

Sabbath Sermon: Shadows of Eternity
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First Fruits Ministries, an affiliate of
Corner Fringe Ministries

Torah Portion: Behar (On the mountain):
Leviticus 25:1-26:2; Jeremiah 32:6-27; Luke
4:14-30: <https://tinyurl.com/43rhp5fp>.



Shabbat Shalom, brothers and sisters. Please turn to your neighbors with a hug or a handshake and say good morning with the love of our LORD Yeshua. — — [pause, title screen].

Last week I spoke to you about how the LORD called my family to keep His Holy Convocations commanded in Leviticus 23. Since we started obeying the LORD on Yom Kippur in 2020, I have experienced the blessing that comes from resting in the LORD in greater magnitude than I could have ever imagined. He is True to His Word—He will bless those who keep His commandments—How could He not? Keeping the feasts of the LORD—the weekly Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day—[this] has brought such spiritual blessing that I couldn't imagine a time before doing this. There was a time, and it has details, but ever since we moved to obey God out of love for Yeshua and a desire to serve Him, everything has simply aligned with what our hearts know to be True, and our relationship with the LORD has deepened exponentially and is deepening still. Notably, since turning my heart to follow Yeshua, and this is an even more recent development, I can say as Paul did, "we celebrate in our tribulations" (Romans 5:3), and I can fully appreciate what Yeshua said in Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." In no way am I saying that celebrating the feasts causes tribulation or persecution—though to some extent our obedience has brought some persecution upon us from those who don't yet understand—what I am saying is that I have truly come to experience joy despite any suffering or persecution in my life on account of our obedience. I honestly pity those who have not known this joy, and this is relatively new for me, and so I pity my former self. Praise God, all comes to light in His timing, not ours. I could talk about so many different things, but I want to hone in on this one point as we get started. I used to read these verses cited here and think they were crazy, but

now I just trust in the LORD and do what He commands to the best of my understanding on account of my love for Him, and He simply takes care of the rest. Oh, that was a double entendre, wasn't it? Yes, He takes care of the rest. Despite scorn, rebukes, accusations, disagreements, and other troubles, I can rejoice in the LORD and hope in His promises, because I believe in them and I believe in Him and therefore do what He has asked me to do in as much as my present understanding allows, and I pray you all will choose to do the same.

This week's Torah Portion is called "On the Mountain," and "Behar (בְּהָר)" in Hebrew here refers directly to Behar Sinai (בְּהָרִי), where the LORD spoke to Moses and wrote His commandments with His Holy Spirit on two tablets of stone. Today we each come to the foot of Mt. Zion, Behar Tzeon (בְּהָרִי), the Mountain of God, and now the Holy Spirit of Yeshua writes God's commandments on our hearts, and we stand on the stable foundation of faith. We read in Psalm 125(:1-2), "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forever." He is with us forever, even to the end of the age, and we will certainly dwell with Him forever when He comes. And so we ought to become disciple-making disciples of Yeshua together, following Him in all of His ways, teaching all who trust in Him to surrender to His commandments, seeking to understand them together by the power of His Holy Spirit. All that being said, there are going to be some mysteries that remain in the Word of the LORD for each of us—and even some things none of us can fully grasp at this point. Among them are the subject of this week's reading in Leviticus 25 relative to the seventh Shemitah Year and the 50th Jubilee Year that honestly still create great intrigue in my heart. I may be able to provide some finer details on what I believe these times mean in Spirit and in Truth, and how they tie in to some of the feasts we covered last week, but how to recognize these periods in real time might have to be left to individual discernment, for there is significant disagreement on these matters.

