

9. The Gardens of Gilgal: Harvesting Fresh Produce in Time for the Feast of Tabernacles?

In our previous chapter, we addressed the fact that Glenn Moore has switched from believing that the Israelites entered the Promised Land *during* a Sabbatical year to his current stand that they entered the Land six months *before* the onset of a Sabbatical year. Our first item of concern was Glenn's redefinition of the term "very soon" from meaning "right away" to "six months later." We know that the Israelites conquered Jericho and Ai early into their sojourn in the Promised Land, and we demonstrated that, from all available evidence, this was accomplished within their first month of crossing the Jordan. We also covered the unlikelihood of Joshua waiting an additional four months to write the words of the Law on stones and how the author of the book of Joshua would most likely have informed us that Joshua read the Law to the people during the Feast of Tabernacles ... *if* that was when he read it to them.

Another item of consideration pertaining to Glenn's change of heart involves the actual command of *when* the Israelites were to begin observing the land sabbath. Glenn's modified belief conflicts with the understanding presented by the Scriptural mandate for the Israelites to rest the land a rest *when they entered it*. Glenn now believes the Israelites entered the Promised Land prior to a Sabbatical year, leaving them a full five months for planting and harvesting a garden (if they so desired) before the onset of his proposed Sabbatical year. Yet the command was, "*When you come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a rest unto Yahweh*" (Lev. 25:2). Did Yahweh mean an "immediate rest" or a "later rest" for the land? Although we have already reviewed this particular command several times in this study, it bears a little closer examination, especially since it is clear that Glenn doesn't believe that Yahweh intended an *immediate* rest. Here is what we read in Leviticus 25:1-2:

¹And Yahweh spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying,

²Speak 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.

We intentionally highlighted the word "then" because the obvious question that Glenn needs to answer is "When is *then*?" More specifically, since Glenn obviously believes "then" means six months later, he needs to answer *why* he believes the word "then" means six months later. Previously, when Glenn was persuaded that the Israelites *immediately* recognized a land rest, he had no problem believing that the word *then* meant "as soon as you enter the Land." Now, of course, he attributes a different understanding to the word "then."

We know that once the Israelites conquered Ai, they were able to enjoy a period of relative peace in their first encampment there (Gilgal) ... and with some precious seeds that they would have been able to procure, they could have set aside some time to plant gardens. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* expounds on this "free time" that the Israelites were now able to enjoy:

30 The building of this altar and the ceremony that followed were commanded by Moses (Deut 27 – 28). By this act Joshua acknowledged the Lord as the source of every victory and blessing. Like Abraham, who built altars wherever he traveled throughout the land, Joshua was claiming this territory in the name of the Lord. It was an appropriate time to worship now that Israel had established a foothold in the central highlands that divided the north from the south. (Compare Exod 17:15 where Moses built an altar after his victory over the Amalekites.)

Did the Israelites Wander in the Wilderness for Forty Years or Forty-One Years?

Because the narrative says nothing about any Israelite conquest of the area around Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, perhaps the inhabitants were friendly to Israel (this is the area that was subdued by Simeon and Levi, cf. Gen 34). Since the narrator only relates a few of the major battles, it is possible that the battle of Ai is symbolic of the conquest of the entire mountainous area in central Palestine. The Israelites could celebrate this ritual of covenant renewal in peace because God had placed the fear of Israel in the hearts of the natives. “Mount Ebal” became the central place of worship at this time in Israel’s history.¹

I’m not sure I agree with the above author’s supposition that the inhabitants of the area around Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim may have been friendly to Israel, especially since the Israelites weren’t there to establish peaceful relations with the locals. Nevertheless, I do agree that the Israelites had by this time gained a foothold in the Land and could now “get settled” in their encampment at Gilgal. There would certainly have been no shortage of work to do in constructing shelters and seeing to it there was plenty of water and food for everyone.

Speaking of food, this is one of the first things a family would focus on when getting settled. Planting a garden would help to assure them of sufficient provisions for the coming winter. However, as we covered in our opening segment, the question is raised as to whether or not planting a garden at that time was sanctioned by Yahweh. The commandment of Leviticus 25:2 states that when they entered the Land, *then* was the land to keep a sabbath to Yahweh. Since Glenn Moore believes the Sabbatical year didn’t start until the upcoming fall season, which would have been some five months after conquering Jericho and Ai, he must be of the opinion that “then” doesn’t mean “right away.” Let’s take a closer look and see if we can get a better understanding of Yahweh’s intent.

