

Bible Commandment Marks End of Shemitah

The Shemitah year in Israel has drawn a lot of interest from Christians around the world. Some have linked the agricultural practice to cataclysmic world events throughout history.

Israelis marked the official end of that period on Wednesday by following a unique biblical command.

It happens once in seven years. Tens of thousands of Israelis gathered at the Western Wall at Sukkot to listen as rabbis and political leaders read and sing the Word of God to them.

The reading signals the official end of the Shemitah year when Jewish people let their farmland lie fallow.

Deuteronomy 31 says, *"At the end of every seven the Feast of shall read this law before all they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law."*

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin read from Psalm 122:

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces."

The crowd listened and prayed and recited scriptures after the rabbi.

Earlier in the day, thousands of Jews from Israel and around the world came to the Western Wall to celebrate another biblical tradition that takes place three times a year.

It's called the Birkat HaCohenim—the priestly blessing. God commanded Aaron to bless the Jewish people, saying:

"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

CBN News asked participants why they came.

"It's a very special thing to be able to get a blessing from so many cohanim [priests] and the blessing really comes from God and goes through the cohanim to the people," one man who brought his family from Muncie, New York, told CBN News.

"It's very important because these people who are blessing us are holy people and they're bringing the blessings from God down to us," an 18-year-old woman from Montreal, Canada, said.

"I just had this awakening and arousing. I felt very inspired to be here with thousands and thousands of Jewish people on this holy day," Rabbi Chaim Dalfin from Brooklyn, New York, said.

And even at the end of a long, hot day, there was still enough energy for rejoicing.