



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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THE KINGDOM OF FREEDOM

By Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, "Seven weeks of years shall you count—seven times seven years—so that the seven cycles amount to forty-nine years. Then, on the tenth day of the seventh month, let the trumpet resound; on this, the Day of Atonement, the trumpet blast shall re-echo throughout your land. This fiftieth year you shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when every one of you shall return to his own property, every one to his own family estate. In this fiftieth year, your year of jubilee, you shall not sow, nor shall you reap the aftergrowth or pick the grapes from the untrimmed vines. Since this is the jubilee, which shall be sacred for you, you may not eat of its produce, except as taken directly from the field.... When you sell any land to your neighbor or buy any from him, do not deal unfairly. On the basis of the number of years since the last jubilee shall you purchase the land from your neighbor; and so

also, on the basis of the number of years for crops, shall he sell it to you.... It is really the number of crops that he sells you. Do not deal unfairly, then; but stand in fear of your God. I, the LORD, am your God."

LEVITICUS 25:1, 8-17

Reflection

After a week of perusing the complexities and mysteries of the Mosaic walk with God in the establishment of the Ten Commandments, The Dwelling of the tabernacle, and the calendar cycle of the great festivals and oblations, we are suddenly met with a miraculously simple and divinely balanced mandate for the Hebrew communities—the Year of Jubilee. When the people have received the foundations of a code for living and a structure for community identity, a spiritual center for worship in the form of a portable temple, and a yearly map for religious practice, they are instructed to maintain in perpetuity a model of ownership and justice in matters of property and personal possessions. If the people are to be centered in God, in managing their financial and commercial dealings, they must embrace a way of interacting that eliminates the danger of accrued wealth, that allows individuals to amass vast sums of money and tracts of land through inheritance and shrewd transactions. The Jubilee, celebrated each fifty years, returns each person to familial holdings and ‘estates.’ There is no amalgamation of riches, but an historically balanced way of maintaining familial holdings. Land purchases/ leases are pro-rated, based on the length of time remaining until the next Jubilee arrives. Granted, this does not homogenize the level of wealth among the people, but it does allow each to garner the fruits of what he has, and bars the ‘rich’ from padding their holdings without regard for others’ needs.

In this simple practice, the Hebrews are directed to center their dealings with one another within a context of recognition that all things ultimately belong to God, and are distributed by God. Human ingenuity must not try to circumvent the rights of others to have a stable foundation to plant and harvest, and to generate resources for family well-being. As the Commandments provide a platform for spiritual dependence upon God’s guidance, and the festival cycle provides a religious rhythm for daily focus on God’s presence throughout time, the Jubilee offers a centered rhythm for human enterprise and commerce. In sum, the community remains rooted in its foundations within God’s generosity and justice. Our contemporary models for financial systems and methods would do well to recognize that what we own and how we own it is best grounded in our appreciation for God’s gifts, not simply in the ways we can manipulate resources to our personal benefit. We may not return to ancestral holdings far away, but we can hold to a spirit of humble thanks in the presence

of the bounty that our lives hold, dealing and sharing accordingly.



Land of Jubilee
Photo by Fr. David C. Robinson, S.J.

For Pondering

- When you reflect on your own approach to wealth and possessions, do you find yourself looking for ways to share your bounty with others?
 - What do you feel are the current practices in 21st century business that lead us away from a sense of 'Jubilee'?
 - How might you change your lifestyle in a way that allows you to embrace the freedom of 'Jubilee' as you live and work in your own community?
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