

## Why Should We Study the Statutes?

### Chapter 1

*"In every age, transgression of God's law has been accompanied by the same result... As it was then, so it is today... In the last days of this earth's history, God's covenant with His commandment-keeping people is to be renewed." Review & Herald, Feb. 26, 1914.*

Lately, statements like the above have seemed to be inviting an ever-increasing number of honest Adventists to review and study. The anti-Semitism, which has plagued Protestantism for generations, may have distorted our view of God's design for a Remnant more than most of us realize. The laws of Moses have been, for the past three hundred years, accepted in the Christian community as applying only to ancient Israel; so, why study them now? Of what significance could they possible have for the end-time people of God?

On the other hand, how could God have outlined a life-style for a nation He called His own, and then decided all that he had previously outlined wasn't good enough, so He'd try something else? God is not as man; God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Dichotomies, between my understanding of God's dealing with His people in the past, and what was sometimes presented as truth for the present, began to appear. These demanded honest research, to know God's choice life-style now. Certainly, if He was interested enough to spell out the details for His chosen remnant then, why not now?

If the words of God were committed to Israel - and they were (Romans 3:1,2) - and these oracles, which had been delivered at Mount Sinai, were to be passed down to us (Acts 7:38), certainly we need to know those oracles. Peter, in the New Testament, admonishes Christians to be focused and persuasive in sharing the Gospel, *"As one who is delivering the oracles of God,"* (1 Peter 4:11 - *The Twentieth Century New Testament*). Peter compared the earnestness of preaching the Gospel with the power with which God spoke the Law at Sinai. Both the Law and the Gospel are the oracles of God.

Another reason for studying God's statutes, His oracles, ordinances, and commandments was that Jesus, Himself, had said, *"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"* (Matthew 5:17, 18). The Greek word translated "law" in these verses, according to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, means:

"to parcel out,"  
 "law (through the idea of prescriptive usage),"  
 "(regulation), spec. (of Moses [includ. the volume]; also of the gospel.)"

Jesus was saying that no utterance from God - an oracle by definition, is an utterance of God - will ever be nil, or void in this life. In these verses Jesus is clearly referring to the *Torah*. Thus, according to Jesus, no prescriptive law, or oracle given by God to Moses could be changed in any detail, until all has been fulfilled.

That little word "fulfilled" has often come into question. This book will not exhaust all the objections fired at Bible students who choose to "Remember," "Keep," and "Do." The explanation here will be simple, and it is this: From the reading of Matthew

5:17, 18, we know that "fulfilled" cannot have the effect of taking something away. Even if we reason that "fulfilled" means "completed," there are some aspects of the great controversy, which have not yet been completed. An example is that the provision for our salvation was completed at the cross; however, the eradication of sin was not. *"Not one word that has proceeded from the mouth of God will become void until prophecy becomes history."* Review and Herald, Feb. 27, 1900, (pg.160) Emphasis supplied.

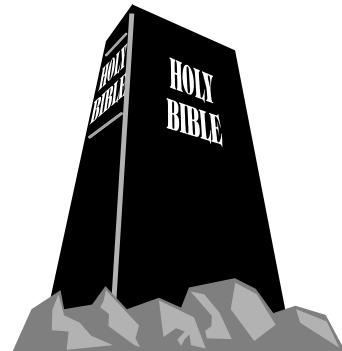
We, as Sabbath-keepers, have always understood that the blood sacrifices pointing to the death of our Savior were fulfilled at the Cross. But Protestant pressure, backed by Catholic tradition, has persuaded well-meaning Sabbath-observers to conclude that the **whole Torah** was fulfilled, or "completed," at Calvary. This assumption is simply not Biblical. Too many evidences suggest otherwise.

Psalms 19, verses 7-10, 14, have often been sung in praise to God: *"The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul [I want to be thoroughly converted]; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple [I long for that wisdom]. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart [Do you want your heart to be in the state of 'rejoicing'?]; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean [it purifies] enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether...More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."*

How could anything so perfect be useless? 1 Cor.13:10 reminds us that, *"When that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect will be done away."* Since the reference here is clearly to a time in the future, this text cannot be referring to the Cross. Therefore, because sin is still here, we still need God's perfect protection: His Laws.

Returning to Psalms 19, notice why David values all of God's oracles: *"By them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them is great reward,"* (verse 11). Verses 12 and 13 explain that "great reward" to those who keep God's testimony, His statutes, commandments, and judgments. The benefit is great:

1. Discern what is error
2. Rid secret sins
3. Protect against presumption
4. Avoid vice and destructive habits
5. Keep from the unpardonable sin (grieving away the Holy Spirit)



Once we see that all the words of God are righteous, and that includes His statutes and judgments (Deut. 4:8), we might then look for their purpose for each of our lives today. What possible application can there be from laws that applied to nomads thousands of years ago?

*“And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it... Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image...And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heavens, and...be driven to worship them,”* (Deut. 4:14, 16, 19). So, God told Moses to teach His people how to safeguard the Ten Commandments. Verification of this purpose is clear in the writings of Ellen G. White.

*“During the passing centuries, from generation to generation, Satan made repeated attempts to cause Israel to forget the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments (Deut. 6:1)...for he knew that if he could only lead Israel to forget God, and to walk after other gods,...the chosen nation would surely perish”* (Review & Herald, Feb. 19, 1914).

*“In consequence of continual transgression, the moral law was repeated in awful grandeur from Sinai. Christ gave to Moses religious precepts which were to govern the everyday life. These statutes were explicitly given to guard the Ten Commandments. They were not shadowy types to pass away with the death of Christ. They were to be binding upon man in every age as long as time should last. These commands were enforced by the power of the moral law, and they clearly and definitely explained that law”* Review & Herald, Vol. 1 (page 164,) May 6, 1875. Emphasis supplied.

Israel obeyed the statutes when under the authority of God-fearing leaders. They abandoned Him under the influence of worldly-minded ones. Is it any different today?

*“God is now testing and proving His people. Character is being developed...Among God’s professed people are corrupt hearts; but they will be tested and proved. That God who reads the hearts of everyone, will bring to light hidden things of darkness where they are often least suspected, that stumbling blocks which have hindered the progress of truth may be removed, and God have a clean and holy people to declare His statutes and judgments”* Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, page 333. Emphasis supplied.

The Lord is purifying a people who will live by “every word of God,” Luke 4:4. Will we be among them?

*“In every age, transgression of God’s law has been accompanied by the same result...As it was then, so it is today...In the last days of this earth’s history, God’s covenant with his commandment-keeping people is to be renewed,”* (Review & Herald, Feb. 16, 1914)

God is proving a people today, as of old, preparing those who will be safe to save for eternity. They have crucified the flesh daily that they might express their devotion and love for His inexpressible grace. These truly believe as they sing the hymn, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” Deut. 8:1-3 tells us that God is testing His professed people. They could only expect the joy of the

Promised Land as they submitted to the humbling, testing, experiences brought to those who were committed to live by every word of God.



Centuries later, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 (Luke 4:4), when he met His humbling, testing experience in the wilderness. He was humiliated and tested more than any of us will ever endure. Jesus has tested every trial that will come to you and me. He promises that you will not be tested beyond what you are able to bear, as you fend and defend your life by the Word of God, every word of God.

Both Deuteronomy 8:5, 6 and Hebrews 12:5 tell us that God disciplines His children **so that they will grow up walking in the commandments of the Lord.** See also Prov. 3:5-12. As it was then, so it is now. We know that God's government is from eternity to eternity. We know that the "methods" of salvation have always been the same:

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:8-10, The New American Standard Bible).*

Here Paul is teaching that there is no difference between a Jew and Gentile's approach to salvation. For us all, faith must link with God's grace to produce a new creature who brings forth righteousness from that union. It is not our own righteousness, but Christ's righteousness. The "just" in ancient Israel lived by faith (Hab. 2:4); the "just" in Christian Israel live by faith (Gal. 3:11).

The covenant before the cross and the covenant after the cross are one. Both look to the cross for ratification. On both sides of the cross is the promise of the Blood -- Christ's' blood, never the blood of animals, that is central in the covenant. We accept it by faith looking back via the testimonies of eye witnesses. Old Testament Israel looked forward by faith via the testimony of the sacrificial system. Nevertheless, then and now, God's people have ever been languid in the pursuit of holiness. It is time for me to take seriously the admonition of Paul to the Corinthians:

*"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God," (2 Cor. 7:1).*

God will have a pure people of whom it may be said: *"He that is holy, let him be holy still..."* Revelation 22:11. These *"keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus,"* Revelation 14:12. The faith of Jesus cannot be separated from the keeping of the commandments. Both are evident in the covenant God has made with His own, then and now. That covenant will be re-established with God's Remnant in the last remnant of earth's history -now!

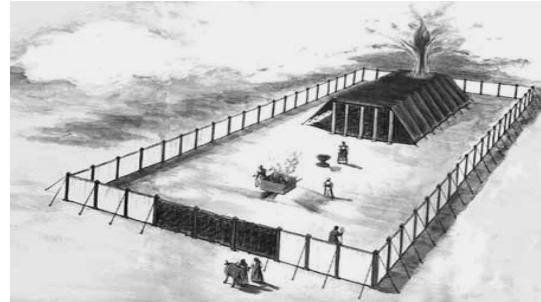
Why have some among us believed that the statutes were nailed to the cross? Does the Bible say so in the writings of Paul? Before we look at the texts that say something was nailed to the cross, consider what would happen to our doctrines if we nullify the statutes. There is a statute for tithing; shall we nail it to the cross? Another statute forbids incest; another, sexual relations with a relative or an animal. Are those laws “against us”? What about the laws dealing with health and sanitation? Shall we throw them out? Or the statutes requiring that one be honest in business, or helpful to the handicapped, or generous with the poor. Are these the rules that seem contrary to us, oppressive, or limiting our freedom in Jesus? No, of course not. In the next chapter, we will begin to look at each statute as it functioned then, and what keeping the statutes could mean to us now.

Some ordinances were nailed to the cross; this is true. It is unfortunate that many of us have lived so many years without distinguishing between what is, and what is not, part of that which ended with the death of Christ. Let us look at the complete reference from the previously quoted passage (Review and Herald, Vol. 4. [2-27-1900], page 160):

*“If we will practice the truth, at whatever self-denial and self-sacrifice, we shall follow on to know the Lord, and we shall know that his goings forth are prepared as the morning...Not one word that has proceeded from the mouth of God will become void until prophecy becomes history, as in the case of the sacrificial offerings that prefigured Christ. Type met antitype in the death of the Son of God.” (Emphasis supplied.)*

There we read that what ended at the cross was the “sacrificial offerings that prefigured Christ.” Ezekiel (43:18) calls them **“ordinances of the altar.”** Again, Ellen White explains in a number of places that the symbols pointing to Christ, -that is the sacrificial offering, were to cease (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 365, i.e.). “When type met antitype in the death of Christ, the **sacrificial offerings** ceased,”

(4RH 193, 6-26-1900). Indeed, it was noted by Daniel that the coming Messiah would **“cause sacrifices and oblations to cease.”** And that is exactly what happened.



That brings us to Colossians 2:14. Evangelist John VanDenburgh explains this text in more detail in his book, Holy History, and in his videos on Colossians, Chapter 2. It would be worthwhile for the reader to review that book or video for a more comprehensive explanation of Colossians 2. This passage, unfortunately, has been used for decades by Christians who were seeking to defend their minimizing of the Ten Commandments and their exonerating of another day of worship.



For those of us who maintain that the Ten Commandments were not nailed to the cross, nailing the statutes to the cross shoots ourselves in the foot, for the statutes are to safeguard the Ten Commandments! In the chapters that follow, we will see that these statutes were given to elevate and refine. That which protects us from hurting or destroying ourselves, and others, certainly can't be considered "against us," (Col.2:14). No, what is "against us" is the **record of our sins**. That record Christ bore on the cross. The Law of God is not the record of our sins; it is the transcript of His righteous character! In type, when we repent, the record of our sin is erased by His blood.

If I must appear before the judge for a speeding ticket, I have no hope that the judge will excuse me by telling the officer to go tear down the speed limit sign. If I am guilty of running a stop sign, would I be thankful that the officer was willing to remove the stop sign? With all the stop signs gone, and with no speed limit, would we feel safe to drive on the nation's highways? Undoubtedly not; these laws are to protect us. They are not "against us." But if, when I appear before the judge for speeding, the officer does not come with the **record of my guilt**, my case is dismissed. You see, it is the written record of our guilt that stands "against us" in a court of law. The Law of God is never against us. God's purpose has always been to redeem, not destroy.



Now, let us look at the scriptures often used to nail God's oracles to the cross.

Colossians 2:14 is such a text: *Blotting out the **handwriting of ordinances** that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*

Ephesians 2:15, 16 is another such text: *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments **contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.*

By looking up the word "ordinances" from Colossians 2:14, we find under number 1379, from 1378 in Strong's Concordance, that it means "to prescribe by statute" or to "submit to rule." In 2 Chronicles 33:8 we read God's promise repeated to Israel, if only they would be careful to do all that He had commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses.

What ordinances are being spoken of here? These ordinances given through Moses had to do with the **enmity** (Ephesians 2:15) first recorded in Genesis 3:15: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruise his heel.* Not between mankind and Satan was this enmity “slain,” but between mankind and God. It was sin that brought the curse against us, that created a barrier between God and man. The strength of the curse was realized by the ordinances of the altar -the sacrifices that transferred the confessed sins of the people to the sanctuary, and ultimately to the Lamb of God. These ordinances of the altar (Eze. 43:18) defined what sacrifices were to be offered for various sins, various occasions, and by various socio-economic groups in Israel. They were to be object lessons of the damage sin causes. They were also rehearsals of the horrifying curse the Son of God would take upon Himself in order to bring to an end the curse of sin and its enmity.

We have already read that that which pertained to the **sacrificial system** went to the cross when type met antitype. Hebrews 9 describes the ordinances of the altar as “ordinances of divine service,” or, as some versions read, “regulations for worship” (verse 1). All of these regulations were associated with the **blood of animals** prefiguring the new order of worship established by Christ: *which [had] stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation* (Heb. 9:10-14).

Thus, when we return to Deut.31:26, we find the instruction given to Moses to take the oracles of God (written down as an **authoritative witness**) which would declare whether or not this people obeyed the laws of God, and place them in the side of the Ark of the Covenant. If obeyed, they afforded a safeguard to the Ten Commandments. If disobeyed, they were a **witness against** the wayward people.

We must distinguish between the ordinances, which carried the “citation” of our guilt - **the blood sacrifices** (the legal bond for our evil deeds to hold us to justice); and the statutes, which guarded Israel - then and now - from behaviors of injustice. Following the parallels from court scenes and legal procedures today, we may more clearly see that Jesus took the handwritten **record of our sins to the cross** so that there could be no citation against us in the Judgment! That is **Good News!** Do we then make void the Law [*Torah*] through faith? *God forbid: yea, we establish the law*, Romans 3:31.

*“The teaching which has become so widespread, that the divine statutes are no longer binding upon men, is the same as idolatry in its effect upon the morals of the people. Those who seek to lessen the claims of God’s holy law are striking directly at the foundations of the government of families and nations. **Religious parents, failing to walk in His statutes, do not command their household to keep the way of the Lord.**” Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 143, (Emphasis supplied).*

The Servant of the Lord makes it crystal clear that God’s people to the end of time are to observe God’s commandments, statutes, and judgments. Consider a few more such statements. May we be drawn closer to Christ, and farther away from the traditions of men. Then we may become the holy people, through which God may show forth His character

of love to a dying world. Remember, God wrote the Ten Commandments Himself; He spoke the statutes and judgments Himself, and His words will not return unto Him void.

*The sacred statutes which Satan has hated and sought to destroy, will be honored throughout a sinless universe, (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 342).*

*I counsel you to humble your heart and confess your wrongs. Consider the solemn charge David gave to Solomon on his dying bed: 'I go the way of all the earth. Be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.' **Take this charge to your own heart,** (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 509).*

*The principles set forth in Deuteronomy for the instruction of Israel, are to be **followed by God's people to the end of time...**Never can we afford to compromise principle by entering into alliance with those who do not fear Him, (Prophets and Kings, p. 570).*

*The Lord Jesus gave these commandments from the pillar of cloud, and Moses repeated them to the children of Israel and wrote them in a book, that they might not depart from righteousness. We are under obligation to fulfill these specifications, for in so doing, we fulfill the specifications of the law of God, (Review and Herald, Vol. 3, December 18, 1894).*

*There are glorious truths to come before the people of God.*  
*Privileges*

*and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, **they will know more and more of the oracles, and be established in right doctrine,** (That I Might Know Him, p.114).*

*The statutes concerning marriage, inheritance, and strict justice in dealing with one another, were peculiar and contrary to the customs and manners of other nations, and were designed of God to keep His people separate from other nations. The necessity of this to preserve the people of God from becoming like the nations who had not the love and fear of God, is the same in this corrupt age, when transgression of God's law prevails and idolatry exists to a fearful extent. **If ancient Israel needed such security, we need it more,** to keep us from being utterly confounded with the transgressors of God's law, (Review and Herald, Vol.1, May 6, 1875).*

*The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols, (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 133).*

*It was Christ who had said, 'Ye shall do My statutes, and keep My judgments.' Christ had presented the same principles on the Mount of Beatitudes as He had on Mount Sinai, (Signs of the Times, June 11, 1896).*

*Christ, to enforce the will of his Father, became the author of the statutes and precepts given through Moses to the people of God. Christians who extol Christ, but array themselves against the law [Torah] governing the Jewish church, array Christ against Christ, (Review and Herald, May 6, 1875).*

*It would be a scene well-pleasing to God and the angels, would His professed followers in this generation unite, as did Israel of old [referring especially to the revival in the days of Nehemiah], in a solemn covenant to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes, (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol.7, p. 117, Emphasis supplied).*

Why then should we study the statutes? We should study them because they are God's principles for holy living. Whether ordinances, judgments, statutes, or testimonies; they are righteous altogether. Even the "civil laws breathed the spirit of the moral law; they reflected and applied the principles of the Ten Commandments," (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol.1, p. 611.)

These holy principles were passed down by word of mouth for centuries. Noah was taught these statutes, Genesis 7:1-3, for he knew which animals were clean and which were unclean. Abraham obeyed God's statutes (Genesis 26:4,5), and received the promise of blessing because of his faithfulness. Moses had been taught to obey the statutes and lead the Children of Israel to observe them on their journey to Sinai, (Exodus 18:16, 20). Rebekah knew the statute when she connived for Jacob to be given the birthright, (Gen. 27). Is it not time that we, who are serious about our relationship with our Heavenly Father, discover the principles which He authored to prepare His own as a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," (1 Peter 2:9) - then, and now?

## Statutes for the Workplace

### Chapter 2

***"Only by acting upon principle in the tests of daily life can we acquire power to stand firm and faithful in the most dangerous and most difficult positions," The Ministry of Healing, p. 490.***

The theme of this book is the life style of God's people, past and present. Because our life style reinforces and demonstrates our grasp of the realities of the Everlasting Gospel, we will begin this adventure into the distant past with a visit to the Torture Stake where two economies met. There at the cross, "where we first saw the light," is our essential starting point, lest any reader become discouraged or disillusioned with the "dig" for the buried treasures, which have been lost in time and superstition. It seems essential to place this study of the statutes in right perspective to the Gospel as this study begins.

Given that we believe character development is one of our most important responsibilities in this life, and that Christ came at His first advent to reveal the character of the Father to us so that He may restore His character in us, the question is often asked: How can sinful man ever come up to the standard of perfect obedience required by a perfect law? The futility uncovered by the first question, implies a second: Is it not destructive of the Gospel to dwell on the ancient standards and life style ordained for God's "called out" ones so long ago? After all, it is by faith that we are saved, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8, 9).

*So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us, (Steps to Christ, p. 63, Emphasis supplied).*

We cannot make ourselves righteous by right doing. Our righteousness is as filthy rags, Isa 64:6, and we continually fall short of God's holy character (Rom. 3:23). What is often overlooked is that the Gospel is more beautiful when viewed through the magnification of the Law. The Law is a transcript of God's holy character, of which we have none. Yet, only the doers of the Law will be justified (Rom. 2:13). Wherein is our hope? Calvary. The blood and the water, which flowed from the Savior's side, hold for us the Blessed Hope. The blood represented life; but when shed, it represented death, while the water represented cleansing.



Thus, from Calvary comes our salvation in three parts:

- the substitutionary, perfect **life** of Christ meeting God's perfect standard, His Law;
- the sacrificial **death** of Christ paying my debt for sin, and
- the **cleansing** water washing away my guilt, leaving me a clean conscience.

1. Christ's perfect sacrifice paid the debt for my sinful past and tendencies.
2. His perfect obedience stands in my behalf, when I grasp it by faith.
3. I, then, walk with Him in newness of life, daily cleansed by the washing of the Word in the Spirit.

When the reader has a correct understanding of how we are saved, there will be

an increased appreciation for law in the life. When out of balance, we will be trapped in legalism, believing, foolishly, that aligning our lives with His revealed will through Scripture will in some way improve our standing with God. We must see clearly that Christ took our place and paid our debt. Furthermore, He perfectly obeys the Law for us, past, present, and future –until we are given immortality. Our sins were imputed to Him that His righteousness may be imputed to us. Since only the doers of the law can be justified, Christ did and still does the "doing" for us and in us. We may then stand before God as righteous. We didn't do the dying for ourselves; neither can we do the "doing" for ourselves. All is a gift received by faith, changing the heart and life.

Let the reader then understand, as we begin looking at each statute, that statute-keeping is not herein recommended to improve one's standing with God! Salvation can never be earned! To attempt to earn merits with God diminishes the unfathomable mercy and love of God, as if we could somehow tap into some of the "credits." Those who sense their growing goodness are self-deceived, for the nearer His remnant come to Christ, the more clearly they see their self-centeredness. The moment we think we can get something from God by improving our obedience, we have landed in the sand trap of self-glory. It is called legalism.

While the legalist thinks he can be saved by keeping the Law, the antinomian wants to get to heaven without responsibility to God's revealed will. He wants free grace. Today we hear it called "cheap grace." Both the legalist and the antinomian are wrong. Notice the Master's reply to a legalist.

*When the young man came to Christ, saying, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." It was not possible for the young man, or for anyone, to keep the commandments of God except through the merit of Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of the blood of Christ there could be no remission of sin, no imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner. Christ endured the penalty of sin in his own body on the cross, and fulfilled all righteousness. The merit of the righteousness of Christ is the only*

*ground upon which the sinner may hope for a title to eternal life, (Sanctified Life, page 81, Emphasis supplied).*

Then why try? Hebrews 12:14 offers an answer. *Pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* That is where the water comes in. By the cleansing water of the Word, administered by the Holy Spirit, we are cleaned up to stand in holy places.

*It is a great, a solemn work to obtain a moral fitness for the society of the pure and the blessed... Only by conforming to the Word of God can we hope to come to "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." But we must do this, or we shall never enter heaven, (Our High Calling, p. 338).*

*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, 2 Peter 1:4.*



Our fitness will never become our title to heaven, for it will always be defective and deficient of the infinite holiness of God. Even Enoch and Daniel, examples of the sanctified life, are but a dim reflection of the holy character of Christ. Nor will our title negate our fitness. Testimonies, Vol.2, page 549, reminds us that Christ is our Pattern and we must strive to follow that pattern. It comes down to motives and relationships.

Romans 4:12 tells us (Romans was written for Gentile converts) to walk in the steps of that faith of our father, Abraham, walking after the Spirit, not after the flesh (Rom. 8:10). According to Jesus, if we choose to follow Him, we will not walk in darkness but have the light of life. (John 8:12)

*If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned. More than this, Christ changes the heart. **He abides in your heart by faith.** You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure [Gal. 2:20 and Matt. 10:20 then quoted], (Steps to Christ, pp. 62, 63).*

Herein lies the purpose of this study: The affectionate cooperation with God to reproduce Christ's character in us. We cannot obey God to be favored by Him, but we will obey Him because we have been adopted into His family. The difference is in the motives.

**Who Really Loves?**

*"I love you, Mother," said little Nell,  
"I love you more than tongue can tell."  
Then she teased and taunted for half the day,  
Til all were glad when she went to play.*

*"I love you, Mother," said little Fran,  
"Today I will help you all that I can."  
She rocked the baby 'til he fell asleep,  
Then she got the broom the floor to sweep.*

*"I love you, Mother," said little John.  
And as he said it, his cap went on.  
Out to the garden he ran to swing,  
Leaving dear Mother the wood to bring.*

*"I love you, Mother," again they said,  
Three little children tucked in bed.  
How do you think Mother ever guessed  
Which of her children loved her best?*

*"I love you, Jesus," said Christian Bill,  
"I love you enough to give you my will."  
Then he careened through traffic to get to work,  
So even the patrolman called him a jerk.*

*I love you, Jesus," sang Deacon Clyde,  
"I promise to always stay on your side."  
Then he sizzled his wife and withered his kid,  
Til they found it hard to forgive what he did.*

*"I love you, Jesus," prayed gentle May,  
Then she visited the shut-ins and helped all day.  
Singing, she worked to uplift one and all,  
Encouraging her family to obey God's call.*

*In the Judgment Day, what will be said  
When Jesus has judged the living and dead?  
How will He know who loved Him most?  
He'll know by the things that kept them engrossed.*

May the reader view the statutes from the motivation of loving devotion to the King of Kings, our Saviour, The Great Lawgiver.

**Statutes for Masters (Employers):**

The Israelite must never defraud anyone, nor rob wages, nor even hold them past payday, Lev. 19:14; nor be dishonest in any business dealings, Lev. 19:35, 36.

For the most part, this rule is respected today among honest Christians. Stories of greed leading to the embezzling of funds, or dishonestly reporting of goods and services, always cause the people of God distress and sadness, especially when it is one of their own who is guilty. The Christian should be the most honest person in town, even when it is to his or her own disadvantage.

*A feverish haste to become rich will find no manifestation in the words or in the works of Christ's followers. When the soul is sanctified by the truth, all elements of selfishness are banished. Ingratitude, with its evil tendencies and results, will not live in the heart that loves the truth. Policy and truth will never pull together or be at agreement. Policy implies cunning, false pretenses, artful management, an eagerness for selfish, personal aggrandizement without regard to strict integrity in the ways and means used. Honesty and strict equity are in perfect harmony with all the principles of truth, in perfect harmony with God's holy law. Our every act should bear a reliable testimony to the validity of truth (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 13, page 232, Emphasis supplied).*

A poor man could not be made a slave by giving him a loan, Ex. 22:26, 27. Furthermore, if he worked for the benefactor to pay his debt, he must be released from the remaining debt in the 7<sup>th</sup> year. The poor man must be sent on his way well furnished from his benefactor's flock and food, Deut. 15:12-15. He must receive full wages for his work, whether he was an Israelite or a foreigner, Deut. 24:14; and, if he needed the money earned that very day, he was to be paid according to his need, Deut. 24:15.

What benevolence, what generosity was expected of the people who were to represent the character of our loving Heavenly Father! *My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19), was the standard then. It is the standard now. Certainly, it is clear to this writer that God calls us to benevolent acts, to a generous spirit, to selfless service, just as our Heavenly Father bestows upon us so lavishly all our needs. Those who find joy in generosity toward those who can return them no benefit have found the key to an eternal secret.

**All must release the creditor's debt in the seventh year. It was the Lord's release, Deut.**

15:2,3.

*The Lord would place a check upon the inordinate love of property and power. Great evils would result from the continued accumulation of wealth by one class, and the poverty and degradation of another. Without some restraint, the power of the wealthy would become a monopoly, and the poor, though in every respect fully as worthy in God's sight, would be regarded and treated as inferior to their more prosperous brethren... The regulations that God established were designed to promote social equality (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 534).*

In the hands of a hedonistic society, this principle could wreak havoc in the business world and the nation's economy. On the other hand, a powerful testimony might be born about the goodness and protection of God. It certainly would render a fatal blow to this capitalistic society, as we know it. We would become more dependent upon the arm of the Lord and less self-sufficient, if this statute were to be applied today. Perhaps that was its intent in the first place. Just a thought.

#### Statutes for Men Servants:

A Hebrew servant would serve his master for six years. In the seventh year he would be set free. If he had taken a wife, and had children during those years, these remained in service to the master. If the freed husband chose to stay to preserve his family unit, he could have his position for life, Exodus 21:2-6; Deut. 15:16-18.

When a Hebrew landowner fell into debt, whether because of poor management or for other reasons, to the point that he could not pay his creditors, he was allowed to turn his land over to another Israelite landowner, usually a major creditor. The bankrupt landowner, now servant, could work for the new master for six years to pay down his debt. At the end of that time he could go free and the remainder of his debt would be canceled, but the land would not return to his possession until the fiftieth year, the year of Jubilee.

Servants who elected to remain in their master's household were often promoted to greater confidence and responsibility. Their service was to be as unto the Lord. This principle is repeated in the New Testament: *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God, and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men* (Col. 3:22, 23). Paul admonishes us to do the will of God from the heart, (Eph. 6:6).

Akin to this instruction is that given in Ecclesiastes 9:10: *Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might.* In other words: whatever is your job, give it your best. That was true for servants in Israel; it is true today. Certainly, material and spiritual blessings often flow to the worker who follows the work ethics described in Scripture.

Spiritually, when we first come to know the Saviour, we are likely to enter His presence as servants, saying, in effect, "*I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness*" (Ps. 84:10). Even when the prodigal son returned to his father, having known the position of "son," he still came pleading to be accepted as a servant (Luke 15:18, 19). Christ often referred to those who will be saved as "faithful servants" (Matt. 25:21-23), reminding us that those who wish to be chief will be servants of all (Mark 10:44). May we learn to be servants of God from our hearts.

Another consideration in this provision is the relationship between the servant and his possessions. Anciently, servants had no ownership, in the fullest sense. Even his family members were not his by right, since they too, belonged to the master. In principle, we are not our own. We have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). Our lives are subject to the will of our Master. Our possessions are His, to be spent for His glory, never our own.

That is where we begin as slaves of sin, newly set free from spiritual Egypt. When we have come to the place we know the new Master's will and how to efficiently manage His affairs, in the analogy, we are becoming valuable servants. These look forward to the proclamation: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy lord* (Matt. 25:21).

But, this is not the only analogy represented in Scripture to explain our relationship to the Heavenly Father. Several other metaphors, implicit in the statutes, reveal a deep and most compelling bond that develops between Yahweh and those who love Him.

**All Hebrew servants went free with all their possessions in the year of Jubilee, Lev. 25:6-10.**

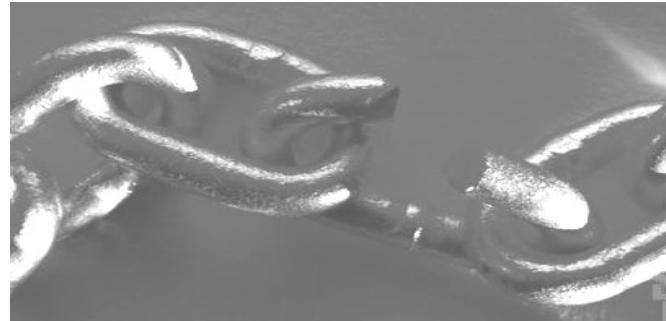
This meant that no Israelite could become a slave for life. Hard times might force a poor family to sell its inherited land and serve another in order to survive. But God had this statute to elevate the lowliest of His children. They were never far from hope.

Today the principle of hope is central in the Gospel. We are ambassadors of Hope to the hopeless. No matter how discouraging one's circumstances, no matter how sinful one's past, there is hope upon which to anchor one's soul. Jesus referred to the principle of this statute when He read from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord,* (Luke 4:18, 19).

He had come to set at liberty the captive. That mission is now the responsibility of His representatives in the world. May we be about our Father's business as was Jesus.

The Jubilee, occurring the year after every seven sabbatical years, pointed forward to the ultimate rest in the Earth Made New. Then, we will lay our burdens down and study war no more (Isaiah 58:6; Micah 4:3). This promise is for those who loose the band of wickedness and break every yoke (Isaiah 58).



Another look at this statute, from the gospel view, might give us an even more direct principle. The servants who were set free in the Sabbatical years were Hebrews: of the family of God, so to speak. These, through wrong choices or other adverse circumstances, had lost their inheritance. But no; it was to be restored in the fiftieth year.