Let's start by reading about the Shemitah (שְׁמִטָּה) in Leviticus 25:1-7: "And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female

servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.” The “sabbath year” for the land is called the Shemitah (שְׁמִטָּה) year, because, as the word means, it is literally a time to let the land drop, to release it from its duties or to give it a remission. Before I get into any of the spiritual interpretations here, I want to explain what the LORD put on my heart, and what we did for our first Shemitah year, and how we were blessed by it. I don’t explain this to encourage obedience to my own interpretation, but to share the glory of the LORD that my wife Jen and I experienced in our lives—the joy derived from our obedience that came from love for Yeshua in our hearts. With that, we reasoned as follows: Through Yeshua, we are children of Israel grafted-in to the One Olive Tree, and the LORD had given us land here in New Hampshire to enjoy. It may not be the Promised Land in the Middle East, and it certainly is not the Kingdom of God that is to come, but it is land that belongs to the LORD that He has entrusted to us, and for this we were and still are quite grateful. Shouldn’t we give the land here the year of rest the LORD commands for it in the same way we ourselves rest on the day the LORD has set apart for our weekly Sabbath? We reasoned: Indeed we should. And so on Yom Kippur in 2021 when Israel began celebrating its Shemitah year, we decided to give our gardens a year of rest. This was significant for us, because we had just finished plowing the land in front of our house for new gardens the previous year, and we were literally enjoying our first harvest when we learned about the coming Shemitah. It wasn’t exactly something we were jumping up and down to do on account of this, but we felt the LORD leading us to do it, and so we did it.

Before I can tell you what happened next, consider what the LORD said to the children of Israel in Leviticus 25:18-22, where we read: “So you shall observe My statutes and keep My judgments, and perform them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill, and dwell there in safety. And if you say, ‘What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?’ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat of the old harvest.” We live in modern America and buy most of our produce in grocery stores; we don’t rely on our gardens to provide all of our food. But I’ll tell you what: We are working toward that goal, and the LORD knows our hearts. Our heart was to “observe [the LORD’s] statutes and keep [His] judgments, and perform them,” and as soon as we decided to do this, the LORD brought forth an abundant field of Amaranth that we could not have possibly planted on our own. Now, we might say, the Amaranth seed came in the compost we put down, and that explains the whole thing. Perhaps it does,

maybe it doesn't. To me, it doesn't matter. I can tell you that definitively the LORD made it known to us that His Word is sound, for in the sixth year the land we had planned to leave fallow the following year produced more Amaranth than we could possibly know what to do with. For those of you who don't know, Amaranth is a very powerful native grain that has more protein than most grains we might plant. In addition to this, the entire plant is edible, not just its seeds. We did what we could with it—we were new to this. In addition, I planted a northern almond tree on the very last day before sundown, and to this date that tree is thriving. During the Shemitah year, we let the fields do their thing—whatever the LORD had in mind. They became overgrown like I've never seen. I thought a forest might start growing there. Friends of ours commented on our Shemitah garden, saying that a food-producing garden would never grow from that location again; it would be impossible to clear all the weeds. "Impossible," they said. Remember, as Yeshua said in Luke 1:37, "Nothing is impossible with God," and this is what we said in response. Well, the year came and went, and we didn't plant until after Yom Kippur 2022—garlic is planted in the fall, and then in the spring we got to work weeding and planting the rest of the garden. When the fall of 2023 harvest came upon us, abundance is a word that does not do justice to what happened. The LORD produced so much food from that garden that we are literally still eating some of it. If you've been coming to First Fruits Ministries and enjoying some of our butternut squash, you've been eating some of it, in fact. I can't help but praise the LORD, and every time I think about what happened in our garden, I can't help but say out loud in praise, "He did it! He did it! He did it! He did it! Yes, Yeshua, you did what you promised! Praise be to God!" How can I possibly doubt anything else God said in His Word when He even did this small thing for us. I want to say something else here: We weren't doing this to test Him. We had no expectations for any of this. We simply wanted to do our best to honor God's commandments. But God wanted to show Himself faithful to us, perhaps so I could share this story with you, for this testimony is part of our long history of walking with the LORD and learning from Him. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Whatever God says in His Word is true, and I believe every bit of it, and I KNOW He will keep proving this over and over again to me and to anyone else who trusts in Him and follows Him in all of His ways, through good times and bad times. Praise be to God! Now, whatever happens in the future with our garden is not entirely relevant. We're simply going to keep trusting in the LORD, and I am certain that we will not be disappointed, even if we do encounter hangups in this physical world.

