

Into the Promised Land - Joshua's Story
Lesson #37
“Miscellaneous Civil Laws” - [Deuteronomy 25 <> 26]
•HANDOUT•

► This lesson [#37]: Chapter 25 begins with Moses switching to the subject of Civil matters. He begins to deal with the principles of limiting corporal punishment, effectively dealing with family matters, which includes how working animals are to be treated, and how God commands justice for all, not for just God's covenant people.

► Chapter 25 opens with a Law which set a limit on corporal punishment. Israel was to be a nation that was governed by law. So, when there was a dispute it needed to be brought before a judge in a court of law. The judge had the God-given responsibility to determine who was righteous and who was wicked, and to make a determination what the guilty party should suffer.

But there were limits set. In the case when a guilty man was sentenced to a beating, the maximum number of blows was to be forty.

Paul reported in the New Testament that he received this sentence five different times, given to him from the Jews who hated him for his powerful and compelling teaching about Jesus. He was sentenced to these beatings when the Jewish leaders realized Paul's Gospel message was making inroads with the Gentiles and they were coming to faith in Jesus, which, in turn, were having a profound effect on the early church. But what Paul reports is that he received forty stripes minus one, which was the maximum law of the day.

Q. Deuteronomy clearly states that the limit was forty strikes. Why was this changed so that by New Testament times, it was reduced to “forty stripes minus one?”

► Verse 4 gives us the next command law: The Ox was not to be muzzled while it treaded out the grain. To do so would be cruel. Ox were forced to walk in a circle for hours on sheaves of wheat in order to separate the seed grain from the stalk. The ox should be allowed to eat some of the wheat as it worked, thus providing the animal nourishment and strength to carry out the task required of it.

Q: How does Paul use this principle in the New Testament? [Ref: 1 Corinthians 9:9-10]

► Verses 5-10 deal with family matters. This is about the Levirate marriage. Simply stated, if a man dies without leaving descendants to inherit and to carry on his name, it became the responsibility of one of his brothers to take the deceased brother's widow as his wife and perform the duties of a husband with her. Any child born to the union of the widow and the brother would be considered the deceased man's offspring and not that of the biological father's. If the deceased brothers, or closet relative, refused to do this, there would be publicly shamed because it was considered a great tragedy for a man to die without leaving descendants. Perhaps this is why God was making an exception to His prohibition regarding incest in marriage, which we covered in Deuteronomy 24, Lesson 36. The concepts of the Levirate marriage was not peculiar to Israel, but was a well accepted practice throughout the ancient world.

Q: What is the most well known example of a Levirate marriage in the Bible?

► What follows in Verses 11-12 is most difficult! A woman was to be shown no pity if she interfered in a physical fight her husband was having with another man by grabbing hold of the other man's private parts. Her punishment was to have the offending hand cut off.

Q: What is the Deuteronomic law trying to accomplish with this edict?

► Verses 13-14 commands an Israelite to be honest in all his business dealing, especially when it comes to weights and measures. It was unlawful to have differing weights: a large stone for buying, which would give the buyer more goods for one's money; a small stone for selling, which would give less for the money. Israelites were to use the same stone measurement and weight for all transactions.

The Lord makes his feelings clear on this matter: He detest those who deal dishonestly, but will reward those who are honest with long life in the land He is about to give them.

Q: What does Jesus teach about this? [Ref: Luke 6:38]

► Deuteronomy 25:17-19 • "Never forget what the Amalekites did to you as you came from Egypt. They attacked you when you were exhausted and weary, and they struck down those who were straggling behind. They had no fear of God. Therefore, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies in the land he is giving you as a special possession, you must destroy the Amalekites and erase their memory from under heaven. Never forget this!

Q: Who are the Amalekites and what happened when they attacked Israel as they were coming out of Egypt?

Q: Were the Amalekites ever completely blotted out of history?

Moses has now completed his discourse on the miscellaneous laws and ordinances. Moses now gives instruction for Presenting the Firstfruits and Tithes to the Priest. Chapter 26 opens with: "And it shall be, when you come into the Land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance ...

Q: Why does Moses begin this chapter by restating, yet once again, that this is the Land God is giving Israel as an inheritance?

Q: Why is the Promised Land referred to as Israel's inheritance?

Chapter 26 opens with the admonishment that words of Thanks & Praise are to occur
At the Harvest when Firstfruits & Tithes are given ...

► These admonishments went into effect once the people were settled in the land, each leader of a family was to take some of the first produce from the soil to the place where the Lord had designed for the tabernacle to rest – the place that was to be a “dwelling for His name.” Although Numbers 18 spoke of the firstfruits that were to be brought regularly to the priests, the firstfruits described here in Deuteronomy 26 seem to be a special offering of firstfruits, given from the very first harvest produced in the Promised Land.

The words of thanks and praise they were instructed to say when they gave this special offering, in essence, was an elaborate declaration that reviewed Israel's history as just a few people went down to Egypt, their oppressed and miserable sojourn there and how the Lord God brought them out 400 years later, and they were a great number. The words of individual thanks and praise end with the statement that each family within each tribe had indeed received their part of the land as an inheritance according to the promise of God.

Each basket of first fruits was presented to the priest who would take it and place it in front of the altar on behalf of the Israelite.

The instruction ends with: *“So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite, and the stranger who is among you.”*

Q: What was it about this elaborate statement that has led scholars to believe this firstfruits was different from the annual offering of firstfruits which are mandated in Exodus and Leviticus?

Instruction for the giving of the Tithe ...

► Added to Israel's first time giving of the first fruits was the rule for giving the tithe to support the Levites and the underprivileged; which was to be done every third year. This benefited the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows. It is believed this triennial tithe was presented in each donor's town, rather than carrying it to the Sanctuary and then returning it to the towns for distribution. This “tenth” or “tithe” is referred to as “the sacred portion” was not viewed as a secular tax for the welfare of the poor, but as an act by the hand of the Lord, and was therefore, considered as holy and its use must not be abused.

When giving this tithe, there was a declarative prayer-type vow each person was to recite as they gave. In part, the prayer of declaration said:

“I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them. I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for an unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'”

Q: Why would the Lord want each person to make this declaration when giving the triennial tithe?

► **Deuteronomy 26:16-19** • The LORD your God commands you, this day, to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him.

And the LORD has declared this day that you are His people, His treasured possession as He promised, and that you are to keep all His commands. He has declared that He will set you in praise, fame, and honor, high above all the nations He has made, and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as He promised.

Q: Why is it ironic that Moses cautions Israel to “carefully observe” everything God has commanded Israel?

Q: Is this the first time Israel has promised to obey God and walk in His ways? And is this the first time that God has called Israel His treasured possession, a people holy unto the Lord?

Chapter 26 concludes the discourse Moses began in Chapter 12.

**This discourse gave the specific stipulations for
the Covenant-Treaty God made with Israel.**

The purpose of these stipulations was for Israel to be a holy people unto the Lord.

Moses has served as the Covenant's Mediator thru-out the discourse.

Moses now gives instructions for a special altar to be set up.

This is where we will begin next time.



Next Time • Lesson #38
“The Special Altar”