Now, make the parallel. What might be the result of a Sabbatical year spent in redeeming and restoring the "inheritance" to those languishing for "spiritual income"? This is not to say that nothing be done for the backslider until six years have passed. God gave provisions for every eventuality throughout the year. The effort would be beyond the daily care for the brethren. This would, of necessity, be a time of personal "housecleaning," and restocking the supplies, spiritually speaking. Certainly, only good could come from such a re-consecration, sacrifice, and united effort for our weaker brethren.

If a master was too harsh with discipline so that the servant sustained permanent injuries, the servant must be set free, Ex. 21:27. If a master abused his servant, the law allowed the servant to flee to another master. The selected new master must give the abused servant asylum in the spirit of kindness and concern, Deut. 23:15, 16; Lev. 19:34.

Philemon received a letter from Paul reminding him of a principle in this statute, and asking him to forgive Onesimus, who had apparently been a careless or lazy worker. This may be the only New Testament example of this statute being effective. Yet, in principle, we find it active today even in international law respecting refugees fleeing tyrannical governments. We are directed by God to "break every yoke," and "let the oppressed go free," Isa. 58:6,7. This may include child abuse and spousal abuse, as well as racial, sexual, and religious abuses in the world and in the work place.

According to the statutes, masters were allowed to discipline a slothful servant. But the master could not be abusive, administering the rod in anger. If self-control was lost in the whipping, the servant was free under the law to escape to a more humane employer. Spiritually speaking, this statute may find its parallel in our deliverance from the tyranny of

Satan, who abuses those under his power. We have fled to a loving Master who protects us, henceforth, from the ravages of sin.

**The master who killed his servant must be punished, Ex. 21:20. If it could be proved to the court that the master didn't mean to kill the servant, the punishment was less severe, Ex. 21:21.**

Consider these statutes given to protect the well-being of the poorest of God's people. As mentioned, there was to be no such thing as permanent, involuntary servitude for a Hebrew slave to a Hebrew master (Lev. 25:25-55). Around them the heathen nations practiced the crudest forms of slavery. The Hebrews well knew the suffering of slaves. They had the scars from Egypt to remind them. It would have been easy for them to "do unto others as they had been done to." But God set limits. Even the lowliest Israelite was, in a sense, a son of God. All were to be treated with dignity. That was then...



This is now. Treat those in your employment with respect, self-control, and fairness, remembering that our God is a God of love, justice, and mercy. It is part of the Everlasting Covenant -*I will be your God, and you will be my people* -that we treat those under our authority with sympathy and respect. *A man of understanding walketh uprightly*, Proverbs 15:21. Whatever our occupation, our most important employment is for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let us remember to be about our Father's business.

#### Statutes for Maidservants:

If a father arranged for his daughter to become a maidservant, she would not be free in the seventh year. If she did not please her master who took her, he could look for another man to take her as his housemaid, thus ending his own obligation to care for her. But if the first master betrothed the maid to his son, the master must treat the maid as a daughter. And if the master took another wife, the maid's care and obligations remain the same, Exodus 21:7-10.

Because maidservants were customarily taken from the captives of war, a more comprehensive explanation of this statute will be found in Chapter 6, where the issues of conquest are discussed. Of interest here, is the care and protections required of householders toward maidservants. There was a time of probation during which adjustments to the new family, and the new God, were to take place. If the maid was rebellious, the master might find a more suitable place for her service. The master was not permitted to abuse or neglect his maidservant. She became part of the household and was to be cared for as long as she remained there.

From this statute we may safely conclude that we are to show a care and loving responsibility toward those in our employment. Thus, when the service of a worker is no longer needed, or personality conflicts require the termination of the employee's service, the employer will follow the principle found in this requirement. Thus, he/she will help the departing employee find a suitable option so that the released worker does not suffer by the severance. What a testimony this policy would give in favor of our benevolent Master whose government is founded on altruistic love.

**Any man who had sex with a married maidservant caused her to be scourged, Lev. 19:20.**

The *Mishnah* states, in contrast to the KJV, that the maidservant would, rather, be brought in for a judicial inquiry to determine who was at fault. Sex with anyone, other than with one's own spouse, was forbidden by God. While it was the practice of the whole world around them to make the housekeeper the master's sex partner, never was it acceptable to God. The laws governing the relationship between masters and house maids never gave license for keeping secondary wives, or concubines.

It is the frequency with which the practice appears in Scripture that has caused some to assume that God didn't disapprove, therefore, He must have approved. We must keep in mind that, with each appeal for return to the God of Israel, came the directive to put away concubines and foreign wives, as in the days of Nehemiah.

**If the master ignored or mistreated the maidservant, she was free to return to her father's house, Ex. 21:11.**

As time passed and the sacred covenant with God was forgotten, Israel wanted the privileges and blessings from God without responsibility toward Him. Are the professed people of God much different today? According to the *Talmud*, the rabbis came to accept plurality of wives and concubines among the people. How easy is the downward path as we become desensitized to the evil. But, that was then...

This is now... We are to take on our responsibilities, showing respect in all domestic matters, and keeping the work place free of moral corruption. We are to follow the rules of society in so far as they do not tamper with God's principles. Some suggest that the spirit of the statutes seems to have been to keep the principle of responsibility as sacred to God as sanctuary worship. Like Israel of old, we have too often followed the customs around us to the point that our minds have become dull of hearing about the way of the Lord.

God is calling us back to the "old paths" that we might be a light in the deepening

darkness, now. Let us resolve to guard our Father's name among the worldly-minded crowds. Let us, as David after his conversion, henceforth go "fully after the Lord" (1 Ki.11:6). We need to remind ourselves that we are to be separate from the world by the way we dress, eat, talk, and conduct our business.

*My son, if you receive my words, Solomon exhorts us, and treasure up my commandments with you, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God, then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, and every good path, (Proverbs 2:2, 5, 9, Revised Standard Version*

Today, the writings of Mrs. White may be regarded as added "safeguards" to protect the Ten Commandments and point us to a higher standard of living. Her admonitions and guidelines have acted much the same as the statutes did for ancient Israel, and they have been received with about as much enthusiasm as the oracles of old. Modesty in dress standards, the principles of clean and healthy living, daily communion with God, and simplicity and graciousness in speech would have set us apart as the "holy nation" God has been waiting to receive.

The principles from the statutes governing servants, or employees, have not changed today. Discipline or punishment for the slothful or arrogant servant and the consequences for the vengeful master can still be heard and judged in a court of law. The evidence of motives behind the crime, or injustice, determined the punishment then, as today. It is still God's intent that we hold high standards in the workplace.

*He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God, Micah 6:8.*

## Statutes for Family Life

### Chapter 3

*The teaching, which has become so widespread, that the divine statutes are no longer binding upon men, is the same as idolatry in its effect upon the morals of the people. Those who seek to lessen the claims of God's holy law are striking directly at the foundations of the government of families and nations. Religious parents, failing to walk in His statutes, do not command their household to keep the way of the Lord.*

*(Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 143)*

#### **Statutes for Parents:**

Parents must teach their children all the statutes given by God through Moses, Lev. 10:11; Deut. 4:9.

*Train up a child in the way he should go* (Prov. 22:6), was the principle here. Of course, it would do little good to teach the statutes to your children while you yourself were not living by them. Israel's educational system was a kind of "home school" where parents were given the privilege and responsibility of guiding their children in all the duties of Hebrew life. Daily the children were to be led to memorize and value the tenants of their religion and heritage while they helped with the chores around the house or field. That was God's blue print for Christian education then.

The reading of the scripture scrolls, as we see Children pictured by artists, may have been added to the curriculum through the schools of the prophets, as almost no one learned to read and write in those early centuries. Moses had been the exception, having been brought up in the courts of Egyptian nobility. The Hebrews, as slaves in Egypt, had received no education. It had been up to parents to prepare their children to work for Pharaoh and to pass to them the tenets of their beliefs, as well as they could be recalled.

When they finally left Egypt, some five hundred years after the covenant had first been made with their ancestors, few had an accurate knowledge of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Patiently, Moses dealt with ignorance and complaint, teaching this grumbling people to trust and obey God. They had hardly reached the other side of the Red Sea before that education began in earnest.

Before this deprived and ignorant people reached Sinai, Moses was found teaching them the commandments and statutes of the Lord (Ex.18:16). Ellen White tells us the commandments were repeated at Sinai (1 RH, p.164). That which is "repeated", must have been known before the "repeating." Yet, only Caleb and Joshua entered the Promised Land forty years later. None else had thoroughly learned the lessons, implicit and explicit, their deliverance should have taught them. Since they could not teach to their children

what they refused to learn and practice, all but two, who had left Egypt for the Glorious Land, perished in the wilderness. The vast majority never entered the Everlasting Covenant with Yahweh. They never entered the sacred rest (Heb. 4:6).

"I would give the world to have your experience with the Lord," said one young Christian to another whose devotion was very apparent.

"My friend," replied the other, "that's exactly what it cost me. I gave the world for it."

Experience with God is truly costly. It costs parents more than money to train their children for Christ. It costs them the world to model Christian living before their young. It cost Abraham the willingness to yield his only son to the altar of sacrifice. It cost Esther the risk of her life. It cost Daniel being cast into a den of lions. It cost the three Hebrew worthies being thrown into a fiery furnace. It cost Noah years of ridicule. It cost Stephen death by stoning; it cost Peter his life, as well. Hebrews 11 lists the price saints have paid modeling, teaching, and living an experience with the Lord. It takes active faith to please God (Heb. 11:6). Finally, full payment was made for a world of sin; it brought the Son of God death on a torture stake.



What will you give in exchange for your soul, and the souls of your children? When we make our character development and that of our children our number one objective, we will see how vital the environment we select for raising our children really is.

*All these things happened unto them for an ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. 10:11*

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope, Rom. 15:4*

Today, God is calling out a people who will separate their children from the idols of this age. Young people are especially affected by the influence of godless peers and stimulating entertaining. According to Deut. 6:6,7, God's people were, and still are, to teach their children and youth morning, noon, and night, the principles of a useful and holy life.

*Happy are the parents whose lives are a true reflection of the divine, so that the promises and commands of God awaken in the child gratitude and reverence; the parents whose tenderness and justice and long-suffering interpret to the child the love and justice and long-suffering of God; and who, by teaching the child to love and trust and obey them, are teaching him to love and trust and obey his Father in heaven. Parents who impart to a child such a gift have endowed him with a treasure more precious than the*

*wealth of all the ages—a treasure as enduring as eternity, (The Faith I Live By, page 270).*

Families who take seriously the statutes for parents must be prepared to meet ridicule -even abandonment -by family and friends who do not share this dedication to the Word of God. But the rewards far outweigh the disapproval of well-meaning advisors. Families must carefully guard every avenue to the soul, avoiding reading, television watching, or stereo listening that introduces impure thought. God is seeking families who will dare to be a "peculiar people," completely dedicated to walking in, and sharing God's precepts.

Perhaps you are someone who needs to reorder his/her priorities for the good of the family. The parents of John the Baptist examined their priorities, then moved to the wilderness where the forerunner of the Messiah was educated for service. Is there any sacrifice that is too great for the salvation of our children? One may not be impressed to move to the wilderness; not all will be. But all who would follow this statute will oversee the learning environment of their children.

**A father must not allow his daughter to become a prostitute; it would bring much wickedness, Lev. 19:29.**

Although appalling, by our Western standards today, daughters have been exploited throughout history in many parts of the world. Certain countries of the Middle East still practice astonishing heathen cruelties to their women and young girls. In contrast to the barbaric disregard for innocent, young girls, God put the responsibility on fathers to protect their daughters from such humiliation.

Furthermore, burning within the breast of every maiden in Israel was likely the hope that she might be the chosen woman to bear the promised Redeemer. The sacred possibility carried its own protection, as long as fathers were guiding, guarding, and instructing their daughters. That was then...

Today, as for centuries, fathers have, to a great extent, controlled the morals of society. What they admire about women, what they compliment in their wives and daughters, has been a powerful influence in the lives of those young women. If fathers praise beauty, their daughters will seek beauty. If they compliment character, then character will become admirable. What characteristics dads favor in the women in their lives will heavily influence the kind of women their daughters become. While mothers have a major role in the training of children, let us not forget that it is the father's duty to *"bind his children to the throne of God by living faith"* (Adventist Home, p. 212).

Furthermore, God calls fathers to guide their daughters into pure and holy regard for the sacredness of marriage. It was vital to national prosperity in the past, and it is equally

essential to church prosperity in the present.

**A Hebrew maiden could never be betrothed to a foreigner, Deut. 7:1-3.**

This statute, like the one before it, protected the marriageable young ladies from complicating their lives and losing their mission. For example, they would give up their inheritance and property, slated to return to them in the year of Jubilee, if they had married out of their nation. In fact, daughters who were ready for marriage must remain within their own tribes if they wished to avoid losing family property. This was of particular significance for the families who had no sons.

A Hebrew maiden betrothed to a foreigner would have to give up her religion, and certainly her hope of mothering the promised Messiah. The responsibility in this statute was, again, primarily upon the father. He must not give his permission for his daughter to marry a foreigner. The story of Dinah, found in Genesis 34, affords us some insight into the principle of this statute, apparently known long before Sinai, it should be noted (See Gen. 26:5 for evidence).

When Shechem's father requested Jacob's permission for Dinah to be betrothed to his son (Gen. 34:8-10), the point of discussion focused on circumcision. Although we may object to the deceptive ploy engaged by the sons of Jacob, we can see that the statute, set to protect future generations of Israel as God's own people, was at stake. No maiden was ever to be allowed to marry a foreigner, according to the command of Jehovah. Shechem was a Hivite, one of the Canaanite tribes to the north of what would later become Asher's inheritance. The proposal was not simply one young man's passion for a beautiful maiden, nor his father's determination to strengthen national security and international relations. To Jacob, the situation included much more; for no Israelite maiden was ever to be given to prostitution, or be treated as a prostitute. The sons of Jacob had reason to be angry. Their religion had been undermined, their sister defiled, and their God blasphemed. But that was a long time ago.

Doctor Laura, author, counselor, and radio broadcast hostess, writes and talks about the stupid things women do to mess up their lives. Marrying out of one's faith is one of them. But, what if fathers took a greater interest in their teenage daughters? Dating would no doubt be postponed for a few more years beyond the present custom. What if fathers took the time to direct their daughters' ideals to godliness in a prospective companion? We would likely see fewer messed up lives caused by culturally and religiously mixed marriages.

But Christian fathers, who are too busy while their children are growing up, will be too late to become their teenagers' confidants when they are most needed. Unless the father makes time throughout each week for the precious bonding process with his family, the children will grow up with a spirit of independence from his counsel. The results are predictable.

A father must censure the vows his teenage daughters made. If the father discovered the teenager had vowed a vow that she should not keep, the father must disavow the pledge, releasing the daughter from it, Num. 30:4, 5.

Oh, the heartaches that would be averted if Christian fathers today would take time to listen to and counsel their teenagers! It is a father's God-given responsibility to know where his teenagers are, and what they have agreed to do.

*The father, as priest of the household, should deal gently and patiently with his children. He should be careful not to arouse in them a combative disposition. He must not allow transgression to go uncorrected, and yet there is a way to correct without stirring up the worst passions in the human heart. Let him in love talk with his children, telling them how grieved the Saviour is over their course; and then let him kneel with them before the mercy seat and present them to Christ... Child Guidance, p. 286, 7.*



A father having had more than one wife may not show partiality to the first-born of the wife he loved most. The birthright blessing must go to the actual first-born, Deut. 21:15-17.

This statute impeded partiality between children. The Bible records of Joseph, "When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him," Genesis 37:4. It is not in God's loving character to favor one above another. He loves His children equally. Furthermore, the birthright carried more responsibility than privilege. Generally, the eldest was better equipped for family leadership, having been introduced to caring for others by the time the second sibling was born. God said the birthright was to be given to the eldest son.

Today surveys show that more than 80% of attendees at Christian leadership

conferences are first-born. Are these eldest among siblings more sensitive to the spiritual, or are they guided more diligently than their younger brothers and sisters? It is the observation of this writer that the birthright blessing on the eldest child has never been removed. It remains today as truly as in the past.

Monogamy verses polygamy was not the focus of this statute. The issues of monogamous marriages were directed through other statutes, and will be considered in Chapter 5. The above statute is about preventing partiality, often between stepchildren and half-brothers and half-sisters.

Consider the problem created, for example, when Rebekah violated this statute. She favored Jacob over Esau, her first born. The story is recorded in Genesis 25:28-34, and 27:6-41. It reads like there was much strife and rivalry in that home. Rebekah knew she was disobeying God's commandment when she plotted the deception. Isaac was no less guilty, having apparently favored Esau, who showed less interest in the Faith of the Fathers. We will never know until eternity what God's method would have been to bless Jacob with the lineage leading to the Messiah, but we can be sure that it did not include deception or disregard of His commands.

The principle for us is obvious. God instructs us to guard against favoritism between children, regardless of natural talent and beauty. Although humanly unnatural for a parent to be unaffected by dispositions and competencies, it is commanded by God. What He requires, He enables.

If a son was rebellious and stubborn, not following God's ways nor obeying his parents, the parents were admonished to turn him over to the elders of the city to deal with him, Deut. 21:18-21.

Parenting in Israel was to be taken quite seriously. Children were to be taught to obey all of God's laws (Deut. 6:7), making them a separate people from the nations around them. Respect for their elders was taught in both statutes and the fifth commandment. Rebellion was parallel to the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23), and we know that witchcraft was an abomination before God. Thus, both must be dealt with speedily and decisively.

Today, from criticism over being separate from the world and churches around us, many have become lax, totally disregarding the principle of this statute: If parents have ruined their child by lack of loving guidance and firm discipline, that child or youth was to be placed in the hands of trained authorities to administer discipline. Sadly, what we often witness among us is a spirit of tolerance toward youthful rebellion.



Rarely will one hear of a parent who calls "proper authorities" when a youth is out of control. Recently, however, on the news came a report of a father responding to the pleading of an incarcerated son. It seems the son was begging his father to post bail. The bail bond was several thousand dollars and the father couldn't, or wouldn't, pay it. So, the son, being desperate, told his father about the robbery, which had resulted in his incarceration. The father found the stash of bills; but, instead of posting bail with the loot, he turned it over to the police. Parents who are willing to obey the "tough love" component implied in this statute are few and far between.

Furthermore, it has become risky in this country for a parent to spank an unruly child. God says, *He that spareth his rod, hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*, Proverbs 13:24 (KJV). Again, *discipline your son while there is hope; do not set your heart on his destruction*, (Proverbs 19:18, Revised Standard Version). The Living Bible, Paraphrase renders that last clause: "If you don't you will ruin his life."

The Hebrew children were to grow up knowing that they were a holy people to bring the knowledge of God to the nations around. The youth were in subjection to the household rule of their fathers until they were married and on their own. There was to be zero tolerance for rebellion against the parent's rule. The father must know the pledges, or agreements, the youth had made and must annul any vows or arrangements the father deemed inappropriate, whether to God or to peers. That was then...



This is now... Be diligent in training your children in loving and loyal obedience to God, never allowing the pursuit of money or personal gain to out-value the time needed for bonding with your children. Take the Bible as your textbook, your teacher's guidebook, your casebook of exemplary versus disastrous parenting practices. The time spent in the Word, for your children's sakes, will bring lasting rewards. Children who are not taught to respect their parents will, as adults, have great difficulty learning to trust God.



In summary of this section, recall that partiality will destroy a family, so deal fairly with each child and stepchild. Parents should learn enough about child development and parenting to practice those parenting skills that will lead their children to choose God's ways for themselves as they mature.

If your child becomes lawless,

don't allow that child to grow up hurting others; turn him/her over to the authorities, according to the law. The family is sacred before God; preserve its holy influence. Regard parental responsibility as part of God's laws, which it is. Therefore, lovingly, impartially, teach the children and youth to show respect and obedience toward God and parents.

*Fathers and mothers who claim to be Christians, and who have not been doers of the words of Christ, who have not educated and trained their children in correct habits, have not brought them up to love and fear God, as God has directed them to. The words of Moses to Israel, concerning the statutes and judgments of the Lord, are also the word of God to us,"*

*Signs of the Times, March 21, 1895.*

### Responsibilities of Children and Youth:

Daughters without brothers must marry within their own tribe so as to keep their inheritance in their tribe, Num. 6:30.

Everyone was cared for in God's design for His people. Although they were greatly influenced by the surrounding nations, Israel's care for each person held them together in a bond of national pride and unity. Here, young ladies were prevented from destroying their own security. That was then...

Today we would not conclude that God wants us to marry within our extended families so as to keep the heirlooms among relatives. Certainly, the Bible is not saying that we should marry our siblings or cousins in order to be in harmony with this statute.

In Israel, their economy necessitated this statute in order for daughters to keep for their offspring that which was rightfully theirs. Whereas the men took preeminence in financials matters, God was here protecting the rights of a woman to keep her father's land. She could only do that if she married within her tribe. Otherwise, her land went to her husband from another tribe, and was thereafter passed on to the children of her husband in his tribe.

Spiritually, this principle may add some evidence that we should marry within our faith. For a woman today to marry a non-Christian, or even a Christian of another religion, will likely cause her to forfeit something of her spiritual inheritance. That is assuming that she has been raised to value her family's spiritual gifts.

If the teenager was being enticed secretly to take in some worldly amusement, he/she was to refuse to go, refuse to keep it a secret, and not to feel sorry for the tempter when he got into trouble for it, Deut. 13:6-11.

The teenager also had responsibility to exercise the training given, to recognize temptation, resist evil, and flee from it. How beautiful would be the experience of children and youth today, and how gratifying would parenting be to the Spirit-filled father and mother, who, seeing every aspect of life as spiritual, would bring up their families to choose God's presence over the pleasures of this world. What sorrow would be averted. What joys could be shared.

How sad to witness the teenager from a Christian home taking his/her cues from the world instead of the Word! How comforting to find a youth who is willing to forfeit popularity with peers in favor of companionship with God and the angelic host. In this regard, Paul admonished the youthful Timothy, *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, 1 Tim. 4:12.*

### You Tell

You tell what you are by the friends you seek,  
 By the manner in which you speak,  
 By the way you employ your leisure time,  
 By the use you make of dollar and dime.  
 You tell what you are by the things you wear,  
 By the spirit in which your burdens bear,  
 By the kinds of things at which you laugh,  
 By the records you play on your phonograph.

You tell what you are by the way you walk,  
 By the things of which you delight to talk,  
 By the manner in which you bear defeat,  
 By so simple a thing as what you eat.

By the books you choose from the well-filled shelf;  
 In these ways and more, you tell about you, yourself;

So there is really no particle of sense  
In any effort at false pretense.

*-Author Unknown*

Although the poem is dated -from my late mother's collection - it contains truth akin to the statutes. What witness does the teenager's life bear by choices made? This statute, like the others in this section, safeguards the fifth, first, and second commandments.

Open contempt for parental authority could not be tolerated. Disrespect for parents brought a curse upon the child as serious as blasphemy, (Lev. 24:16; Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 27:16). *Honor your father and your mother that your days may be long in the land God gives you*, is the fifth commandment, (Ex. 20:12). Respect your parents is God's command. Adam Clarke, master scholar and commentator, says, "The word 'honor' not only meant respect and submission, but also to take care of a person, to nourish and support him" (Clarke's Commentary on Ex. 20:12). *Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or mother*," we read in Deuteronomy 27:16; while in Leviticus 19:3 Moses reminds us that, "Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father.

Solomon emphasized this statute when he wrote, "*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck*," (Proverbs 1:8,9). Here, Solomon is pointing out that courtesy, honor, and obedience to your parents are the ornaments of a Christian. Conversely, *whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness* (Proverbs 20:20), and *Hearken unto thy father that begat thee and despise not thy mother when she is old* (23:22).

Luke records how Jesus reiterated the fifth commandment to the rich young ruler, stating that keeping it was one of the conditions found in the lives of those who are entering into life eternal (Luke 18:20).

Have we allowed society's mindset to destroy family values and parental discipline? Today parents fear being sued, incarcerated, or robbed of their precious children if someone makes an exaggerated claim to the authorities. The results have brought anarchy to society and blasphemy to Christianity. Among professed Christians, apathy and certain indifference have paralyzed Bible order. The instruction comes to us as to Israel of old:



*Only take heed to yourself, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons, Deut. 4:9*

*With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come—the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! How soon...our children might receive their inheritance..." Education, p. 271.*

*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, Deut. 6:5-7.*

*Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life, Prov. 4:23.*

Peter, in the New Testament, gives the same admonition:

*Therefore, brothers, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, you shall never fall, 2 Peter 1:10.*

*We are in a day when iniquity abounds. There are those who have but little moral sense...and they corrupt other minds. They call evil good, and good evil. They are Satan's most efficient agents, and individuals of this stamp will connect with our institutions and with God's instrumentalities, masking their evil ways under pretension of godliness...Safety lies in close adherence to rules and regulations in harmony with God's great moral standard of righteousness, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 18, page 299, emphasis supplied).*

## Peace in the Neighborhood

### Chapter 4

*"I counsel you to humble your hearts and confess your wrongs. Consider the solemn charge David gave to Solomon on his dying bed: 'I go the way of all the earth; be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.' Take this charge to your own heart. Let no one flatter you in wrongdoing. While it is a disgrace to sin, it is no disgrace, but rather an honor, to confess one's sins... Put away pride, self-conceit, and false dignity; for these can be maintained only at the most terrible consequences to yourself," Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 509, (Emphasis supplied).*

The statutes for discussion in this chapter have been divided into three categories:

- Those governing greed
- Those controlling carelessness
- Those restricting anger

These statutes clearly amplify the law of love for one's neighbor. See Leviticus 19:18 for this "New Commandment" which reads, *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.*

#### Statutes Governing Greed:

It was a grievous sin to sell a countryman into slavery (Joseph, i.e., Gen. 37:25-28), Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7.



God will surely avenge the evil committed against mankind in every age through abuses of the institution of slavery and its related forms. Serfdom, peonage, forced labor, and debt bondage have all played their crippling parts in dehumanizing individuals, the stronger to use, and often abuse, the weaker. When man lost his dominion over the earth, this disposition to rule soon degenerated into domination over the weaker or gentler

among mankind. Slavery was thus brought to this country. Prisoners of war were the prime source of slaves in the ancient world, and every culture in every age has sanctioned some form of slavery. While God permitted servants among His people, He supplied strict rules for their treatment.

For someone to kidnap a free man and, for spite or greed, to sell him into slavery was a grievous and despicable sin. When caught, the perpetrator must himself be sold into slavery as the punishment for such a great evil. This is why Joseph's brothers worried so when his identity was made known. According to their law, really God's law, they expected to become Joseph's slaves. That would have served justice. But Joseph sought no revenge. Well he knew that God had turned their cruelty into great blessing.

During the years just before the Babylonian captivity, Israel and the separated Judah fell away from Jehovah so completely that Amos prophesied their eminent punishment. *Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities,* Amos 3:1. Among those iniquities listed in the book, is the sin of selling their own people for silver and their poor for a pair of shoes, Amos 2:6.

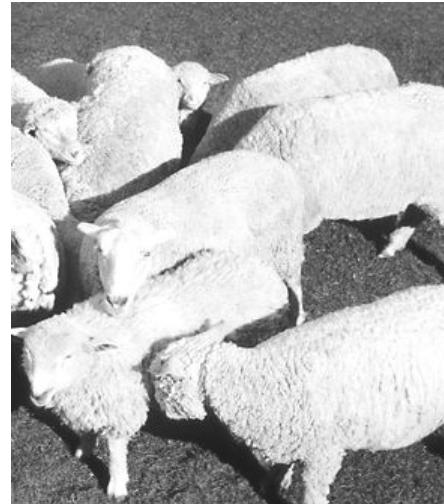
Today, the principle of this statute should guard the Christian from allowing jealousy to take root in the heart. Jealousy is nearly always associated with greed. If not kept out of the heart, jealousy will lead one to carelessly, or spitefully, betray a friend or brother. Was it not jealousy that lead His own countrymen to betray our Saviour?

**If a man stole an animal and killed it, or sold it, he must restore four to five times its value, Ex. 22:1; Lev. 24:18.**

Again, greed for personal gain would have been the cause behind this statute. A starving brother would not need to steal an animal for a meal; provisions were ample for the care of the poor. So, only greed, or spite, was left as possible motives for stealing someone's poultry or livestock.

To cut the heart out of this temptation, the law demanded that the thief pay four to five times the value of the stolen animal. The severity of the fine must have been effective, as we find no stories recorded in Scripture of animals being stolen by countrymen.

If today, the punishment for stealing property were a fine five times the value of the item stolen, thieves would certainly be less inclined to engage in the sport of car theft, for example.



**If a thief was caught breaking into someone's property and was killed by the homeowner in the act of catching him, the homeowner was without guilt for protecting his property, Ex. 22:2**

Perhaps you can remember when the principle of this statute was among your state laws? Few states protect the homeowner any more. Forty years ago a homeowner would be acquitted if it could be proved that he had to kill the intruder to protect his property. Before the next decade was finished, robbers detained in a violent struggle by the master of the house were successfully suing heads of households for injuries and mental stress! Most courts of law now protect the guilty. New search and seizure laws sanction intrusion and theft by governmental agencies today, and homeowners have no recourse. Justice is truly *"far off and truth is fallen in the street"* (Isa. 59:13).

**If the thief were caught before he destroyed or stole any property, he would be sold as a slave, Ex. 22:3,4.**

*"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he,"* Proverbs 23:7. If he intended to complete his thievery, he was punished as a thief. There were only three reasons an Israelite could be turned into a slave: 1) extreme poverty, in which case the person would request the bonds in order to be cared for; 2) parental authority, as in the sale of a daughter to become a maid servant; and 3) punishment for theft, making the thief a servant to the landowner who

had been victimized.

The servitude could be ended in three ways: 1) the year of Jubilee set all slaves free; 2) the full payment of the pre-determined debt for the attempted crime; and 3) the Sabbatical year which cleared all debts among brethren. To these the rabbis added a fourth: the death of the master, leaving no son to enforce payment.

If the thief, on the other hand, was caught red-handed, he would be ordered to repay double all he had stolen, Ex. 22:4.

While we have little control over the punishment rendered for thievery of our property, we can clearly see that the severity of these specifications, if respected, would have kept the observers from breaking the Ten Commandments; specifically, the eighth and tenth commandments: *Thou shalt not steal*, and *thou shalt not covet*, respectively.

Today, the awareness of the severity imposed upon the thief, or want-to-be thief, for breaking these statutes stands as a monument to remind us that God expects us to be honest with others' property and content with what we can afford.

If money or property was placed in the care of a neighbor, and it was stolen, the thief must pay double; but if the thief could not be found, the caretaker would be brought before the judge for questioning to determine if he himself was the thief. He must stand responsible for what was in his care, Ex. 22:7, 8, 13.

There are people today who adhere to a strict code of ethics which demands that they act responsibly in the care of another's property. Without awareness of this statute, some keep it, just because it feels right and ethical. One such experience comes to mind.

A generous lady offered to have my clarinet re-felted so that I might participate in a church orchestra many years ago. While away at church, however, her house was burglarized and this expensive clarinet was part of the loot. Fortunately for me, she thoughtfully reported my loss along with her own. My clarinet was soon replaced by a used one of similar value. I was thankful that this lady's own sense of fairness and responsibility was strong. Thus, was restored to me something I would have otherwise had no way to replace.

Being responsible for what is in our care is a principle of conduct too often ignored.

Furthermore, if you, while in the employ of someone, cause damage to his property, you must take responsibility for the replacement or repair of the broken item. This responsibility is yours even if your employer is unaware of the accident.

**All cases of embezzlement or theft had to be presented before the judge to determine guilt. The condemned would pay double, Ex. 22:9.**



In principle, God was requiring respect for the property of others. Anyone in Israel who did not respect the property of others would end up with less than before the theft. It is clear that stealing was considered a terrible injustice, and it was to be punished proportionately. When enforced, this statute helped to minimize greed, and to form a major deterrent to this evil in society. Leviticus 19:11 added, *Do not steal, lie, or deceive one another.*

If money was lent to the poor, no interest could be charged; furthermore, requests for financial aid must be granted, even if the 7<sup>th</sup> year of release was near so that the money would, undoubtedly, not be paid back, Ex. 22:25. One must be open-handed and open-hearted toward the poor, Deut. 15:7-11; 23:19.

*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31) is the underlying principle in many of these statutes. In essence, when you find someone in need, help that person without expecting any return. Those who enjoy selfless service here will experience the "interest" later, when the "Well done," is heard from the returning Saviour. Of course, the truly selfless person will not be considering the future interest, or rewards. The joy of service is its own reward.