In my research for today's sermon, I discovered something that was somewhat perplexing. We're talking about the Shemitah year presently, and we're going to get

into a discussion of the Jubilee year, also. In either case, no one really agrees on when these times are actually supposed to take place, or how we're supposed to recognize them. I'm going to spare you most of these details, but there is a bit of intrigue involved with all of this and I want to explore it just a bit with you. As we can see again in the early verses of Leviticus 25, the LORD said, "When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD." In other words, when Israel entered the Promised Land, led by Joshua, and the nation celebrated their first Passover while enjoying the fruits of the land, this was year one. From there, they were to count seven years and give the land its rest in the seventh year, and the cycle would continue on from there to the present day. And while I'm pretty certain we can pinpoint which year Israel entered the Land and then count forward from there, there is significant disagreement on those details. As of today, Israel celebrates the Shemitah year starting from the year the Rabbis say the second temple was destroyed, and they explain that this was the seventh year in a cycle of sevens dating back all the way to Creation, according to Chabad.org. Here's the thing: there is great disagreement on the chronology of ALL these events. On top of that, Scripture doesn't speak of a Shemitah year prior to Israel entering the land, which is not to say the concept itself does not predate this time period. In any case, it seems incorrect to base the Shemitah cycle on any supposed day of Creation or even the year the temple was destroyed. That being said, this is where I believe we ought to land: According to several verses throughout the Gospels, Yeshua kept the feasts of the LORD along with all the other Jews, and it would appear from reading Acts that the Apostles continued to do the same. Let me give you two of many examples in Scripture: In John 7, the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, according to verse 2, and verse 10 explains that Yeshua also went to the feast per the commandment. In Acts 20:16, Paul set sail from Miletus to head past Ephesus so he could arrive in Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost per the commandment, and we're going to talk about Pentecost today. We don't see any variation from this pattern in the New Testament, despite the modern church's best efforts to invent one. It is for this reason, specifically, that First Fruits Ministries has chosen to keep our festivals united with the majority of Jews today, along with Corner Fringe Ministries, also, with Pentecost being the only exception due to clear guidance from Scripture. On Shemitah, though there is excellent guidance from Scripture, there is very poor record keeping pertaining to the months and the years that have transpired since Israel entered the land. Thus, for those who care to recognize Shemitah, we believe it makes sense to do so along with the majority of Israel. To be clear: I don't say this to create any kind of obligation regarding the

Shemitah year. That's between you and God. Many people believe that only Jews in Israel ought to honor the Shemitah, but I've given my reasoning for doing so, and "to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Please use your discernment in consultation with the Holy Spirit. I am beyond grateful that the LORD has led us to honor this time, for He has shown His hand of blessing on account of us doing so.

Next, I want to explore the patterns that we can see the LORD developing in Scripture as the next layer of meaning relative to the Shemitah as well as the Jubilee. And in doing this, we will revisit some of the feasts from Leviticus 23, as they are quite relevant to these patterns. In describing the Shemitah year, the LORD explains, "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the Lord." This is a pattern derived directly from the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:8-11, where we read, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work," and "the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." The Sabbath is the first feast day the LORD commanded us to keep as a Holy Convocation, so the tie-in here is important.

Next, in describing the Jubilee year, which is sort of like a second Shemitah year once every 50 years, the LORD said this in Leviticus 25:8-14: "And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. 'In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another.'" We have not discerned when our how to celebrate the Jubilee as of yet, but I think as you'll see later, I do believe the LORD will show us at the appointed time. Without getting into the deeper significance at this time, note only the pattern that I have underlined here, for I want to show you its counterpart.

