

## 2. *Only Five Years of Reaping and Sowing Between the Jubilee and the Next Sabbatical Year?*

The only place in Scripture we can turn to in order to find the instructions pertaining to the Jubilee year is Leviticus 25. This same chapter offers the explanation for determining the Sabbatical years, often referred to as the *land Sabbaths*. These years are critical to our study because in order to understand the determination of the *Jubilee year*, we must first understand the reckoning of the *Sabbatical years*. With this in mind, let's read the first portion of Leviticus 25:

<sup>1</sup>And Yahweh spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,

<sup>2</sup>Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto Yahweh.

<sup>3</sup>Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof;

<sup>4</sup>But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for Yahweh: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.

<sup>5</sup>That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land.

<sup>6</sup>And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee.

<sup>7</sup>And for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat.

According to the above instructions, upon entering the Promised Land, the Israelites were to give the land a "Sabbath rest," followed by six years of sowing and reaping, and then they were to once again let the land lay fallow during the seventh year. Notice that no exceptions to this rule are specified; six years of sowing and reaping must precede each Sabbatical year. As we are about to see, this is a critical factor in making the determination as to whether the Jubilee cycle should consist of 49 or 50 years. In the verses that follow, we are given the instructions pertaining to the reckoning of the Jubilee year:

<sup>8</sup>And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

<sup>9</sup>Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

<sup>10</sup>And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

<sup>11</sup>A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.

<sup>12</sup>For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field.

As I explained earlier, I am aware of two interpretations of the above passage, but from my perspective, the wording is very clear. This is how I understand the intent of the Author: A Sabbatical cycle is seven years long, six of which are spent sowing and reaping, and during the final year the land is to lay fallow. We are to count seven of these cycles (7 x 7), which comprise a total of 49 years. During

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the seventh month of the 49<sup>th</sup> year, the trumpet is sounded to announce the approaching 50<sup>th</sup> year—the year of Jubilee. Once that 50<sup>th</sup> year has ended, the Sabbatical/Jubilee cycle is reset. That is my understanding of how Yahweh intends the Jubilees to be determined. Notice that the instructions are the same for the 50<sup>th</sup> year as they are for the seventh year concerning sowing and reaping. The bottom line is, if the ancients did not start sowing their fields until the 51<sup>st</sup> year, then the 50<sup>th</sup> year could not have been the first year of the next seven year cycle of sowing and reaping. Thus, even though there is a cycle of “7x7” involved in the Jubilee cycle, it is actually a 50-year cycle, not a 49-year cycle, because the following year after the “7x7” cycle ends is the Jubilee Year.

The opposing view maintains that the Jubilee cycle is only 49 years in length, and that *year one* of the next Sabbatical cycle coincides with *year 50* of the preceding cycle.<sup>1</sup> Where do they glean this understanding? Certainly not from the text itself, because the simple fact that a 50<sup>th</sup> year is mentioned proves that it is a 50-year cycle, not a 49-year cycle. In a nutshell, we are told to follow a certain pattern every seven years; after following that pattern seven times (i.e., for 49 years), the following year is a special year. That following year is year #50. Once year #50 is over, we repeat the cycle, and that is what makes it a 50-year cycle, our opponents’ view notwithstanding. Moreover, if we carefully reexamine the instructions found in Leviticus 25, there is no mention that *year one* of the following Jubilee cycle must coincide with *year 50* of the previous cycle. This is a problematic fact for which the proponents of this belief have offered no satisfactory answers, at least none that I have ever read. Nevertheless, as we can observe from the calendar reproduced above, the proponent of that calendar believes that year 50 and year one *must* coincide.

Another difficulty arising from the “Year 50 = Year 1” system is the fact that this method effectively disrupts the “six years of sowing and reaping” required for each of the seven sabbatical cycles. Here is an excerpt from the above calendar that vividly illustrates the obstacle faced by proponents of the “Year 50 = Year 1” method of reckoning the Jubilee year:



*How many years of sowing are permitted within this Sabbatical cycle? How many are commanded (Lev. 25:3)?*

As I mentioned previously, I have heard attempts at explaining the above conundrum, but none of them have been satisfactory. A common explanation is that the above scenario is an “exception,” just as the Day of Atonement presents an “exception” to the “work six days, rest on the seventh” command. The Day of Atonement is commanded to be observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh Scriptural month. Since the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month may fall on any day of the week, during that particular week there will be *two* days of rest, not one (unless the Day of Atonement happens to fall on the day of the weekly Sabbath, as it did in 2008). Thus, although Yahweh commands His people to work six days, then rest on the seventh day, the week during which the Day of Atonement falls presents a necessary exception to the “work six days, rest the seventh” command. This “necessary exception” explanation has been offered by “Year 50

