

# What Is the Shemitah?

*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: Here are transcripts of a two-part radio interview by Tom McMahon of The Berean Call Ministry with Dr. David James of the Alliance for Biblical Integrity Ministry. The interviews were a discussion about Jonathan Cahn's book, The Mystery of the Shemitah. Although these interviews were conducted several months ago, they answer many questions that I am getting from people as September 2015 approaches – the supposed time of judgment for violating Shemitah Law). You can listen to the two interviews by going to the following links, which are also at the Berean Call website:*

Part 1 - <http://tinyurl.com/qgl6hkk>

Part 2 - <http://tinyurl.com/ntdyryx>

## Part 1

September 26, 2014

**Program Description:** Tom welcomes his guest David James of the Alliance for Biblical Integrity as they discuss Jonathan Cahn's latest book *The Mystery of the Shemitah*.

**Gary:** Welcome to *Search the Scriptures 24/7*, a radio ministry of The Berean Call featuring T.A. McMahon. I'm Gary Carmichael. Thanks for joining us. In today's program, Tom welcomes Dave James, author of *The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction?* Now, along with his guest, here's TBC executive director Tom McMahon.

**Tom:** Thanks, Gary. Today we're going to be discussing an extremely popular book that's related to another very popular multimillion-dollar selling book that we addressed last year. It's titled *The Mystery of Shemitah* authored by Jonathan Cahn. Now, his other related book, which was atop the New York Times Best Sellers list, is *The Harbinger* published by Charisma Publishers. Our guest who will give us his thoughts on the book is Dave James, and he's the author of *The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction?* which took issue with Jonathan Cahn's bestseller.

Welcome, Dave.

**Dave:** Thanks, Tom! Always good to be with you.

**Tom:** Yeah! Dave, let's start with a summary of *The Harbinger* and what you took issue with.

**Dave:** Well, *The Harbinger* – just the word “harbinger,” a lot of people don't even know what that is. The word harbinger means an omen or a sign...

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Dave:** ...and the underlying premise of *The Harbinger* is that in Isaiah 9:10 there are nine identifiable harbingers or signs or omens that happened – or things that happened in ancient Israel. Isaiah 9:10 is directed toward the northern kingdom of ancient Israel, God warning them that judgment was coming, and that to them it would come through the Assyrians.

**Tom:** Dave, I just want you to underscore the point. You said, “...God warning them that judgment is coming.” You see, this was not a warning to repent or to turn around, this was a judgment that God was – He's declaring a judgment to come, right?

**Dave:** Right. They had gone too far, and so He was preparing to send the Assyrian army in to execute His judgment.

**Tom:** Right. So again, I'm jumping a little ahead, but I want our listeners to understand that, because when you get to the point of the supposed parallel between 9/11 and God's judgment against the northern kingdom of Israel, there's no warning to repent in Isaiah:9:10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17... you know, on and on, right?

**Dave:** Right, right. The judgment is at hand.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Dave:** Absolutely. Well, so to continue then, Jonathan Cahn believes that he has found nine of these signs in Isaiah:9:10 – which I would take issue whether there's actually nine there, and whether they're even signs at all...

**Tom:** Right.

**Dave:** ...but beyond that, he believes that those things that happen to ancient Israel have been replaying on American soil, beginning with the terrorist attacks of 9/11 when the planes went into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon and crashed, and the fourth plane crashed in Pennsylvania, and he was saying that this was God's warning. And then he enumerates nine different things that he believed that ancient Israel suffered, or happened in ancient Israel, and said exactly those same things have been happening in America. So his entire book is built upon that premise, and his goal – his stated goal – is to, in light of that, get Americans to repent and turn back to God, the One whom they have abandoned that was once dedicated to God and now America's turned her back. And so this is a warning shot, a shot across the bow, if you will, to America.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm. Now, Dave, I don't know anybody – Bible-believing Christian or otherwise – who doesn't recognize that America needs to repent. [Laughs] I mean, look, you know the way we're going; it should be obvious to everybody, where obviously as a nation that, you know, we don't have a covenant with God, but we are – we have been for the most part a Christian nation, and we're getting so far away from that. I mean, even the church within America has issues or serious problems along that line. So the purpose of your book, and because we published it – that's why I'm speaking on behalf of the publisher – was to consider something that supposedly used the Bible, used the Scriptures, [and] used prophecy to more than imply that America needs to repent – we agree with that, but you cannot abuse the Scripture. You can't distort the Scriptures to make your case. It's a matter of the end justifies the means, and in this case what you've been writing about, what you're saying, and what we agree with is that the means are fallacious – they're in serious error. So you can't be a Berean – you cannot judge these things by the Scriptures if you just buy what Jonathan Cahn has written [and] what he has to say without checking it out.

**Dave:** Look, that's right. You know, an illustration just occurred to me as you were talking: it's not a lot different than saying somebody who's living in sin is eating an apple and he chokes on it, and then somebody goes to Genesis 3 and says, "Because on the day that you eat of this fruit, you will surely die," somebody tries to say, "Okay, this was a warning to that person." It's really not any different than that.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Dave, so that's our concern, your concern with *The Harbinger*. But now we have his new book *The Mystery of Shemitah*. Well, first of all, you gave us a good definition of harbinger – what about Shemitah? What's that all about?

