

FAITH FORMATION SERIES

**“JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE:
Old Testament Roots, New Testament
Fulfillment, & Ecclesial Practice.”**



Oct. 30, 2025 - 7:00 PM



St. Lawrence Martyr Church
2210 Lawrence Avenue East, Scarborough,
ON M1P 2P9



Fr. Giuseppe G. Scollo



Outline

1. Ecclesíal Practíce.
 2. Old Testament Roots.
 3. New Testament Fulfillment.
- Questions & Answers.



Ecclesial Practice



In the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year 2025, Pope Francis writes: "For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" (cf. Jn 10:7, 9) of our salvation" (Spes Non Confundit 1).



Ecclesial Practice



In the praxis of the Church, the Jubilee is a relatively "recent" phenomenon. The first Jubilee Year was officially instituted by Pope Boniface VIII in AD 1300 and was meant to be celebrated every 100 years. The next Popes shortened it to 50 years, after the example of the Biblical Jubilee.



Ecclesial Practice



Ninety years later, Pope Urban VI introduced a cycle of 33 years (AD 1390), to underline the length of Christ's earthly life. In AD 1470, Pope Paul II established the current praxis (every 25 years) to allow each generation to participate in it at least once in a lifetime (making it more accessible).



Ecclesial Practice



The current praxis shows the Church as a Mother, who wants God to break into our time and to renew our lives & history, thus opening her spiritual treasures and making them available to all, offering the graces of conversion, renewal, forgiveness, & freedom, and guiding our steps towards our encounter with the Lord.¹

¹ See the Vatican Document for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, "What is a Holy Year: The History of the Jubilee."



Ecclesial Practice



Historically, the first Jubilee “was preceded by a journey of grace” (*Spes Non Confundit* 5 mentions the great “Celestinian Pardon” in L’Aquila, in 1294; the “Pardon of Assisi,” in 1216, and of “Santiago de Compostela,” in 1222). This link of the Jubilee Year with the experiences of journey and forgiveness has Biblical Roots.²

² See J.S. Bergsma, *Jesus and the Jubilee: The Biblical Roots of the Year of God’s Favor* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road, 2024). Cf., also, Id., *Jesus and the Jubilee: Reflections for the Jubilee Year 2025* (Catechetical Review).

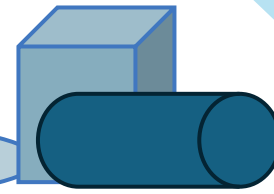
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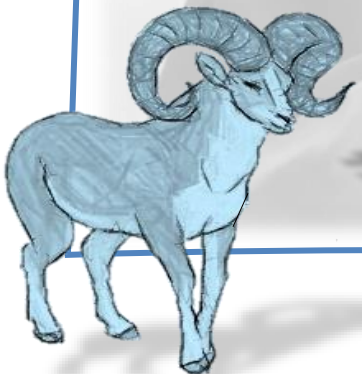




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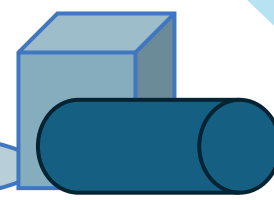


Despite its connection with "joy" (Lat. iubilare, i.e., its result or consequence; cf. Dt 16:9-11; Gal 5:22), the term "Jubilee" derives from the Heb. יוֹבֵל (yôbél), that is the "ram's horn" (also known as שׁוֹפָר, shôpár) blown to mark the 50th year (cf. Lev 25 & 27).

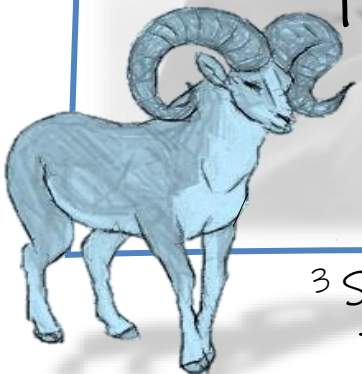




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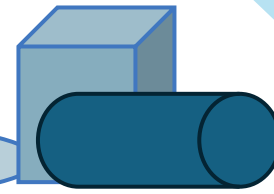
On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur),
the sound of the yôbél (or shôpár) heralded
the beginning of the Jubilee Year, as the
Book of Leviticus explicitly prescribes.³
Placed at the center of the Torah,
Leviticus is of central importance.