The Scriptures are silent in this arena. Perhaps this is because there was ample provision made for the care of the poor, so reducing the temptation to take advantage of the neighbor's open-handedness. But that was long ago. By the time Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem, almsgiving had become a prestigious art. Drawing the minds of His hearers back to the point of this statute, and exposing those leaders who had found a way to reward greed, Jesus cleared away the rubbish from the true intent of this provision:

*Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

*Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly, Matt. 6:1-4, (The New King James Version).*

Today the principles of these statutes governing greed and promoting generosity are still witnessed in the lives of God's own. No announcement is made; no recognition is appropriate. No plaque mounted on the wall will reward those who give from the pure motive of "love thy neighbor as thyself."

In Luke 12: 34 we are reminded that we already possess the Kingdom, so we are to be generous with what we "own," knowing our real treasure is in heaven:

*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

If a poor man gave away his coat as a pledge for a loan, it had to be returned to him before nightfall so he could keep warm in the night, Deut. 24:6, 12, 13, 17.

An outer garment was given as a vow for two different, but similar, occasions. One was for a life-long commitment, or covenant. The second was a short-term loan. When it was used as a pledge for a loan to a poor man, it must be returned to him before night. The loan might become a gift, if the poor man could not repay the loan by nightfall. Hopefully, he would repay the loan even after his outer garment was returned to him. That was a matter of personal integrity.

The use of the coat, or robe, in the ritual of covenant making was more involved. The first book of Samuel (18:3, 4) tells the items that were exchanged in the making of the covenant between David and Jonathan. The first item traded was the robe, or coat. The above statute, however, refers to a coat as security for a short-term loan. In both functions of the coat, it represented one's character, or pledge, being given as surety.

Our word should be so true that it could rightfully represent our integrity. For centuries the gentleman's word, confirmed by his handshake, stood for his character; no written bond or deed was needed. A man's word was his bond, his deed, and the surety of his character.

God has also made a covenant with His people. The first item of exchange, when we personally enter that covenant is the robe. For our rags, He gives us His Robe of Righteousness. This exchange is not a loan, how-



ever; it represents a lifetime commitment, the Everlasting Covenant.

Looking at the symbolism from the point of view found in this statute, we find the Son of God becoming poor (Isaiah 53) that we might become rich in righteousness. In symbolism, Jesus, the Perfect Debtor (having taken the debt of sin for the whole world) gives us His coat, His Robe of Righteousness, until He restores Life Eternal (the full payment) to the landowner (Adam lost his dominion to Satan when sin entered the human race).

In the analogy, Christ will have made full restitution before "eternal nightfall". This last concept may sound too ethereal, too outlandish to have a spiritual parallel. But astronomers tell us that the way the heavenly bodies are lining up, if Christ does not return in the next few years, the planets in our solar system will soon fully align for the first time. This is significant because the gravitational pull of each planet would be offset during a perfect planetary alignment. Some speculate that this upset could cause the solar system to be thrown out of balance. This could, potentially, result in its self-destruction. The earth would then witness "eternal night"! Scary? Perhaps. But His Word is sure. Full restoration of life eternal and dominion will be delivered before the lights go out!

How may we apply this statute to us today? Nothing today seems similar to the customs and culture in which it was established. Perhaps the only practical lesson for us here is the obvious: We must never allow someone to suffer as a result of our adherence to rules governing our generosity. In fact, generosity that must be regulated is not truly generosity. Furthermore, mercy must always exceed fairness; love must supercede justice when love cannot be expressed through justice. *Blessed are the merciful...* Matthew 5:7.

**One must not take a poor man's only source of sustenance in order to fulfill a pledge made to someone else. One was not allowed to help oneself to the poor man's property, nor sell him as a slave in order to pay a bill. That sin of greed was punished by leprosy, Deut. 24:6-9.**

The concept of "what's yours is mine" has no place in God's social order, even though the reverse is a truth. "What's mine is yours," reveals the opened-handedness of our Father's ways. This statute was to protect the person and property of the poor from being seized for the wealthier man's personal gain.

In many ways, this statute is violated today. But not only in the secular court system do we see such injustice rendered in favor of money. There are ways in which humanistic and evolutionary maxims ("the survival of the fittest") are employed, even in Christian circles.

One example of the violation of the principle from this statute is the accepted practice -at least it is accepted among university professors- of usurping a graduate student's research for publication. Professors in state universities do it as a standard policy. Does that make it right? This writer believes Christian professors should follow the principle of this statute, rather than be influenced by popular practice in this regard. Thus, they would protect the publishing rights of the student researcher, encouraging and advising the student to share the new insights in print, rather than dubbing his or her own name on the published research.

Better that we wait for the rewards from the Heavenly Father, than to give way to greed. *"Others, Lord, Let this my motto be, that I might live for others as Thou has died for me,"* is a safe rule.

When a tool was lent to the neighbor, the tool's owner was not allowed to go into the borrower's house to recover the tool, nor help himself to the borrower's tools for security to get back his own. Instead, the owner must be generous, patient, and kind to the borrower, Deut. 24:10, 11.

Everything we own belongs to God. Thus, when another member of God's family has need of something we possess, their need supercedes our ownership. Simply stated, it requires that one be generous with one's neighbor, but without expectation of any remuneration for it. Do not allow a tool, or anything loaned, to become a source of contention, God's word implies. Buy another tool, if you need the tool before the borrower is finished using it. Here is a difficult code to follow. When filtered through the code of love, we see that people are more important than things. Materialism takes another hit.

*In our social relations with one another, we are to work on Christ's principles. Honesty, true courtesy, kindness, and gentleness are to be seen in our dealings with one another. But there is more than this. We are to exhort one another daily, while it is called today. True faith is not narrow or selfish. We need to be actuated by a strong, living piety, which draws us to God and leads us to work earnestly to correct our errors (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 18, pages 337, Emphasis supplied).*

When someone remembered, and was convicted, that he had wronged someone, he must make restitution with 20% interest added. If the person wronged was deceased, the equivalent payment could be made to a near relative or to the priest, Num. 5:8-11.

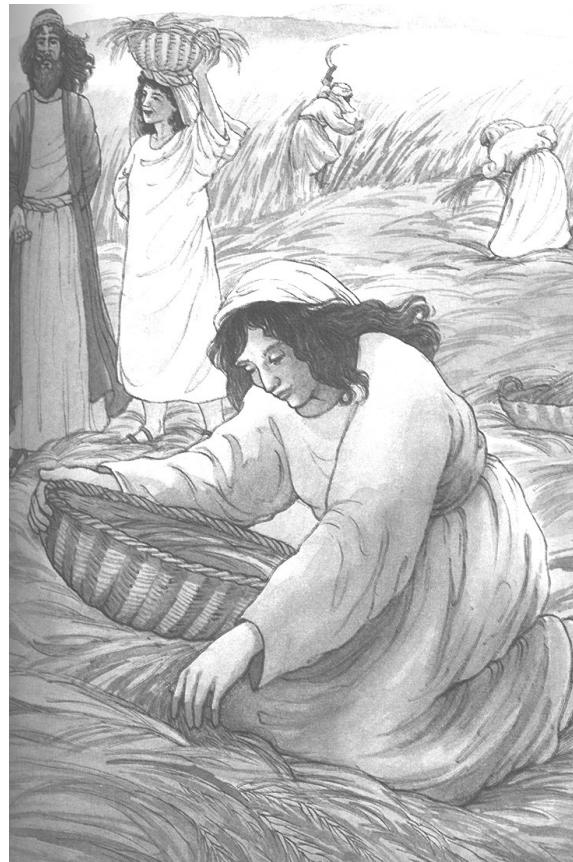
This restitution payment was completely voluntary. This was not a fine imposed by the court on behalf of the wronged party. Memory of the wrong was to bring about conviction and restitution. It was the rule of integrity. Paying twenty percent, or \$200 on a thousand, revealed the true spirit of unselfishness and complete repentance. If the Holy Spirit moved a person to repay what had been wrongfully taken, perhaps in ignorance when the offense was committed, that was strictly between God and the offender. But when he added 20% to the restitution, the offended knew that the error had not been contrived out of malice or greed. Or, if it had, the guilty was now thoroughly repentant. If we could live by the principle of this statute, our lives would present to the world a clearer statement about the nature of our benevolent God. It would, furthermore, crush the spirit of self and selfishness.

When the landowner harvested his crops, he must not take every bit, but leave some for the poor and the immigrants to glean, Lev. 19:9,10; Deut. 24:19-22.

*There are many who urge with great enthusiasm that all men should have an equal share in the temporal blessings of God. But this was not the purpose of the Creator. A diversity of condition is one of the means by which God designs to prove and develop character (Ibid., p. 535).*

How can we have "social equality" (PP 534) at the same time with "diversity of conditions" (535) and yet not have "equal share in the temporal blessings of God"? At first reading these phrases may sound contradictory to each other. A careful reading of the context of these opposing statements, however, renders no dichotomy. The "social equality" aims for equal respect and appreciation between the social "diversity of conditions." He is not calling for socialism to be enforced, for it breeds greed and social injustice. But, God calls His people to value every person equally; and, therefore, share with the valued poor.

In the spirit of this statute, farmers still allow gleaning, and gardeners still share produce with those who need. We may all do well to remind ourselves that in the Judgment Day, cases are decided by how we treated Christ in the persons of the poor.



*"In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"* (Matt. 25:40), was the criterion then; it is the criterion now.

When a hungry person walked through a field, he could help himself to whatever he could eat; but it was not lawful to fill a pail and take some home to others, or to pick some for another meal, Deut. 23:24, 25.

Centuries later, we see this provision in action when Jesus and His disciples walked through the corn field one Sabbath. Jesus came under censure from the Pharisees, not for breaking this statute, but for breaking the Sabbath commandment. All food preparation must be made before the Sabbath hours. Both Mark and Luke mention the incident when Jesus explained his behavior on that Sabbath day by the well-known text: *The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath. The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.* See Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5. Jesus was watched closely, the Pharisees hoping to catch Him breaking the statutes or Ten Commandments. Both were the oracles of Yahweh.

"No trespassing" signs may bar the hungry person from some fields and orchards today. But I have never heard of a needy person's request to pick an orange or apple being

denied, not in this country.

**There was a curse upon anyone who would remove his neighbor's landmark, Deut. 27:17; Deut. 19:14.**

Even in the earliest recorded history, Job called removing landmarks a crime (Job 24:2). Review the entire chapter. It makes a good overview of the numerous ways evil men were breaking God's statutes. Interestingly enough, most scholars agree that Job was written long before the Exodus, adding evidence to the fact that God's laws, including statutes, were known centuries before they were repeated and written at Sinai.

Solomon likewise, through the Proverbs, reminds God's people to the end of time that wisdom is following God's ways and obeying His words. Although the word "statute" does not appear in his collection of wise sayings, it is apparent that his sayings are meant to reinforce these maxims of wisdom repeated through Moses at Sinai. Proverbs 22:28 broadens the meaning of this statute: "*Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set,*" (Modern Language Version); whereas, Proverbs 23:10, 11 more closely follows the thought in Deuteronomy: "*Don't steal the land of defenseless orphans by moving their ancient boundary marks, for their Redeemer is strong; he himself will accuse you,*" (Living Bible Paraphrase).

In a spiritual sense, this statute has an additional application to "casebook" believers of this generation. It is now, more than ever before, that covert efforts seem to be boldly undermining the spiritual landmarks of Christ's bride, His Church.

*Satan is ever on the alert to deceive and mislead. He is using every enchantment to allure men into the broad road of disobedience. He is working to confuse the senses with erroneous sentiments, and remove the landmarks by placing his false inscription on the signposts, which God has established to point the right way. It is because these evil agencies are striving to eclipse every ray of light from the soul that heavenly beings are appointed to do their work of ministry, to guide, guard, and control those who shall be heirs of salvation (Our High Calling, page 92).*

*Our only safety is in preserving the ancient landmarks. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20 Counsels on Health, page 459.*

*He [Satan] works today as he worked in heaven, to divide the people of God in the very last state of this earth's history. He seeks to create dissension, and to arouse contention and discussion, and to remove if possible the old landmarks of truth committed to God's people (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 4, page 145).*

**Usury, or interest, must not be charged for loans to another Israelite, Lev. 25:36-38.**

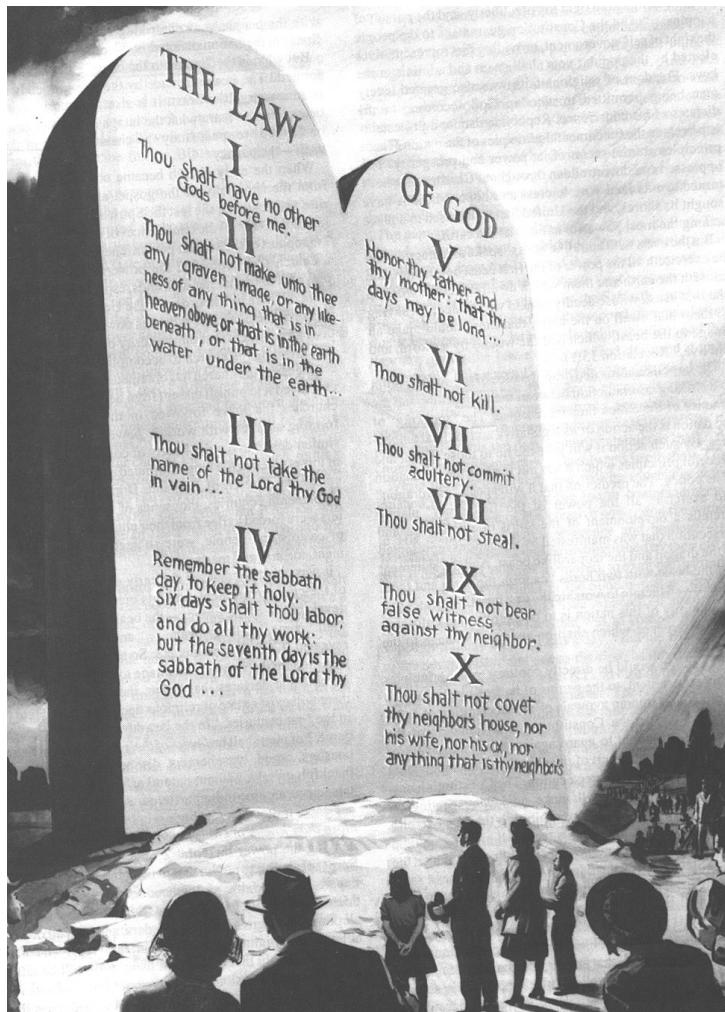
Interest could only be assessed on loans to foreigners. See Chapter 6 for the statutes regarding business with foreigners. An Israelite was a brother; he should be favored as one. He was not allowed to advance financially at the expense of a brother.

Today, we should observe the same principle. If we make a loan to a church member, no interest may be charged. As pointed out in Chapter 2, God calls us to be generous with those in need. The Lord God, who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, will take care of us as He did the woman of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), and honored her generosity toward the Prophet Elijah.

**Every third year a second tithe was collected for the poor, Deut. 14:23, 29.**

*Every third year...this second tithe was to be used at home, in entertaining the Levite and the poor, as Moses said 'That they may eat within thy gates, and be filled' [Deut. 26:12]. This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality... Although God had promised greatly to bless his people, it was not his design that poverty should be wholly unknown among them...There would ever be those among his people who would call into exercise their sympathy, tenderness, and benevolence. Then, as now, persons were subject to misfortune, sickness, and loss of property; yet so long as they followed the instruction given by God, there were no beggars among them, neither any who suffered for food. (Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 530, 531).*

Some have concluded from the *Torah* that three tithes were collected in the course of a year: The tenth for the teacher's of *Torah*, a tenth for the new converts who needed support while they studied *Torah*, and in the third year this above mentioned tithe for the needy. In this way the work of the priests and mission of the "church" were advanced along with the care of the poor, widows, and orphans.



Israel was expected to love the Lord with all their hearts, and their neighbors as themselves, Lev. 19:18. Some have claimed that this injunction was new to the Jews at the time Jesus told his disciples, *“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another,”* John 13:34.

The commandment to love one another must not have been what Jesus was referring to when He called the commandment “new,” since it had ever been a foundational principle of God’s government, both in heaven and upon earth. It had been repeated to Israel through Moses. The principle of the statutes governing the treatment of one’s neighbor condemned any action other than that born of loving regard.

What was “new” then, must have been the degree of self-sacrificing love that was addressed through God’s demonstration on the cross. This was a completely new and singular event purposed to present to the world a clear revelation of God’s character of love. That God sent His son to die for a “neighbor,” was truly a new thought. It had been possible for the Jews to treat a neighbor with respect, according to the letter of the statutes. They were proud of their generosity, and could brag about it in public prayers: *“I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers,”* (Luke 18:11, 12). The motive of love had been missing. That was then...

This is now... A generous heart with open-handedness has ever been exhibited among God’s people in every age. No greed can harbor in a heart broken by God’s love. Today, as anciently, God is calling out a people who will respond to, and restore His covenant.

*Love to God must be brought into our daily life. Then, and then only, can we show true love for our fellowmen. When this is done, when Christ is enthroned in our hearts, we manifest by our daily life, by our conversation, by our unselfish interest in one another, by our deep love for souls, that we are doers of the Word of God. The reality of our conversation is marked*

*by a deep earnest piety, which purifies the soul, and works unceasingly for the good of others, (Signs of the Times, March 11, 1897).*

**Statutes Against Carelessness:**

If the neighbor's animal (dog, horse, ox, and i.e.) killed someone, the animal must be killed and buried. The owner would be fined and the animal would be cursed, Ex. 21:28, 32); but if the owner knew the animal was dangerous, but did nothing to secure the animal, both the animal and the master would be put to death; a life for a life, Ex. 21:29. In some cases, the master was allowed to ransom his life by paying a hefty fine for his neglect. This fine was determined by the husband, or the judge, to represent the value of the life, Ex. 21:30, 31.

How easy it would have been to follow these statutes simply to avoid the consequence. A man with an excellent watch dog would have taken precautions, perhaps keeping the animal tied up, as is often seen today, with a sign posted to alert visitors--a symbol perhaps, since few commoners could read a sign posted: "Beware of Dog." "A life for a life," meant an animal's owner could not afford to be careless. Not even ignorance was a shelter for the guilty. All must take precautions to protect the neighbor from potential dangers. Truly, we have always been our brother's keepers. It is a cardinal rule in God's government. This concept is born out, also, in the next two statutes.



If a man left a pit opened and the neighbor's animal fell into it and was injured or killed by the fall, the owner of the pit must pay for the animal, Ex. 21:33, 34.

If a man's animal killed another man's animal, the living animal must be killed and both dead animals sold. The money would be divided between the owners. If, however, the aggressive animal was known to be vicious, the owner would have to kill the vicious animal, but forfeit his portion of the money obtained from the sale of the meat and hide, Ex. 21:35, 36.

God's children could not afford to be careless with another's property, nor excuse themselves if his animal caused damage to a life, or another's possessions, or land. Most of

the statutes in this section have carried over into logical consequences today. However, the complication of determining who is right and who is responsible usually ties up our court system, since few today are willing to admit guilt, regardless of the evidence. Those who claim the name of Jehovah must follow a higher standard. There must be no lawsuits between neighbors or brothers. (See Manuscript Releases, Vol. 5, page 420, for a clear perspective on this subject.)

**If a man allowed his livestock to graze in another man's field, he must give the best of his own field or vineyard to the neighbor in restitution, Ex. 22:4.**

After reading through the statutes in this section, one may readily see that God expected responsible, thoughtful, and generous behaviors from His people; nothing less, under any circumstance. These qualities of His character are still needed in His Remnant so that God's glory may be perceived in this last generation.

It is better to be taken advantage of, than to take advantage. The Remnant people of God have given their "rights" to the Father above. These will seek peace and pursue it. They believe with the writer of the proverb: *When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him*, Proverbs 16:7.

**If a man accidentally set his neighbor's field or property on fire, he must pay for all the damage done to the neighbor's property, Ex. 22:5, 6.**

If the neighbor was trusted to care-take of an owner's animals and property while the owner was away, and something bad happened to the property or animals during that time, the caretaker would have to swear by the oath of the Lord that he was not guilty of neglect. If the judge found no neglect on the caretaker's part, the caretaker would not be required to make restitution, Ex. 22:10, 11, 13.

*I saw that if there is anyone on earth who can consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian. He lives in the light of God's countenance...And when matters of importance must be decided by law, there is no one who can so well appeal to God as the Christian. I was bidden by the angel to notice that God swears by Himself (Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13, 17). He swore to Abraham (Genesis 26:3), to Isaac (Psalm 105:9), Jeremiah (11:5), and to David (Psalm 132:11; Acts 2:30). God required of the children of Israel an oath between man and man, Exodus 22:10, 11. Jesus submitted to the oath in the hour of His trial, (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, pages 202, 203).*

While some Christians have maintained that it is wrong to take an oath in court,

there are numerous examples of oath-taking in Scripture, in addition to the above instruction. Certainly, our Lord's example alone is sufficient evidence that the evil is not in the oath. It must be, then, in a tainted testimony. When one swears "under God," the person testifying is declaring that the testimony being given is as purely the truth as if Yahweh, Himself, were telling it. There may be other facts unknown to the witness, but what he has seen and heard he reports truthfully.

**A borrowed tool that broke must be replaced by the borrower; but if the owner was present during its use, the borrower was relieved of responsibility, Ex. 22:14, 15.**

This statute regarding responsibility for a tool that broke while the owner was supervising the use of the equipment being borrowed (Ex. 22:14, 15), may seem lax to some. Most of us would replace or repair the broken item that was in our use, whether the owner was present or not. The exception to this ethical rule would likely be over the cost of repairs, such as for a car that had worn parts. We are without doubt within the "letter of the law" when we make a judgment call over whose responsibility it is to repair worn out equipment, knowing it may have been needing repairs before we borrowed it.

This statute would also cover shared driving responsibility while traveling long distances. The vehicle's owner would assume responsibility for auto repairs needed during the journey, even though someone other than the owner may have been driving when the need arose. But the spirit of this law, that the Jews missed and we must rediscover, will surface by asking the question, "What would Jesus do?" Personal rights were not His priority; they will not be ours either.

**Never promise something with an oath without doing it, Lev. 5:4. Never take an oath falsely, Lev. 19:12.**

As God's word cannot return unto Him void, so should be the pledge made by one of His children. We must stand true to our word. Our word represents our character. We have read about Jephthah's rash vow (Judges 11:30) and Ananias and Sapphira's deception to secretly break their vow (Acts 5:1-11). The seriousness of making a vow, or promise, is real. Eccl. 5:4, 5 enlarges upon this oracle of Jehovah:

*When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou has vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*

Today a promise holds no more security than the weather forecast for most people. The rate at which marriage vows are broken should be alarming. One out of three marriages ends in divorce, even among Sabbath-keepers! Something is wrong here.

Baptismal vows are regarded with even less sanctity. Three out of four who take the oath of baptism disregard it, or discard it, when it no longer suits them.

In contrast to this bleak reality, God will have a people whose word is straight as an arrow. These value and keep their vows to Him. These keep their promises to others, even when inconvenient to do so. It is better to make no promise than to disregard it.

**A railing must be built around a flat roof to keep people from falling off, Deut. 22:8.**

As today, homeowners were required by law to keep their property safe for all who lived or visited there. We may be thankful, indeed, that the principle of this statute is still enforced.

**Israel was instructed to be careful not to discourage the widow, the orphan, or the strangers. The Israelite must remember that he had been a stranger in Egypt; and, but for the grace of God, would still be in that predicament, Deut. 24:17, 18.**

Their memory of abuse at the hand of taskmasters, their scars, their bereaved wives and mothers must never be forgotten. Those memories, and the scenes of judgment on the land of Egypt, kept the Israelites reminded that by grace were they saved; it was a gift unmerited, although pledged to Abraham centuries before. They had been through so much. God's heart was tender to the weakest among them.

Neither in word nor deed was a redeemed child of God to discourage or burden the widow with her load of worries and care. She may have lost her husband, and only means of support, by disease, robbers in ambush, or war. God's people were to rally to her need. The story of Ruth and Naomi gives us insights into this statute in action. Ultimately, it is the story of Christ's redemption of each one of us from a hostile world. We as Christ's representatives in the world are called upon to tend to the burdens of the widows.



The orphan, too, needed security, acceptance, and a sense of hope. Whether from a prolonged disease, or sudden death from animal attack, or the ravages of war, the loss of parents brought on more trauma than a young life should be required to handle.

God's people would be there to locate next of kin, or take in the child as one of their own. More time and attention would be required to assist this tender soul away from anger and bitterness into a useful life. Even the stranger, separated from his own people, needed special care.

What would bring the stranger to their land? Possibly the need for asylum from an

oppressor, or fear of a hostile government, or even famine, or pestilence could send the foreigner to Israel. Whatever the cause, the loving child of God was to extend hospitality to the sojourner. The same applies today. Let us be careful to encourage and lighten the load of those within our influence, especially those made vulnerable by the adverse circumstances.

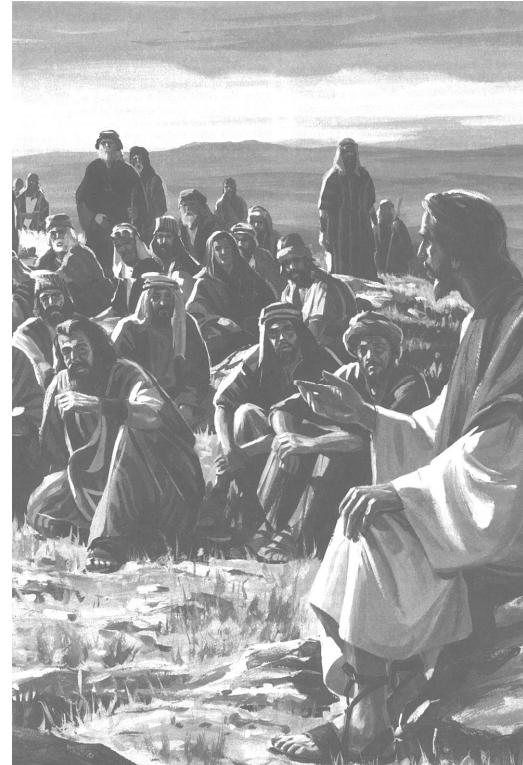
The principles found throughout the statutes were lofty: Never put one's own wants or needs above another's. Be truthful, honorable, responsible, attentive, and generous. We are our brother's keepers. Repeatedly we are reminded, "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,*" (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mk 12:31, 33; Rom 13:9, 10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). No other principle was illustrated, contrasted, and stressed more throughout scripture than love to one's fellowmen. None was spoken about more by our Saviour, nor more exemplified in His life, than the directive to love one another unselfishly. One of my favorite prayer songs is called, "Others." Here is the first verse:

Lord, help me live from day to day  
 In such a self-forgetting way,  
 That even when I kneel to pray,  
 My prayer shall be for others.  
 Others, Lord; let this my motto be  
 That I might live for others  
 As Thou hast died for me!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus amplified many statutes so that His hearers would see that love for God and one's neighbor is fulfilling the law. Without love in one's heart for the weak, the user, and the unlovely, keeping the commandments, statutes, and judgments was quite meaningless. In fact, no one could keep them without love as the motive.

*It was Christ who had said, "Ye shall do My statutes, and keep My judgments." Christ had presented the same principles on the Mount of Beatitudes as He had on Mount Sinai (Signs of the Times, June 11, 1896).*

Jesus suggested this principle of condescending love to the lawyer (rich, young ruler) who questioned His doctrine, in Matthew 22:35-40.



There the lawyer, absorbed in dogma and mind gymnastics, asked the Saviour a rhetorical question the lawyer thought was a deep theological mystery: "Which is the

greatest commandment?" The question implied the legalism shrouding his reasoning. Was he seeking to reduce his devotion to a pragmatic delineation of minimum requirements? Or, was he playing mind games with the Son of God? Sadly, the young lawyer failed to grasp the core issue at stake in his prideful pursuit of excellence. He would not take hold of the condescending love without which his religious fervor was a mere sham.

Paul later wrote, "*Love is the fulfilling of the law,*" in Romans 13:10; and again in Galatians 5:14 he explained that "*the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*" Why did Paul not repeat the two summary words -Love to God and love to mankind?

After His ignominious death on the cross and their own experience with persecution and hardships, the disciples did come to comprehend these words of the Saviour. He had in three-and-one-half years transformed the plans and purposes of eleven friends. They finally saw, and Paul was later taught, no one can love one's neighbor without first experiencing the transforming love of God, in and through one's life. Therefore, to truly "love thy neighbor as thyself" embodies all the commandments and safeguarding statutes of the *Torah*. Conversely, one who ignores the principles found in the commandments and statutes of the *Torah* has but a dim view of that altruistic concern called "Brotherly Love."

The prophets proclaimed it; the priests explained it: Walk with God and love your fellowmen; the theme is consistent throughout Scripture from cover to cover. It is not a New Testament concept alone. It is the whole purpose of all the oracles of God in every age. What does the Lord require of us, his saints?

- Do justly
- Love mercy
- Walk humbly with thy God (Micah 6:8)
- Walk righteously
- Speak uprightly
- Despise gain from oppression
- Refuse a bribe
- Avoid evil reports (Isaiah 33:14, 15)
- Keep the Sabbath
- Hold fast God's covenant (Isaiah 56:6 lp)
- Learn to do good
- Seek justice
- Reprove the oppressor
- Defend the fatherless
- Plead for the widow (Isaiah 1:17)
- Hate evil
- Love that which is good (Amos 5:15)
- Live by faith (Hab. 2:4; Gal. 3:11)
- Meditate on His name (Mal. 3:16)
- Love your enemies

- Bless those who curse you
- Do good to those who hate you
- Pray for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:44)
- Seek no praise (Matt. 6:3,4)
- Care for little children (Matt. 10:42)
- Forgive others (Matt. 6:14; 18:22)
- Keep the commandments (Matt. 19:17)
- Watch and pray (Matt. 26:41)
- Deny self (Matt. 8:34)
- Serve others (Mark 10:42-45)
- Be merciful (Luke 6:36)
- Pursue humility (Luke 14:11)
- Fear the Lord your God
- Walk in all His ways
- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul
- Keep His commandments and statutes (Deut. 10:12)
- Give thanks in everything (1 Thes. 5:18).

Throughout the Scriptures, Bible writers consistently pointed out what is so explicitly expressed in both song and verse: “If you want to be great in God’s kingdom, learn to be a servant of all.” *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another* (John 13:34, 35). The love God sheds in our hearts when we are converted at the cross is the universal thesis of the Old Testament statutes. They may become God’s transforming prohibitions against self-centered, careless living when they spring from a grateful heart.

### Statutes Restricting Anger:

If a pregnant woman was injured so that she miscarried, the person at fault must be punished according to the justice demanded by the husband, Ex. 21:22. If the mother lost her life also, the person at fault would be put to death, Ex. 21:23-25.

According to this law, if two men were fighting and they crashed into the pregnant wife, one or both of them could be held liable, if the blow caused her to abort the fetus. This law hasn't changed, except in the severity of the punishment. Anger is still a destructive emotion, both to the antagonist and the victim. The perpetrator will be held responsible.

There is some evidence that God condescended to allow laws to be enforced, which were not the ideal, but met the needs of the people in a state of moral growth and spiritual development. In Matthew 19:3-8, Christ referred to the law (Deut. 24:1-4) Moses had been instructed to give them allowing divorce. Divorce was never in God's design for

His people, then or now. But He allowed it because of the hardness of heart among His people.

The above statute may also have elements of God's condescending in it. It was not God's design that they seek revenge. But they did it, and this statute made provision for the revenge of an injured wife. Like the "avenger of blood" (Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:6, 12) spoken of in Exodus 21:13, this statute allowed that which was imperfect while restricting its boundaries.

If two men fought, the wife must take great care if she were to come to her loosing husband's aid. Specifically, she could not render the attacker immobile by injuring the bully's private parts. The penalty for disregarding this statute was to have her hand cut off, Deut. 25:11, 12.

Even in such a dire emergency, a woman was not free to help her husband by an indecent act. To touch a man inappropriately would have moral ramification beyond the wrestling of two men. The moral code must be sacredly guarded.

*I have been urged by the Spirit of the Lord to fully warn our people in regard to the undue familiarity of married men with women, and women with men, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 4, page 63).*

If two men fought and one was sent to the hospital, the other man must pay the injured man's hospital bill and lost wages, Ex. 21:18, 19.



The law did not give license to fighting, but made provisions for the eventuality.

Homicide perpetrators were punished by death, Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17. This sin was listed among the curses spoken from Mt. Ebal. The law included undiscovered murder and the taking of money to slay the innocent, Deut. 27:24.