In Leviticus 23, we read relative to First Fruits that the priest ought to wave a firstfruits offering from the early harvest “on the day after the Sabbath.” This Sabbath, within the context of Passover, must refer to the weekly Sabbath that takes place during the Passover week, for the text continues afterward with this passage relative to the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, as follows: “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. ... And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.” (Leviticus 23:10, 15-16, 21). Within the context here, it's very hard to argue that the Sabbaths being described here are anything other than weekly Sabbaths, though some do this. In any case, in the same way that the weekend of Pentecost, or Shavuot, includes the weekly Sabbath day followed by the annual festival on the 50th day following First Fruits, the Jubilee year is the 50th year following the seventh Shemitah year in the 49th year. And as we contemplate this further, consider how both of these cycles represent another interesting phenomenon. The 50th day is the first day of a new week, just as the 50th year is the first year of a new shemitah cycle. What an elegant design! We might take this one step further and briefly revisit the significance of the Eighth Day at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. We know from studying the Feast of Tabernacles that the seven days themselves represent the 7,000 years of Creation, while the Eighth Day represents the Eternity that will come with a New Heaven and New Earth at the end of the Millennial Reign of Messiah Yeshua. Does this pattern itself repeat again with the First Fruits to Pentecost cycle as well as the Shemitah to Jubilee cycle? Is this 50th day and 50th year meant to represent the beginning of something new that is different than what came before, while also representing a continuation in some manner of what came before. I believe this pattern points to this very thing exactly. And yet, while a new day is upon us now, and a new day is yet to come, something I will explain in a few moments, we still do live within the Creation that God set in motion in six days, and then He rested on the seventh day and hallowed it, and this is why we still and always will sanctify the seventh day and the seventh year and hallow them, so we might rest and the land might rest, giving honor and glory to God and His plan for Creation. There is something in the intricacy of this plan that pulls my heart toward obedience to the best of my understanding, and I believe the LORD looks first upon the heart.

Now, before I get into the deeper spiritual meanings to the Shemitah and the Jubilee cycle for the sake of the land, as well as the Sabbath cycle, and the First Fruits-Pentecost pattern for the sake of you and me, I want to point out one very important and foundational piece that will help us get there. Both the land that God gives us to use, and the life that God affords to us so we can come to know Him—both were created by God for His glory and both belong to the LORD. When it comes to the land, the LORD said in Leviticus 25:23-24, “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me. And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land.” As it pertains to the Jubilee, the land shall return to its original owner’s family during that 50th year for a new beginning. When it comes to the people, the LORD said in Leviticus 25:39-43, “And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. And then he shall depart from you—he and his children with him—and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers. For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God.” It would appear that the world in its present form is a total abomination compared to the original order the LORD had in mind for Israel. He didn’t desire for any one person or family in Israel to become so powerful that they would have dominion over the whole world, for He designed each of His people to care for a certain segment of His creation. In order to prevent the dominance of any particular family over any particular land, He designed His Jubilee to restore the original order. While my libertarian friends might claim property rights or even claim ownership over their own lives, the truth of the matter is that God owns both; He owns our lives and He owns the property He calls us to manage. For those who believe they own their own lives, please explain that to God on your death bed. We might ponder the rationale for this from a worldly perspective, and I’m sure we could have fun with that conversation, but the spiritual meaning is far more important. The LORD, who created the Heavens and the Earth and everything in them, has dominion over his creation. And while He shared that dominion with His people whom He created, He did so under a very specific order that He still rules. The LORD cares for His creation and His people, and He desires that His people care for both the land they were given as well as the people whom they interact with. Did He not say, “love one another, as I have loved you?” Clearly, this command is voluntary, for neither Israel nor the rest of the world operates this way today, but someday it will.