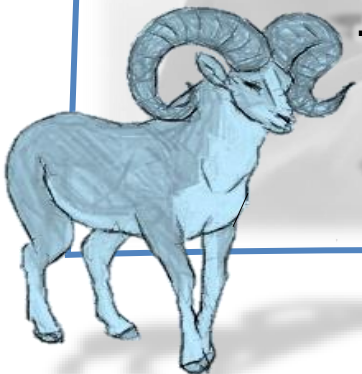
³ See J.E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 3 (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 427-34; and J.S. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill: 2007).



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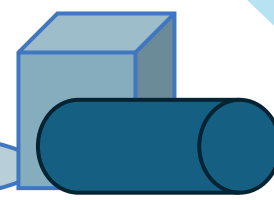


The Book begins with God's call of Moses (Heb. וִיקְרָא) and is His word about cult, liturgy, and holiness (cf. Lev 19:2; Dt 18:13; Mt 5:48; 19:21; and Lk 6:36). Therefore, the Jubilee is strictly connected with our holiness and our relationship with the Lord.





OT Roots

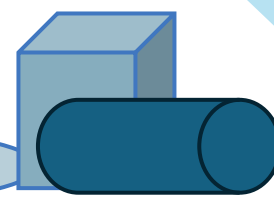


To understand Leviticus and Jubilee (Lev. 25) we must recall the context: the people have been freed from the slavery of Egypt and are now encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, still in the desert (דָּבַר > מִדְבָּר, Hos 2:16), with no land.

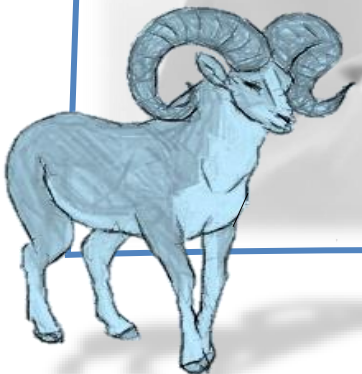


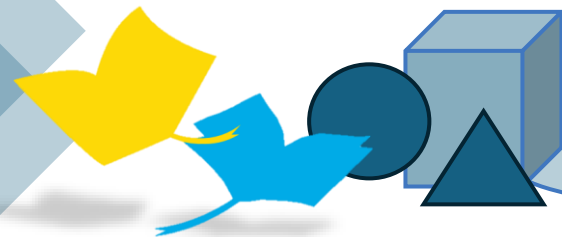


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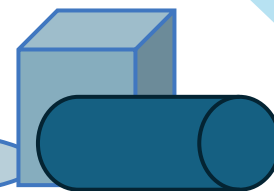


Israel's identity, existence, and holiness rest on the foundation of one experience: the Exodus (vs. the possession of a land), i.e., the power of God's Word to set his people free from all forms of slavery. In Lev. this experience is reinterpreted as separation/sanctification (Heb. קִדּוּשׁ), for a mission.





OT Roots

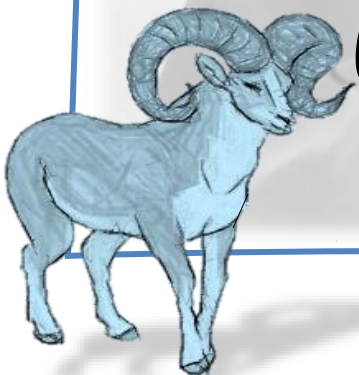


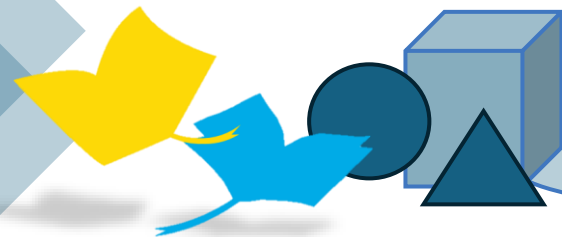
Just as the Israelites are called to holiness and freedom because they belong to the Lord (cf. Lev 25:42, 55) and can not behave like all other peoples (Lev 22:32-33), so too do Time and Land (Gen 1; Exod 19:5; Lev 25:23): God sanctifies / separates them (eg, Sabbath, Jubilee) and snatches them from the slavery to work (cf. Exod 1:14; 5:4-18).