Do you wonder if an Israelite was ever let off a murder charge for insanity? We read of Israel's kings getting away with murder. Otherwise, we have no scriptural record of this command being carried out, or of it being violated.

*How carefully God protects the rights of men! He has attached a penalty to willful murder. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). If one murderer were permitted to go unpunished, he would by his evil influence and cruel violence subvert others. This would result in a condition of things similar to that, which existed before the flood. God must punish murderers. He gives life, and He will take life, if that life becomes a terror and a menace. Mercy shown to a willful murderer is cruelty to his fellow men. If a willful murderer thinks that he will find protection by fleeing to the altar of God, he may find that he will be forced from that altar and be slain. But if a man takes life unintentionally, then God declares that He will provide a place of refuge, to which he can flee, (Sermons and Talks, Vol. 2, page 186).*

If the murder was not premeditated (manslaughter), the guilty could flee from his avengers to an appointed place for protection until justice could be determined and executed, Ex. 21:13. If, however, the killing was indeed a murder committed in anger, the guilty would be taken from the sanctuary of protection to be slain, Ex. 21:14.

The essence of the statute was: *An eye for eye and tooth for tooth*, Lev. 24:20. Here is another example of a statute given to Moses, which was less than the perfect ideal God wanted for His people. Yahweh had no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Eze. 33:11) any more than than now. His purpose in giving the "eye for an eye" command is suggested by Ezekiel in the second half of this verse: *...but that the wicked turn from his ways and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*<sup>9</sup> Prevention by punishment may have propelled this statute.

Jesus was not giving the people a different standard of behavior when He seemingly contrasted the Law of Moses with His own. He was suggesting a different motive than the people had understood.

*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away, (Matt. 5:38-42).*

The dichotomy here was not over two opposing laws. The issue was Old Covenant *blindness* verses Everlasting Covenant *comprehension*. The difference was the letter of the law verses the spirit of the law. Moses had given the law, if you kill someone you will be killed; if you injure someone, you will be injured. So don't do it. Instead, love one another and put others before yourself. But if you don't do that, consequences will follow. Is that too harsh a picture of God? I think not; for *those he loves he disciplines and corrects every son he receives* (See Heb. 11:5-7).

What principle may be extracted for us today? On a personal level, don't defend yourself against greedy and evil people. Instead, be generous with all. For, if you become haughty and high-minded, God will deal with you blow for blow. Some readers may see in this extraction too nearly a Pollyanna Syndrome to be practical in today's hostile world. While one should take customary precautions for one's safety; beyond that the Promises (i.e. Is. 54:17) and the Armor (Eph. 6:11-18) are our thorough and adequate defense.

Never mistreat a defenseless widow or fatherless child. God will destroy the disobedient to this statute; He will leave the wife of the guilty as a widow and his children fatherless, Ex. 22:22-24.

*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me (Matt. 25:40).*

Again, the law seems to take a severe stance in the expectation that fear of consequences will deter the wrong doer. But, fear cannot motivate loving actions. So why did God couch His requirements in such negative terms?



The obvious answer is that the simple-mindedness of newly freed slaves warranted it. These people were used to acting expediently according to rewards and punishments. God sought to reach them through provisions and power, because our loving God always meets man where he is, and that is where they were in moral development.

Let us not judge the choices of our Elohim harshly or critically for not reaching them sooner with His matchless love. He could not because they would not. Israel could not comprehend love until they were stopped by His power. They could understand military might. They could understand capital punishment. But they couldn't grasp the meaning of selfless love until Calvary displayed the picture painted in blood.

Now we know what Love looks like: raising a child from a funeral bier, wiping away tears from a grieving mother, forgiving sinners, healing the sick, and offering hope. As

Lamentations 5:3 reminds us, we were all orphans and widows until the Love of the Father took us in. So, likewise, we are to respond to the weak, the displaced, the homeless.

One must never speak unkindly to or about the person who was handicapped, whether blind or deaf, etc. One must help to make his/her life easier, not harder, Lev. 19:14. To avoid helping a blind person was to incur a curse, Deut. 27:18.

What a rebuke this statute gives to those who do not show sympathy for the life of a handicapped person. Lack of understanding is not a justification for neglect; no, the basis of neglect is rather apathy for that which is not "like me." Selfishness frames the foundation of the disregard for this statute. As love for God increases, one's "understanding" catches up. When we open the heart to the level of caring that His love provides, we will find every bias, every shyness, every self-centered awkwardness dissolve into gentle compassion. That is the power of His love in us to change our careless hearts when we focus on His compassion for the weak.

**Never repeat gossip, Lev. 19:16.**

This anti-gossip rule is a safeguard for the commandment, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor*, Exodus 20:16. By adhering to this policy we are safe from guilt over telling what is not true about someone. Sometimes the facts we hear may be correct; only the tone, or the nuances, suggest attitudes or insinuate meaning not born by the facts. Repeating the unkindness violates the principle of the ninth commandment.

### The Tongue

"The boneless tongue, so small and weak,  
Can crush and kill," declares the Greek.  
"The tongue destroys a greater horde,"  
The Turk asserts, "than does the sword."

A Persian proverb wisely saith,  
"A lengthy tongue—an early death."  
Or sometimes takes this form instead:  
"Don't let your tongue cut off your head."

"The tongue can speak a word whose speed,"  
The Chinese say, "outstrips the steed."  
While Arab sages this impart:  
"The tongue's great storehouse is the heart."

From Hebrew hath this maxim sprung,  
 “Though feet should slop, ne’er let the tongue.”  
 The sacred writer crowns the whole,  
 “Who keeps his tongue doth keep his soul!”  
*(-Philip B. Strong)*

In summary, the rule prohibiting gossip is as needed now as in past ages. When we love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves, this ancient vice will lose its enjoyment. It seems to come naturally to most of us to enjoy a bad report, especially about someone who has ignored or slighted us. But there will be no revenge, no bitterness, no gossip among those who are uniting their hearts with the gentle, peace-loving Saviour. How foolish to live one’s life like it was a trial run for a second chance. Let’s get off the fence and put on the whole armor of God (Phil. 6:11-18) that we may stand against the darts of negative thinking.

**Don’t hate anyone; don’t bear a grudge, nor try to get revenge for any wrong. The child of God must love his neighbor as himself, Lev. 19:18.**

As paraphrased, the above statute sounds like it must be from the New Testament. But no; this was the standard toward which Jehovah of the Old Testament urged His adopted family. Here again we add evidence that the Love Commandment was not new after all.

**If an enemy’s animal got lost and was found by the neighbor, it must be kindly taken back to the enemy owner, Ex. 23:4. There were to be no “finders keepers” in Israel. Each must help another find that which was lost. But, if a lost item was found and the rightful owner could not be discovered by honest effort, then the item could be claimed by the finder, until the rightful owner came forth, Deut.22:1-4.**

When Saul, son of Kish, went out to seek his father’s donkeys, he searched three days without success. But others were aware of the lost animals; they followed the directive of this statute helping in the search. Thus, Samuel could assure Saul that he could attend to more serious matters, for the donkeys had been found and taken home (1 Sam. 9:20).

When Abraham returned from his battle with the kings (Gen. 14), he kept nothing for himself (See verses 22-24). He was in another man’s territory doing battle to deliver his own property and kin. That is all he was willing to claim. The benefit afforded to the King of Salem (Jerusalem), was part of Abraham’s responsibility under God to help a neighbor reclaim that, which had been lost.

Do we volunteer to join the search for a missing child? Do we read the bulletin

board notices of missing pets? Do we report money found to the police department? If we do, we may be observing the principle and spirit of this statute.

**If an enemy's animal was in distress, the neighbor must help it. Show mercy toward your enemy was the statute, Ex. 23:5.**

Contrary to the custom today, those followers of the Most High God were instructed to help even a distressed animal belonging to an enemy. Today, due to the threat of lawsuits, most people will choose to "not get involved." Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, reminded the multitude of this requirement of Heaven, however. Cutting away the distortions of the Pharisees, He declared,

*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (Matt. 5:43, 44, New King James Version).*

Israel had been instructed to hate evil, but nowhere had they been instructed to hate a disagreeable neighbor. In Leviticus 19:18 the statute was stated clearly: *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* Once again, the Hebrew people missed the intent. By the time Jesus walked among men, a challenging, philosophical question for theologians to ponder was, "Who is my neighbor?"

Are we Christians today still trying to weasel out of obligations, duties, and responsibilities found in Scripture? It will not be so among the Remnant. *I delight to do thy will, O my God,* "declares the Psalmist, *"Thy law is within my heart"* (40:8).

**Show respect when an elderly person enters your presence by standing to your feet, Lev. 19:32.**

God called out His people from Egypt to be a holy nation, not because they were already more righteous than other people; not because they were more worthy than other people; but, because He had promised. By setting His place of dwelling in the center of their life-space, and by engaging them in a drama that would teach them His plan to restore the very nature of God lost in Eden, this despised mass of slaves was favored above all others. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the people of Israel (Ps. 103:7), yet only a remnant entered His Everlasting Covenant. Commandments, numbers five, six, and eight were by this statute magnified, teaching the rule of self-control, showing honor, dignity, and respect to the aged. That was then...

*The principles of the word of God—principles that are as high as heaven, and that compass eternity—we are to understand in their bearing upon our daily life. Every act, every word, every thought, is to be in accord with these principles (The Ministry of Healing, p. 454).*

Basically, our Heavenly Father is today looking for peacemakers who are hungry for truth and godliness, who are merciful, humble, and faithful to His Word (Matt. 5:3-10). Jesus lived in accordance with the statutes; after all, He gave them in the first place.



The statute requiring respect for the elderly when they enter your presence has long been forgotten, even in principle, in many cultures today. It would be well for all of us, who have decided to follow Jesus through His oracles, to reinstitute this beautiful courtesy. May the gentle Jesus teach us to honor others as did He. Furthermore, God considers all people older in the family of God to be as parents, thus respected for sage and age. While this relationship is enjoined in Eastern cultures, in the West, it has been ignored, sometimes arrogantly. God is looking for covenant keepers who will reinstate this statute among them. Accordingly, we will live in harmony with the spirit of the fifth commandment.

Honoring others, let us speak with respect in the face of rudeness; with hope, where there is despair; adding joy, where there is sadness; sharing praise, to cover others' criticism, and expressing forgiveness to quell another's wrath. *How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good tidings, who publish peace* (Isa. 52:7). This is the life of the peacemaker, whom Jesus called "the children of God" (Matt. 5:9).

"Why were the saints called 'saints'?" someone has inquired. Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful, patient when it was bothersome to be patient; and because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still; and kept silent when they wanted to talk; and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable. The answer is quite simple, but the doing still requires daily surrender.

When we come to realize that we are truly God's children to uphold His character, and to "go on God's errands," we will be transformed by contemplating His matchless love—a love that suffers long and is kind, is gentle in spirit, patient and self-controlled. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.)

*Christ in the heart, Christ in the life, this is our safety. The atmosphere of His presence will fill the soul with abhorrence of all that is evil. Our spirit may be so identified with His that in thought and aim we shall be one with Him (The Ministry of Healing, p. 510).*

*The grace of Christ received into the heart, subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, pp. 27, 28).*

The statutes still guard the Ten Commandments, focusing our attention upon the heart rather than upon the stone. These rules for a selfless lifestyle help the follower of Christ to keep the Ten Commandments in his/her heart. When we love our neighbor as ourselves, we won't want to spread harm to anyone's reputation. We will regard the elderly as a blessed source of wisdom and knowledge, and will protect life and property, even that belonging to those who respond in meanness. God's Remnant will look after the handicapped, the poor, and the weak. This is only possible when Yahweh writes His Laws upon their hearts.

## The Question of Morality

### Chapter 5

*The principles set forth in Deuteronomy for the instruction of Israel, are to be followed by God's people to the end of time...Never can we afford to compromise principle by entering into alliance with those who do not fear him, Prophets and Kings, page 570.*

It is an indisputable fact that most shipwrecked lives can be traced to the disregard of the seventh commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (Exodus 20:14). Sit in an active minister's study, read his mail, talk to the men and women who come for counsel, listen to the telephone calls; and you will soon see the pervasiveness of this sin which leads into a tangle of human wreckage.

Yet, no subject is more often dealt with in the *Torah* than the question of morality. For the most part, these pure and lofty ideals have fallen on deaf ears. The disdain for the requirements of morality has done more to destroy the image of God in mankind than all other evils combined.

If a man had sex with a maiden, he must marry her and pay her father a dowry, Exodus 22:16. If the father refused to allow the marriage, the suitor must still pay the dowry, Exodus 22:17.

Fifty shekels of silver was the dowry for a maiden, Deut. 22:29. To the best of my mathematical calculations, fifty shekels would approximate eight to ten month's wages. In today's economy, that would be a formidable fee. If a person's income were only two thousand dollars a month, the dowry would amount to \$16,000 to \$20,000. A moment of passion could place a poor man in serious debt.



This statute also covered the precocious couple engaged in premarital sex. The young lady took a great risk to pressure her father; for, if he said "No," she would bear the disgrace of losing her virginity -a major consideration for another man who might consider marrying her.

Think of the possibilities of enforcing this statute today, even within the limits of the Christian community. The thought undoubtedly will bring a smile. The pressure for abstinence would suddenly shift from the maiden to her suitor.

If a damsel, who was engaged to be married, had consensual sex with another man, they both must die (Ex. 22:23). If the betrothed damsel was raped, only the man was guilty (vs. 25). In the case of a man raping a virgin, the man must pay the father to allow him to marry the girl, and he could never divorce her, since she had been humiliated (vs. 28). See Deut. 22:23-29.

Here three types of seduction are described. The first is the situation in which an engaged, young lady had sex with another man before her marriage ceremony. The pair was treated as guilty of adultery if the encounter had taken place in a city where she could have cried for help.

In the second scenario, the betrothed damsel would have been too far from help for her cries to have been heard. In that case, only the rapist would have been put to death.

Finally, in the third case, if an unengaged lady was seduced or forced to have sex, the man must pay the dowry, and, as stated in Exodus 22, may or may not be allowed to marry the girl. If the father did allow the marriage, the husband could never divorce the woman, as he had already humiliated her once.

The SDA Bible Commentary regards premarital sex between engaged couples with some of the above severity, recalling Joseph's concern for Mary who, being found with child (Matt. 1:20, 24) before their marriage, he thought to put her away quietly. Although this application may be allowed, the Deuteronomy passage does not justify it. Joseph may have considered Mary's premarital pregnancy evidence of rape or consensual relations with another man. In either case, Joseph's consideration was to protect Mary from the humiliation associated with such gossip. That was then...

What about today? Few stand up against premarital sex in any context. Church ladies give baby showers for the fornicators as if fornication was honorable. Worth considering is the question, what would the principles of these morality statutes do for society today? Can we even imagine it? What would these standards do for the Christian community if Christians stood in contrast to the world? Sadly, the institutions of Christianity have become perverted by tolerance for immorality to the point that those who advocate moral standards are more likely to be considered "out of line" than the advocates of promiscuity.

By consistently lowering the standard to accept the moral corruption, "*they look upon sin as righteousness, and righteousness as sin. By associating with these, whose inclinations and habits are not elevated and pure, others become like them*" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 5, page 143).

**Sex with an animal was forbidden, Exodus 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15, 16; Deut. 27:21.**

This statute is referenced among the twelve curses proclaimed from Mount Ebal. One may read the entire list in Deuteronomy 27:15-26. Anyone who would practice such debauchery is not a "Christian." The two life-styles are incompatible.

**A man must not marry two sisters (Lev. 18:18), nor both a mother and her daughter; this was wickedness, Lev. 20:14.**

About the tension, distress, and heartache caused by Jacob marrying two sisters, the Bible is silent. We can only guess. The jealousy between the wives is suggested in Scripture, but how Jacob dealt with the arguing and bickering, the accusing and tattling is not told. His could not have been a peaceful haven, "a light of the world" kind of home.

Although the nations around them saw no wrong in sexual indulgence, Israel was to be a separate people (Lev. 20:24) with standards much higher than their worldly neighbors.

The nations around them had no standards for moral conduct. They would wait for the natural consequences of disregarding this law of God. The same is true today. Children and teenagers go through the godless, public school system with nary a thought that there is a healthier, happier design for their lives.



**Don't even look at the nakedness of another person; not your father or mother, not your brother or sister, not your aunt or uncle, nor (outside of obvious parenting necessity) any person other than your spouse, Lev. 18:6-17; 20:11,12, 17, 19-21; Deut 22:30; 27:20, 22, 23.**

The seventh commandment, against adultery, was to be safeguarded by the injunction, "*Don't even look at the nakedness of another person,*" suggesting the

relationship between thoughts and actions. Christ, in Matthew 5:27, 28, reminded the multitude of this relationship when He spoke,

*You have learned how it was said: You must not commit adultery. But I say this to you: If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Jerusalem Bible).*

Here, Jesus refers to the giving of the commandments “of old,” and reminds them of the protective statute, which had apparently been forgotten. He contrasted what they already knew (the seventh commandment) with what He was about to teach them: Don’t look at a woman lustfully. The conjunction, “but,” establishes the contrast. Yet, one can readily see from the numerous references in the *Torah*, that the principle of keeping one’s mind from lustful thoughts had also been given “of old times” (*King James* rendering) in the above statute. Christ taught no new commandment; He, rather, magnified the Law, placing the precepts of old in new casings.



We may safely conclude from Christ's revitalizing the oracles of God, that, morality had so declined by the first century A.D, that few knew or practiced this commandment-protecting statute. Furthermore, we recognize in His discourse that Jesus was not only upholding the seventh commandment, but He was also elevating the statute as well, for its principle of pure thoughts placed a “hedge” around the seventh commandment.

Jesus was explaining the kernel of the commandment, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*,” exhorting the multitude to guard the sacredness of the marriage bond by keeping their minds free from stimulating temptations and lustful thoughts being foisted upon them. That was then...

This is now... Today nudity is commonplace. To keep from looking upon naked body parts seductively exposed, seems impossible. Nudity is the number one selling technique used by merchandisers. How can we avoid it? It may seem prudish to some to put television personalities, movies, billboards, and magazines, etc. in the spotlight of this statute: Don’t even look at nakedness. But what is our authority for morality? -Custom, or Scripture? Culture? or the Word of God?

Some will counter, because nakedness is so commonplace, it is no longer seductive. Then, ask yourself, have we become so contaminated with the declining morality that sin has lost its sinfulness? If it were not seductive, furthermore, advertising agencies would not spend millions using it. To be in the world but not of the world has seemed virtually impossible! Yet, God will have a peculiar people who will guard their minds against all immorality, including sensual thoughts. For this and other reasons, removing the television makes sense to many modern saints of God. We know God specializes in things thought impossible; shoring up our minds may be one of them.

Another implied question regarding pure thoughts should be considered by parents. It concerns the bath. The bath has for centuries been a choice place for relaxation, an escape from pressures, and a place to focus on problem solving. For some, reading in the bathtub provides a desirable release. Some women light candles and burn fragrant aromas around the tub.



For the Greeks and Romans, the bath was a public place for relaxing the body while exercising the mind. It was at the public bath that great minds poured over scientific theories and military strategies.

Could it be that the above statute includes no parent-with-child bathing? -No viewing of a parent's nakedness at all? Certainly with a more conservative attitude protected from toddlerhood, adolescents would have a far different regard for their sexuality. Some modern psychologists would call this attitude abnormal, and even harmful, since the openness to sex talk has been in vogue. We must remember that God's ways are foolishness to the world (1 Cor. 1:23, 25; 2:14; 3:19). The godly parent will prayerfully seek God's perspective rather than that of learned men.

Then, there is the question of swimming attire. Just bringing up the subject in a group of young people raises hackles. Have we moved so far from Scripture that we can never go back? *The instructions given to Moses for ancient Israel, with their sharp, rigid outlines, are to be studied and obeyed by the people of God today (SDA Commentary, Vol. 1, page 1103).* It is time to return to the "old paths."

Noah's folly after the flood crisis gives us an inkling of God's perspective on "nakedness sacredness." Genesis 9 tells the story (verses 20-27), however scanty, of how Noah drank of the wine from his vineyard. We are not told how he became "uncovered within his tent." We do know from the Scriptures that Shem and Japheth respected the statute: They backed into the tent to lay a cover over their father's nakedness. Much speculation surrounds this story. What did Ham do that brought upon his descendants the curse there recorded? Did he touch his father? Did he laugh at his father's nakedness? We don't know. We do know that parental respect had been decreasing before this fateful day.

*The unnatural crime of Ham declared that filial reverence had long before been cast from his soul; and it revealed the impiety and vileness of his character. These evil characteristics were perpetuated in Canaan and his posterity, whose continued guilt called upon them the judgments of God...*

*On the other hand, the reverence manifested by Shem and Japheth for their father, and thus for the divine statutes, promised a brighter future for their descendants." Patriarchs and Prophets, page 117.*

Two lessons immerge from the above quote. First, there is a brighter future to those who learn reverence toward parents and the divine statutes. Second, many divine statutes were in place centuries before Sinai. This statute seems to have been one of them.

**Marital sex was not to take place during the wife's menstrual period. That was an abomination to God, Lev. 18:19; 20:18.**

Here we find both literal and spiritual implications. Blood contained the life or death of the body. Through the blood disease was transmitted from one to another. The woman's immune system was stressed, and her body was more susceptible to infection than at any other time of the month.

Spiritually, it is through the shed blood of the Messiah that life is imparted to us. Thus, the ideology of blood is one of shared life and death. That shared intimacy should not be subjected to an increased potential for illness or compromised health.

The prohibition against intimacy during a wife's menstrual period may have lost much of its intended purpose today. With better sanitary provisions and more knowledge, we may have overlooked a subtlety that, if known today, would settle any debate over the importance of this law in our contemporary lives.

**Having sex with your neighbor's wife is an abomination to God, Lev. 18:20; 20:10.**

And who is your neighbor? Although Christ's answer came in the context of mercy to anyone in need (Luke 10:29), the story of the Good Samaritan defines "neighbor" for all Biblical injunctions. One's neighbor is anyone not of one's own family. Other statutes prohibit improper conduct with family members, as well. All human relationships were covered. The seventh commandment, Thou shalt not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14), is here in reference, however. The injunction ends with a judgment: death to the adulterer and the adulteress. Does that not tell us clearly what God thinks of society's new morality? He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

**Homosexual relations was an abomination to God, Lev. 18:22; 20:13.**

For a Christian to speak up on the subject of homosexuality requires unusual tact and reverence, lest even the rebuke should be like the lights of the Pharos which

sometimes served to wreck the ships they meant to save.

While we are all born with a sinful nature, we are not to willfully sin. Christ has made the provisions for our justification and sanctification, both imputing and imparting his righteous life to us. Through the daily regeneration of our lives in Christ at the foot of the cross, we may overcome the debasing tendencies inherited.

The marketplace has been flooded with books defending homosexuality. Even some so-called "Christian books" defend this weakness on the basis of genes. But the Bible calls it an abomination. To have the tendency, or disposition toward, doesn't constitute the abomination. It is the practice of, or the giving in to, the weakness that is the abomination to Jehovah.

**A servant of God must not take to wife a woman who is not a virgin, Lev. 21:7, 14.**

It seems fitting that a priest would select a wife from among the virgins in Israel, for he was to be set apart for a holy purpose. His mate must be as dedicated to a holy life as he was, or his reputation and influence would be undermined.

In contrast to the ideals the Heavenly Father set before His people, is the story of God's directing Hosea to marry a harlot. While it is not known that Hosea was a priest, his prophecies placed him in a position of spiritual leadership during the last forty years of the Northern Kingdom. It is, therefore, significant that his marriage and each of his children, by their names, proclaimed the judgment of God against the northern tribes.



Israel had been called (Eze. 16:8-15) God's bride. She was to keep herself for Him alone. Thus, the title of "whore" was appropriate for a nation that had gone after the world in spiritual adultery. Hosea's prescribed marriage was a desperate attempt to shock the people of Israel into recognition of their wickedness.

Today, the Heavenly Husband is looking for a people who will love Him enough to keep their affections on the things of God, and who have no desire to flirt with the world. God will have such a people (Rev. 14:1-5) when He comes again. These follow Him wheresoever He goes.

**If the daughter of an anointed priest of God played the harlot, she must be put to death, Lev. 21:9.**

Immorality in the family of an anointed priest of God must be eradicated. Death by fire was ordered. Perhaps that is why we find no examples recorded in Scripture of

rebellion to this statute. On the other hand, it may have been because Israel so quickly turned away to lust for the lures of Satan, so that the priests tolerated the abomination.

*The great statute book is truth, and truth only; for it delineates with unerring accuracy the history of Satan's deception, and the ruin of his followers. Satan claimed to be able to present laws which were better than God's statutes and judgments, and he was expelled from heaven. [Dear Reader, do you see the evidence that the statutes existed before Adam's sin?] He has made a similar attempt upon earth...He has taken the world captive in his snare, and many even of the people of God are ignorant of his devices, and they give him all the opportunity he asks to work the ruin of souls, (Selected Messages, page 316).*

Ministers today hold the same holy office and calling as priests of old. Their children may not blend with the world in ways others might call "innocent." When they do, the effectiveness of the minister's influence is severely lessened. Reverence for the holy office of ministry must be enjoined upon each member of the family. But is that what is commonly seen among us? Praise God for the faithful ministers who, like Abraham, commanding his household after him (Genesis 18:19), have held up the standards in love and obedience for their families.

The daughter of a priest could not marry out of "the faith" or she must be sent away never to have anything to do with holy things again, Lev. 22:12.

Eastern religions have held on to a likeness of this precept throughout the centuries. The Catholic religion has set a form of this rule for its members. Protestants, on the other hand, have often tended more to tolerate compromise. What does the Scripture say about this principle? Amos 3:3 - *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* 2 Corinthians 6:14 - *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness?*

Among professing Christians, there has been a problem discerning light from darkness. Truth is too often perceived in shades of gray. Gray is the color of confusion when values are compromised. Gray is the color mixed for the open-minded on the pallet of "situation ethic." The question, rather than, How far can I go and stay in good favor with my church?" should be "How can I better serve and represent the Saviour? What is His will for my life as revealed in Scripture?

To the latter, Paul answers, *All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).* We pray for discernment, and the Holy Spirit is sent to help us interpret the cases and codes recorded in Scripture. Thereby, we may apply the principles of the past to our

present challenges, no matter how culturally different they may be.

If the priest's daughter was divorced or widowed and had no child, she could return to her father's house, providing she brought no stranger with her, but if she had married a stranger, she could not eat of the holy offerings, Lev. 22:13, 14.

The daughter of the priest, who had married lawfully and had been set aside or widowed, could return to her father's home and be re-established in the family ministry. The food provided at the table would come from the sanctuary, or temple, and from tithes brought from flock and field. Because the meal often included sacrificed meat, she could not bring a stranger with her to the table. As the food was dedicated for a sacred purpose, so each, who ate of the food, had to have been set aside for a holy ministry.

Should it not so be today among those who take His name? What if ministers recognized their paycheck, paid from tithe to the Almighty One, as sacred income for sacred purposes? What if each family member showed reverence for the tithe and the sacredness of God's money? What if such money was spent prayerfully so that children in the minister's home grew up recognizing their financial support as coming from Jehovah, so that they used it reverently to His glory? There are few ministers' homes where this principle is still respected.

The concept of not feeding the stranger from the animal sacrifices at the temple has no apparent parallel in our lives. The sacrificial services pointed to the sacrificed Lamb of God. Their significance ended on the cross. The principles remaining for us today include the following:

- 1) Responsibilities and privileges, reserved for the spiritually discerning, will not be placed in the hands of strangers.
- 2) Those in sacred office will submit to the sacredness of their Divine appointment; and
- 3) Children and youth, growing up in a home set apart for sacred ministry, are themselves ministers in the making.

This statute is not about refusing to feed strangers or turning them away from shelter. There are statutes that command the care of strangers and foreigners, even enemies. This law was not about loyalty, generosity, and respect for the sacred. What power would attend the preaching of the oracles of God in this frivolous generation if more ministers accepted the sacred responsibility in the manner commanded of old!

If a woman broke the seventh commandment to have a secret affair, and the husband began to suspect it, he was to bring her before the priest who would pray for a curse or

blessing to be upon her according to her truthfulness and innocence, Numbers 5:11-31. If the husband did not follow this ordinance, he was also guilty before God (vs. 31).

Numbers, Chapter 5, describes the judgment upon a woman caught having an affair, thus breaking her marriage vow. Two witnesses were required (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15) to secure a conviction of the transgressors, but only the husband could bring the case to court. The penalty was death (Lev. 20:10) to the couple when proven guilty. But, when the husband first suspected unfaithfulness, he must follow specific steps outlined in Numbers 5.

There may be no parallels today for the rituals performed by the priest to determine the woman's guilt or innocence. After all, guilt was associated with the **ordinances of the altar**, which ended at Calvary. Not that the guilt ended there, but its rituals did. Even the principles may have been lost through centuries of change. Jesus quoted the rule of established guilt by the testimony of two or three witnesses (Matt. 18:16), thereby reassuring us that the practice was of God's origination, and was to continue to the end of time. More on the significance of two witnesses will be found in Chapter 9.

Also important in this judgment of God was the husband's guilt if he ignored the sin. Thus, in addition to the severity of judgment for breaking the seventh commandment, we also, from this law, gain God's perspective on deliberately ignoring sin within the family, or church family. In a previous chapter we read the judgment on a teenager who rebelled against the parents. The parents must bring that rebellious youth to the authorities for justice. When one youth was tempted by another youth to seek the pleasures of the world, the command was to "Tell."



Other examples of turning the guilty over to the authorities may be cited, all of which bear out that we are to have a "zero tolerance policy" for immorality, individually and corporately.

Then the Son of God came to earth to demonstrate God's character, and suddenly the "zero tolerance" in the Oracles seems to have found new definition. To the woman taken in adultery, Jesus spoke forgiveness: *Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more* (John 8:11).

Was Jesus changing the rules He Himself had given at Sinai? Was this encounter really about adultery? Jesus acknowledged the truthfulness of the law they quoted (vs. 5) when He said,

*"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (vs. 7). With all their professions of reverence for the Law, these rabbis, in bringing the charge against the woman, were disregarding its provisions. It was the husband's duty to take action against her, and the guilty parties were to be punished equally. The action of the accusers was wholly unauthorized.*

*Jesus, however, met them on their own ground. The law specified that in punishment by stoning, the witnesses in the case should be the first to cast a stone, (The Desire of Ages, page 461).*

Christ had, by His Spirit-inspired response, avoided their efforts to entrap Him, inferred their own guilt for not following the provision of the statute; and at the same time, He had shown respect for the law given to Moses. By extending to the woman forgiveness, He empowered her with deliverance. The guilt was turned on the Pharisees. But that was a long time ago.

How do we relate to the seventh commandment in the light of this New Testament incident? Many believers in the Law wish to escape this commandment. Yet, *moral principle, strictly carried out, becomes the only safeguard of the soul, (Counsels on Health, p. 621).* At the foot of the cross, we must daily submit our sin-damaged hearts. There He alone can forgive, cleanse, and refocus our lives on a higher plane.

*For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ, 2 Cor. 2:17.*

The point is, then, that because the husband only could bring the accusation before the court, it was both an act of justice and one of redemption. Rumor would be stopped. Sin would be dealt with as committed against both God and His people. And the innocent would have restored a good reputation. That was then...

Today, the oracle spoken by the Son of God remains for us and our children: *Judge not lest ye be judged, Luke 6:37.* Only our Heavenly Husband may bring accusation against us, and He loves us more than life itself.

*The knowledge of the claims of the law would crush out the last ray of hope from the soul if there were no Saviour provided for man; but the truth as it is in Jesus, is a savor of life unto life. God's dear Son died that He might impute unto man His own righteousness, and not that he might be at liberty to break God's holy law, as Satan tries to take men believe. Through faith in Christ, man may be in possession of moral power to resist evil, (Selected Messages, Vol. 1, page 317).*

**A woman was not to wear a man's clothing; nor was a man to wear a woman's clothing. It was an abomination to God to do so, Deut. 22:5.**

The impersonation of the opposite sex was done for vulgar and lewd entertainment among the heathen. The phrase, "that which pertaineth," in the King James Version, may include articles other than clothing. Thus, the SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, page 1030, enumerates such items as weapons (Gen. 27:3), armour (1 Sam. 14:1, 6), and furniture (Nahum 2:9), which may be implied. God created mankind, male and female. The desire to minimize the differences makes a strike at the Creator's design.

