

Leviticus 25: 1-7

The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

Historical Context:

The Israelites have just been delivered from their slavery in Egypt and into the Promised Land given to them by God. Similarly to when God gave Moses the 10 Commandments, this passage is another instruction on how a nation of His people should live under their covenant with their Creator and how to maintain their distinct identity as God’s people.

Questions/Main Points:

- Why does God want the land to rest?
- What is the importance of sabbath?
 - For people?
 - For the land?
- Who does the Sabbath year provide for?
- Walter Bruegemann says “Sabbath is a practical divestment so that neighborly engagement, rather than production and consumption, defines our lives.” How do you think a Sabbath practice challenges the norms of our culture and way of life?
 - How might these counter-cultural practices serve as a prophetic witness to others?
- How does this relate to the values of environmental justice?
 - How does caring for the environment care for our communities as well?
 - How can environmental justice be practiced in the way we produce and consume food on a personal and systemic level?