And this is the underlying spiritual meaning of the cycles that God describes in Leviticus. The first day of the week in the weekly cycle, the Pentecost celebration, the eighth day of Tabernacles, and the Jubilee year all represent a new beginning that restores what was lost but also provides a new opportunity to do things better than they were done during the previous cycle. If we look at Ezekiel 18 briefly, it would seem that this same concept also applies to generations of people. In Ezekiel 18:4, the LORD explains, “Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die.” I’ve explained this section of Scripture many times, but the underlying point throughout the chapter is this: each person has an opportunity in his or her life to use the resources the LORD has given him or her to trust in God, obey His commandments and prosper, if not physically then spiritually. When people from good backgrounds or practices turn away from righteousness and commit evil acts, violating the resources or the people around them, they will be cut off. When people from evil backgrounds or fallen practices turn away from their sin and repent, taking on the LORD’s Way by following Him and caring for the resources and people around them, they will be redeemed and offered eternal life. It doesn’t matter what the fathers did, or what the sons do, for each person will be accountable for his or her own actions. Each generation provides a new beginning. While this truth doesn’t tie in precisely with the Jubilee cycle and the redemption of souls at the end of it, I want to pursue a thought experiment with you to perhaps draw out some more meaning here. Consider how God defines a generational lifespan. In Psalm 90:10, we read, “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if reason by strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.” Next, consider the wilderness experience of Israel. When the nation rebelled against God and refused to enter the Promised Land in the first generation, everyone older than 20 was sentenced to die in the wilderness, while everyone younger than 20 was given a chance to continue on (Numbers 32:11). Thus, we might deduce that 20 is the age of majority. From that age, 50 years remain until the lifespan comes to its typical end, though it may continue in tribulation for another 10 years. In other words, the 50 year reset seems to tie in to the opportunity every person has to take the resources and surrounding people the LORD has given him or her and either walk in His ways and spiritually prosper or walk against Him and suffer the consequences of that choice. After each cycle, the next generation has a chance to start over. I wonder—and I don’t know the answer to this—but I wonder: Is this why we’ve lost track of the Jubilee cycle? Is this 50-year cycle different for each person who lives? When the new cycle begins, the resources and surrounding people are reset, and another generation has an opportunity to turn to the LORD and fulfill His will?

When considering even the weekly Sabbath cycle, or the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day, I can't help but think of what Moses wrote about God in Psalm 90:4; namely, "A thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night." The Apostle Peter clarified the meaning of this truth when He wrote, "Do not forget this one thing, that with the LORD one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). If God created everything that we know in seven actual days, is it possible that the whole of that creation will play out over 7,000 years, and if so, then what? Will a new cycle of creation take place, or does that eighth day represent a new beginning of a better system without the sin and death we succumbed to in this one? Again, I don't know the full answer to this, because I do not have complete understanding of God, but Scripture explains the truth of the latter idea and states plainly that sin and death will be no more when that new—perhaps eternal—cycle begins. In fact, I believe that the First Fruits-Pentecost and Shemitah-Jubilee pattern lend credibility to the latter idea rather than the former, which I will explain. And this is why I think it's critical for us to pay attention to these patterns in Scripture, for they are "a shadow of the things to come," as Paul explained in Colossians 2:17, and their substance is Messiah Yeshua. While I do believe our heart ought to desire obedience to the LORD's will in remembering these appointed times, Paul's point comes into play for today's discussion. There is a much deeper understanding that these feasts and cycles are pointing to, and so we certainly should not get caught up by the ideas that men have come up with on how to be obedient. "We ought to obey God rather than man," as Peter explained in Acts 5:29.