The Remnant people of God will shun popular customs that draw them into conformity to the world's rebellion against the universal morality found throughout the Bible. May each reader determine to be transformed by renewing the mind (Romans 12:2) in the ways God has outlined for His saints. Our dress will be distinctively modest, setting us apart from the world. That which is ostentatious, unrefined, or immodest will not recommend our Saviour to the careless throng. How may I better give glory to my Saviour? This should be our first consideration.

Someone has sagaciously written, "A wise man is one who knows the difference between good, sound reasons and reasons that sound good." To the justifications offered by women buying their clothing in the men's department, this statute stands in rebuke.

It was essential that a woman be a virgin at the time of her marriage to a young man of Israel. If the new husband suspected that his bride was not a virgin, he was to present this accusation to the city council for a hearing with the bride's relatives. They would show evidence of her virginity, according to ancient custom. If her case revealed rape, an investigation would follow. If the young lady was found innocent, her new husband must pay her father double the dowry and retain his wife. But if she was found guilty, she must die, Deut. 22:13-24, 25-27.

The question remains, how can parents safeguard their adolescent children from the spirit and immorality of the world? The servant of the Lord has left such instruction. By following these rules for life, reserving dating until the youth is of a marriageable age and maturity, many traps will be avoided. The youth, having been brought up in the way of the Lord, will use after-school hours for community and church service, and for helping around the home.

When young people are allowed to date, often unchaperoned, the laws of God are broken and the compromising teen is damaged. *I cannot believe that the word of God is abiding in the hearts of those who so readily yield up their innocence and virtue upon the altar of lustful passions*, wrote the servant of the Lord (*Counsels on Health*, page 611).

Young people must learn the lessons of self-sacrifice in order to walk with God. No one can serve self and God at the same time. Let parents ask forgiveness from their teenagers for having failed to focus their lives in heavenly places. Then, daily renew with the young their commitment, and encourage them to follow on to the end. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth* (Eccl. 12:1). *Let no man despise thy youth* (1 Tim. 4:12), *but be an example unto the believers. Flee youthful lusts*, we read in 2 Timothy 2:22.

The admonition to Timothy is the admonition to every young follower of Christ today. These words from Scripture contrast His young saints with the self-gratifying crowd

(Gen. 8:21). Our youth, rightly taught, will grow into an army of crusaders who will cover the globe with God's glory. May yours and mine be among them!

### Our Can'ts and Cans

If you would have some worthwhile plans,  
 You've got to watch your can'ts and cans;  
 You can't aim low and then rise high;  
 You can't succeed unless you try.  
 You can't go wrong and come out right;  
 You can't love sin and walk in light.

*-Selected*

There must be no whore in Israel, and no sodomite among the sons of Israel. Furthermore, to hire a prostitute was an abomination in Israel, Deut. 23:17, 18.

From the many statutes defining and protecting the seventh commandment, it should be clear to us that God still has a "zero tolerance policy" against the lust of the flesh. Christ overcame in the flesh as the Perfect Man, that we through love and faith in Him might walk even as He walked, (1 John 2:6).

On the lighter side, is this description of a "Square" found in a fifty-year-old scrapbook I inherited from my late-mother. Its message matches the thesis of the above statute.

### **What Is a Square?**

He's that strong, polite, God-fearing young fellow who freely admits that he prays, weeps for joy, plays with little kids, kisses his mother, goes to Dad for advice, thinks old folks are nice, and blushes. He wears jeans he can bend in, puts savings in the bank, cuts his hair, likes school, can't imitate the television cartoons, avoids dirty discussions about sex, goes to worship, drinks water, drives thirty miles per hour in a 30 MPH zone, is in bed by twelve, doesn't smoke and expects purity in girls.

As a result of his odd and outlandish behavior, he suffers the loss of gang companionship; but he gains the gratitude and devotion of his parents, school honors, family respect, unjaded imagination and spiritual security. He is a strange fellow, but I like him. **Might he be your son?**

It is just as important to instill moral purity in our sons as in our daughters. While sons often escape moral obligation to high purity standards, according to society's ethics, Christ-centered homes will not leave the moral training of their sons to osmosis or chance.

*The father who has become a slave to abnormal appetite, who has sacrificed his God-given manhood to become a tobacco inebriate, cannot teach his children to control appetite and passion... He is in no condition to rouse moral courage and independence in the young, (Signs of the Times, December 6, 1877).*

Fathers, to a large degree, hold the responsibility to teach their sons self-control and moral courage. Unless the standard is modeled, taught, and expected, sons will have no developed capacity or values to hold their passions in check while peers and secular role models ignore God's moral laws without incurring disfavor.

When a man was embarrassed by his wife's "uncleanness," he could divorce her. However, if her second husband died, the first could not reconsider and take her back, Deut. 24:1-4.

A provision for divorce was given to cover the husband who considered his wife's conduct a disgrace. The word "uncleanness" in the King James Version may be translated "shame" or "dishonor," or "disgrace." This precept came to mean to the Jews that they could divorce for almost any reason. For anything could be claimed to be a shame or dishonor to a maverick husband. Christ, however, explained that this was not God's intention by the allowance (Matt. 19:4-8), but it was conceded because of the hardness of their hearts. In Matthew 5, Jesus quoted the practice, which had evolved from this statute (verses 31, 32); namely, a man could divorce his wife for any displeasure as long as he gave her a legal bill of divorcement. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Saviour addressed these abuses by directing the listeners to more responsible behavior.

Women had never been allowed to initiate a divorce. If the husband was cruel, the woman could flee to her father's house and be protected, but there was no clause that could be construed to allow her to jump out of wedlock for a more handsome dude. Israel had a guilty conscience for their treatment of wives; the prophets kept it so. In the list of Israel's covenant breaking activities are these words:

*And this, too, you do: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with sighing, because He no longer regards the offering, or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, "Why?" Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, although she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Anyone with any intelligence does not act this way; for what did*

*that one do, who was seeking offspring from God? So watch out for your feelings lest you be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel, and the one who covers his clothing with cruelty, says the Lord of host. So take heed to your spirit, and be not unfaithful, Mal. 2:13-16 (Modern Language Version, Emphasis supplied).*

When a man married, he was exempt from military or civic duties for one year, Deut. 24:5.

It was in God's plan, and certainly for the benefit of the nation, that provision be made for marriages to be well established. One full year was granted for the honeymoon period. When a man took a wife, he had already made the provisions for establishing a home. The house was ready to be inhabited. By taking a year off from outside duties, it did not mean he would not till his land or milk his cows during that first year. He simply would not be called to leave home for civic or military obligations.



Jesus put forth a parable, ever trying to correct the abuses and misunderstanding foisted upon the oracles of God, of a wedding feast to which many guests were bidden (Luke 14). Among the concerns of the groom, were the excuses offered by friends of the couple. One such excuse from a guest was that he had taken a wife (vs. 20). In the context of this parable, it is clear that the excuse was merely an excuse. Thus, we see that this statute had become as distorted and convoluted as so many others, for anything one didn't want to do during that year could be justified by this ordinance. That was then.

How would this precept apply to us now? Society has made little allowance for newlyweds. Some businesses allow one or two weeks for a honeymoon; others, only a day or two. But, what if the church body aligned themselves with all of God's precepts, including this one? How might the principle of this statute help the newly-formed union get a solid footing?

We may speculate on a parallel application to this "honeymoon law." Church members might leave on the doorstep sacks of produce, casseroles, and notes of joy and encouragement, periodically. Once a week, or so, the pastor and his wife might call on the couple to encourage and counsel the pair through adjustment challenges. By these and other creative ways, a congregation could encourage the new family to build firmly their

home in the ways of the Lord, for a whole year!

From that power-packed beginning, we may see where small groups could expand to keep contact with all young families in the congregation. Subjects of interest to the young families would be the course of study within these “cell” groups. Christian living and child rearing, family values and witnessing, would rise to a higher level. God’s churches would prosper and fill with others eager to learn a better lifestyle, as they adored their Redeemer.

When a man died, if his wife was left childless, the man’s brother was required to marry her and provide children in place of her late-husband. The firstborn would carry the late-husband’s name, Deut. 25:5, 6. But, if the brother refused to take the widow as his wife, then the woman was to come to the city gate (city council) and tell the judge and city fathers. They would have a hearing. In the end, the man who took off his shoe and spit in the face of the irresponsible brother would be given the woman to wife and raise up a son for the deceased (vs. 7-10).

The instructions regarding levirate marriage law, seems to have served two purposes: To the deceased, it guaranteed progeny who legally carried the family name. The child would grow up to maintain the duties of a descendant of the deceased. The second purpose was to prevent the widow from becoming an outcast in her community. By the levirate marriage she would remain part of the family. Life would remain as normal as could possibly be under her circumstances. Thus, her concerns over raising children to her husband’s name were given dignity among her people.

Also important in Hebrew theology was the passing of one’s religion and solidarity from generation to generation. This statute assisted the preservation of the family, or tribe consciousness, which remains today more prominently in the Far East than in Western societies.



Is the principle of this prescribed custom lost in the melding of centuries of cultures? Is there anything here that should be resurrected? Today there is no provision for the family name. If both the husband and only son are killed at war, the wife is simply bereft of her husband and son. No near kin will step in to raise sons in honor of the deceased. Since there is no possibility of this statute having a practical application today, one might consider its possible spiritual parallel, knowing that much of Hebrew history was a rehearsal of some aspect of redemption.

It was the war in heaven where the trouble all started. The enemy soon thereafter beguiled the perfect human family. Spiritual nature died that day.

But, Christ came as the Perfect Next-of-Kin to raise up a spiritual family for the Father. The Father's name will be in their foreheads. These spiritual children will inherit the kingdom of the Father through the merits of Christ who procreated their spiritual life.

What can we do today to get back to the old paths, to the life-style and standards that preserve the name of our God among our own in this generation? It is not possible to separate from the world so completely that we are no longer influenced by the sights and sounds around us. Modern culture has cleverly woven in the moral decline. What then should we do?

The antinomian recommends that we stop trying to "do;" just accept the world and its immoral life style as normal and natural. One can't do much about it, anyway. Christ lived the perfect life for us; we can't live it, so accept things the way they are. Just live to praise God for the Gift, and "go with the flow." The legalist argues, on the other hand, that we must walk as the Saviour walked **in order to be saved at last**.

The truth remains: We obey and walk in the ways of Yahweh, not to escape being lost, but to spread His loving and just precepts and character that others will want a relationship with Him. In other words:

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven, Matthew 5:16.*

### The Church and the World

The Church and the World walked far apart  
 On the changing shore of Time;  
 The World was singing a giddy song,  
 And the Church, a hymn sublime.  
 "Come, give me your hand," cried the merry World,  
 "And walk with me this way."  
 But the good Church hid her snowy hands,  
 And solemnly answered, "Nay;  
 I will not give you my hand at all,  
 And I will not walk with you:  
 Your way is the way to endless death;  
 Your words are all untrue."

"Come walk with me but a little space,"  
 Said the World with a kinder air;  
 "The road I walk is an exciting place,  
 And the sun shines always there.  
 Your path is thorny, and rough, and steep,  
 While mine is broad and smooth;  
 My road is paved with flowers to reap,  
 And yours with boredom and tears.  
 The sky above me is always bright,

Your lot seems full of woe.  
 My path, you see, is a broad, fair one  
 And my gate is high and wide;  
 There is room enough for you and for me  
 To travel side by side."

Half shyly the Church approached the World,  
 And gave him her hand of snow;  
 The World quickly grasped the delicate hand  
 Saying in accents low:  
 "Your dress is too modest to please my taste;  
 I will give you jewels to wear,  
 Rich velvets and silks for your beautiful form,  
 And diamonds for your hair."

The Church looked down at her plain white robes  
 And then at the dazzling World,  
 And blushed as she saw his handsome lip  
 With a smile contemptuous curled.  
 "I will change my dress for a scantier one,"  
 Said the Church with a smile of grace:  
 Then the pure white garments were tosses away,  
 For what the World gave her in their place.

"Your house is too plain," said the proud old World.  
 I'll build you one like mine, -  
 Carpets from Brussels, and beautiful drapes  
 And furniture ever so fine."  
 So he built her a costly and stunning house,  
 Magnificent it was to behold;  
 Her sons and daughters worshipped there,  
 Gleaming in purple and gold;  
 The hall was used for shows and fair,  
 And the World and his children came.  
 They brought in jesting, gossip, and glee.  
 The Church had no place for the lame.

The Angel of Mercy flew over the Church,  
 And whispered, "I know thy sin;"  
 Then the Church looked back with a sorrowful sigh  
 Longing to gather her children in;  
 But some were off at a movie that day,  
 And some were playing ball,  
 Others were drinking at a new friend's house,  
 So the angel went away.

Then the sly World gallantly said to her,

“Your children mean no harm,  
 Merely indulging in innocent sport.”  
 So she leaned on his proffered arm  
 And smiled and chatted and picked some fruit  
 As she walked along with the World;  
 Her message was silenced and her witness was mute  
 As millions to destruction were hurled.

“Your preacher’s too bold and speaks too plain,”  
 Said the World to the Church with a sneer.  
 “He threatens my children with frightful tales,  
 Which I want them not to hear.  
 He talks about the Judgment, and fire, and pain,  
 The Sabbath, and eternal death;  
 The third angel’s message, which I believe  
 Should be mentioned with bated breath!  
 I will send you preachers of a better stock,  
 Brilliant, funny -a blast.  
 They will tell your people to live as they like,  
 They’ll all go to heaven at last.  
 The Father is merciful, loving, and good,  
 Tender and faithful and kind;  
 Do you think He would take one child to heaven,  
 And leave the other behind?”

“You give too much to the poor,” said the World,  
 “Far more than you ought to do;  
 If the poor need shelter and food and clothes,  
 That’s for Welfare to do, not you.  
 Go, take your money and buy what you want:  
 Fine clothes and cars and pleasure,  
 Rich foods, fancy dining, -Forget what’s been taught;  
 Enjoy yourself with full measure!”  
 My children, they dote on all such things;  
 And if their love you would win,  
 You must do as they do and walk in the ways  
 That they are walking in.”

Then the Church held tightly the strings of her purse  
 And sheepishly lowered her head.  
 She whimpered, “I’ve given too much away;  
 I’ll do, Sir, as you have said.”  
 So she put her belongings in her own cart  
 As the widows went weeping by;  
 And the sons of the World and the sons of the Church  
 Walked closely hand and heart.  
 And only the Master who sees and knows,

Could tell the two sons apart.

Then the Church sat down at her ease, and said,  
 "I am rich, and in goods increased;  
 I have need of nothing, and naught to do  
 But to laugh and visit and feast."  
 And the sly old World heard and laughed in his sleeve,  
 And mockingly said aside:  
 "The Church is fallen, the beautiful Church,  
 And her shame is her boast and pride."  
 The Angel drew near to the mercy seat,  
 And whispered in sighs her name;  
 The saints, their anthems of rapture hushed,  
 Covered their heads in shame.

Then a voice came down through the hush of heaven  
 From Him who sits on the throne:  
 "I know thy works, and how thou hast said,  
 'I am rich,' and hast not known  
 That thou are naked, and poor, and blind,  
 And wretched before My face.  
 Unless thou repent I will cast thee out  
 And blot thy name from its place.  
 I counsel thee to buy of Me  
 Gold that will make you rich;  
 And anoint your eyes with the heavenly salve  
 To discern your Master's wish."

Oh, Church, wake up; hear the Spirit's voice  
 As He calls through the world today.  
 Return to the Commandments of the Lord,  
 And from the World turn away.  
 For this old World will be destroyed,  
 While God's Church lives by faith.

Neither the antinomian nor the legalist is right in his response to the Oracles of God. Each holds truth; and both are in error. None will ever be saved by commandment and statute keeping. Neither will we be saved without it. That we are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) is a cardinal truth; that we are thereby "ordained" (prepared) to walk in His good works (Eph.2:9) is also a maxim of holy living. Let us each one renew our covenant with our Maker that He may write His precepts in our hearts and live out His life within us. Then we shall exclaim with the Psalmist: *Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law* (Ps. 119:18). Morality is an expression of a converted heart.

## Immigrants and Strangers

### Chapter 6

*"There are glorious truths to come before the people of God. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, they will know more and more of the oracles of God, and be established in right doctrine."*

*That I May Know Him, page 114*

Be kind to strangers (Lev. 19:34); don't belittle or oppress them (Ex. 22:21). Remember you, too, were once strangers in a foreign land, Ex. 23:9.

Commenting on this precept, George Arthur Buttrick, noted Bible scholar, has this to say: "If God so spoke to Israel concerning the Gentile, shall he not through these same words speak to the Gentile concerning anti-Semitism?" (*The Interpreter's Bible, Vol.2, page 100*). "Remember you were aliens from God," he reminds us. Let us show compassion for those who are blind to their own Messiah, as well as those who are yet pagan in beliefs and behavior.

Today we need the compassion spoken of in this statute. But it cannot be commanded. It must come from a forgiven heart. *To him little is forgiven, the same loveth little* (Luke 7:47); Conversely, *he who is forgiven much will love much*. Should we not then express compassion toward the Jew caught in blindness, as strangers to their Messiah? Let us forgive them, for many still know not what they have cast away. There is not room in God's true message to His people for the anti-Semitism still lingering among some Sabbath-keepers.

It might seem that it should be easy to put oneself in another's shoes, having walked that way before. When one quits smoking, shouldn't that victory quicken the overcomer's sympathy for the soul still trapped by this vice? The person once hooked on drugs, alcohol, or any compulsive habit, should be more tolerant and understanding of the addict, the alcoholic, and the compulsive drives yet uncontrolled in another's life. How sad it is to discover that vice plus overcoming is not equal to sympathy and compassion. Only when **forgiveness** is in the equation, do the quotients equal compassion for the weak.

Furthermore, when one turns away from childhood training to join the world and its glamour, the will is marred for life. The character, once weakened by habitual, deliberate sin, will never reach the potential it could have realized. Praise God when the sinner returns to the Saviour, but what a loss of influence for the years spent on destruction or discouragement to others. These willful strangers (prodigal sons) and strangers from far countries (spiritual infidels) need this statute demonstrated.

Let us, therefore, show loving compassion to spiritual Jew and spiritual Gentile alike, for where would we be, but for the grace of God? When we accept our forgiveness and cleansing, we allow God to restore what the "locust hath eaten," (Joel 2:25). Then we can share with others to the glory of God.

**You must give respect to foreigners in your land, helping them to avoid getting taken advantage of in money matters. You must treat them as your brothers (Lev. 19:33, 34), remembering that your ancestors were once foreigners in Egypt.**

Here a specific behavior is identified which may show one's concern for the foreigner in one's area. We are our brothers' keepers. Even the refugee is our brother. Help him to understand the economic principles in our land. Advise him so he will not be gullible to high-pressure sales and gimmicks. Care for him as one of your own.

This statute bans racism in all its forms. Our modern equivalent to this statute might be, "Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you." Most of us need an attitude adjustment at times. No matter the treatment, our response is to pattern after the Divine One, who made no defense in His own behalf.

**The same laws apply to strangers in your land as to your neighbors; you have one law for all, Lev. 24:22.**

In the previous verse (21), murder and property damages are addressed, with this verse following: *You shall have one law for all, neighbor and stranger alike.* In other words, whoever commits a crime, the same shall be punished, regardless of race or creed, with the same punishment as the Hebrew native in the land. The behavior may not be the stranger's choice; it may not be the law he is comfortable with, as in his own land. The law to be enforced must be Israel's Law, that standard given by their Elohim. We may safely conclude that when a stranger sojourned in Israel's land, he had previously been informed about the penalties for breaking their laws. The sojourner had no appeal to international court, no recourse for a less severe punishment.

We know that God forgives crimes confessed and forsaken, but the penalty is not withheld. Restitution must be made to the extent it is possible, for the citizen and foreigner alike. David's confession was deep and sincere, and from the Scriptures we know that he was forgiven; yet he suffered the consequences of his sin for the remainder of his life.

Apply the principle from this statute to the standards upheld in the home, and in the church. Everyone is to be treated generously, but the standards must not be lowered to accommodate the pleasure of the stranger to the Law of our God. Yet, that is exactly what has happened in many cases. There has always been the pressure to lower the standard of the Word of God, "so we won't scare our visitors and new interests away," we are told. If we hadn't lost sight of this statute, there would, undoubtedly, be some people turned away by discipline and structure. Some people, no doubt, traveled around Israel's borders lest they would have to encounter Israel's religion and laws. Is that fact a good argument against holding high standards?

Years ago, my husband and I attended a ministers' retreat for the conference where he was serving. Consistently throughout the four days, we listened to appeals to uphold high standards in our churches. The speaker had recently attended the ministers' conference of another Protestant denomination (Baptist, as I recall). There, he heard their leader appealing to the pastors to raise their membership standards. His argument was based upon statistics showing, at that time, that the two fastest growing denominations in the United States and in the World were the SDA's and the LDS's.

Their president then enumerated the standards, which set these denominations apart from other churches. Two of the standards that I can recall were vegetarianism and tithing. "Do those things people will have to give up, stop them from joining those churches?" he asked. "No!" he responded after a moment of silence. "People want a church that sets them apart from the world. They want to come out of the world, not just change their name in the world."

How does this experience relate to the statute about the same law for all? Today, contrary to the implication of the above speech, some formerly conservative churches have lowered their standards hoping to make their tenants more attractive to the pleasure loving throng. Yet, according to this Protestant president, it was high standards that held the attraction for those seeking a better life.

Do times change the Word of God? Do culture and politics alter the policies of the Most High? In some ways, yes. The principles remain, although the actual cases may appear quite different in modern cultural trappings. What has happened to churches, our churches, then, that can justify the new tolerance for sin? It seems as though failure to interpret and extract the guiding principle in the ancient laws resulted, in the 1970's and '80, in a condescension to situation ethics. Once the focus shifted to interpretation, to the near-exclusion of Bible codes and prescriptions, the next phase progressed effortlessly. "Unity at any cost," and "tolerance toward all" led the way to the apostasy we see defended in many of our churches today. Nevertheless, God will have a people who will repave the old paths to higher ground.



*Our publishing institutions are to exalt the claims of God's downtrodden law.—Standing before the world as reformers, they are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all His commandments. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the old waste places, raising up the foundations of many generations. They are to stand as repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in, The Publishing Ministry, page 48.*

The foreigners could become the servants of God's people (Lev. 25:45-47), but no Hebrew could become a slave permanently. If the foreigner got rich in the Hebrew master's employ, while the master grew poor, he might become the servant of the foreigner, until Jubilee; then he would go free, Lev. 25:47-55.

The meaning of the word "slave" has changed somewhat from the days of Israel in Canaan. Today, a slave is one who is taken, often against his or her will, and forced to work for a master who supplies only room and board and bare essentials. Consequently, we have a tendency to read the Old Testament passages about slavery with our own picture of the nineteenth century South.

It is true that slavery, as practiced by other nations was brutal and crude. To the extent that Israel was influenced away from God's design, they increased in cruelty and decreased in respect. Let us remember that all of God's laws form a transcript of His loving character. This fact His archenemy has sought to disfigure and destroy in His people. God required compassion for the weak, love for the neighbor, and respect toward all mankind. But God could not compel love; He could only demonstrate it.

The Hebrew might offer himself as an indentured servant, for a time, to get out of debt; but he would have his land restored to him in the year of Jubilee. The poor master could be redeemed by a kinsman before the Jubilee arrived, however. But the children of a foreigner would be slaves for life. We may speculate that no foreigner requested asylum in Israel without considering the consequences. The foreigner would have been choosing Israel's God, Israel laws and life-style, and giving up his own family traditions and religion. This must have been one of the ways Israel was to proselytize the peoples around them. We find few accounts of the heathen requesting servitude in exchange for Israel's security under God's rule, as the Gibeonites once did (Joshua 9:1-6).

Most slaves in Israel were acquired from prisoners of war. Even so, they were to be treated according to the statutes; some to be slaughtered to rid the land of the immorality and idolatry, and some to be accepted into their system of employment, if the captive did not blaspheme the God of Heaven.

There is no parallel between the slave-master relationship in Western society today,

but the spirit of humble service still abides in the hearts of God's children.

**When the Lord brought judgments upon the heathen, Israel was not allowed to be sympathetic toward the evil doer, Deut.7:2.**

If God Almighty would not allow the Children of Israel to mourn the loss of life among the heathen worshippers of false gods, should we today? When God delivered the Children of Israel out of Egypt, it was both friendship and fear that brought the mixed multitude out with them. It was Israel's friendship with their Egyptian neighbors, their intermarriages, and subsequent children, which kept the Egyptians among them. Nevertheless, it was this mixed multitude that caused the demise of the first generation in the wilderness. As harsh as it sounds, it is still friendship with the world that will destroy us. Grieve not, therefore, for the loss of life among the heathen; grieve rather that you did not reach them for Christ.

**Intercourse was forbidden. To intermarry would weaken their faith in the God of Israel, Deut. 7:3.**

Association with idolaters was allowed on God's terms, but intimate association with them was strictly forbidden. They were a covenanted people to hold before the world the power, compassion, and authority of a holy God. To intermarry would not only weaken the spiritual focus of the family; it would also crumble the protection around the nation.

Solomon, who had once prayed for godly wisdom to lead the nation, soon became a foremost influence to break down the nation (1 Kings 11:1). A major factor in that sad history was the disregard for this statute. Solomon's marriage to more than one wife was itself a confrontation with the oracles of God. For him to marry women of every major religion and nation flaunted his earthly power in the face of holy Deity.



The man who had aspired to rule the sacred nation in the most honorable way, got his eyes on his own accomplishments, and accepted the glory for himself. He turned to man's wisdom, ignoring the laws of Jehovah, and thus, he led Israel in the downward path to dishonor.

Solomon wasn't the only prominent leader who failed to practice what he preached.

Scripture is replete with the accounts of others like Esau (Gen. 26:34,35) and Samson (Judges 14:1) who, by defying the admonition of the Lord, brought great discouragement to those faithful in their generations. That was then...

Little has changed today, certainly not in principle, from those ancient tragedies. The same defiance to the statutes today brings the same consequences to families and nations as in the days of yore. Yet, the intermarriage continues, and it seems no one can stop it. Our families are compromised, and our children grow up to leave the covenant with the Lord God of Heaven, until like Israel of old, the church [nation] and the individuals will alike be judged in the balances of the Sanctuary. Christ warns us as He did the first century compromisers:

*And thou, Capernaum [Seventh-day Adventists, who have had great light] which art exalted unto heaven [in point of privilege], shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day... (Review & Herald, Aug. 1, 1893).*

God has invited us to be His peculiar people, separated from the wisdom of the World. Will we be captured by Satan's sophistries? Will we hide in the ashes of Sodom and Capernaum? If we choose now to honor our Creator and Redeemer by cultivating a relationship through which He may write His laws in our hearts, we may be hidden in the Father's "cleft of the rock" in that day that will try all mankind.

Debtors were released from their debt in the seventh year, but the Israelite could bill the foreigner again at the end of that year in order to give to the poor. If there were no poor among them, the foreigner was released from the debt, for Israel could afford to be generous. God had been so with them (Deut. 15:3-5). While they could not charge interest to their brother (Deut. 23:19), they could charge the foreigner interest on a loan (vs.20), unless he proselytized; then he was to be treated as a brother in financial dealing. See Lev. 19:33,34.

Several points are worthy of acknowledgement here. First, that God had blessed Israel, and would continue to do so, so long as they continued in His covenant (Deut. 15:5). Secondly, Israel was to be a light to envelop the whole world. Thus, they must learn to treat the stranger as a brother. They were to be generous, first with their own, and then with those who proselytized to the Jewish faith. Finally, they were to be generous with the foreigners who traded with them or traveled in their land.

Another important concept here is the guard against greed and covetousness clarified in several statutes. Concern for the needy was based on the reality that all men are brothers. Consequently, Israel for centuries was practically a classless nation. The

inherent worth of every life under-girded this sense of brotherhood. They should have had no need or occasion for coveting what others possessed.

Sadly, along with national apostasy, their regard for the "poor," -the word here referring to the "underdog," the "defenseless" citizen in Israel- was too soon set in casings to view only at the Feast of Tabernacles and in the year of Jubilee.

When the Messiah began His earthly ministry, poverty was an acknowledged and well-established fact. That Jesus often singled out the poor to share His power and glory reveals the compassion He had for this class. Had Israel obeyed the statute, there would have been virtually no poverty among them. Some would still have been richer and some poorer, but the abject poverty found on the streets of first-century Jerusalem would not have existed. Jesus did not condemn the poor; He himself had been born in a stable, raised in a poor-man's town, learning a poor-man's occupation. "You have the poor with you always," He reminded His listeners (Matt. 26:11). It was the poor who listened most eagerly to His gospel (Matt.11:5); it was the poor in spirit who would be blessed (Matt. 5:3).

Christianity, at its best, reaches for hungry hands as Jesus did, for He who calls us to be His ambassadors identified himself with the poor. "I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me... (Matt. 25:34-36).

From this statute we have the solution for one of the world's most vexing problems. Poverty creates class struggles, political conflict, and disdain for religion. The solution is simple and practical. Yet, it requires unreserved service to God.

*To acknowledge that all are children of one Father, and to act accordingly in mercy, is to leave no room for poverty, special privilege, or injustice. Human need is not a matter just for systems and laws, but for mercy and lovingkindness. Therefore, fundamentally Deuteronomy's can be the only permanent solution, (The Interpreter's Bible, Vol.2, p.428).*

An Ammorite or Moabite could not enter the house of worship because they had caused much trouble for Israel and had hired Balaam to curse Israel. From that time ten generations must be counted before anyone of that nationality could participate in the religious services of Israel, Deut.23:3-6.

God had already told Israel not to retaliate toward Ammon (Deut. 2:19) because He had given their land to the children of Lot. Although Ammon and Moab were related to Jacob, they had not shown the common courtesy due to strangers when Israel passed through their land (Gen. 14:18; 18:2; 19:1,2). They were reluctant to even trade with God's people as they traveled through the land. Furthermore, it had been the Moabites who, in years later, along with the Midianites (Num. 22:4-7), had employed Balaam to curse Israel. The Bible writer here seems to be saying, "Don't trust them!"

In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, Tobiah was excluded from the Temple service by the enforcement of this statute (Neh. 13:1-8; 2:10). Some Bible commentaries suggest that this statute may have been added after Moses delivered the laws of God at Sinai. Ammon, they claim, did not become a nation until after the Sinai experience. This statute may have been included because of the hostility that developed between Israel and their neighbors. We do know that some statutes were known before Sinai. In fact, some may be traced as far back as the entrance of sin in Eden. It seems that some statutes, set to protect the sacred from the common, continued to be added after the death of Moses. This would help explain how more than six hundred statutes and judgments came to be included in their writings by the time the Jews used them to condemn the Saviour.



Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their burdensome restrictions. Luke records the rebukes (Luke 11:39-54) toward the entire Jewish system at that time. *Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers, Luke 11:46.*

Can we glean from this statute a principle for our time? There are a couple of possibilities: Don't be quick to give church authority and responsibility to one who is newly converted; it takes time to test and prove the new heart experience. Secondly, could it be that when any religious body has shown intolerance toward the people of God, it should be given fifteen generations before anyone of that persecuting religion is allowed in your worship service, let alone in your pulpit? Perhaps the reader will think of other applications for this prohibition.

**The Edomites (descendents of Esau) and Egyptians were to be allowed in the sanctuary in the third generation, Deut. 23:7,8.**

The reason stated in these verses for not shunning descendents of Esau, nor the children of the Egyptians, is intriguing. Esau was a son in the lineage of the Covenant, whereas many Egyptians were kind to the Children of Israel when they sojourned in Egypt. In the third generation individuals from these two groups could be circumcised, showing their submission to the Covenant, and thereafter participate in the worship services of the congregation.

Jesus alluded to the principles of these two statutes (Deut.23:3-8) when He sent his disciples out to evangelize the regions around Galilee. (In other words, don't waste time on those who are prejudiced against you.) They were to preach that the kingdom of heaven is

at hand. Taking neither money nor map, the disciples were to test the worthiness of each household. Where the gospel of Jesus was welcomed, the disciples were instructed to leave a blessing; where they were met with prejudice and hostility, they were not to waste their time. The instruction was, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. See Matt. 10:5-15.

What application may be made to our day? Should we flaunt our religion in the face of non-believers assuring them that our religion makes us superior to them? Some do it. Should we doggedly debate and argue to convert our neighbors, family, and friends to our understanding of scripture? Some do it.