<sup>1</sup> Cf., Moore, W. Glenn, *The Jubilee Code*, 2008, pp. 61-62, where he writes, “First, we need to consider that in the context of this statement [Lev. 25:1-11] it speaks only of 7-year and 49-year cycles—it does not speak of 50-year cycles. Clearly, context already implies that the cycles are of a continuous nature and that they are based upon multiples of 7 and 49.”

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= Year 1” proponents, including Chuck Baldwin, who contributed the following commentary to an online forum in August 2006:

There are 2 possibilities regarding not sowing or reaping during the Jubilee year. The first is simply that it is an exception to the rule of sowing for 6 years. You are aware that the last day of U/B, the Day of Atonement, and "your" Pentecost (50% of the time) are exceptions to the 6-day work week. Therefore, since we already have "approved examples" of exceptions to the "rule of 6", there's no reason that the 1st year of the 1st "week" of the Jubilee cycle can't be an exception to the normal sowing & reaping.

The other possibility is that the Jubilee/50th year actually starts in the middle of the 49th year. Note that the trumpet announcing the Jubilee is blown on the Day of Atonement and not during the spring festivals. Since this year is a Sabbath year, no sowing or reaping is done from this fall to the fall of the next (50th/1st) year. In the fall of the 50th/1st year, the normal seedtime planting could resume, since the "Jubilee year" (fall-to-fall) would be over.<sup>2</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, this analogy is not a tenable explanation. Since Yahweh specifically commands that the Day of Atonement be observed on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, this makes that particular week a *specified exception* to the “work six days, rest the seventh” rule. For the Jubilee cycle, however, Yahweh offers nothing that would *hint* of a specified exception requiring that one sabbatical cycle must consist of *five* years of sowing and reaping. This “exception” is only an “exception” by interpretation of those who support the 49-year cycles. The response I’ve given here also applies to the day of Pentecost. Since the “morrow after the seventh Sabbath” is a commanded day of rest from servile work (Lev. 23:15-21), this day is another *specified exception*.

With regard to Chuck’s proposed second possibility, this explanation also falls short. According to the text of Leviticus 25:8-9, the trumpet of the Jubilee is to be sounded on the tenth day of the *seventh month* of the 49<sup>th</sup> year. I regard this as an announcement of the upcoming Year of Jubilee, not a pronouncement that the 50<sup>th</sup> year has already begun in the middle of the 49<sup>th</sup> year. Notice that the trumpet was sounded in the *seventh month*, not the *first month of the 50<sup>th</sup> year*. A year is a year in the eyes of Yahweh, so a new Scriptural year doesn’t begin until the following spring. The year that begins in the spring is the 50<sup>th</sup> year and that 50<sup>th</sup> year doesn’t conclude until the following spring. Thus, we see that the only explanations offered for “five years of sowing and reaping” during the first Sabbatical cycle after a Jubilee Year consist of *unspecified, unmentioned exceptions based on Scripturally-specified exceptions*.

Speaking of “exceptions,” the year of Jubilee is, in and of itself, presented as a *specified exception*. During the sabbatical cycles of six years of reaping and sowing, followed by the seventh year of land rest, if Yahweh said nothing further, those cycles would continue on and on, ad infinitum, without stopping. However, Yahweh *does* say something further. He stipulates that after seven cycles are completed (i.e., 49 years), the 50<sup>th</sup> year is a Jubilee year ... *another* year of not sowing or reaping. Thus, if we are going to focus on *exceptions*, the year of Jubilee is the only exception Yahweh gives us, not “five years of

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<sup>2</sup> From a posting submitted by Chuck Baldwin, under the screen name “chuckbaldwin,” to an online forum located at [www.elijah.com](http://www.elijah.com). This forum was a special forum set up by the forum owner for the purpose of discussing the Lunar Sabbath doctrine, and it was called the “True Sabbath” forum until it was closed by the owner in 2008. The “forum thread” was called “**70 Week Prophecy Confirms Weekly Cycle**,” and Chuck posted the above commentary on 08-16-2006 at 05:47 PM. In a subsequent posting by Glenn Moore (on 08/20/2006), he expressed agreement with Chuck’s explanation.

