
TAKE THE YEAR OFF!

EXODUS 23:10-13



We've all been through times when we're extra-busy and rest is rare. The demands of work take over our life with little or no time off. But even in normal times, work can dominate our thinking so much that we forget to look after ourselves and others. God is squeezed out in the stress. God saw that tendency in Israel too and, in Exodus 23:10-13, provided a special remedy for over-work or over-thinking about work. It was this. Take the year off!

LEARNING

REST IN YOUR KING (10)

For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow (10-11). God commanded Israel to take a year off work every seventh year to help them remember that as their maker, and as the maker of the land, he had the royal right to dictate how they lived and worked the land. In the seventh year, they were neither to sow their fields nor even reap what grew naturally. God was saying, remember and rest in your King.

WE CAN RUN AROUND AS KING,
OR WE CAN REST IN OUR KING.

But how would they eat?

REST IN YOUR PROVIDER (11A)

The seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow (11). What's the first thought you'd have if someone told you not to work for a year and just rest up? "How will we buy food? How will I pay the mortgage? What about school fees?"

The Israelites were just like us. Sure, their specific worries were different, but they would still worry about how to provide for their families. This, therefore, was a test, as to whether in resting themselves and their land, they would rest in God's provision. God was saying, Remember and rest in your Provider.

WHEN GOD SAYS "I WILL PROVIDE,"
DON'T SAY "NO, I WILL PROVIDE."

What did they do when resting? Did they just sit around doing nothing?

REST IN YOUR RESTER (11B-13)

While resting from physical work, they were to engage in spiritual work. It was a time to think about God – who he was, what he was like. They were to see the goodness and love of God in the rest-year. **The seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat (11).** God was caring for the poor and the animals as well. Verse twelve's instructions about the Sabbath Day also reveals God's desire to rest and refresh his people, the land, the poor, animals, servants, and immigrants. Remember and rest in your Rester.

WHEN WE'RE RUNNING, RUNNING, RUNNING,
GOD'S SAYING "REST, REST, REST"

LOVING

Imagine you were visiting Israel at this time. When you cross the border, it's totally silent and still. No workers in the field, no animals ploughing. You enter a village and everyone is sitting happily talking with one another. They seem to have all the time in the world. You ask, "What's wrong?" Everyone laughs. "Nothing wrong, everything right. We're resting in our God's sovereignty, his provision, and his rest. Come on over and we'll tell you more. Doesn't it remind us of the one who said, **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"** (Matt. 11: 28-30)

LIVING

Rest in your King, your Provider, and your Rester.