This was not Christ's method. He instructed His disciples, *when you come into a house, if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you* (Matt. 10:11-13). There must be peace in the houses where their call is given. Their labor was not to be lost, producing no fruit for the kingdom of God. Then the Savior warned them that they were going out among wolves (verses 14-17). Some would turn them over to their city councils. Others would misrepresent their mission and message to bring about a character assassination of God's witness before the church board (modern application). Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves (verse 16).

In a letter addressed to Elders Daniells, Colcord, and Starr, we find this commentary:

*We are not to throw our arms about the men who are Satan's masterpieces for working out his will...Truth is to be proclaimed in warnings that will make hearts tremble in contrition before God. The sharp, clean-cut testimony must be born...[Matt.10:16 quoted] Make no compromise with those who have apostatized, but treat them kindly, giving no occasion for your good to be evil spoken of, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 9, p. 88). Further amplification is found in Testimonies for the Church, (Vol. 9, page 230).*

*The Lord has said: "Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations." Exodus 31:13. None should disobey His command in order to escape persecution. But let all consider the words of Christ: "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." Matthew 10:23. If it can be avoided, do not put yourselves into the power of men who are worked by the spirit of antichrist. Everything that we can do should be done that those who are willing to suffer for the truth's sake may be saved from oppression and cruelty.*

*Satan's attacks against the advocates of the truth will wax more bitter and determined to the very close of time. As in Christ's day the chief priests and rulers stirred up the people against Him, so today the religious leaders will excite bitterness and prejudice against the truth for this time. The people will be led to acts of violence and opposition which they would never have*

*thought of had they not been imbued with the animosity of professed Christians against the truth, (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9, page 239).*

**The Amalekites were to be wiped out completely for having no fear of God in their underhanded attack on Israel's weak, feeble, and exhausted ones, Deut. 25:17-19.**

Exodus 17:8-16 gives us the reason for this judgment against the Amalekites. The children of Israel had left Egypt only weeks before their encounter with Amalek. It is not possible that the Amalekites had never heard of the power of Israel's God. Certainly merchants, from Egypt to India would have spread the word over all the then-known world. But these people were undaunted and defiant in the face of that knowledge. The children of Amalek flaunted their national strength in the face of the God of the universe, choosing to ignore His judgments against Egypt, the news of Israel's miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, the visible cloud of covering by day, and the pillar of light to open the darkness.

It was at Rephidim, where the children of Israel grumbled over the need for water. It was here that Moses met one of his greatest tests. How could these people be so quick to forget the songs of deliverance in favor of complaints over needs not met! The encampment was only a short distance from Mt. Sinai when Moses struck the rock at Horeb, bringing water to the weary travelers. In the setting of a negative, complaining multitude, faithless and ungrateful, Moses named the place Massah and Meribah (Temptation) because the Children of Israel tempted God there.

The domestic disturbance quieted, Moses needed quietness with God as well as physical rest. Instead, he was alerted that the Amalekites, descendants of Esau, who dominated the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, were marching against him. Moses had learned to submit his plans and his fears to the One who appointed him to undertake this enormous responsibility. Read the story of supportive faith and courage (Exodus 17) to be reminded of the how God intercepted the strongest army to teach Israel the greatest lesson about who fights Israel's battles. That was then...

*All these things happened to them as examples—as object lessons to us—to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end, 1 Corinthians 10:11 (The Living Bible).*

Are we learning to abhor what God abhors, to seek God's direction in the face of overwhelming odds, to meet spiritual and emotional attacks with prayer, and to venture, under the impulses of the Word of the Lord, where others would fear to go? If so, we are learning from their examples what we must know for these last days.

If an Israelite wanted a captive of war to become his wife, he must let her mourn her family for one month; then she could become his wife. But, if she didn't please him, he must let her go; he could not sell her, as she has already been humiliated by being captured, Deut. 21:11-14.

The rules for war with enemy nations were specified in Deuteronomy 20:10-15. There we learn that the first rule of war was to offer peace. Israel was not to enter battle with any nation without offering them a peaceful settlement first. If refused, the battle would begin, and their women and children would be taken as part of the spoil (vs. 14).

These women and children were not to be harmed in any way. The children, when separated from their parents, were taken into Israelite families where they were cared for as household servants. A favorite among our children today is the story of the little maid (2Kings 5:2-5), taken from the land of Israel during a battle with Syria. She witnessed to the power of the God of Israel before her captors. From her faithfulness to God, Naaman, her master, was healed of his leprosy and undoubtedly grew in respect for the God of Israel.

The captive woman whom an Israelite wanted to marry must be allowed to mourn her losses for one month. If, in time, she didn't embrace the new husband and his new religion, she could not be made into a slave, but must be set free to return to her own people.

Today women from captured territories are rarely treated with as much dignity as was required by God of the Israelites. The respect for women that God required of Israel, even in war times, framed the foundation for the recognition of womanhood's true dignity during the Early Christian Era. Yet, without the spiritual foundation for our ethics in wartime, women are often ravaged and disgraced. This ought not to be.

For the Christian there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28), for all are equal before God. Through Christ all are the children of the Kingdom. In every age, where the Word of the Lord does not hold the preeminence, men seek to dominate women, often reducing them to toys or servants. But it is not so among those who are seeking to align their lives with the oracles of God.

There appears in this passage from Deuteronomy (21:7-14) a beautiful analogy for thoughtful contemplation. It involves captives taken during wartime. A female captive might be brought into the household by the unmarried warrior to become a servant to the family. She would be given a period of time to adjust to the new way of life. If she pleased the family and was happy to worship their God, the son in the household might then ask for her hand in marriage. He would make his request of his father, who would betroth the servant girl to his son, if that pleased him. Once married, she inherited, with the son, all the estate of the master.

Is that not a picture of the gospel? God sent His Son into battle with His enemy Who took captives from the enemy's land. The Son presents us to the Father as servants in the house of the Lord for a period of probation. We have this period of probation to determine whether we will be rebellious or obedient. If compliant, we will be drawn by the love of the Son of God for us. If we learn to love the family, leaving behind our world-loving ways, we may fall in love with the Son.



Christ then asks the Father for our hand in marriage. The Heavenly Father betroths us to His Son, for that pleases Him to do so. Once slaves to sin, then captives of the Son of Righteousness, to be first servants of the Heavenly Family, we are elevated to the exalted honor as Bride of Christ, and daughters in the Master's house. We are then treated as equal with the Son to receive all the privileges and inheritance of the Kingdom.

Amazing Grace!  
 How sweet the sound  
 That saved a wretch like me!  
 I once was lost,  
 But now am found;  
 Was blind, but now I see!

## Statutes for Health

### Chapter 7

*These directions, which the Lord gave to His people, express the principles of the law of the kingdom of God, and they are made specific, so that the minds of the people may not be left in ignorance and uncertainty. These scriptures present the never-ceasing obligation of all whom God has blessed with life and health and advantages in temporal and spiritual things, Review and Herald, Vol. 4, p. 249.*

The following health statutes have been grouped together by categories. This study is not exhaustive, as there were many health laws. In this chapter, the reader will find some of the practical and spiritual meanings associated with these precepts of Jehovah.



**An Israelite must not eat any flesh which had been killed by wild animals. That meat could not be properly drained, Ex. 22:31. Neither could the Israelite eat any animal that died of itself, Lev. 17:15; Deut. 14:21.**

The Israelites were to be a spiritual people; thus, they were given what some commentators call "holiness laws." Some believe these health laws were more about ceremonial cleanliness than about physical and spiritual health. You may not agree with that idea when you have read this chapter.

Any animal which died by itself, or was killed by another animal, was to be used as dog food (Ex. 22:31), or sold to strangers (Deut. 14:21). In other words, such meat could be sold to the heathen who had no conscience against such flesh. Animals that died in struggle would be full of hormones detrimental to health. To be a spiritual people, they must be a healthy people. Early in their wanderings, Israel had been promised freedom from the diseases around them (Ex. 15:26), if they would keep God's laws and statutes. Sadly, most in Israel cared more about appetite than healthfulness.

*By departing from the plan divinely appointed for their diet, the Israelites suffered great loss... They valued the earthly above the spiritual, and the sacred pre-eminence which was His purpose for them, they did not attain, The Ministry of Healing, page 312.*

**An Israelite must not eat fat nor blood, Lev. 3:16, 17; 7:28-27; the life was in the blood, Lev. 17:10,11; Lev. 19:26; Deut. 12:15, 16, 23.**

The prohibition against the use of blood in the diet has been easy to explain. At least it wasn't dependent upon modern medical research to substantiate the ban on blood. Blood was sacred to the Hebrew. It symbolized the life of the Son of God, and was therein used to cleanse the earthly sanctuary and to make atonement for the sins of the people. Israel was never to mix the sacred with the common, nor the common with the sacred. Thus, the meat prepared for consumption must be completely drained of blood. Today, we know that disease is transmitted through the blood. But the prohibition seems to have been more about symbolism than health at that time.

The only explanation given in Scripture for not eating animal fat was simply, "The fat is the Lord's."

This was the same reason given for paying tithe (Lev. 27:30). Both belonged to the Lord. Beyond this reason no explanation was given. Why would the Creator of all things want the fat of the animals reserved for Him? Some have speculated that the fat



represented sin and that Yahweh wanted sin, symbolically, to be given up to Him. Since sin is an abomination to God, why, then, would He call the offering of fat, "a sweet savior unto the Lord" (Lev. 3:5)? To many Bible students the simple explanation offered is too simple.

*Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Dictionary*, (page 191) offers this reason for the prohibition: "*The ground of the prohibition was that the fat was the richest part of the animal, and therefore belonged to him.*" Certainly fat is the richest source of energy in the human diet. Fat yields more than double the caloric energy than protein or carbohydrate. The Israelite was to distinguish between suet around the flesh and that fat that was intermingled in the meat, probably because, as we know today, God knew that a little fat in their diet was essential, but only in small amounts. The small amount of saturated fat was kept in balance in the body by the large amount of fruit and grains consumed in Palestine.

Furthermore, nutritional science of today has revealed a physiological reason for the statute against the eating of animal fat. That reason is the destructive effect of saturated fat and excess cholesterol to the cardiovascular system. Other diseases associated with excess fat in the diet are degenerative arthritis, herniated discs, hemorrhoids, diverticulosis, and the dreaded cancer. Therefore, it is most likely that God gave this statute against animal fat to promote health and prolong life, with "none of these diseases."

One of the doctors at Weimar Institute used to give a graphic illustration from his own life when he lectured on dietary prohibitions. He would tell about growing up in Korea. His family had chicken only on special occasions. At these festive dinners, he saw his grandmother always reserve for herself the neck of the chicken, while he was encouraged to take a slice of breast or a drumstick. Dramatically, he would tell his listeners how he had turned to his grandmother asking, "How come you always get the neck of the chicken, and I have to have the leg or breast?" He was never satisfied with her explanation and, over a period of time, began to covet the neck, thinking that his grandmother was being selfish in keeping one part of the chicken just for herself.

The day came when, according to his culture, this growing youth was offered the first choice on the chicken platter. Now was his opportunity to take what his grandmother had so selfishly been saving for herself. He reached for the neck. An argument ensued. Everyone at the table tried to redirect his youthful zeal. Their efforts were to no avail. With his first bite into the neck, came a whole new appreciation for the character of his grandmother, the Weimar doctor would recall. She had not been saving the best for herself, but had reserved for herself that which no one else would want.

Having told this story to his patients in the Weimar Lodge, he would launch into his analogy of how God gave the restrictions for the good of Israel and all of mankind. When God said, "*The blood is mine*," or "*The fat is mine*," He was not telling His people that He enjoyed seeing bloodshed or smelling burning fat, any more than Sang Lee's grandmother withheld the neck because she liked chewing on gristle. Were the Israelites content with the Lord's explanation, "*It is mine*"? No more than the innocent boy was content with his grandmother's. Not until he bit into the bony, meatless neck, did Sang realize why it had been withheld from him. Our God doesn't want the fat and blood any

more than Dr. Lee's grandmother wanted the chicken neck. But He withholds that which is both literally and symbolically harmful.

The Heavenly Father wants us to abhor sin as He does. We read in Amos 5:21,22, *I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.* And why is this so? Because, *to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams* (1 Sam. 15:22).

*Many Bible readers and professed Bible believers do the very thing that the Lord has told them not to do, and then they suffer the result of their disobedience. God does not work a miracle to prevent the consequence of their folly. If they introduce into their systems that which cannot make good flesh and blood, they must endure the result of their disregard of God's word, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 7, page 424).*

The Israelites were taught to not touch any person or animal that was dead; if they touched a dead body without knowing it, they were unclean when they found out, Lev. 5:2. Neither would they touch any body fluid or excrement for the same reason, Lev. 5:3; Lev. 15:2-13.

Without the medical knowledge we now appreciate, people in ancient times were given this statute to safeguard health. Because disease and death were associated, Israel was told to avoid touching any dead body, whether animal or human. In this way, they might prevent epidemics from spreading through their ranks. It was each one's moral obligation to protect the interests of others. That included their health and well-being. If, however, the person inadvertently touched a carcass, or body excrement, the individual was to immediately begin the separation and process of purification. One must not continue to expose others to what he or she might have contracted. This process, primitive as it was, helped to disinfect the area.

When a member of the immediate family died, someone would have to remove the body and prepare it for burial. No person in the service of God might touch a dead body, except it be of his own household (Lev.21:1-4). We may speculate that this exception may have been made because the priest would have already been exposed to whatever caused the family member to die. Looking at it from the prohibition angle, we must recognize that the man of God must keep himself in excellent physical and spiritual health. He must live to serve the people, a servant dedicated to God, blameless, healthy, and holy.

Sin and death were inseparable in the mind of the Israelite. It was because of sin that death entered their reality. Death of the daily sacrifice reminded them that sin was ever around them. There was no escaping its hideousness. Thus, the statute held a double significance. The disease of sin, spiritually discerned, with its end in death would be dealt with on the one hand, while the physical danger of deadly disease was being prevented on

the other.

Each day we must remain at the foot of the cross long enough for the death of the Son of God to impress our minds with the association between that death and our "disease" of sin. While this is important for each of us who are part of the "royal priesthood, a holy nation," it is especially essential for the church pastor, if he expects to successfully serve both the congregation and the Heavenly Father. Only at the foot of the cross can we truly comprehend and appreciate the spiritual implications of these health laws, beyond their more obvious physical application.

The priests were to abstain from wine and strong drink, Lev. 10:9.

*We are to become familiar with the Levitical law in all its bearings; for it contain rules that must be obeyed; it contains the instruction that if studied will enable us to understand better the rule of faith and practice that we are to follow in our dealings with one another. No soul has any excuse for being in darkness. Those who receive Christ by faith will receive also power to become the sons of God, (Letter 3, 1905, Emphasis supplied).*



When Moses first climbed Mount Sinai to commune with God, he was told to instruct the people that they had been rescued from Egypt so that they could become a peculiar treasure unto God above all the nations (Ex. 19:5). "You will become to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (verse 6), says the *Modern Language Version*.

Had they obeyed the voice of God, as they promised to do, they would have become a holy people to serve as ambassadors to the heathen world. But, it didn't happen. The people were happy to bask in the Shadow of the Almighty, but reluctant to walk in His chosen pathway. So, the Father sent His Son to more clearly

reveal the relationship He wanted with this people. They hung Him on a despicable cross. With the open denial and rejection came the doorway of salvation to the Gentile.

Thus, we foreigners were brought into the Covenant. We are extended the same document to sign, and offered the same sealing by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30); *for, if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise* (Gal. 3:29). *He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God* (Rom. 2:29).

Today's Christian, first and foremost, accepts that covenanted adoption. 1 Pet. 2:9 reminds us that *we are that chosen generation, that royal priesthood, that holy nation, the*

*peculiar people that our God is seeking to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.* Therefore, we will keep our minds and bodies clean and healthy for His service.

Let us consider the idea that the maintenance of our health is for our priestly service to the God of spiritual Israel today. First of all, a few minutes of research in one's computer, or in the E. G. White Index, will bring this statute into a new level of respect. Look up the word "Impossible." There the seeker of truth will discover a list of behaviors and attitudes which render service to God "impossible." Here are a few that pertain to food and drink:

- *It is impossible to obey the precepts of God's Word while our habits of life are at war with nature, (Unpublished Manuscripts, Vol. 6, p. 10).*
- Inclination, habit, delicate, unhealthful preparations in cooking and unhealthful habits of dress are weakening physical, mental, and moral efficiency, and making it impossible to overcome temptation, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 6, p. 36).
- *It is impossible for the brain to do its best work when the digestive powers are abused... How can men be honored with divine enlightenment when they are so reckless in their habits, so inattentive to the light which God has given in regards to these things? (Reflecting Christ, page 152).*
- *By the example of Daniel and his fellows in Babylon, we see that it is impossible to reach the standard which that Lord would have His children reach, and practice an easy, accommodating kind of religion that leaves principle out, and is controlled by circumstances. Youth who would serve the God of heaven, cannot engage in worldly merriment, eat of enervating luxuries, or drink strong drink... (Sons and Daughters of God, page 174).*
- *It is impossible to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God when we continually fill them with corruption and disease by our own sinful indulgence, (Counsels on Health, page 24).*
- *Every violation of principle in eating and drinking blunts the perceptive faculties, making it impossible for them to appreciate or place the right value upon eternal things, (Ibid. page 38).*
- *It is impossible for any to enjoy the blessing of sanctification while they are selfish and gluttonous... (Ibid. p. 66).*

The command was to eat only animals which had a cloven hoof, and those which chewed their cud, Lev. 11:3-8. Israel had to distinguish between clean and unclean meats, and fowl, etc. Lev. 20:25; Deut. 14:3-10. They were to eat only the fish with scales, Lev. 11:10-12, and eat no carrion birds, Lev. 11:13-19; Deut. 14:11-20.



It has been a challenge for Bible scholars through the ages to discover the differences between what was declared "clean" and what was declared "unclean." Were there hygiene or health issues involved? Did certain animal flesh represent specific sins? For example, some say horse flesh is very good to eat. Is it not used for food because the statute forbids it; or, that the heathen Saxons regarded the horse as sacred to their god, Odin? Or could there be, as has proven to be true in other cases, that scientific knowledge has yet to discovered some redeeming facts for the support of God's precept? It is not like our Elohim to make laws for which He reveals no rationale.

For those who believe the Creator had very good purpose for giving these prohibitions, much has been accepted in faith by "God said it and I believe it, and that settles it for me" reasoning. Is there an empirical, physiological explanation for the ban on certain meats? Some have speculated. For example, since the swine was considered the most unclean (Isa. 65:3,4; 66:17), some Bible defenders have tried to prove that the nature of swine's flesh was more susceptible to disease and parasites, thus rendering it unfit for human consumption. Does the flesh of forbidden creatures contain more disease than those declared to be "clean"?

There is another angle on this issue that is addressed briefly in the SDA Bible Commentary's explanation of Leviticus 11:4; namely, that unclean things were to be regarded as "abominations" to Elohim. *They shall be even an abomination unto you*, (Lev. 11:11; See also verses 13 and 43), says the Lord God Almighty. The things, which our God abhors, are said to be "abominable." When the Hebrew word for "abominable" or "abomination" is used, it is nearly always in the context of idolatry. This fact may suggest to us that the prescription for clean and unclean meats has something to do with loyalty, as well as health.

*Disease in cattle is making meat eating a dangerous matter, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 18, page 353; Counsels on Diet and Foods, page 411).*

*I advise every Sabbath-keeping canvasser to avoid meat eating, not because it is regarded as sin to eat meat, but because it is not healthful, (Manuscript*

*Releases, Vol. 16, page 173).*

*Eating the flesh of dead animals has an injurious effect upon spirituality. When meat is made the staple article of food, the higher faculties are overborne by the lower passions. These things are an offense to God, and are the cause of a decline in spiritual life... Whatever we do in the line of eating and drinking should be done with the special purpose of nourishing the body, that we may serve God to His name's glory, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 4, page 384).*

We find a similar thought in the New Testament. Paul tells us that whatever we eat or drink should be so that we may glorify God (See 1 Cor. 10:31). This is because our bodies are to be considered temples in which the Holy Spirit may dwell, for we have been bought with a great price (see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). He further warns us not to defile the temple of God, which we are (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). Yet Paul, in his letter to the Romans, explained how one person, strong in faith, may eat what someone weaker in faith would consider unfit for consumption. "Stop judging one another on the basis of what you eat!" Paul says in Chapter 14 of Romans, "*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*" (vs. 17).

Paul is **not** saying disregard the statutes God gave Israel, anymore than he is saying to disregard the Sabbath, as might erroneously be construed from verses 5 and 6. He **is** saying, "*Christian, don't judge one another, but draw together in spiritual bonds of loving fellowship, showing deference in matters that may cause a weaker brother or sister to stumble. The right course is not to eat meat, nor to drink wine,*" we read in verse 21 (The New Testament in Modern English).

Nevertheless, the Statute-Giver Himself concluded that *it is not that which goes into the mouth, which makes a man common or unclean* (Phillips), *but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles a person* (Matt. 15:11). The Savior had just observed (verses 8, 9) that people were more ready to follow the teaching of men than to allow their hearts to be softened by the presence of One sent by God. The Lawgiver Himself had earlier reminded the multitude that He had not come to remove or disregard the Law - *Torah* (Matt. 5:17). Nothing would be changed until it was all fulfilled (vs. 18).

Was Paul's doctrine of tolerance in conflict with the teachings of the Messiah? Let the apostle answer for himself: *Do we then make void the law* (The reference to law here refers to all the writings of Moses.) *through faith?* **God forbid: yea, we establish the law** (Rom. 3:31). And through the ages since that inspired explanation was written, a remnant has preserved the oracles of God in every generation, in spite of character assassinations, persecution, torture, and death.

Today we may with certainty conclude that God wants our hearts, our love and loyalty, above all else. When we give Him our hearts, **then** and only then, will He begin to

lead us into greater and greater light about His character and His purposes for our lives. To obey His laws before we surrender our whole beings to His control, is like electrical currents through unprotected lines. It will do more damage than good. But, when He has our hearts, He entrusts us with more knowledge and more Family responsibility. We are no longer servants, but are adopted children of the Father, the bride of the Son, to inherit all things pertaining to eternal life. As members of the family, we live by and grow in all ways that edify others and glorify the Son. Our loyalties encompass the health laws for His glory.

When a woman gave birth to a boy, she was required to separate herself for a week and circumcise the baby boy on the eighth day, Lev. 12:2-4. If she had a girl baby, she had two weeks for recovery, or up to 66 days, then she would bring a burnt offering for the infant, Lev. 12:5-6.



By the translation from Hebrew to English, the impression is given that having a baby was a disgusting experience, causing the mother a curse from which she and the baby must be purified. The intent of these passages was, rather, that when a woman gave birth, she had the right to stay out of the routine work force for up to two months plus a week, approximately nine weeks. Here is another example of God's tender regard for women in contrast with the cruel inhuman practices that were

the rule among the heathen.

On the eighth day a son would be inaugurated into the covenanted people by circumcision. This rite had originated with Abraham (Gen. 17:10), another example of a statute that predated Moses, and symbolized the covenant with God to cut away the fleshly nature, and replaced it with a spiritual nature. At the ceremony of circumcision the son was named. Much thought was given to the naming of children, as the name specified the child's relationship with both Yahweh and the holy nation.

The mother was to remain quiet until she had healed. She was not to attend religious services for at least a month. Then she was to present to the priest her offerings. Thus we find Mary and Joseph in the temple presenting Jesus to the priest, according to this statute. And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, so named by the angel before he was conceived in the womb (See Luke 2:21-39). That was then...

Today many Christians continue to observe this statute. They often give health reasons for the circumcision rite. Mothers stay away from church and crowded malls to

protect their newborns from unnecessary exposure to disease. The length of time allowed for a mother to stay out of the workforce has drastically reduced, but most of the principles included in this statute have remained to this day, the differentiation between boy and girl babies being the main exception.

**When a person seemed to have leprosy, that person must be quarantined for seven days. If after that, it was certain to be leprosy, that leper must be shut away from the camp. The garments of the leper must be burned, Lev.13. Any person(s) sick with leprosy, or other contagious diseases, must be provided for outside the camp, Num. 5:2-4.**

Leprosy was a major threat in the Middle East in the pre-Christian Era. The Hebrew word *sara'*, from which we get the English word "leprosy," is a more inclusive term which means "striking down." It was sometimes linked to sin, as in the striking down of Miriam (Numbers 12:10) when she had complained against her brother, Moses. Other examples of its association with judgments of God, are the cases of Gehazi when he coveted and lied to gain wealth from Naaman (2 Kings 5:27), and Uzzah when he presumptuously touched the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam. 6:6,7; 1 Chron.13:9, 10). Thus, any serious disease, recognized by distortions in the skin, was included in the Hebrew word, "leprosy."

The description of leprosy in cloth or in houses suggests that this disease was likely in the form of a mildew or fungus found there. This condition would render the house or garments unfit for human use. Things so contaminated were to be burned, as there was no known way to destroy the disease bearing spores.

Medical science nowadays has almost eliminated this dreaded disease. Only among the ignorant in third world countries is the disease still found. But, our own precautions toward deadly and communicable diseases shows, unknowingly perhaps, the respect we have for this law of the Lord God of heaven.

**When couples engaged in sex, they must wash everything touched by their body fluids; and they must remain unclean until evening, Lev. 15:16-18, 24.**

Our compassionate God ordered these specific health laws for the purpose of giving His people every advantage for health and longevity. After the flood, both generation age and life expectancy diminished rapidly. Before the flood, man lived nearly a thousand years; after the flood, life expectancy rapidly decreased to less than a hundred years.

Today, with the advances in medical science, we may expect to live nearer the one-hundred-year mark than David, who was given only seventy years. We do not know if David's life was shortened because of his promiscuous youth, his hard life on the run from his enemies, or disregard for health statutes. We may never know. But we do know that common habits of hygiene today make this statute of little relevance in our culture. People still wash body and clothing affected by these body fluids; we know that the principle of hygiene still prevails.

**A woman must refrain from social interaction and remain unclean during seven days of menstruation. Everything she sat on, lay down on, or wore must be washed, Lev. 15:18-20. Anyone who had contact with things contaminated by the menstruating woman must also wash carefully and be separate (unclean) until evening, Lev. 15:21-23.**

As earlier stated, blood contains the life and death of an individual. Here is another rule set down to protect Israel from the spread of disease. In the fifteenth chapter of Leviticus are set down six types of uncleanness:

- Abnormal male conditions (vs. 2-15)
- Normal male conditions (vs. 16, 17)
- Normal conjugal relations (vs. 18)
- Normal female conditions (vs. 19-23)
- Inappropriate conjugal relations (vs. 24)
- Abnormal female conditions (vs. 25-30)

(See SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, page 770 for other references.)

It is appropriate that God should give conditions for sexual relations as part of His instruction to Israel, both then and now, for sex should be spiritual. Both sex and religion belong to the realm of the sacred. The waiting rooms of psychiatric clinics are filled with people who have failed to see the relationship between healthy sex and pure religion.

**When the army was away on assignment, each man must dig a hole and cover his excrement, Deut. 23:13, 14.**

Nothing was left unmentioned that might weaken the health and safety of each Israelite. For the protection of animals, people, and the environment, this rule is still followed by conscientious hikers and back packers today.

**The Israelite could not wear cloth that was made from linen mixed with wool, Lev. 19:19, or of any other blends, Deut.22:11.**

The reason for this rule is unclear; some speculate that blends effect one's strength negatively. Some teach that God was trying to preserve the different kinds of animals and plants in pure strains. Others believe the rule was spiritual. Ask a rabbi. He may tell you that the linen would deteriorate sooner than the wool, but the linen could be boiled if exposed to disease, while the wool would shrink. Mixing the two was linked to a concept expressed clearly in the New Testament: *Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers* (2 Cor. 2:14). *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* was a similar expression found in the Old Testament (Amos 3:3). Thus, we see that the statute was both practical and spiritual. That was then...

This is now. The spiritual symbolism, having been lost through time and apostasy, leaves only the principles remaining. Today, it is nearly impossible to find fabrics made from a single source. Almost all fabrics are blends of animal with synthetic, or plant fiber with man-made fibers. Interestingly, one can search fabric stores from New York to Paris, but one will be hard pressed to find wool blended with linen. The two are still totally incompatible.

What lesson may apply to our own lives from this simple directive from Yahweh? To the Jews from David's times down to the coming of the Messiah and beyond, every command from God carried a spiritual message. It is left to us to glean from each precept and example the universal truth that transcends time and culture. Let us apply both the practical and the spiritual lesson to our lives. What our God has forbidden to be together, let us not try to rationalize away:

- Dating unbelievers
- Marriage to unbelievers
- Business partnerships with unbelievers

*The Lord has given His holy commandments to be a wall of protection around His created beings, and those who will keep themselves from the defilement of appetite and passion may become partakers of the divine nature. Their perceptions will be clear. They will know how to preserve every faculty in health, so that it may be presented to God in service. The Lord can use them: for they understand the words of the great apostle, 'I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service,' (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 4, page 1105:4, Emphasis supplied).*

## Is Ecology All That Important?

### Chapter 8

Webster's New World Dictionary defines ecology as "the branch of biology that deals with the relations between living organisms and their environment." The forgoing statutes show the Creator's interest in that relationship. Sometimes the relationship may appear to be more metaphysical than physical, more spiritual than material, more metaphorical than actual. Now we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12), but one day we will probe the mysteries of the universe. Until then, let us expand our thinking about God's grand design for this intimate relationship.

**The Israelite was to work his land for six years, but let it rest in the seventh year so that it might feed the poor and the wild animals, Ex. 23:10,11; Lev. 25:3-7.**

In the Exodus passage, the motive for the land resting seems to be consideration for the poor and wild creatures. The Leviticus reference, on the other hand, makes no mention of beneficiaries, except the land itself. How could the people survive if they did not till the soil for one full year? Sources in Israel today tell us that a bumper crop was promised during the previous year. Like the miracle of the manna on the sixth day (Ex. 16:22), which they witnessed during the wilderness wandering, there was a miracle experienced each sixth year that prepared the families to honor the year of rest for the land.



today's agricultural knowledge, should be a lean year, showed that Yahweh honored their obedience.

Some have speculated that Israel probably didn't have the knowledge of crop rotation commonly used in modern agriculture. We know that each year a crop is repeated the soil is being depleted. By the seventh year, some suggest, Israel had to give the land a rest just to have the land build up nutrients again. But the very fact that they had a bumper crop in a year, when, by

There is no Biblical record of Israel following this statute before the Babylonian captivity. In fact, little is written about this law other than the statement of it. Josephus (*Antiquities xi, 8. 6; xiv. 10. 6*) provides the best evidence for the time period after the captivity. He tells how "*Alexander the Great, and later Julius Caesar, exempted the Jews from paying taxes in sabbatical years, on the ground that they would have no income that year,*" (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol.1, page 611).

Some of us, having only recently come into this knowledge of the *Torah's* underpinnings of our Christian faith, and its involvement in the re-establishment of the Covenant with the last generation on earth, sense there may be no time to prepare for a seventh year of land-rest. Other than the weekly, monthly, and yearly reminders, the next land-rest may well be the seventieth, or final, Jubilee. Then, the whole world will rest while God's remnant are experiencing recuperation and re-creation in His presence.

**Six days were appointed for work; the seventh was set aside for rest. Workers and animals in one's employment were to also observe this rest from labor, Ex. 23:12.**

While the nations around them were engaged in continuous labor (2 Chron. 2:17) seven days a week, Israel was granted the mercy of only six days of labor with the seventh for rest. This privilege was to be extended throughout all the Holy Land. Even strangers sojourning there were blessed by the requirement to rest on the seventh day.

Herein lies a lesson for us. How often do we hear of professed Christians compromising the Sabbath rest for the sake of non-members visiting in their home? The principle of this statute, as well as the commandment it supports, is that throughout the household, -throughout the church body, -let **all** observe the day of rest. That should include all employees, all livestock, and all non-Christian visitors (strangers to our God) within our property. Abraham, Father of the Faithful, conducted his



household with this principle, so that all the nations around saw and heard his testimony of the one True God.