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sowing and reaping.” Those who teach that Scripture also presents “five years of sowing and reaping” as an exception are simply reading something into the text that is not there.

If it is true, as we believe it is, that year 50 and year one of the next Jubilee cycle do *not* coincide, there will *always* be six years of sowing and reaping, as illustrated below:

43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
1	2	3	4	5	6	<b>7</b> (land rests)	<b>Jubilee</b> (land rests)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (land rests)	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (land rests)	

In Glenn’s rebuttal to our original study, he reinforces his view that there *must* be five years of sowing and reaping at the beginning of each new Jubilee cycle, emphasizing that this is an “exception to the rule.” This time, however, he goes a little further, remarking that the Jubilee year is not actually referenced in Scripture as being an interruption of the Sabbatical cycles.

COMMENT: The Jubilee year and the five years of sowing and reaping are all exceptions to the rule, just as I have determined from my examination of Leviticus 25:22 that the eighth year is also an exception. And the Jubilee year is not actually stated to be an interruption of the Sabbatical cycles, so again, we have to look more closely at this issue to determine the final answer.<sup>3</sup>

I believe June’s response to Glenn’s comments is sufficient to illustrate his mistaken premise:

The Jubilee year must be an interruption of the Sabbatical cycles. Nowhere in these verses are we told that one of the cycles (the first cycle) will have just 5 years of sowing and reaping. Yahweh went to great detail to explain how these years are laid out. He started the Israelites with a year of rest (a Jubilee Year, but this was unknown to them at the time). After the year of rest, they were told to have seven cycles of 6 years of reaping and 1 year of rest. After that, they would again have another year of rest (a Jubilee Year). This entire cycle of 50 years is the example for the Israelites to follow.

In view of the instructions given in Leviticus 25, June’s point is valid. If you begin a cycle, and then that cycle comes to an end, you then start all over. This is common knowledge, and one of the best

<sup>3</sup> From “In response to *The Jubilee Cycle*,” by W. Glenn Moore, 11/01/2008, p. 12. At one time, Glenn posted this and his revised version of this study on his web site, but removed it in the spring of 2009. For reference purposes, we have decided to post his original study on our web site. It may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL:

<http://www.ponderscripture.org/PDF%20Files/Jubilees%20-%20Glenns%20Original%20Rebuttal%20to%20Our%20Study%2011-01-08.pdf>.

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illustrations of how this works is with the weekly cycle. Once “day 7” is over, “day 1” of the next weekly cycle begins. With the Sabbatical cycle, it starts with “year one,” then ends with “year seven.” Once “year seven” is over, the cycle begins again. However, the Sabbatical cycle is itself embedded within *another* cycle -- the Jubilee cycle -- making it a “cycle within a cycle.” The Sabbatical cycle doesn’t determine the Jubilee cycle; rather, the Jubilee cycle determines the Sabbatical cycles. If a Jubilee cycle consists of 50 years, then once that 50<sup>th</sup> year has ended, “year 1” of the next Jubilee cycle begins. As we know, “year 1” of the Jubilee cycle coincides with “year 1” of the first Sabbatical cycle. With the method proposed by Glenn Moore, “year 1” of the next Jubilee cycle begins before the previous Jubilee cycle has ended, which allows the year following the Sabbatical year (year 49) to coincide with “year 1” of the next Sabbatical cycle, thus preventing interruptions to the Sabbatical cycle. Glenn justifies this understanding with the words “[the Jubilee year is not actually stated to be an interruption of the Sabbatical cycles.](#)”

An argument that I have heard in opposition to the belief that the Jubilee cycle must interrupt the Sabbatical cycles is fact that this pattern provides a stark contrast between 50-year cycles and the weekly cycle. I have heard such remarks as, “Your proposal cannot be correct because ‘year 50’ disrupts the ‘cycle of sevens’!” Only when “year 50” and “year one” coincide is there a seamless transition from one Jubilee cycle to the next (i.e., no need to have “year 50” jutting out from the sabbatical cycle as it does with my illustration). The seamless transition from one Jubilee cycle to the next one without disrupting the sequence of the Sabbatical cycle, as the “Year 50 = Year 1” proponents assert, more closely mirrors the seamless pattern of the weekly Sabbath, which, as they claim, adds greater weight to their position. How do I answer this claim?