And that leads us back to the cycle of seven sevens, symbology for completion and perfection that can only come from God, ending with a new cycle that we see in both the First Fruits-Pentecost pattern as well as the Shemitah-Jubilee pattern. Consider that First Fruits was the day that Messiah Yeshua rose from the dead, following His sacrifice for our sins on Passover; on the first day of Unleavened Bread. He was our Lamb of God and our Unleavened Bread, our Creator who became flesh to sacrifice His perfect life so that we could be redeemed by His blood, for God demands blood to atone for sin (Hebrews 9:22). Recall, using Jubilee language, how Paul explained amazingly in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Only God could do this for us, and no other sacrifice could provide a substitute for the self-sacrifice He made. His blood was the offering for the new covenant that He made with us, it was the price for our redemption, but just 50 days after He rose from the dead, He sent His Holy Spirit into all who put their trust in Him,

whether Jew or Gentile, and this brought about a new beginning, the seal for His New Covenant with His people. God came to dwell within us, marking us as His possession. We are His people, and He is our God, when we trust in Yeshua and follow Him in all His ways. This act was the beginning of a new cycle, providing us with a new and better way to interact with God, His resources, and the people around us. It was a type of reset. He provided His Spirit to dwell in us as a seal of this better way, and this seal, as we read in Ephesians 1:13-14, was “a guarantee”—a downpayment—of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” This inheritance spoken about here is the New Heaven and New Earth that is prophesied throughout Scripture that will be realized upon Yeshua’s second coming. Note that it is also the beginning of a new cycle—perhaps the last and eternal one, following the complete and perfect appointed time in which we now live. And in these truths I want to show how the Shemitah-Jubilee pattern also explains both the first and second coming of Messiah Yeshua.

When Yeshua came in the flesh and began His ministry, He said something very powerful that directly relates to the Jubilee. When he entered the synagogue in Nazareth, we read in Luke 4:17-21, “He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” The Jubilee was fulfilled in the hearing of those First Century Jews relating directly to the first part of the Isaiah 61 prophesy, which I will show you in more detail in just a moment. Consider Yeshua’s earthly ministry. Without getting into all the Scriptural references, you know that He uplifted the humble—He called disciples from a group of men who were rejected by the Rabbis. They were doing business with their fathers, meaning that they did not advance in their Rabbinical studies, but Yeshua called them to follow Him. He met with those poor in spirit and poor in stature, He freed those held captive by evil spirits, He gave sight to the blind, and He freed His followers to keep God’s commandments rather than remain under the heavy, oppressive burdens levied by the Rabbis as part of their oral tradition. He fulfilled this prophesy to the letter during His first coming.

Consider also the interchange Yeshua had with John the Baptist's disciples from Luke 7:20-23. John sent them to ask Yeshua, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?" Before we get to Yeshua's answer, consider the implications of this question, and whether it is translated correctly. The words "coming one" are derived from the Greek word "erchomai," which means "to come," and the word "another" comes from the Greek "allos," which means "another of similar type." John the Baptist knew Yeshua from his youth; His mother Elizabeth and father Zechariah both prophesied that he would prepare the way for the Messiah. When Yeshua came to be baptized by John, Yeshua's cousin stated plainly, "Behold the Lamb of God." John had no doubt that Yeshua was the Messiah. It's inconsistent to believe that he did. Thus, this question is far more powerful and relevant to our discussion today. John, through his disciples, was asking Yeshua: Have you come to fulfill all the prophecies concerning the Messiah or will there be a second coming? In other words, will you at this time install your Millennial Kingdom, and will you bring about the new Heaven and the new Earth right now, or is this coming at a future date? Yeshua's answer confirmed the latter, just as He did when His disciples asked the same question after His resurrection in the first chapter of Acts. Remember, the disciples asked the risen Messiah, "LORD, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'" (Acts 1:6-8). When Yeshua responded to John's disciples, He said the same thing; He said, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me'" (Luke 7:20-23). This is straight out of Isaiah 61:1-2, the section that the LORD said was fulfilled when He spoke at the synagogue in Nazareth. These are the very things the LORD did when He came. You see, the prophesy of the Shemitah-Jubilee cycle was fulfilled in His first coming, and it will be fulfilled again when He returns. He fulfilled the "acceptable year of the LORD" during His first coming, as He stated in the synagogue in Nazareth, and by this He meant that He fulfilled the Jubilee, but He would fulfill it again at the end of days. In this pattern, we can better understand why Pentecost occurs on the 50th Day following First Fruits, for Yeshua would leave His Holy Spirit downpayment with His people so they could be witnesses for Him during a new era, a New Covenant era. This happy circumstance was also marked by the fulfillment of the first Jubilee, as we explored in Luke 4, but there would be another, as Yeshua explained to John's disciples, after another seven sevens, a perfect and complete appointed time of the LORD.