Someone might look at the text of Leviticus 25:2 and deduce that the word *then* doesn’t specifically say *when*, so Yahweh may have meant some unspecified date in the future. If you were to have this impression, then I have a question for you: “If you were one of those Israelites, would you have volunteered to be the first one to sow some seeds upon entering the Promised Land?” This is another question that Glenn really needs to answer. Since he is so willing to teach that “then” *really* meant “six months later,” would he have volunteered to be the first to plant a garden in Gilgal?

Someone else might review the Hebrew text of Leviticus 25:2 and conclude that the word “then” may or may not be understood as being a part of the text. After all, not all translations offer the translation of “*then shall rest*” for the Hebrew word *shâbath* (word #7673 in *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*). This word, by itself, is written שָׁבַת and means *to repose* or *to rest*. However, in the text of Leviticus 25:2, it is written out as וְשָׁבַתָּה (pronounced *veshavetah*). Adding the “waw” at the beginning of this word can convey the meaning of “*then shall rest*,” as it reads in *The Interlinear Bible*, translated by Jay P. Green. However, another interlinear Bible translates *veshavetah* “*and shall rest*,” which conveys a much more liberal understanding of “when” that rest shall occur. Here is a screen capture from Leviticus 25:1-2 as it appears in that online interlinear²:

¹ From *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 3, Frank E. Gæbelein, Gen. Editor, Commentary on Joshua, by Donald H. Madvig, ZondervanPublishingHouse, Grand Rapids, MI 1992, p. 294.

² Screen capture from the ISA (Interlinear Scripture Analyzer) Interlinear Bible, Copyright © 2002-2009 by Scripture4all Foundation - All Rights Reserved. This verse may also be viewed online by accessing the following URL: <http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/OTpdf/lev25.pdf>.

Did the Israelites Wander in the Wilderness for Forty Years or Forty-One Years?

דָּבַר	אֶל-בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאָמַרְתָּ	אֲלֵהֶם	כִּי	תָבֹאוּ	אֶל-הָאָרֶץ
dbr	bni - al	ishral	u-amrth	al-em	ki	thbau	e-artz - al
←	to	Israel	and-you-say	to-them	that	you ^(P) -are-coming	the-land
!							
אֲשֶׁר	אֲנִי	נֹתֵן	לְכֶם	וְשָׁבְתָה	הָאָרֶץ	שַׁבַּת	לַיהוָה
ashr	ani	nthn	l-km	u-shbthe	e-artz	shbth	l-ieue
←	giving	I	to-you ^(P)	and-she-ceases	the-land	sabbath	to-Yahweh
which							

Shown below is how this same verse appears in *The Interlinear Bible*, translated by Jay P. Green.³ Notice how Green translated וְשָׁבְתָה (*veshavetah*):

CHAPTER 25

1	1121	1696	559	2022	4872	3068	1696
2	וַיְדַבֵּר	יְהוָה	אֶל-מֹשֶׁה	בְּהַר	סִינַי	לֵאמֹר	: דָּבַר
	the	to	Speak	,saying	Sinai	in	Moses
	of sons				Mount		to Jehovah
							And
							spoke
	אֲשֶׁר	אֲנִי	נֹתֵן	לְכֶם	וְשָׁבְתָה	הָאָרֶץ	שַׁבַּת
	I	which	the	into	you	When	them
					to	say	and
							Israel
3	תִּזְרְעוּ	שָׁנָה	שֵׁשׁ	שָׁנִים	לַיהוָה	שַׁבַּת	אֶרֶץ
	shall	you	years	Six	to	a	land
	sow				Jehovah	sabbath	the
							shall then
							you to
							am
							giving

Again, the question at hand is, “Should the word וְשָׁבְתָה (*veshavetah*) be translated “and shall rest” or is “then shall rest” more accurate? More importantly, should we derive an understanding from the context of this verse that Yahweh did or did not mean an *immediate* rest to the land? Was it okay for the Israelites to plant gardens at Gilgal?

