



Jubilee 2025: pilgrims of hope

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The “jubilee” (Hebrew: לְבוֹי, yôbel), as an extraordinary temporal event, finds its biblical roots in the Book of Leviticus (25:8–31). Precisely, “jubilee” is the year at the end of the seven cycles of Shemittah (sabbatical years). A particular year, therefore, at the end of “seven weeks of years, that is, seven times seven years. These seven weeks of years will make a period of forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet [לְבוֹי, yovel] on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement, you shall sound the trumpet 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” (Lev. 25:8–10). The biblical text contains numerous legal prescriptions aimed at guaranteeing a correct religion and peaceful social coexistence. These include those on the jubilee that has direct relevance to the land: land ownership and rights, the restitution of land to its former owners, the forgiveness of debts, the liberation of slaves and prisoners, the rest of the earth, all under the light of divine mercy.

Chapter 25 opens with this prescription: “When you have entered the land that I am about to give you, you will honor me by letting the soil rest periodically”. Here it is worth emphasizing the close link between an event of a sacred and religious nature with the economic and social life of the people.

During the Jubilee Year the earth had to rest; therefore no sowing, no harvest.

However, the spontaneous products of the fields could be harvested. It was also prescribed that everyone should get back his property (land or house) if he had alienated it; and every slave of Jewish origin returned to freedom. The law thus provided for the periodic return of properties and people to their primitive state, so that neither absolute poverty nor slavery could become the definitive condition of a family or a person. There are many doubts about the effective implementation of this legislation. It is certain, however, that the institution of the jubilee fell into disuse after the Babylonian exile.



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