Let's take a closer look at Isaiah 61:1-3 for more information. I've underlined the section that the LORD read from in Luke 4, but then I've included a few more phrases that follow it, and these will become entirely relevant to understanding the metaphorical Jubilee cycle as I'm relating it to you. We read: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD," This is where Yeshua stopped reading, but the prophecy continues. After we read, "to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD," we read "and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." The second part of this prophecy speaks about what happened and what is still happening during the prophetic Shemitah cycle that is represented by the present age, following the Jubilee represented by Yeshua's first coming.

You see, vengeance indeed fell upon Israel following the death and resurrection of Yeshua. Following a 40-year period of transition, the temple was destroyed, just as Yeshua prophesied in Matthew 24. Just one generation later, a false Messiah named Simon Bar Kokhba led Israel to a successful revolt against the Romans in AD 132, leading the Rabbi Akiva to identify Bar Kokhba as the Messiah. Yeshua warned: "many false Messiahs will come, and they will deceive many" (Matthew 24:5). It is important to note, Rabbi Akiva is held up by many to be among the founders of modern Rabbinical Judaism. Because of Rabbi Akiva's proclamation about Bar Kokhba, millions of Jews died in AD 135 when the Romans retaliated for the revolt. Yeshua had prophesied this event precisely when He said in Luke 21:20-22, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." At this time, those Apostolic Jews who followed Yeshua and his disciples survived this massacre. In a prophesy of his own, the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:6, "We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The LORD had called Jews to the fulfillment of Scripture in Him, not to a worldly interpretation of Scripture led by errant men.

I want to fast-forward briefly into next week's reading from Leviticus 26:21-25, because it also speaks directly to this vengeance of God that Isaiah foretold in Isaiah 61. The LORD, who desires that we love Him and keep His commandments provided a host of blessings for such obedience and curses for disobedience. What's fascinating is that when we tie all of these scriptures together, it's clear that the vengeance of the LORD will come against all who deny Messiah Yeshua. We read: "Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins." The seven here is important, for it points to the cycle of sevens represented by the seven Shemitah years prior to the Jubilee. And then, the LORD speaks about the wild beasts, the governments from among the Gentiles that He would send to further judge the disobedient. He said, "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. 'And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.'" This is exactly what happened during the Bar Kokhba revolt to those Jews who denied Messiah Yeshua and didn't heed His warning to run for the hills. Jerusalem was surrounded by Rome, and millions of people died. It was a tragedy, but for those who trusted in Yeshua, they were preserved. The curses of the old covenant fell onto the heads of those who doubted and disobeyed, but those who embraced the new covenant and obeyed Yeshua were spared. As an aside, this in itself verifies Yeshua at the very least as a prophet from God, but even more specifically on account of His Words as God Himself, for this is how He spoke.

I want to return to Isaiah 61, for it also speaks about this era in positive terms in light of the New Covenant. Yes, the day of vengeance of God certainly followed the acceptable year of the LORD, but the LORD also gave His disciples "the planting of the LORD," so that the LORD might be glorified. This planting of the Holy Spirit would bring beauty from ashes, joy in the midst of mourning, praise toward God even amidst a spirit of heaviness, and all who trust in Messiah Yeshua would be called "trees of righteousness." Whether Jews or Gentiles, when grafted-in to the One Olive Tree, the root of Jesse supports us and helps to sustain our lives, if not in this world, then certainly in the next, and we bear the fruit of the Spirit for the Kingdom of God.