As we seek to answer these questions, there are some very important items of consideration that we would be well-advised to keep in mind. For one thing, we don’t read anything in the book of Joshua stating that the Israelites did any sowing upon entering the Promised Land. Someone may answer that they were too busy fighting their battles to worry about planting gardens. Yes, the soldiers would not likely have had time to till the land. However, this wouldn’t have precluded the family members that stayed behind from doing such a thing. Our point here, though, is that there is no record that anyone worked the land. Secondly, we have those “Jewish traditions” that the Israelites entered the Promised Land during a Jubilee Year, and we all hopefully know what that means – no sowing or reaping. If we ponder just these two items without considering any other options, I would have been *very afraid* to so much as turn over a shovelful of earth with the intent of putting in any kind of garden or crop!

³ From *The Interlinear Bible*, Hebrew-Greek-English, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1985, p. 110.

However, I believe another literal translation from the Hebrew text serves to even further raise the question of whether Yahweh would have allowed anyone to have worked the land upon crossing the Jordan. While we certainly do not agree with the translator’s decision to render the Creator’s name (יהוה, *Yahweh*) as “HASHHEM,” we do find his translation of the other parts of Leviticus 25:2 to be very interesting⁴:

Shemittah (The Sabbatical Year)

25:1 Vayedaber HASHHEM el-Moshe **beHar** Sinai lemor
HASHHEM spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai, saying,

2 Daber el-benei Yisra'el ve'amarta alehem ki tavo'u el-ha'aretz asher ani noten lachen **veshavetah** ha'aretz Shabbat I'HASHHEM
"Speak to the Children of Yisrael and say to them, when you come to the Land which I give to you the Land shall be at rest - a Shabbat for HASHHEM."

This, then, is the understanding the above translator has regarding Yahweh’s intent – that the land “shall be at rest” when the Israelites enter the land. You, the reader, must decide for yourself if the author has the correct understanding ... or not.

Another source up for consideration is the Septuagint translation. This version was translated from the Hebrew to Greek by seventy Hebrew scholars in the 3rd century BCE. The key word in the screenshot below is the Greek word *καί*, which can mean either “and” or “then,” depending on the context. It is word #2532 in *Strong’s Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, where a variety of possible applications are listed. Nevertheless, it should be of interest to our study that the translators consistently choose “then”:⁵

CHAPTER 25

A Sabbath Rest for the Land

	2532	2980—2962		4314	*	1722	3588
25:1	καί	ελάλησε	κύριος	προς	Μωσῆν	ἐν	τῷ
	And	the LORD	spoke	to	Moses	on	
3735	*	3004	2980		3588	5207	*
ὄρει	Σινᾶ	λέγων	25:2	λάλησον	τοῖς	υἱοῖς	Ἰσραὴλ
mount	Sinai,	saying,		Speak	to the	sons	of Israel!
2532	2046		4314	1473	3752	1525	1519
καί	ερεῖς		προς	αυτοῖς	ὅταν	εἰσέλθῃτε	εἰς
And	you shall say		to	them!	Whenever	you should go	into
3588	1093	3739	1473	1325	1473	2532	73
τὴν	γῆν	ἣν	ἐγώ	δίδωμι	ὑμῖν	καί	ἀναπαύσεται
the	land,	of which	I	give	to you	then	shall rest
1093	4521	3588	2962		1803	2094	4687
γῆ	σάββατα	τῷ	κυρίῳ	25:3	ἐξ	ἑτῆ	σπερεῖς
2land]	a Sabbath	to the	LORD.		Six	years	you shall sow

Both Hebrew and Greek texts, then, convey the understanding that the “Sabbath” rest was set in motion *as soon as the Israelites entered the Land*.

⁴ From *Hebrew Transliterated & English Translated Torah*, VaYikra 25:1 - 26:2, Copyright © 2000 - 2005 Orach Chayim Website by D'vorah. All Rights Reserved. This chapter may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: <http://headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh30.html>.

⁵ This screen shot is taken from *The Apostolic Bible Polyglot*®, an Interlinear Septuagint and Greek New Testament, Charles VanderPool, Editor-in-Chief, The Apostolic Press, Newport, OR, January, 2006, ISBN 0-9632301-1-5 Rev. 1.2, www.apostolicbible.com.