First of all, in view of the fact that Scripture offers no indication that “year 50” and “year one” coincide with each other, this only leaves room for the understanding that they do *not* coincide, which in turn leaves room for the understanding that the Jubilee year falls *outside* of the sabbatical cycle. Secondly, for those who insist that there must be a seamless transition from one Jubilee cycle to the next (without disrupting the Sabbatical cycle in the process), I can only ask, “Why?” For all we know, each Jubilee cycle represents the generation of mankind, with the final Jubilee “year” being representative of eternity, and eternity certainly falls *outside* of what we understand as “time.” Since that 50<sup>th</sup> year is only *representative* of eternity, this means we can only observe that Jubilee year here on earth during what is known as “the time side of eternity.” As such, once that year ends, we begin a new count to the next Jubilee ... a new countdown representative of the dawn of man moving towards the goal of eternal life. With each completed “countdown,” the cycle resets itself, so there is certainly no need for a seamless transition requiring “year 50” and “year one” to coincide with each other.

I might add that Glenn has actually expressed agreement with my view that the Jubilee year is representative of eternity. During one of our discussions on this topic, June asked Glenn, “Why did Yahweh specify the 50<sup>th</sup> year?”

To my surprise, Glenn answered, “Because He’s using the 50<sup>th</sup> year to represent eternity.”

I was so surprised to hear this response that I grabbed the first piece of paper I could find and immediately transcribed both the question and Glenn’s answer, along with the date on which he said it.<sup>4</sup> The reason I wasn’t expecting this response is because I don’t believe it makes sense to regard the Jubilee

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<sup>4</sup> The actual date was September 6, 2008.

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Year as representing eternity if that symbol of “eternity” is actually a part of an ongoing, continuously-repeating process that will eventually bring us to *another* “eternity.” In Glenn’s case, he believes that the Jubilee Year is not only the representation of eternity, but to him it is also the beginning of another cycle that will bring him to “eternity” again ... and again .... and again ... a continuously-repeating process. Glenn is left with no choice but to regard the Jubilee Year as being a part of an ongoing, continuously-repeating process because that 50<sup>th</sup> year also represents the 1<sup>st</sup> year of *another* cycle that will eventually bring him to the next “Year 50.”

Many believers would agree that “eternity” falls *outside* the continuously-repeating cycle of time, so if we can agree on this understanding, then it makes more sense to believe that when the Jubilee Year arrives, the previous cycle (the Sabbatical cycle) has ended and a new “era” has begun. The Jubilee Year is *outside* the boundaries of an otherwise continuously-repeating cycle, *not part of it!* This parallel fits the Scriptural model much more securely than the one proposed by Glenn, who wants to incorporate the Jubilee Year (eternity) with the next cycle (time). For Glenn, there are no actual interruptions, and in fact, his “eternity” *coincides* with “time,” since year 50 is *also* year one of the next cycle. Not only is such an understanding missing from Scripture, but it just doesn’t fit the pattern.

Glenn Moore addresses the above commentary as an “objection” in his web site’s “Answering Objections” section. Rather than addressing his response here, I have chosen to incorporate it into Part II of this study, “Objections to Glenn’s Answers to Objections.”

Although I believe I have sufficiently addressed the “exception to the rule” argument presented by those who promote a 49-year Jubilee cycle, I realize I haven’t offered the original explanation that Glenn Moore gave us, which is an excerpt from his book *The Jubilee Code*. This particular explanation, in my opinion, needs to be presented here because it incorporates additional concerns upon which we should focus some of our attention:

In the case of the repeating pattern of “sow six years . . . rest one year” the five years following the Jubilee year would simply be the “exception to the rule.” Actually, this was the same argument given by Rabbi R. Jehudah.<sup>5</sup> We know, for instance, that there is a rule that says “work six days” then “rest” on the seventh day—and it is in regard to the weekly cycle. However, this rule does not apply in situations which require the keeping of special feast days, which also contain “high-day” Sabbaths. These special Sabbaths interrupt the regular rule of “work six days. . . rest the seventh.” Some may argue that these “exceptions” (like the feasts) are specifically identified in Scripture, but the year of Jubilee is (supposedly) not specifically identified as an “exception.” However, I have to disagree: the year of Jubilee is specifically identified as an “exception” by its very mention in the text of Scripture, just as the other special Sabbaths are commanded to be kept on certain days of the Jewish calendar. And the fact that the cycles of 7 years is listed as repeating (whereas the 50th year is not listed as repeating) strongly implies that the main focus is on the cycles of seven (since a repeating cycle of 50 years is not mentioned in the text).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *A Treatise on the Sabbatical Cycle and the Jubilee*, p. 12, Benedict Zuckermann, Hermon Press, NY., 1866 (Reprinted in 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Cf., Moore, W. Glenn, *The Jubilee Code*, 2008, p. 62.