Israel itself would ultimately be restored through this process, as we read on. As Isaiah 61 continues, the prophesy continues to explain the period of time between the two

comings of Messiah Yeshua, and then ends with a representative second Jubilee at the end. As we prepare to close today, I'm going to walk you through the rest of this prophecy, which ties all of the appointed times we've been talking about together. We read: "And they shall rebuild the old ruins, They shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations." Have we not see this come to pass in our very lifetime? Yes, there is trouble ahead, but Israel came back together in a single day in 1948, and yes, as Isaiah prophesied, "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the foreigner shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers." This is happening in literal meaning, for many foreigners live among the Jews in Israel and tend to its bountiful fields and flocks on behalf of Israel. And while we can certainly celebrate this fulfillment, consider also the spiritual meaning. Do not sons of the foreigner feed the flocks of Israel with the Truth of God's Word. Do Gentiles not plow the fields preparing them for the planting of new disciples, and dress the vines, bearing fruit for the LORD? Yes, Israel is now made up of both Jews and Gentiles in the New Covenant, and we are one flock with one shepherd, just as Yeshua said would happen in John 10:16.

As we read on, we see that the followers of Yeshua would be named priests of the LORD, and they would be His servants. Believing Jews and those Gentiles grafted-in to Israel would eat the riches of the Gentiles, and boast in their glory. What better glory is there than being accepted by God through faith in Messiah Yeshua? He is indeed the glory we boast in. There is no shame in Israel, but in Messiah Yeshua all who call upon His name will receive a double portion, the Holy Spirit that falls on all who believe in Him as well as the eternal inheritance that is to come. No longer will Gentiles suffer in the confusion of their pagan fathers, and no longer shall Jews suffer in the confusion of Yeshua's identity, but both will rejoice in the portion of their inheritance that Yeshua has redeemed for them both. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied about this very thing in Ezekiel 47:21-22 (repeat—not in slides), where we read: "Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel." This is the end of the Shemitah cycle; the inheritance that all who call on the name of the LORD will receive in Israel. As Isaiah wrote, "In their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. 'For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth and will make with them an everlasting covenant. Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the

posterity whom the LORD has blessed" (Isaiah 61:4-9). And while we can see Jews and Gentiles coming together to receive honor and praise with everlasting joy in the land of the living, a Jubilee of everlasting proportions, we don't see the prophesy bring in the other patterns relative to the Holy Convocations we discussed earlier until the very end.

Look at how Isaiah 61 ends in verses 10-11: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." These verses describe the end of this age and the beginning of the next. It is the transition between the final day of rest, and the eternal life that will begin at last. It's both a spring, teeming with new life, as well as a wedding, when the bridegroom, Messiah Yeshua, will return at the last Jubilee and unite with His people Israel, who will be made up of both Jews and Gentiles. This last Jubilee will follow the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that the Sabbath, the Passover, and Feast of Tabernacles represent, and the Eighth Day, the eternal kingdom, the New Heaven and New Earth, these promises of God that have been given from the beginning and desired more than anything else by all who give Yeshua their whole heart, will be fully realized. Our redemption will be finalized, for we will be given new bodies in a new land that is completely refreshed and perfected, and in this there will be a final Jubilee. No longer will there be sin or death, but life everlasting in union with Messiah Yeshua, our eternal God. And this, I believe, is the greatest meaning of all of these appointed times of the LORD. He simply wants us to know what He has planned, and the more and more we explore these ideas, the more He will reveal to us. No matter what level of understanding we're at, though, I pray that all of you will join me in desiring nothing more than the total and final fulfillment of these plans of God. Shabbat shalom.