**Dave:** Well, the Hebrew word Shemitah actually means "release," and so what happened is just as in the law God set aside the seventh day of the week as the day of rest, He also set aside the seventh year as a year of rest for the land, so there was not to be any planting or harvesting during the seventh year. And in preparation for that, it was actually a year of blessing, because in the sixth year He caused the land to produce three times what it normally would so that it would carry them through the seventh year and then on into the eighth year until the harvest came. So another thing that happened was that at the last day of that seventh year, debtors were to be released from the debts that they owed to their creditors, whoever they had borrowed from was to wipe the slate clean, and so they were released. That's where the word Shemitah comes from: they were released from their debt. And so that began to be applied to that day, and then applied to the whole year, that seventh year. So when we talk about Shemitah, we're actually talking about the Sabbath year, one year every seven years when the land would rest and debts would be wiped clean.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm. And then to take it just a step further, after 49 years of that there would be a jubilee year, which is related to this law that God had laid out for Israel. So now all of that... Dave, God has a covenant with Israel, so this is part of his covenant: laying out the laws for them, which they were to obey and follow. What happened when they did not follow those laws?

**Dave:** Well, whenever they didn't follow those laws, then there would ultimately be judgment either sooner or later, and as it turns out concerning ancient Israel, the biggest problem was that in ancient Israel and what brought judgment was the fact that they had turned from the God of Israel to worship idols. That happened because they married foreign wives from pagan nations, and they brought the idol worship into Israel. And as a result, Israel abandoned observing the law, and they abandoned observing the seventh or Sabbath year, the Shemitah year...

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Dave:** ...and they did that for 70 cycles for 490 years. So what happened was that God ultimately took them into captivity into Babylon, forcing the land to be fallow, or to not produce anything, for those 70 years that Israel had missed. So it was a long-term judgment that God imposed upon Israel.

**Tom:** Now, Dave, I don't want to get ahead of myself, but you addressed this in *The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction?* and I believe it was chapter 14 – didn't you deal with Shemitah in that entire chapter?

**Dave:** Well, yeah, I did. There is a corresponding chapter in *The Harbinger* called *The Mystery of the Shemitah*, so the title of the new book is the same as one of the titles in *The Harbinger*. And a lot of times, people – when they think about *The Harbinger*, they think about those nine harbingers and the terrorist attacks of 9/11, but that's really only about half or two-thirds of the book, and that's called the "first shaking." The second half of the book, of *The Harbinger*, has to do with the financial collapses in 2001 and 2008 that he says are tied to this seven-year cycle that was imposed upon Israel. So once again, he's taking something that was exclusively and uniquely given to Israel and he says that God is now judging America according to that seven-year cycle.

**Tom:** Now, let's go back to a point that you brought up in the book – and he, Jonathan Cahn, continues to affirm this in lots of different ways – and that is that America has – or let's say God has a covenant with America. Does God have a covenant with America?...

*To read this article in its entirety, go to:*

<https://www.theberean.org/content/what-shemitah-david-james-part-1>

## Part 2

October 3, 2014

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**Tom:** Now, last week, we were zeroing in on some issues related to Jonathan Cahn's book, as I mentioned, *The Mystery of Shemitah*. But we're talking about some facts that – as you pointed out last week – that this book is not presented as fiction, or even part-fiction. This deals with, supposedly, God imposing the law of Shemitah – not the same way, but somehow it has an effect...it's going to have an effect on the United States with regard to its economy. Now, Jonathan Cahn said in this book that the economic downturn of 2008 was the "worst crash in the history of America," and I'm quoting. Dave, is that true?

**Dave:** Well, it depends on how you want to spin your statistics. Quoting someone else, I don't know who, but someone has said that if you torture statistics long enough, they'll confess to anything, and that's kind of what's happened here. That is true in terms of points, but "points" really doesn't mean anything in and of itself. What matters is percentages, and what you find is not only in 2008 but the other one that he notes in 2001 – neither one of those fall into the top ten in terms of percentages of the top...the most significant market crashes. So it's spinning the statistics to support your theory.

**Tom:** Well, again, you see, this catches people...call it their "fright zone." When you say "the worst crash in the history of America," not only is it not in the top ten (and in some cases related to what he said, it's not even in the top 20), but in terms of its impact on America...yeah, we had a recession for a while, but we had things in place that kept it from being anything like the stock market crash of 1929.

You know, as I mentioned last week, I ran these things by a man whose life is, you know, as an investment counselor. He's a historian of all this stuff, and he said there's no way what happened in 2008 even comes close. Yeah, some people were hurt by it, a few people, but nothing like 1929. And then he said even 1985, which somehow got lost in this approach by Jonathan Cahn, was actually far worse than 2008.

**Dave:** And you know, one of the things that concerns me is that I actually did a search on the word "collapse" in his book, just because it was coming up so many times...

**Tom:** Mm-hmm.

**Dave:** [laughs] ...and there are dozens and dozens and dozens. He just uses the word "collapse, collapse, collapse," and "wiped out," and all of this – and not just for America, but worldwide. And the fact is there's a difference between a downturn or even a steep fall – even a crash – and collapse. Those are two totally different things, and nothing came close to collapsing.

**Tom:** Mm-hmm. Dave, you know, right away there may be people who didn't hear our first session – didn't go through the first program – but right away they're saying, "Oh, these guys are attacking Jonathan Cahn. They don't recognize that, you know, America is going south morally, and all of that, and we need to repent."

**Dave:** Folks, yes we do. Absolutely. But as we mentioned last week, you cannot abuse the Scriptures to support a view that...

*To read this article in its entirety, go to:*

<https://www.thebereancall.org/content/what-shemitah-david-james-part-2>