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During the Seventh Year Let the Land Lie Unplowed and Unused **23: 10-11**



This section concerning the Sabbatical year is introduced at this point to teach the lesson of kindness to the poor and to wildlife. For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused (23:10-11a). This was an extension of the Fourth Commandment (20:8-11). One aspect of **the Sabbath** was that **the Israelites** were to let their **land** lay fallow once every seven years. This was to remind **Isra'el** that **the land** was **God's**, and they were merely His tenants. Further details were given in **Leviticus 25:1-7, 18-23**. There were two reasons given for **the land** being given a **Sabbath**. First, it was humanitarian. The needy or those who had no inheritance would have something to eat. **Then the poor among your people may get food from it.** They probably rotated **the land** that was left fallow so that the needy would be able to gather **food** every **year**, not merely every **seventh year**. Secondly, the commandment also benefited wildlife, so **the wild animals** would have something to **eat**. **And the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove (23:11b).** From this mitzvah we learn principles of relying upon **God** in the same way that ceasing from work on the Sabbath teaches us to rely on **Him** rather than on our own efforts. More than that, we learn here that the produce of the Sabbatical year is to be left for **the poor** and **wild animals**. **God** is the **God** of both humanitarian and environmental concerns.

Once **the Israelites** were in Canaan, **they** would ignore **the Sabbath** rest for **the land** for 490 years; therefore, **God** would send them into captivity for 70 years in Babylon (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Gu](#) - **Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule**). One year



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of captivity for each **Sabbath** rest **Isra'el** had ignored.