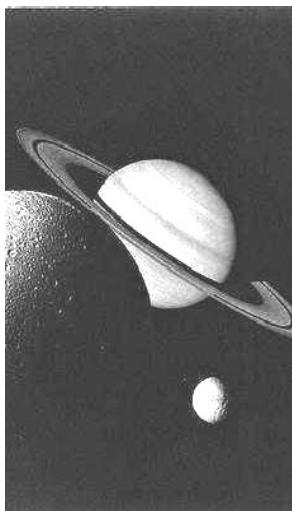
Some may object to this application of the fourth commandment and the statutes which support its meaning. Certainly, we are not to force our religious beliefs upon others. But, when the non-Sabbath-keeper makes a weekend visit in the home of a Sabbath-keeper, it would honor Yahweh to introduce the visitor to God's dominion in that home. If the visitor does not wish to hear scripture read, or watch a truth-filled video, and sing

spiritual songs with the Christian family, the visitor may decline to participate. Perhaps the personal needs of the guest may provide opportunity for sharing precious promises that will encourage the stranger (a stranger to spiritual realities) to learn of the loving care of the Christian's personal Savior. But worship in the home should continue, as it would have, had the family attended a church service that Sabbath. Thus, the day becomes one of personal ministry rather than personal pleasure, and Yahweh is given His honor in the midst of the family's hospitality to others.

With more than fifty years in the faith, this writer has never seen compromise win a soul to Christ. Deciding to stay home to "just visit" with the guest in one's home, because the guest didn't want to go to church, compromises the rulership of the Saviour in that home. May God help us all to let our witness be genuine, sincere, and uncompromising. *The Sabbath was made for man* (Mark 2:27), not for selfish indulgence, not for acquiescence to the world-loving mind, but for bonding with the Saviour, and bridging with the unsaved.

What does the Sabbath-rest command have to do with ecology, one may ask? Notice how the *New English Bible* renders Romans 8:19-23, where an answer is suggested.

*For the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed. It was made the victim of frustration, not by its own choice, but because of him who made it so; yet always there was hope, because the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendor of the children of God. Up to the present, we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth. Not only so, but even we, to whom the Spirit is given as firstfruits of the harvest to come, are groaning inwardly while we wait for God to make us his sons.*



We are told that scientists have now discovered that each body in the universe gives off a sound. In our own solar system each planet sends out a frequency which is one octave apart, thus at least nine octaves of sound. Earth produces the lowest base note in the harmonic chord. Some have suggested that the Romans 8:22 statement is less metaphorical than we have formerly understood. Is our earth's sound really a groaning as it battles with sin?



Here is another new thought for some: The discovery of harmonic sound throughout the universe may put Job 38:7 in a new light. There we read that the morning stars sang together at creation. Now we know the stars do emit sound. We may look forward to their singing with the angels when we are transported, literally, into the family of God.

When sin entered our world, it not only destroyed health and harmony in our lives, it brought pain and suffering to the earth's organic and inorganic substances, creatures and matter alike. Everything was thrown into disharmony, or dissidence. While we don't want to put life into rocks, as the pantheists did a century ago, we must recognize that, in some way not yet understood, even the rocks can cry out for the restitution of all things.

Looking more closely at the word "Sabbath" may give us some insight into Sabbath-rest, as it applies to the restitution of the sinless universe. A quick search in a Bible concordance will lead one to the realization that the word "Sabbath" comes from two Hebrew words of great importance to Sabbath-keepers. The first syllable, "sab," is from "Abba," "father"; the second syllable, "bath," or "beth" means "residence of", as a place of business, or a workshop. The Sabbath is, actually, the Heavenly Father's place of business. Thus, through the Sabbath rest, restoration work takes place. We may have to wait until the Master Teacher spreads His Master Plan before us in eternity to comprehend this creative rest in the Sabbath. By faith, we accept the earnest of that rest in our lives each week when we keep the Sabbath day.

The Hebrew people were instructed not to cross-breed their livestock, nor their crops, nor plant and animal fibers in the making of cloth. They were not to cross-breed their seed, nor sow the ground with more than one kind of seed, lest their produce become weakened and inferior in quality, Deut. 22:9, Lev. 19:19.

Yahweh said, "Don't do it." So rebellious man did it. While he thought he was developing a better product, rebellious man was destroying the life-giving properties within that species of plant or animal. There are a number of different issues implied within these two Scriptures dealing with cross-breeding. One is the genetic engineering so controversial today. Another is planting a vineyard with different kinds of seeds. Both were forbidden by God.



We are told that the nutrition in our food is being depleted while agricultural specialists are finding "better" ways to engineer seed, soil, and produce. Trace minerals,

essential for resistance to disease, are fast disappearing from the vegetables and fruit we eat. For example, we have often used oranges in our diet to supply vitamin C. Reports now suggest that some formulas, presently used to stimulate growth, color, preserve freshness, and resist insects, have reduced the vitamin C content of the orange to only a trace in some cases.

One day soon the true Husbandman will destroy the wisdom of the wise (1Cor. 1:19), -them, which destroy [or corrupt] the earth (Rev. 11:18). Since the opposite of destroying the earth is caring for and preserving it, we may interpret from the contexts of the ecology statutes that to not care for the earth is to bring the judgments of the Lord God Almighty upon ourselves. These judgments are “build in” to the laws of the universe. We may call them “natural consequences.”

The better we become acquainted with our Heavenly Father, the more assuredly we will recognize His love and benevolence in all His prohibitions. His commands can be stated as promises without damaging their original intent. Understood this way, we recognize that the “Thou shalt not’s” are statements of affirmation for having God’s commandments, statutes, and judgments written -the Law of Liberty- in our hearts.

**Yahweh instructed His people to not eat the fruit of their new trees or vines for the first three years. The produce of the fourth year would be given to the Lord. The harvest was theirs in the fifth year, Lev. 19:23-25.**

The first part of this statute encompasses the reality that trees and vines don’t produce much, if anything, in the first three years of growth. In the fourth year, the harvest, small though it may be, was to be given to the Lord in thanksgiving. The tithe principle, namely that we give to God and others before ourselves, is consistent throughout Yahweh’s dealings with His people. The concept existed in the minds of God’s people long before the laws of tithing were spelled out to Israel.

Here we see another way in which man has assumed wisdom above the oracles of God. The custom today is to take for oneself first. Sharing is usually what people think of when they have too much, not before they have satisfied their own needs and wants. The reason for this requirement is only speculated; no one really knows. While most commentaries offer no practical interpretation of this law, we can be sure that the Creator God will make it plain to us in the New Earth.

In the meantime, a spiritual application is herein suggested. The rule may have been enforced to keep Israel from being greedy. Mankind is by nature selfish. That is the sinful nature so repulsive to our Holy Elohim. Israel was commanded to share first with the ministers in the Lord’s house, then with the poor about them. Should we not do the same today?

God still asks us to give Him the firstfruits of our produce [a tithe] before we use our increase for ourselves. Our God has not changed, nor have His laws changed. Let us return to the “old paths,” putting God and others first. Some Christians today follow the statute's instruction, allowing their vineyards and orchards to mature for three years. These statute followers give the produce of the fourth year to their pastor, missionaries, and the poor as a gift of thanksgiving. After that, while retaining the generous heart and open hand, they enjoy the fruit of their labors.

**In the Jubilee year nothing was to be sown nor reaped; not even that which grew of itself could be reaped, Lev. 25:11,12. No land was to be sold forever, for it was the Lord's, Lev. 25:23. It must be granted redemption in the year of Jubilee to the original family who had owned it, Lev. 25:24-31.**

This rule differed from that concerning the sabbatical year in that nothing could be harvested, even for the poor, during this fiftieth year. Some questions surface when one considers that seven sabbatical years would bring the Israelite to the forty-ninth year as a year of no harvest. Consequently, there would be no harvest in two consecutive years, both the 49<sup>th</sup> as a sabbatical year and the 50<sup>th</sup> as the year of Jubilee. Some suggest that the people did not keep both when the 50<sup>th</sup> year arrived, for how could the family survive in Palestine with two years of no income? Knowing that our God never requires that for which He Himself does not supply the means to follow, a better question might be: What was Jehovah's intent in issuing such a requirement?

*In apportioning the inheritance of His people, it was God's purpose to teach them, and through them the people of after generations, correct principles concerning the ownership of the land. The land of Canaan was divided among the whole people, the Levites only, as ministers of the sanctuary, being excepted. Though one might for a season dispose of his possession, he could not barter away the inheritance of his children. When able to do so, he was at liberty to redeem it; debts were remitted every seventh year, and in the fiftieth, or year of jubilee, all landed property reverted to the original owner. Thus every family was secured in its possession, and a safeguard was afforded against the extremes either of wealth or of poverty, (Education, page 43, emphasis supplied).*

While we have more questions than answers regarding the adventure of jubilee, we must recognize that Israel, through the feasts, was rehearsing God's activities in the plan of salvation. Jubilee came at the end of the year, and represented the end of the age, when we who are saved for eternity will be provided for miraculously without our input or labor. We will be fed from the bounty of our God. No one will claim more for having worked harder. No one will have more to share than another. All will be equalized then as God restores to the Creator that which mankind has bartered for sin and slavery.

*Then commenced the jubilee, when the land should rest. I saw the pious*

*slave rise in triumph and victory, and shake off the chains that bound him, while his wicked master was in confusion, and knew not what to do; for the wicked could not understand the words of the voice of God. Soon appeared the great white cloud. On it sat the Son of man (Great Controversy, page 206).*

If someone found a bird nest with eggs or young in it, the discoverer could take the eggs or young, but must not harm the mother bird, Deut. 22:6, 7.



This requirement was not so much about ecology as about conservation. Our Heavenly Father cares about sparrows (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6). Presumably the eggs or young could be taken for food from those birds declared clean. Allowing the mother to live and raise another brood of chicks, or baby birds, would help prevent extinction of a species. Certainly, taking the life of one of God's creatures as a sport would be unfitting to a child of the King.

*This Is My Father's World  
The birds their carols raise;  
The morning light, the lily white,  
Declare their Maker's praise.*

*This is my Father's world;  
Why should my heart be sad?  
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring!  
God reigns; let the earth be glad.*

The Lord God Almighty declared: Don't plow with an ox and ass together, Deut. 22:10.

This command, like the one above, is not really about ecology. It is included here because it was related to concern for the earth and the creatures of it. Again, like the law previously considered (mingled seed), the intent of this statute was, at least in part, regard for natural differences. The ox, heavy and strong, would work less efficiently yoked to the lightweight and weaker ass.

Furthermore, the ox was a "clean" animal, while the ass was "unclean," according to Leviticus 11. Israel was ever reminded to keep separate the clean from the unclean, the

sacred from the common. Herein lies the picture of the principle: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). Although the picture may have faded, the principle must guide our business relationships in every generation. From this statute we hear the words of Amos 3:3 questioning the hearts of Christians employed where compromise seems essential. "*Can two walk [work] together lest they be agreed?*" When one's employment requires one to refrain from speaking praise to God, requires work on the Sabbath hours, or mandates that one join an organization whose objectives are inappropriate for a Christian, one must prayerfully consider the principle of this statute.

**Don't muzzle an ox when he treads the corn, Deut. 25:4.**

Although it was the custom for the heathen to muzzle the ox plowing a field, it was not so in Israel. The statute protected the animal from cruel treatment. Proverbs 12:10 says it this way: *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* In countries where animals are used to plow the fields, muzzles are still used so that the animals can be forced to pull faster through each row –a cruel practice remaining to this day.

The Apostle Paul refers to this practice and prohibition in 1 Corinthians 9:9. His subject is the support of the ministry. Again in 1 Timothy 5:18 he quotes this statute and adds "*The laborer is worthy of his reward.*" The lesson here is that "*Faithful service, whether of men or of animals, deserves generous recognition*" (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, page 1041). Although there were animals plowing the fields in Paul's day, which could have limited his application of the statute, he drew from the divine statute the core of truth that would apply in numerous circumstances to the end of time. Let us do likewise.

**When the land had been polluted by bloodshed, it could only be cleansed by the blood of him who had committed the polluting murder, Num. 35:33, 34.**

Very different from social and environmental laws today comes this reasoning for capital punishment. Yahweh said that bloodshed polluted the land. Only the blood of the murderer could expiate the land. To leave murder unrequited was to leave the land polluted. In fact, there was no expiation for the land, except by the blood of him that shed it. Review the first murder for insights into this statute.

Cain killed his brother, Abel (Gen. 4:8, 10-13), bringing a curse upon himself. He became a fugitive and vagabond on the earth (vs. 12), the first human to receive a curse from God. If, as some have explained the story, Lamech did kill Cain (vs. 23-25), one might conclude that the bloodshed of Abel had then been avenged and cleansed. But no, the curse is passed to Lamech. *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord* (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30; Ps 94:1).

If Lamech killed Cain, he may have avenged Abel's death, but he became a murderer in the process, disregarding God's command, thus compounding his guilt. The Bible ensample leaves us to conclude that



Lamech took matters into his own hands, violating God's command in so doing. If God had honored Lamech in his self-directed efforts to avenge the blood of Abel, we would have a "holy seal of approval" on vigilantism.

In Deuteronomy 21:1-9, instruction is given the priests for cleansing the land when the murderer cannot be found. After slaying a young heifer, the priests from the nearest village would wash their hands over the slain heifer and say, *"Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. O Yahweh, forgive Your people Yisra'el, whom You have redeemed, and do not allow innocent blood in the midst of Your people Yisra'el."* *And the blood guilt shall be forgiven them* (vs. 7, 8).

The phrase, "forgive Your people," may be translated from the Hebrew to mean "make an atonement." The noun form is translated "mercy seat." Thus the murder and the pollution of the land were "made one" again, prefiguring the atoning death of the Messiah. His blood alone could provide cleansing.

We consider in astonishment that Israel joined the heathen in pouring out the blood of their own children, as sacrifices unto the idols of Canaan (Ps. 106:37-39). The thought is abhorrent! How could a people with every blessing and advantage put it aside to make themselves common and unclean? How did their backsliding progress to such deplorable actions as killing their own children? *Lift up your eyes to the bare hills and see! Where have you not been dishonorable? You have waited for lovers by the roadside like an Arab in the wilderness; you have defiled the land with your fornication and your wickedness,* (Jer. 3:2, *Modern Language Version*). They loved pleasure more than promise. The heathen festivals seemed innocent at first, as long as the Hebrew didn't really believe the religious part. But that is how apostasy starts: Rationalization and self-justification. That was then...

This is now. So, what has changed? Spiritually speaking, have we not polluted the land with the innocent blood? Has the pollution problem not been here since the entrance of sin? That which had led to the murder of Abel has continued throughout the ages in the hearts of self-centered followers after peace, pleasure, and power without a price. The earth is polluted with blood.

*Instead of showing gratitude to God for His blessings, the antediluvians used His blessings as a means of separation from Him. They did not seek to honor and glorify their Creator. The gold and silver which He entrusted to them they used for self-gratification. Violence filled the land. Appetite and passion bore away. Men spent their time in dissipation and amusement and in enriching themselves. The earth was polluted under the inhabitants thereof, (The Signs of the Times, April 10, 1901).*

Sinners say, "I want my freedom!" In their effort to rid themselves of restraining laws of God, they choose destruction and death. *It is this desire [for unrestraint] that has made the world what it is today - corrupt as in the days of Noah, and polluted as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Manuscript Releases, Volume 12, page 238).*



We must not treat this subject of ecology lightly, for our world is soon to be destroyed, as in the days of Noah, for the pollution of the land. We may have little to offer as solutions to the world problems of global warming, holes in the ozone layer, or the destruction of natural habitats. Corruption has gone too far; but we can prevent the tide of spiritual pollution from collapsing our homes.

*Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, I beseech you, wrote Ellen White to Sabbath-keeping families. Course sayings, low jests, want of courtesy in the home life, will leave an impression upon you, and if frequently repeated will become second nature.*

Then she adds, *The home is too sacred a place to be polluted with vulgarity, sensuality, and recrimination* (Ibid. Vol. 13, page 82). It is in the home where pollution begins; it is in the home, protected by the presence of the Savior, where the polluted atmosphere may be atoned and purified. May it be so in our homes as we approach the final Jubilee.

## Principles for Leadership and Government

### Chapter 9

*The significance of the Jewish economy is not yet fully comprehended. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols, Christ Object Lessons, p.133.*

*The Christian church...who profess the utmost faith in Christ, in despising the Jewish system virtually deny Christ, who was the originator of the entire Jewish economy, Selected Messages, Vol. 1, page 232.2.*

*The statutes concerning marriage, inheritance, and strict justice in dealing with one another, were peculiar and contrary to the customs and manners of other nations, and were designed of God to keep His people separate from other nations. The necessity of this to preserve the people of God from becoming like the nations who had not the love and fear of God, is the same in this corrupt age, when transgression of God's law prevails and idolatry exists to a fearful extent. If ancient Israel needed such security, we need it more, to keep us from being utterly confounded with the transgressors of God's law, (Review & Herald, p.164 (5-06-1875, Emphasis supplied).*

If God's people would carefully hearken unto the voice of Yahweh to do all His commandments, they would lend to the nations, but never borrow; they would rule over other nations, but never be ruled over, Deut.15:6.

*Had the Hebrews been true to their trust, they would have been a power in the world. God would have been their defense, and He would have exalted them above all other nations. His might and truth would have been revealed through them, and they would have stood forth under His wise and holy rule as an example of the superiority of His government over every form of idolatry. But they did not keep their covenant with God. They followed after the idolatrous practices of other nations; and instead of making their Creator's name a praise in the earth, they brought it into contempt (The Signs of the Times, January 25, 1910).*

Moses repeated to Israel God's design for holy living. Had they as a nation obeyed God's requirements, they would have been the head and not the tail (Deut. 28:13). Long before Israel had been re-educated in the ways of Yahweh, Abraham, whose obedience has become exemplary for every age, reaped the results of his own obedience. It was because he loved God, his children, and his household -more than a thousand persons, counting servants - that he *guarded their religious faith, to impart to them a knowledge of the divine statutes, as the most precious legacy he could transmit to them, (Reflecting Christ, page*

193. *It was by his love for God and others that Abraham obeyed. It was faith that works by love that secured for him power and prosperity in the ancient world, (Patriarchs and Prophets, pages 140-142).* Some in Israel followed and were blessed. Most went their own way.

Today, nothing has changed. The promises extend to spiritual Israel, whose task it is to evangelize the world, to link mankind with the true source of happiness, power, and prosperity. God's people today, as of old, will put far from them worldly idols, and keep God's sabbaths, statutes, and commandments. Conditional was God's promise to protect their land, giving them peace and prosperity, Lev. 26:1-6. But, they would be cursed if they made graven images to hide in a secret place for personal use, Deut. 27:15. God wanted the whole heart then; He asks for the whole heart now. While God's love is unconditional, His blessings are still for those who keep His precepts. Those who love the Son enough to be His servant, and then His bride, are not rebellious to His Lordship.

*Do not love the world nor that which is in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Because all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it, but the one doing the desire of Elohim remains forever, The Scriptures, 1 John 2:15-17 (Emphasis supplied).*

The same laws applied to strangers in their land as to their Hebrew neighbors; they were to have one law for all, Lev. 24:22.

The fourth commandment makes the point that all were to observe the seventh day Sabbath, including the servants, livestock, and foreigners (strangers) in their gate (Exodus 20:10). The concept here remains to this day. When you travel to Europe, you must expect to abide by the laws of the country through which you travel. The fact that Israel was under a theocracy meant that they had both civil and religious laws, but the visitor in their land was not exempt from any level of their government.

Although discussed in Chapter 8, the principle bears repeating: When we grant the lordship of our hearts and homes to the Son of God, the lordship in our homes must remain, even when "strangers" to the Word of God "sojourn" there. We cannot imagine relinquishing our "no smoking" law on public transportation, just because a foreigner has no such law in his homeland. What would our government be like if we made allowances for all visitors in our country? We would have chaos and anarchy in place of stability and reason.

The same is true in our homes. If we set aside our worship time when visitors stay overnight, bring to the table that which we ourselves find offensive to God, tolerate talk or videos which compromise the Lordship of Elohim in our dwellings, we are sacrificing His

lordship for the preferences of the nonbeliever. Do we really want to do that? What message is the shift in rules saying to the visitor? - to our Lord?

Notice how the Savior addressed compromise. He said, "*If your eye is evil, all your body shall be in darkness. If, then, the light that is within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon, Matt. 6:23, 24.*

"Mammon" is defined as a personification of wealth, or materialism. The Scripture is saying, according to this writer's paraphrase, "Don't try to put God first in your life, if you make your decisions based on material needs and advantages. You can't have it both ways.



If your eye is not singular toward the rule of Yahweh in your life and home, you are in darkness and your religion is a sham."

God has ever had a "no compromise policy" when it has come to loyalty versus idolatry. One example of God's "no compromise policy" is found in the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel. *How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him, (1 Kings 18:21).*

*Elijah, amid the general apostasy, did not seek to hide the fact that he served the God of heaven. Baal's prophets numbered four hundred and fifty, his priests, four hundred, and his worshipers were thousands; yet Elijah did not try to make it appear that he was on the popular side. He grandly stood alone. The mountain was covered with people full of eager expectation. The king came in great pomp, and the idolaters, confident of triumph, shouted his welcome. But God had been greatly dishonored. One man, and only one man, appeared to vindicate the honor of God, (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, page 526, Emphasis supplied).*

The statute instructed Israel that, whereas their God ruled throughout the land, His lordship was to be respected by whoever lived, worked, or ventured through His land. That was then.

*Today, as in the days of Elijah, the line of demarcation between God's commandment-keeping people and the worshipers of false gods is clearly drawn. (1 Kings 18:21 quoted) And the message for today is: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities (Rev. 18:2-5), Lift Him Up, page 164.*

In these last days, God will have a people who will not try to serve both His commandments and the World's. The final Elijah message is going to God's professed people throughout the land. May you, Dear Reader, be among those who will make a stand, -however unpopular that loyalty may make you- to *worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* (Luke 4:8). Will you answer with Joshua, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*"? (Joshua 24:15). How else can we give a true witness of our devotion to God's greater wisdom and ways?

When a godless friend or relative spends time in our homes, let us lovingly, prayerfully, but boldly declare our loyalty to God as well as our consideration for the visitor. The visitor may choose to smoke outside, retire to the guest room during evening worship, and bring to the table foods not acceptable to the Christian family. Choices should be respected, without giving the visitor reason to believe that the custom in the home is optional, -observed by preference rather than by conviction. Thus, the government of our homes should be as stable as the government of our church or nation.

Israel was instructed to choose wise men from each tribe to make decision for the land and settle disputes: Over thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens, Deut. 1:15; Num. 11:16-17; Ex. 18:1, 24-27. These judges and officers were to be available at the gates of each city; and they must judge justly, Deut. 16:18.

When Moses complained to Elohim about the enormous challenge of organizing tens of thousands of people in the wilderness, he was instructed to carefully select seventy elders from the tribes to record and settle civil strife. These seventy -some from each tribe- were to judge fairly, without bias. When Israel was settled in the Promised Land, these officers were to conduct court at the city gates. This arrangement may have been for the convenience of the people. It may have been, also, to keep strife out of the Holy City, Jerusalem, which was the capital city of God's dwelling.

In Ezekiel, Chapters 40 through 48, is described the temple that was never built. In the plans for that temple, each tribe had his own gate through which to enter the holy ground. It may be speculated that, just as the Messiah was crucified outside the gate, so each tribe was to leave its strife and debate outside the gates. Outside the gates they were Judeans and Gadites, etc. Once inside, they were Israelites, the Children of the Promise.

Today both within the civil government and within the church government, as in those ancient days, responsibility is shared. No one officer of the church is to dominate the management nor bear all the responsibility; all elected officers are to share both management and responsibility, working together to keep harmony and justice. That is the ideal. In church board meetings where prayer is alive and well, harmony is more likely to prevail without giving up reform and truth.

The people of God must never pervert judgment in their city or national government. They must judge without partiality, and never accept a gift, or bribe, Deut. 16:19,20. They must not show partiality for or against a poor man in court, Ex. 23:3,6; Lev. 19:15; Deut.1:17. In fact, there was a curse on anyone who perverted judgment against a widow, a foreigner, or an orphan, Deut.27:19.



Court systems today have ignored the principle of this divine law. Today the judgment favors the one who can afford the high-priced lawyer. The poor man, the widow, foreigner, and orphan will likely be disadvantaged when coming against pricey representation. This ought not to be.

God's design for settling disputes was equality for all. This included the foreigner who lacked knowledge of the Hebrew's national regulations; it included the widow who may have

had her income cut off; it also included the orphan who was at the mercy of the state, and the poor man who was forced to accept free counsel.

To tamper with the execution of justice, either in favor of, or against the poor, invoked the curse of The Almighty. There were twelve curses listed in Deuteronomy 27. Each curse was followed by the appropriate response: "And all the people shall say, Amen." To the Hebrew, curses were powerful and effective. They had witnessed enough to make them fearful.

The giving of the blessings from Mount Gerizim and curses from Mount Ebal (Deut. 11:29) struck terror in the hearts of the listening multitude. The tribes were divided, with the sons of Jacob's wives, Rachel and Leah, standing on Mount Gerizim calling out the blessings for faithfulness to the Covenant of Yahweh. On Mount Ebal stood the sons of the concubines along with the children of Reuben and Zebulun responding with curses upon any who would dare break the covenant in any particular. This was the setting for the statute on fair judgments.

Simple is the principle we may apply to our lives today: treat all people with equal justice and mercy. Don't make judgments affected by pity or pride.

*God would have the rulers of the nations know that He is the supreme Ruler. Those who preside over the affairs of nations should realize that there is a King of kings. The man who does not know God as his Father, and Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of the infinite God, can not rule wisely. He who has been placed where he has authority over others should seek the Lord for wisdom, that he may govern wisely the subjects of God's*

*kingdom. An earthly ruler can not exercise authority wisely or set an example that is safe to follow, unless he obtains wisdom from God, who is too wise to err and too good to do injustice to His human subjects (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 3, page 37).*

**Be extremely careful in making judgment, lest you condemn an innocent person, Ex. 23:6. Never accept bribes for they blind even the wise, Ex. 23:7.**

This injunction builds on the previous statute adding additional safeguards. Don't accept money in the execution of justice, for it will blind even the wise. False charges may be brought against one, but the man of integrity must have nothing to do with them, lest he condemn the innocent.

Practical matters, which confront all organizations, must be expedited under the unction of the Holy Spirit. If Israel was to represent the character of their God before the nations, their government must pattern after His government. Only in that way could Israel ever achieve the grand prosperity and influence God wanted for them.

Furthermore, our God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). James addressed the issue of partiality as it was seen in the first century AD. The "no partiality policy" given to Ancient Israel is still the Word of God to us. What was to be guarded against nationally is still to be guarded against denominationaly.

*For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin and are convinced of the law as transgressors (James 2:2-4, 6, 7).*

First of all, James reminded the early Christians that they themselves knew well what it meant to be brought to the judgment hall for their faith (vs. 6). The Early Christian Church was ruthlessly hounded for centuries. Persecution of Truth and those holding it has ever been a reality for reformers in every age, including the first century when James penned the above counsel. That unjust treatment should have converted into tender tolerance for others seeking The Way. But the human heart may remain in the clutches of the enemy of souls long after the convicting of the mind.

Secondly, to show partiality, and to judge others accordingly, is defined as "blasphemy" in scripture. Taking the name of the Savior, but not valuing, loving, and responding after His heart of compassion, reveals hypocrisy in the so-called Christian. To take His name is to take His character and His mission. There is no way we sinful humans can do this, except by the method the Apostle Paul explained. We must die to self, daily, 1 Cor. 15:31.

Christ Himself had taught the way, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross **daily**, and follow me, Luke 9:23. Furthermore, He had taught the principles of equality and fairness in parables and teachings, revealing His regard for the statutes. He taught that there is no profit in gaining wealth if it robs one of time for eternal matters (Mark 8:36). And when the disciples disputed among themselves over who might be the greatest among them, Jesus rebuked them saying, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all (Mark 9:35). Then He took a child on His lap and reminded them (vs. 37): *Whosoever receives a child in My name, receives Me.* (See Mark 9:35-42 for other insights).

Thirdly, James calls "partiality" a sin. Since none of the Ten Commandments condemn this attitude, let the reader recognize that the reference by James is to the statutes that clearly enlarge upon the intent within the Ten Commandments. One might see a relationship between partiality and the prohibition against false witness described in the ninth commandment, or against coveting wealth belonging to a neighbor, specified in the tenth. But it is the statute against partiality in judgment that makes James's command clear. James calls it a **sin** to show partiality. Thus, it is shown that **all** the oracles of God -and that includes all His statutes- are to be obeyed. To disregard a statute is to commit sin. Disobedience is always lawlessness. Paul instructed Timothy that the law was not given for the righteous, but for the lawless ones (See 1 Tim. 1:9-13) that they might see their sin and desire the gift of grace.

How different would be our churches today if we allowed the principles of this statute to have preeminence in our church government and operations! What could result among us if those of financial means were not chosen for office on the basis of assertiveness and self-confidence born of financial success? What if the highest church offices were filled with "commoners" filled with a zeal for truth and godliness? What if there was no partiality in judgment over whom may be a channel for truth, so that the teaching could be examined for truth's sake, rather than who presented it?

*When new light is presented to the church, it is perilous to shut yourselves away from it. Refusing to hear because you are prejudiced against the message or the messenger will not make your case excusable before God. To condemn that which you have not heard and do not understand will not exalt your wisdom in the eyes of those who are candid in their investigation of truth. And to speak with contempt of those whom God has sent with a message of truth, is folly and madness, (Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 51).*

What if we each resolved to obey the injunction of the Lord God Almighty? Don't pervert judgment through partiality between the rich and poor, the "haves" and "have-nots." How different would our lives be!

Among the stories about Ellen White is one unpublished account from her years in Loma Linda. Found in a letter from a Loma Linda resident to a friend in the Mid-West, it has recently been shared in public. It seems the folk from her neighborhood soon discovered the hour of Mrs. White's daily walk. It is said that one could rarely find her walking alone; for someone needing encouragement or seeking enlightenment would join her stroll to enjoy her wisdom and instruction.

On one of these occasions, a young man joined her, only to find her vexed with concern. He inquired as to the cause, so she explained that her sleep had been disturbed by a frightful dream during the night. This young man later wrote about this experience and the dream Mrs. White related to the small company who joined her walk that day.



In her dream, Mrs. White explained, she had seen a devastating windstorm level everything around. The young man asked if she was speaking of Loma Linda being destroyed. She clarified that she was speaking of the whole denomination. It was all swept away in minutes; there was not a building nor a person to be seen anywhere. When the storm had passed, there followed a period of silence. Then, quietly, slowly, God's people began to assemble.

From every direction they came. Among them were no former leaders, no preachers, no people of wealth, prestige, and great influence; just humble, God-fearing commoners. They quickly and efficiently organized their ranks and spread over the earth to give the final

#### Loud Cry.

The young man who walked with Ellen White and heard her tell this dream is resting in the grave until the Lord comes. But the letter in which he wrote this disturbing account remains among the letters and papers in the Ellen G. White collection.

May we follow the words of this statute and be admonished by the experiences of others before us. We must judge between right and wrong, not people. We must discern truth from error, not the person who delivers it. Let us love one another, and thereby fulfill all the law (Rom 13:10). That love, born in the heart of God, delights to do His will.

If a case was too hard to judge, it was to be taken to the priest and judge of that area. Then the petitioner must abide by the verdict rendered, Deut. 17:8-11.

When a case was presented to the local court that was too unusual (the Hebrew word in verse 8 translates as "too wonderful," "surpassing," or "unusual"), the case may be referred to the Levitical court for arbitration. In such cases, the petitioners must accept the ruling as the oracle of God. Any dissatisfaction with the verdict was thereafter treated as complaining against Jehovah, and carried a serious consequence.

We see a similarity to this principle carried out in our court system today. Lower courts deliberate common disputes. Higher courts judge the difficult and unusual cases. Long after the case is decided, the controversy may continue, however, in the minds of the public and the media. Such was the jury trial of O. J. Simpson in recent years. All must abide by the rendering of the court, but few believed that justice had been served.

In the early days of Sabbath-keepers in this country, efforts were made to establish a procedure akin to this statute. A kind of "court" assembled to listen to "new light." Civil matters were not brought to the assembly of brethren, but issues of doctrine and leadership. Unfortunately, emotions interrupted logic and prayerful sensibility often enough for this approach to be nearly abandoned today.

Many of us do, however, remember Glacier View, where hundreds of Bible scholars and conference administrators gathered to examine the controversial teachings of Desmond Ford. An earthquake couldn't have done more damage to the denomination than what was experienced through the ranks when the verdict was declared. With Desmond defrocked and dismissed from his positions of authority, scores of ministers walked out of their churches, never to return. With them followed hundreds of members leaving over the battle lines drawn at Glacier View, or out of loyalty to a leader they had come to trust. As ironic as it may be, the doctrines of Desmond Ford have been taught among our people ever since! But the "court" approach to issues of doctrine have not been so public since the Des Ford "trial" in the 1970's.

