sabbioneta dates from the 15th century. In 1436 the brothers Azariah and Meshullam, the sons of Joab of Pisa, arrived there to found the third bank of the duchy of Mantua. On Feb. 10, 1530, the adventurer David *Reuveni visited the town and stayed in the home of Eleazar *Portaleone. From the 16th century, the Jewish population of Sabbioneta constantly increased. In 1746 the town came under Austrian rule. In 1779, in the reign of Maria *Theresa, the first attempt was made to abolish the judicial autonomy of the Mantuan communities, including Sabbioneta. Rabbis and scholars of Sabbioneta including Azriel b. Solomon *Dienna, Johanan b. Joseph *Treves, and Joseph b. Jacob Padua Ashkenazi.

Printing

Sabbioneta is best known, however, for its Hebrew press, which was founded in 1551 by Joseph b. Jacob Shalit of Padua