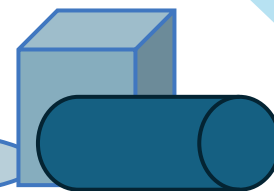
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The sound of the ram's horn (yôbél/shôpár)
evokes God's own voice on Sinai, which is
called "voice of shophar [קול השופר]" (Exod 19:19),
and is thus a memorial of the covenant
and of the "voice/sound" of God's mercy
(e.g., Yom Kippur, Jubilee, the ram God
provided in place of Isaac's sacrifice).

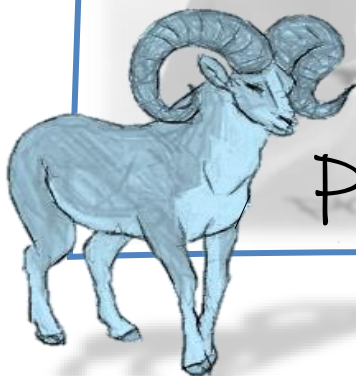




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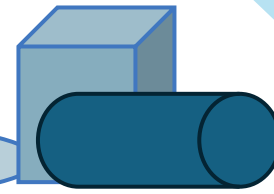


In Lev 25, the Jubilee is described as a special time of rest and freedom: the land must not be worked or sown (v. 11). It is thus a year of trust in God's grace and providence (v.v. 19-21; cf. Mat 6:25, 31-34), when God teaches us to be free from work, money, properties and sins (slaves had to be set free, properties returned, debts cancelled, sins forgiven).



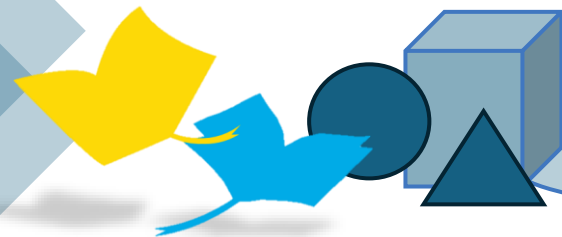


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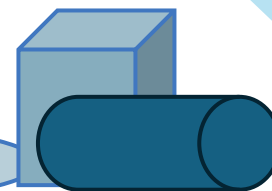


This was meant to reflect the founding and most important event of Israel's history: they were a bunch of slaves chosen by God to become a people set free. At the centre of the Jubilee is thus the Shema, the love of God and neighbour. It is a time of spiritual renewal (not only social-economical); an invitation to freedom.





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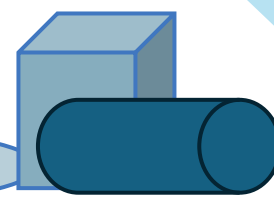


It was also a time to remember one's history and call to holiness, the memorial and renewal of one's covenant with God, a new beginning, a chance to encounter God in His Fulness of mercy, faithfulness, and providence (cf. No. 50 as $7 \times 7 + 1$, i.e. a Shabbat of Days, Weeks [Shavuot/Pentecost], or Years [Shemittah/Sabbatical Year & Jubilee]).





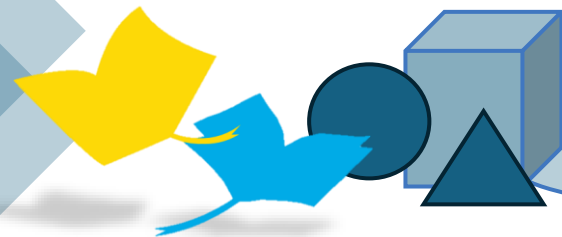
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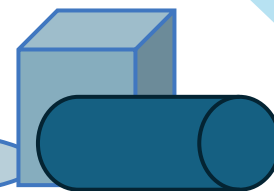
"You shall count seven weeks of years – seven times seven years... forty-nine years" (Lev 25:8) and "You shall treat the fiftieth year as sacred" (Lev 25:10). Both Jewish and Church Fathers explain the No. 50 of the Feast of Shavuot as 49 (the perfect number: 7x7) +1, which is the eschatological day of the resurrection, the day of the Messianic Rest, the 8th day, the fullness, taken from Paradise, from eternal life.⁴



⁴ See, e.g., Philo of Alexandria, *The Special Laws* 2:30; Gregory Nazianzen, *Festal Oration on Pentecost* 41:2; and Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 222-86, 319-32.