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I find the above “exception to the rule” explanation to be very confusing. First, Glenn explains that Rabbi R. Jehudah agreed with his argument that, following the year of Jubilee, there are only five years of sowing and reaping, not six. Of course, we all know that agreement with a Jewish rabbi does not necessarily validate anyone’s conclusion, especially when we learn that the majority of Jewish rabbis *disagreed* with R. Jehudah. Elsewhere in his study, Glenn tells us where he read Rabbi R. Jehudah’s argument:

One Rabbi, however, argued that the cycles were 49 years in length. In the Talmud, *Nedarim*, fol. 61a, and other related passages, R. Jehudah argues for a 49 year cycle without giving any specific reasons: “The year of Jubilee is included in the subsequent Sabbatical cycle” and in another statement “The fiftieth year counts in a twofold way.”<sup>7</sup>

As I alluded to above, we should bear in mind the fact that R. Jehudah did *not* represent the view of normative Judaism of his day.<sup>8</sup> Next, notice that Glenn, in the above commentary, conveys the impression that those of my persuasion may argue that the year of Jubilee is not identified as an “exception.” Since I have already previously written that the year of Jubilee *is* identified as an “exception,” and since I have previously cited this as further evidence validating a 50-year cycle, I’m not sure I follow Glenn’s line of reasoning that I must somehow believe that it is *not* an exception. The fact that it *is* an “exception” adds greater weight to the understanding that it cannot coincide with another year in the count! If this is the method we should employ when reckoning the weekly Sabbath, “Day 7” would also be regarded as “Day 1” each week. The application of such a system simply defies logic, both in normal reasoning and in approved Scriptural example. It begs the question, “*Why does Yahweh even refer to the Jubilee as ‘the fiftieth year’? Why not just say that the first year of the first Sabbatical cycle is the Jubilee?*”

As we have seen, in Glenn’s attempt to explain how one would implement his version of the Jubilee cycle, he focuses on the “exception to the rule.” According to Glenn, the five years of sowing and reaping following the Jubilee year (instead of the standard *six* years of sowing and reaping) would simply be the “exception to the rule.” Of course, as noted above, we should find it strange that Glenn’s

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, some authors have expressed their disagreement with Rabbi R. Jehuda in no uncertain terms. Henry Browne, M.A., in his book *Ordo Sæclorum: A Treatise on the Chronology of the Holy Scriptures*, published by John W. Parker, London, 1844, p. 288, writes, “The numerical definition of the jubilee is plain: it is the 50<sup>th</sup> or 7 x 7 + 1<sup>st</sup> year, just as the day of Pentecost is the 7 x 7 + 1<sup>st</sup> day from the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of unleavened bread. The jubilean period, each and every period, contains just 50 years reckoned from a fixed epoch, the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. It is surprising that any careful reader should have misunderstood these very plain expressions; yet such is the fact. It appears from the Talmud *Erichin*, fol. 12, 2. 13, 1. 32, 2. 33, 1. (cited by Ideler, 1. 503), that a certain rabbi Jehuda was the first to maintain, contrary to the established opinion and the plain sense of the words, that the jubilean period consists of 49 years, the jubilee-year being (as he said) itself the 49<sup>th</sup>, and identical with the 7<sup>th</sup> sabbatical year. His opinion, Ideler informs us, was subsequently adopted by the Gaonim, certain learned Rabbins, who lived after the completion of the Talmud, and expounded it in the academies over which they presided. Maimonides, however, rejects this view as a novelty: ‘The 49<sup>th</sup> year,’ says he, ‘is the sh’mittah (or sabbatical year), the 50<sup>th</sup> is the jubilee, the 51<sup>st</sup> is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the new sh’mittah.’”

Another author, Ray Summers, in his book *Chronos Kairos Christos II*, Mercer University Press, 1998, p. 283, wrote, “Zuckermann’s work (in chronological dating) has stood the test of time, but advances in Qumran studies and archaeological research call for revisions of some of his conclusions. His table identifying sabbatical years runs from 535/534 B.C. to A.D. 2238/2239. He comes down on the side of the view (that of Rabbi Jehudah) that the jubilee period consisted of forty-nine and not fifty years. (We need to call attention to the fact that not all Jewish groups in Jesus’ day, nor all of the later rabbis, followed Zuckermann’s view of a forty-nine year cycle for both sabbatical and *jubilee* observances; some preferred a cycle of fifty years.)”

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“exception to the rule” is nowhere addressed in Scripture. Certainly, if it is understood that there will always be a six-year interval between Sabbatical years, with the sole exception of how the Jubilee year constitutes the second year of a “double Sabbatical” and forces the cycle to reset itself the following year, we would not expect to find a clarification stating, “Be certain that you never shorten the years of sowing and reaping between a Jubilee year and the forthcoming Sabbatical year to five years.” Conversely, if Yahweh’s intent is for us to understand that there will always be five years of sowing and reaping between the Jubilee Year and the following Sabbatical year, then we *would* expect such a clarification. We would expect to read *something* expounding on the “fact” that the first year of the Jubilee cycle is *also* a Jubilee year. However, it’s just not there.

June, upon reviewing the above comments added an additional clarification to illustrate that Yahweh had to teach the Israelites how to observe *one* Sabbatical cycle before He could instruct them to observe *seven*:

Yahweh had to explain how to observe one cycle before He could tell the Israelites to observe *seven* cycles. Otherwise it would be like teaching someone how to crochet by simply saying, “Make fifty stitches for the first row and then start the second row.” You must first explain how to make a *single* stitch before telling someone that they are to make *fifty* stitches.

In the same way, it is unreasonable to conclude that Yahweh taught the Israelites how to observe one Sabbatical cycle consisting of seven years, only for Him to later expect them to “just know” that the first Sabbatical cycle of each Jubilee Cycle must consist of only *six* years.

### *The Testimony of Philo*

Similarly, in the writings of the ancients, such as Philo, a Jew who lived from approximately 20 BCE until 50 CE, we should expect to find a reference to the “five years of sowing and reaping” between the Jubilee Year and the upcoming Sabbatical year. However, Philo instead makes a reference to “*each six years’ incessant industry.*” There cannot be an “each six years of incessant industry” if the period between the Jubilee Year and the upcoming Sabbatical year only consists of five years. Notice what Philo wrote on this subject:

XXI. (104) And the lawgiver, who is a prophetic spirit, gave us our laws, having a regard to these things, and proclaimed a holiday to the whole country, restraining the farmers from cultivating the land **after each six years’ incessant industry.** But it was not only on account of the motives which I have mentioned that he gave these injunctions, but also because of his innate humanity, which he thinks fit to weave in with every part of his legislation, stamping on all who study the holy scriptures a sociable and humane disposition. (105) For he commands his people every seventh year to forbear to enclose any piece of land, but to let all the olive gardens and vineyards remain open, and all their other possessions, whether they be seed-land or trees, that so the poor may be able to enjoy the spontaneously growing crops without fear, in a greater, or at all events not in a less degree than the owners themselves.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> From *The Works of Philo*, “Special Laws, II,” by Philo of Alexandria, ch. XXI, sec. 104-105. This reference may be read online by accessing the following URL:

<http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book28.html>

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Certainly, if Philo understood that there are *five years of incessant industry* between the Jubilee Year and the subsequent Sabbatical year, he had ample opportunity to incorporate such a significant “exception” into his explanation pertaining to the Sabbatical year. However, he offered no such commentary. In fact, when making a reference to the Jubilee Year, Philo does not mention a period of 49 years, as the “Year 50 = Year 1” proponents do. Instead, Philo refers to it as a “period of fifty years”:

Therefore, the law invites the man who is able to recover his original property **within the period of fifty years**, or any one of his nearest relations, to use every exertion to repay the price which he received, and not to be the cause of loss to the man who purchased it, and who served him at a time when he was in need of assistance.<sup>10</sup>

While we do not deny that, even during Philo’s day, there appears to have been some disagreement within Judaism with regard to the duration of the Jubilee cycle, Philo’s testimony is significant because it can be demonstrated that his views were representative of the practices and beliefs of normative Judaism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, ch. XXII, sec. 114.

<sup>11</sup> For details demonstrating how Philo’s beliefs squared with the practices and beliefs of normative Judaism, please read chapter 12 of our study *Facing the Pentecost Controversy*, which may be read online by accessing the following URL: <http://www.ponderscripture.org/PDF%20Files/Facing%20Pentecost2.pdf>.