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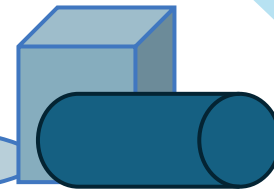


The gift of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) is in fact
the crowning of the entire work of salvation ac-
complished by God in Christ (without the Spirit
of the Risen Christ living within us the event of
the Resurrection cannot be made present in the
Church). The 50th Day of Easter is the Fullness
of God within us through the gift of His Spirit.





OT Roots



Analogously, the 50th Year (Jubilee) celebrates the Fullness of Times, the time of the Messiah (cf. Dan 9:24-25, in which Gabriel prophesies to Daniel the coming of a מְשִׁיחַ נָגִיד, lit. "an anointed ruler," after seventy sevens/weeks of years, i.e., 490 years, from Cyrus' edict to rebuild Jerusalem, in 538/7 BC, after the exile).⁵



⁵ The 50th day was also called עֵצְרָת, lit. "closing, conclusion." See, e.g., Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 3:252; & Mishnah, Chagigah 2:4.

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NT Fulfillment



Prophetically, the Jubilee anticipates the coming of a time of universal salvation. In Luke's Gospel, in the Synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus announces the coming of a "Year" of grace from the Lord, "which is a description of the year of Jubilee,"⁶ its very fulfillment (Lk 4:16-21).



⁶ NET, n. 70, in Luke 4:19. Cf. Daniélou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, 222-86, 319-32.



NT Fulfillment



His whole mission is described here as a proclamation of "liberty" to captives and "freedom" to the oppressed.
In Matthew's Gospel, the entire history of salvation is divided into 3 periods of 14 (7+7) generations each (Mt 1:1-17; cf. Lk 3:23-38 gives 77 names): Jesus inaugurates the 7th series of 7 generations!





NT Fulfillment



In other words, He is the beginning of a new eon,
a new life (cf. Mt 11:29). He Himself is the Jubilee,
the Year of Grace, the New Covenant. He inaugurates
the final Shabbat of Israel's generations, for He is the
synthesis and fulfillment of the entire OT
(cf. Mt 5:17). Time has been filled with holiness!





NT Fulfillment



Jesus Christ himself is, therefore, the final, everlasting and definitive Jubilee, the Fullness of Times, the ram which God provided for us to save us from death (cf. Gen 22:11-14), who took our place & died for us (cf. 1Jn 2:2; 4:10), the "voice/sound" (shôpâr) of God's mercy.





NT Fulfillment



Christ is the "door" to Heaven that has been opened for us (cf. Mt 3:16; Jn 10:7, 9; Rev 19:11)!
We can now enter eternity and reach this fullness of time that is symbolized by the number 50, and this is possible because Everlasting Life/Sabbatical Rest Itself has broken into our time (Heb 4:9-11a).





NT Fulfillment



In this Holy Jubilee Year of Hope, the Door is still wide open, so too are the treasure chests of Heaven. Let us enter this Fullness of Time. Let God's fullness pervade us (cf. Lev 26:11-12; Eph 2:22). May we live our lives with freedom, for Christians have been set free from all bonds of earthly slaveries (cf. Rom 8:15).





NT Fulfillment



Peter's Successor, the Holy Father, has unlocked the Holy Door for us in Christ's name (cf. Mt 16:19; Rev 1:18).

The gates of mercy and righteousness are lifted; our bonds have been broken (cf. Ps 24:7-10; 115:16; 118:19).

Let us enter the doors of salvation, the Jubile
the Communion of Saints, the Holy Trinity. Amen.





NB: This presentation is mainly based on the Italian podcast, “Alle sorgenti del Giubileo (Nov. 26, 2024),” in *Alle sorgenti della fede in Terra Santa: Ciclo di catechesi sulle radici ebraiche della fede* condotto da Don Francesco Giosuè Voltaggio (Episode 134), available online at: <https://allesorgentidellafede.com/>.