Perhaps the greater fault for the aftermath of Glacier View lies in the doorway of ministers and members who refused to abide by the ruling. Conducted in accordance with the principle of this statute, the results should have shorn up the pillars. Instead, pride and prejudice, self-confidence and contention, spread throughout California and several other western states. What could have been a blessing became a curse by the discontentment of unconverted hearts.

If an Israelite heard that one of the cities in Judah or Israel had made laws, which encouraged their citizens to include entertainment and/or worship of heathen gods and customs, that Israelite should investigate the rumor. If the suspicion was proven true, the Israelite was to gather his own city to destroy everything of that renegade city which had gone a whoring after the world, Deut. 13:12-18.

Are we our brother's keeper? If there was ever a question, the principle from this statute should forever settle that debate. It seems that from the entrance of sin the concept

of "mind your own business" quickly spread until it became a societal law. Such an attitude was never to be among God's people. There has never been a time when it was safe to enjoy the presence of God and the pleasures of the world together. To profess godliness while enjoying sin is an abomination to the Almighty One, and in actuality, an impossibility. This oracle of Yahweh sets at war good and evil, not for the world, but in the church and in the heart.

When an Israelite city was drawn into the idolatry of the surrounding nations, that rebellious city was to be regarded as an enemy to God's people. The inhabitants of that wicked city were to be burned and their city left as a pile of rubbish, a monument to the destruction of evil. A prime example of this order carried out, is found in Judges 20. There is recorder the horrific battle that brought the tribe of Benjamin to near extinction, when all Israel went up against Gibeah for the wickedness committed there.



The principle of this statute has been the basis for much bloodshed throughout history. Deuteronomy 13:13, 15 reads:

*Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known.. Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein.*

This scripture empowered the Crusades, which ushered in the twelve-hundred-and-sixty years of Dark Ages. It formed the zeal to wipe out thousands of feast keeping followers of Jesus Christ in the early centuries of Imperial Rome. As a cloak, it covers the bodies of millions of Christians and Jews tortured, mocked, scourged, imprisoned, stoned (Heb. 11:33-40), burned at the stake, or sent to gas chambers.

Are we surprised that so much evil has been done quoting the words of the Almighty? We shouldn't be. The words of God -distorted, of course- were spoken from the mouth of the beautiful flying serpent in the garden. The words of God were offered to the Savior in the wilderness. In the final days of testing, it will be the words of God, spoken in another appealing guise of the Deceiver that will carry many a professing Christian to destruction. Loyal followers of the Messiah must warn their churches now that life and death are suspended in the words of God. Those who don't know the Word intimately will not discern the overmastering deception soon to test the Christian world. Superficial Bible readers will fail that test.

*You know not where you may be called upon to give your witness of truth. Many will have to stand in the legislative courts; some will have to stand*

*before kings and before the learned of the earth, to answer for their faith. Those who have only a superficial understanding of truth will not be able clearly to expound the Scriptures, and give definite reason for their faith. They will become confused... (Our High Calling, page 355).*

*The study of the Books of Daniel and the Revelation—God's Spirit has illuminated every page of Holy Writ, but there are those upon whom it makes little impression, because it is imperfectly understood. When the shaking comes, by the introduction of false theories, **these surface readers, anchored nowhere, are like shifting sand.** They slide into any position to suit the tenor of their feelings of bitterness... (Testimonies to Ministers, page 112, emphasis supplied).*

**In a court of law, a father could not be condemned to death for the crime of his son, nor the son for the crime of his father, Deut. 24:16; Eze. 18:4,20.**

One example of God's dealings with Israel according to this statute, is found in Numbers 26. There Korah and his cohorts were destroyed when the earth opened and swallowed them (vs. 10). The next verse explains that Korah's children did not die. In contrast to God's merciful distinction of the children, we find evidence that among the heathen it was customary for an entire family to perish for the crime of one in the family. Such was the case when Daniel was delivered from the lions. The men who had accused Daniel were thrown to the lions along with their wives and children (Dan. 6:24).

Ezekiel reminded Israel of this law: *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, (Eze. 18:20).* By inference, we may glean the same principle from Romans 6:23: *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Fortunately, the principle of this command was respected in the founding of this nation. No one must die for the crimes of the parent, or the child. Debtors' prisons of the past and court fines of the present have inflicted pain upon the slothful, and pressure upon careless parents of truant children, but none have been condemned to death for a family member's lawlessness.

So it will be in the Day of Judgment, none will escape their fate for the influence of parent or child. No parent may stand in place of the delinquent child. Jesus Christ alone will have born the death decree for our sins. He alone could pay for the crimes of another. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

**The judge would decide in court how many stripes would be given for guilt; Forty was the maximum number, Deut. 25:1, 2.**

While the one falsely accused would be exonerated, the guilty must be punished. From the Hebrew root word for "condemn" (verse 1), comes the suggestion that what was "out of order" was to be rehabilitated rather than punished, in the sense of vengeance (See 1 BC 1041). Thus, the stripes by the court may have been meant originally to deter the misconduct of a sympathizer for the guilty. Certainly, in nations today where crimes are punished by flogging, there is little criminal behavior. This statute may have been an adult version of the "Spare the rod and spoil the child" principle, (See Prov. 13:24).

Whether this application is justifiable or not, one may be certain that the stripes administered to the Savior, centuries later, came from no redemptive intent. Beatings and scourging were apt to be administered upon arrest (See Jer. 20:2; 37:15) in ancient times. According to the statute, however, it was only lawful after the accused had been tried and sentenced in a legal court of law.



The Romans were bound by no such requirement. In several Scriptures we read that Paul was beaten without trial (Acts 16:23; 2 Cor. 11:24); by the Romans once, and by the Jews five times. While it was unlawful to beat a Roman citizen without trial, those who were in subjection to the Roman government had no such protection. Paul himself had been responsible for many Christians being beaten (Acts. 22:19), which added to his remorse after his conversion.

Today beatings are still an acceptable punishment in some countries of the world, but not in America. Yet, as of old, abuse of physical power over the crime suspect often makes news. Nonetheless, God's people will leave the execution of judgment and punishment to the Master of justice and mercy.

**Anyone who wouldn't abide by the ruling of the priest and the judge must be put to death; and all the people must be informed so they wouldn't be tempted to act presumptuously against court rulings, Deut. 17:12, 13.**

Because the administration of justice was to be regarded with reverence, and so as to purge evil from Israel, this statute was enforced against acts of insolence and rebellion toward God-ordained authority. It was expected that this law would, in turn, encourage greater respect for divinely appointed authority, as well as the mandates given through

godly leaders. Paul reminds us that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil...*If thou do that which is evil, be afraid* (Rom. 13:3,4). Even if one was sure that the powers in authority were not of God, honor would be given to the government (Rom. 13:1), unless it was in direct opposition to a command of Jehovah (Acts 5:29).

This statute, still in force at the time of Christ, sheds light on the circumstances and events of His trial on the night before the Passover feast. Court would never convene at such a sacred season, unless urgency was deemed needful by the heinousness of the crime. When a crime was considered so evil as to demand that "all the people" witness the judgment and sentence, there was no better time to reach people from all regions than when they would be present in Jerusalem for the great festivals. Thus, the Jews staged the trial of the Son of God at a time when there would be the greatest number of witnesses in Jerusalem. They hoped by this timing to have the greatest possible influence over the people, to convict them of the horrific evil that would warrant court in session on a Holy Sabbath.

There was no greater evil than to be a "false prophet." According to Deuteronomy 18:20, a false prophet must die, thus accounting for the frenzy to trap Jesus into admitting that He and/or His words were directly from God. To His enemies, Christ was a false prophet. Furthermore, He had seemed insolent against the mandates of the Sanhedrin. Thus, Jesus, the Lawgiver, was condemned by His own law, which had become twisted in the minds of apostate priests and leaders. That was then...

Could abuse of this statute bring martyrdom to many of God's people in the last scenes of Earth's history? What do you think?

God would choose the king.; It must to be someone who would not cause them to pine after Egypt. It would not be someone who would multiply horses [for war, to build up national power]; God's choice would not be someone who would have many wives, nor horde silver and gold, as the nations around did, Deut. 17:14-17.

The Scriptures records this statute as follows:

*When you come to the land which [Yahweh] your Elohim is giving you, and shall possess it and shall dwell in it, and you shall say, "Let me set a sovereign over me like all the gentiles that are around me," you shall certainly set a sovereign over you whom Yahweh your Elohim shall choose. Set a sovereign over you from among your brothers, you are not allowed to set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only, he is not to increase horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Mitsrayim [Egypt] to increase horses, for Yahweh has said to you, "Do not return that way again." And he is not to increase wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor is he to greatly increase silver and gold for himself.*

Here, we find that before Israel asked for a king, God had already given the instructions for the selection.

- God must approve the selection
- The king must be an Israelite
- His rulership would be prescribed by God

1. He must not build up military power (horses)
2. He must not buy horses from Egypt
3. He must not take many wives for himself
4. He must not gather silver and gold to increase his own wealth.

In 1 Samuel 8:4-7 we read of the request before Samuel to select a king to rule over them, for Samuel was an old man and his sons didn't follow the commands and statutes of Jehovah. But, God knew Israel would soon clamor for a king. He had already given the instructions to His servant, Moses, long before the request was made. Later, Isaiah was to record this wonderful principle of Yahweh's faithfulness in anticipating needs and interests. *And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear*, Isa. 65:24.

If a king was to be chosen to rule over them, he must be one of their brethren, not a foreigner. God Almighty would remain their true Sovereign. The chosen earthly potentate must be in subjection to the oracles of God. No foreigner could understand the history and heritage that accompanied Israel into the Promised Land.

The choice of a king was, ultimately, to be God's choice, for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). This important choice could not be left to Israel's personal pleasure, nor a candidate's personal appeal. Yet, the story of the people's choosing Saul to be their first king (recorded in 1 Samuel 10), includes the suggestion of God's disapproval of their request (1 Sam. 10:19), although verse 24 says that Saul was chosen by the Lord. (According to Hebrew thought, anything God did not forbid was considered an action of God.)

This seems to imply that, although He had centuries before given the instructions for choosing a king, the circumstances and motives for Israel's desire were corrupt. God's people were not asking for a king so they might better represent their Elohim before the heathen, but that they might join the heathen to be like them in government.

By reviewing the qualifications for rulership and God's requirements for that office, we may view a model for all governments today. First, the candidate for rulership must be a native and citizen under that government he or she wishes to serve. In this model, the ruler's first obligation must be to God. From The Book of Common Prayer, can be found "A Prayer for the President of the United States, and All in Civil Authority."

*Almighty God... so rule the hearts of thy servant, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES... and all others in authority, that they, knowing whose ministers they are, may above all things seek thy honour and glory; and that we and all the People, duly considering whose authority they bear, may faithfully and obediently honour them...*

Unfortunately, the will of God has become so obliterated by distortions and deceptions that it is virtually impossible to even conceptualize a theocracy at this time in history. Only after this earth is purified by fire will God's theocracy be reinstated; this time with one of "the brethren," the Son of God, on the throne.



Israel was not to accumulate horses, by which to increase the strength of their cavalry, and they were forbidden to return to Egypt to buy from the Egyptians. The stately Arabian stallions from Egypt had become a symbol of power and prowess to any army possessing them. But, in the land of Israel the Almighty One was to be in control and enliven with power their military.

Those who have traveled to Palestine know that the topography is too mountainous to be suitable for large-bodied animals in time of war. Yet Solomon, disregarding the commands of God, purchased horses out of Egypt (1 Kings 10:28) to add prestige to his glowing fame.

The statute of the Lord said the king was not to accumulate silver and gold for his own fame and fortune. Solomon arrogantly gathered taxes of silver and gold so that Jerusalem became the center of wealth for the then-known world. His palace was but a glimpse of the pride that "goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18). Although he enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season, he concluded his life with the proverb, *Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right* (Prov. 16:8), and *How much better is it to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!* (verse 16).

What a contrast between the lives of Solomon and Moses! Both entered the service of the Lord from a heritage of wealth and power. Both felt the task was too great for human wisdom. Both prayed for divine aid. But, Moses had known both poverty and prestige, both want and wealth. He chose *to suffer affliction with the people of God... esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt* (Heb. 11:24-26).



Solomon, on the other hand, came into power without an appreciation for the poor and persecuted. He was raised knowing the oracles of God. But with the generous gift of wisdom and intellect, Solomon could not maintain the humble dependence upon Jehovah he had expressed in prayer at the beginning of his lordship. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people," he had once prayed, "that I may discern between good and evil," (1 Kings 3:9). Even so, he was a compromiser, almost from the beginning of his reign. It is written of Solomon that he

loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father, while offering sacrifices and burning incense in the high places (vs. 3).

Obedience to God, blended with a fascination for the world, is a sure formula for failure. What we see in the leadership of Solomon is a life of pleasing words amid selfish extravagance. Solomon prayed eloquently, taught the people persuasively, wrote inspiringly; but lived recklessly and fool-heartedly in rebellion toward the very statutes and commandments he claimed to love and follow. That was then...

What can be extrapolated for times now? If we may apply God's blue-print for ancient Israel to the government of a religious organization, specifically modern, spiritual Israel, the prescription for leadership might look like this:

- Leaders must be born and raised in the Church.
- They must demonstrate the approval of God in their activities.
- They must not encourage investment in secular agencies, nor employ militant strength to achieve financial and world-wide influence.
- They must not enter ("purchase") agreements with the religions around them to increase their congregations.
- They must be husbands of one marriage, and faithful to it.
- They must not enter enterprises or investments to increase their personal wealth.

In other words, God's man to lead His people to the end of this final millennium must be a man of vision -God's vision; he must be singular in purpose, in principle, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

*Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Then the peace that passeth knowledge will flow from us to bless all... (Sons and Daughters of God, page 348).*

*The religion of Jesus Christ never degrades the receiver; it never makes him coarse or rough, discourteous or self-important, passionate or hard-hearted. On the contrary, it refines the taste, sanctifies the judgment, and purifies and ennobles the thoughts, by bringing them into captivity to Jesus Christ...As God is perfect in his sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere. The ideal of Christian character is Christ-likeness. There is opened before us a path of continual advancement. We have an object to reach, a standard to gain, which includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated... (Special Testimonies on Education, page 206, Emphasis supplied).*

In the early days of Adventism, Ellen White was reluctant to see the authority of leadership placed in the hands of one man or a few, although she always respected the decisions of the General Conference in session. See Testimony for the Church, Volume 9, pages 260, 261 for clarity on this issue. Revealing her position of support for the decisions of the General Conference, she dutifully boarded a ship to Australia. Looking back, she wrote:

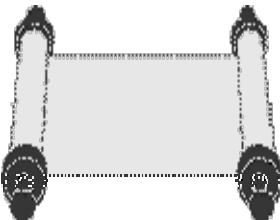
*It was as though I was drawn away by the shape matters assumed. The Lord was willing for it to be so; but I had not one ray of light that he [the Lord] would have me come to this country [Australia]. I came in submission to the voice of the General Conference, which I have ever maintained to be authority. I have no wish to return to America. I feel a holy indignation striving within my soul as I review the past eight years. Testimony after testimony has been sent from God to those in our publishing house and to the managers of the work, who stand at the very head; but they have turned away from the God-given light, to listen to the voice of men (The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, page 1817, Emphasis supplied).*

In summary, let us recognize that God gave to His servant Moses the guidelines for the government of His people. It was never to be placed in the power of a few to control the many. God retains to this day His authority as Head of the body, His church. The question is, Will men of influence usurp His authority, and place spiritual Israel in the path of compromise? They did so in the past. What about now?

The king God selected must have a copy of all God's laws and statutes that he might learn and do them. He must not become proud and set aside the commandments of God, Deut. 17:18-20.

To keep the king of God's choosing from following the path of least resistance, he was to have his own copy of all the laws and statutes of Yahweh. The logistics of this order were staggering. Copying the scrolls by hand was a laborious task. Few men were prepared to undertake this sacred responsibility. Rabbis tell us that even by the first century A.D, there were few scrolls available. Only at Jerusalem could be found a

complete set. They were large, bulky, and required adequate space for storage. Thus, only a section at a time could be used in the temple services. Smaller scrolls could be found in synagogues, but in few private homes throughout Palestine. To have a complete set, containing all the Torah and the prophets, was a privilege only kings could afford.



We are told that a numbering system helped the scribes catch omissions and spelling errors. Rabbi Rood further explains that the word "Torah" was spelled out by piecing together every seventh letter in the transcription. In Genesis and Exodus the word "Torah" was spelling out in a forward sequence; but in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy "Torah" was spelling out in a backwards sequence, again by piecing together every seventh letter. And what about Leviticus? Every fiftieth letter spelled "Yahweh" in Leviticus, the book of rehearsals and ways of Yahweh.

It has been estimated that at the time Jesus Christ stood in the synagogue to read from the book of Isaiah, the monetary value of the Oracles of God on parchment was close to half-a-million dollars, by our present standards. Because it was not readily available, and few people learned to read in those days, the Torah was committed to memory in every faithful, Jewish home. It was a requirement for every Jewish boy to recite the Torah by the age of twelve.

Millennia before Ellen White instructed this people to spend time each day in Bible study and prayer, Yahweh had given the instruction in the form of statutes; this one especially for the leaders of His people. To the extent that this statute was followed, the people were led to trust God and obey His laws. When the king discontinued his dependence upon the written Word of God, the people fell into apostasy.

We are all called to an exalted position of authority under God. We are called to be kings and priests for Jehovah. In fact, we are being groomed for positions in the kingdom of God. With that solemn commission before us, we may better understand the necessity of applying this statute to our own lives now. Let us determine to spend more time in the Word of God learning to know our Elohim and the precepts of His government.

*Let small companies assemble in the evening, at noon, or in the early morning to study the Bible. Let them have a season of prayer, that they may be strengthened, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit... If you yourselves will open the door to receive it, a great blessing will come to you. Angels of God will be in your assembly. You will feed upon the leaves of the tree of life, (In Heavenly Places, page 92).*

Even Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, would not trust His power to come from within. If the Son of God came to earth fully as human flesh, He must attack the sin problem in the same way as we must. And He did. Thus, He became our example for overcoming.

*In childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus studied the Scriptures. As a little child He was daily at His mother's knee taught from the scrolls of the prophets. In His youth the early morning and the evening twilight often found Him alone on the mountainside or among the trees of the forest, spending a quiet hour in prayer and the study of God's word. During His ministry His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures testified to His diligence in their study. And since He gained knowledge as we may gain it, His wonderful power, both mental and spiritual, is a testimony to the value of the Bible as a means of education, (Education, page 185).*

Today, the sad reality is that many leaders of God's people have set aside the study of the Word of God as a source of power and direction for leadership, preparation for daily ministry, and personal salvation. The results have been the same as anciently: apostasy among the people. When the oracles of God are brought forth for meditation and assessment, reformation, as in the days of Nehemiah, will follow. May it happen again soon.

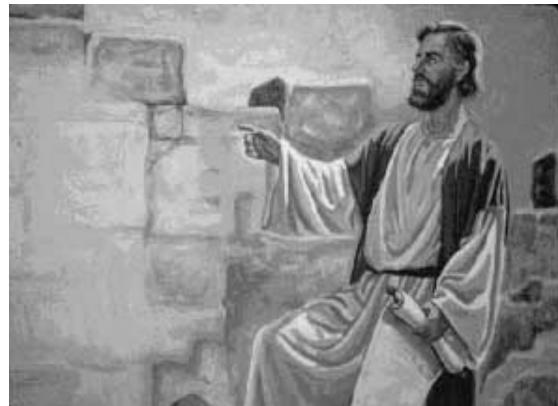
**When Israel went to war against their enemy, they were to have no fear, for the Lord their God would go before them to fight for them, Deut. 20:1-4.**

This injunction sounds more like a promise than a law. Upon a closer look, one will see a law attached to a promise. The promise, the Lord God will fight for you, was repeated from the Red Sea crossing when the multitude responded in panic to the sight of Pharaoh's army following them through the sea (Ex. 14:14). A promise was often attached to battle orders. For example, when Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:7,8), Hezekiah comforted the worried people, who had gathered in the streets, with these words:

*Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles.*

Nehemiah challenged the remnant, who returned to rebuild Jerusalem, with similar words as they stood their ground against opposition (Neh. 4:20). The command and the promise were delivered together.

Jeremiah mentioned the blessing upon the man (Jer. 17:7) who would put his trust in the Lord God Almighty, and a curse upon the man who trusted in flesh (vs. 5).



David wrote of the triumph that comes to the one who trusts in Yahweh in Psalms 20, which was written to be sung. It was a response to the deliverance of their God from the Syrians and Ammonites (See 2 Sam. 10), and encourages us to do likewise in the time of trouble. *"Now I know,"* sang the king in reply to (Ps. 20) verses 1-5, which had just been sung by the congregation, *"that the LORD will help his anointed; He will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we trust in the name of the LORD our God"* (Ps. 20:6,7).

The blending of a command and a promise is not a new idea to most of us. The messenger of the Lord has instructed us, *All heaven is waiting to cooperate with those who will be subordinate to the ways and will of God. God gives grace, and he expects all to use it. He supplies the power if the human mind feels any need or any disposition to receive. He never asks us to do anything without supplying the grace and power to do that very thing. All his biddings are enablings*, (Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Nov. 9, 1897). *As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command, may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings* (Messages to Young People, page 101, Emphasis supplied).

Thus, we see that "trust and obey" is a time-tested principle of Jehovah. "All that God's word commands, we are to obey. All that it promises, we may claim," (Education, page 189). Let us fight the good fight of faith, trusting and obeying our Elohim, until we have finished our course (See 1 Tim. 6:12; 4:7).

Israel was to choose able men for their army. The choices would be made according to their faith and availability. They were not to take anyone who thought he was too busy to defend their nation and their God. They were not to take anyone whose responsibilities to his family would make his service a hardship, and they must not accept into the armed services anyone who was faint-hearted, Deut. 20:5-9.

Like the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue, this precept is stated in the negative. Conversely, the command could be summarized: Soldiers are needed:

- Who trust in the power of Jehovah to fight for them,
- Who can make sacrifices,
- Who have made arrangements for their family's care,
- Who display courage to stand for the right

Does that list resemble a more modern injunction given to the young soldiers of Spiritual Israel's armed forces? Notice the similarities.

*Dear youth, the very best thing you can do is to enlist freely and decidedly in the army of the Lord. Surrender yourself into the hands of God, that your will and ways may be guided by the One who is unerring in wisdom and infinite in goodness... Let your name be enrolled in the heavenly records as one of the chosen and elect of God, (Our High Calling, page 219).*

*With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world! How soon might the end come -the end of suffering and sorrow and sin! (God's Amazing Grace, page 189).*

Israel was to invite their enemies to surrender peaceable; but if they refused, Israel was to destroy them utterly, Deut. 20:10-20.

The next section of Chapter 20 in Deuteronomy, focuses upon strategy. Before a sword was drawn, before an arrow was shot, Israel was expected to offer peace. This was not peace at any price. It was not peace by compromise. This peace offered to the enemy was peace by surrender. This option was offered to a city which was distant from the land (vs. 10-15) which Yahweh was giving back to His people. Those cities, which were in the land of Palestine, were to be leveled (vs. 16-18) in preparation for Israel to take possession.

It appears that the leaders of God's people sent out to the cities in their pathway messages that may have read something like this. "We are servants of the Most High Elohim returning to the land which Yahweh gave to our fathers in the days before the Great Famine. We will be entering the land where you are settled this time next year. Please know that our God is a peace-loving God, and we are a peace-loving people. Therefore, our God offers you peace, rather than war; life instead of death, which the Egyptians chose on the other side of the Red Sea..."

From the historical account in Scripture, we discover that most of these cities chose

war, regardless of the land's original ownership, and regardless of Israel's reputation and offer of a peaceful settlement. It seems that even the fear of what happened to the land of Egypt, and the destruction of the city of Jericho, could not off-set their trust in the power of human force. When their probationary time had elapsed, these cities were taken and every living thing was destroyed, according to the command of their God. Israel was to take no spoil for themselves, lest they be tempted into greed and idolatry. Whenever Israel failed to follow this order entirely, judgments fell on the guilty parties (See Joshua 7 for the case of Achan).

We may, from this statute, find a spiritual application to bless our lives. Note the antitypes of salvation. The Heavenly Father sent His Son into the enemy strongholds with a Letter offering life to those who would surrender. As in the case of Rahab, that surrender could be personal, not only corporate or collective. Individuals who accepted the terms offered, could surrender to the authority of the Loving God, and by His mercy, escape doom in the strongholds of Satan. Upon surrender, the subjects became servants to the children of the Most High God. After a period of probation, in which their characters and conversion were tested, these surrendered servants might marry into these families and co-inherit the kingdom of the Master.

We are the foreigners offered eternal life and peace for our surrender. Will we hide in the crowd of popular self-confidence and rebellious pride, or will we separate from the stronghold of Satan before it is too late to make the choice?

**When Israel went to war, their men must not rape; they must not even be naked in front of each other in the army. God's army must be morally pure, Deut. 23:9-12.**

In a sense, even in the time of war, the soldier was to conduct himself as an ambassador for Yahweh. He went into battle under the banner of judgment; flanked on either side were justice and mercy. The soldier must ever be under the control of the Captain of the Army, Yeshua, the Son of God. He must regard the battle of the Lord as sacred as a religious assembly. Every battle was to be both punitive and redemptive. Purity of life was admonished. Each soldier was to conduct himself by high moral standards. Other nations might rape and plunder, but Israel's army could not. "God could not consistently lead a faithless, unclean people to victory," (S.D.A. Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, page 1034). God intended that Israel be light bearers to the world. Their behavior must be consistent with their message.

Is not the principle of this statute still important to us today? In all our daily concourse, whether in battle against evil, or in flight to escape it, should we not ever be mindful that we are ambassadors for the King of Kings?

*Dear brethren in the ministry... As ambassadors for Christ shall we at this critical period of the history of the church, when the nations of the world are almost universally wavering between infidelity and idolatry, consider the signs of the times? Shall we heed the voice of God through His Word,*

*giving warnings and appeals and commands... My brothers and sisters who are engaged in the solemn work of being the mouthpiece of God, be sure that the treasure house of the heart is pure and holy, (Unpublished Manuscript, Vol. 6, page 14).*

Locations for sanctuary were provided for the protection of the accused until he could be heard fairly, Num. 35:12-25. If he was not proven guilty, he was given asylum until the death of the avengers who were after him, or until the death of the high priest; but if he left the protection of the place of safety, the avenger would be guiltless who killed him, Num. 35:25-28; Deut. 19:3-21. If the murderer was found guilty, he must be removed from the place of safety to be stoned, Num. 35:30-33.

In Numbers 35, Moses is instructed to establish three cities of refuge in Trans-Jordan and three in the land of Canaan proper, after the conquest of the land. This command was repeated to Joshua, as he was the one who would carry out the orders.

While it fell upon the next of kin to avenge a homicide, limitations must necessarily be imposed to insure the administration of justice. Thus, the cities of refuge were established. In today's terms, we might think of them as a special type of "minimum security prisons." If the manslayer had committed the crime out of anger or hatred, the facility offered no protection. But if, on the other hand, the accused could show that the death was an accident, whether preventable or not, the accused would be given asylum until a complete investigation and judgment could be determined. If the manslayer felt he needed extended protection from angry relatives of the deceased, he could live in the city of refuge for as long as the threat remained. But, if he ventured from the protected refuge, no bodyguard would accompany him, and his death would not be avenged. That was then...

But this is now. Since our court system operates on a different principle, and we have no control over that determination, there may be no application to us today, except the spiritual one. Certainly, it is true that Satan, the accuser or the brethren, is ready to destroy us if we venture from our refuge in Christ Jesus. The major breakdown of the analogy is over our guilt. We are guilty and deserve to die. We have no right to asylum. But Christ died in our place anyway. Herein there is no antitype from literal Israel's statute. Praise God, Christ stepped beyond the present day understanding of His justice, and taking our sins upon Himself, He revealed that His "doing what is just," extended to us also His unprecedented mercy.

**It took the testimony of two witnesses to convict an accused criminal, Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15-21.**

Legal matters could not be settled by the testimony of one witness. Two were required, no doubt to help prevent someone from being sentenced to death by a revengeful or spiteful witness. Even today in a court of law, no legal case may be determined solely by the testimony of a single witness.

Then, there was the possibility of a false testimony being given in court. Several verses of details within the statutes define the punishment for disregarding the Ninth Commandment: *Thou shalt not bear false witness*. If perjury was discovered, that false witness was himself punished according to the law. "An eye for an eye" was the principle upon which Israel's court system was based. Some suggest that this principle was one of the most misconstrued principles of the Old Testament, giving license to punishments of revenge. Such an understanding is completely incorrect, and sets one up to believe that our God is a vengeful God, getting even with those who harm His Own. But this is not true neither in the Old nor New Testaments. Our Elohim has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (See Ezekiel. 18:32; 2 Pet. 3:9).

The Messiah had Himself repeated the statute requiring two witnesses in Matt. 18:16. *In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established*. The penalty for perjury was disregarded by the corrupt religious system in the days of the Savior. The Jews acknowledged the statute when it suited them, but ignored it in order to condemned Christ (Matt. 26:60). Jesus was set up to be condemned by the false testimony of two witnesses-the ultimate example of a verdict of "Death" requiring the testimony of two witnesses.

The writer of Hebrews, refers to the "**two witnesses**" law to make an additional point. He warns us, if we sin purposely after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice offering for sins, but some fearsome anticipation of judgment (See Heb. 19:26-29). That Judgment will be more terrible than the judgment of criminals is the days of prophets and kings for those who have spurned the Father's love. Hebrews is saying that just as a person who had disregarded the *Torah* of Moses died by the testimony of two or three witnesses, so there remains a final Judgment that will be settled by the testimony of two witnesses. The writer's purpose is to contrast the judgment of those who rejected the Law with those who reject the Son of God. How much greater will their punishment be! This is not to say that the Law is of less importance than the Son. The Father sent His Son to demonstrate His Holy Law in action. To reject the Messiah was to reject the clearest revelation of both the Father and His Oracles.

Christ reminded His followers that they were to be **His witnesses** to His fulfillment of the prophecies (See Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:8). These prophecies had revealed that He was indeed the Messiah of the Covenant. Paul repeated this statute in his first letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:19), clearly in a setting of judgment again, saying, "*Don't receive any accusation against an elder, except there be two or three witnesses.*" Witnesses were to provide evidence or proof. Thus, when one follows the phrase through the Scriptures, it should not be surprising that the last reference to the testimony of "two witnesses" appears in the Judgment scene in Revelation.

Chapter 11 of Revelation pictures two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth and ashes

for 1260 days, or forty-two months -which is the same time period, beginning at the time that the Gentiles take control to trample Jerusalem, according to the Scriptures.

*But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my **two witnesses**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth (Rev. 11:2,3.)*

Some hold that the two witnesses in reference here are the Old and New Testament. Certainly, the entire Scriptures lead one to loyalty to God and His commands. Revelation 11:4 says they are the two candlesticks that stand before God. Interestingly, the record of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 only two churches (candlesticks in Rev. 1:20) which remain: Smyrna (2:8-11) representing the witness for those who die in their faith, and Philadelphia (3:7-12) representing those who are translated without seeing death. Moses represented those who were laid to rest, while Elijah stands for those who will not taste of death.

*Elijah was a type of the saints who will be living on the earth at the time of the second advent of Christ, and who will be 'changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,' without tasting of death, (Prophets and Kings, p. 227).*

Elijah typifies the message which "shut up heaven" so that it rained not for the duration of his prophecy (1260 days or 42-months equal 3½ years). The "no rain" prophecy was a specific message given to the leadership of the professed people of God who had been led into idolatry. The turning of "waters into blood" prophecy (verse 6), on the other hand, was a specific message for the leadership of Egypt who had enslaved God's people of promise. It was sent to warn Egypt of the consequences of not obeying the God of Moses Who was calling His own to obey and follow Him.

Thus, we see evidence that the two witness of Revelation 11 are the message and experience of the Smyrna Christians and Moses along with the Philadelphia Christians and Elijah. Both represent a specific message and mission, driven by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and symbolized by the oil from the olive tree supplying the candlesticks.

The message of Moses, bringing the people into a knowledge of the Oracles of God, combined with the message of Elijah, calling the people back to those Oracles, must be the **two witnesses** testifying before the whole universe that God is just in delivering some and destroying others.

- **Moses (Keep the commandments and statutes, and love the Lord thy God with all your heart - Ps. 105:26-29, 43-45; John 7:19)**
- **Elijah (Return to the commandments and statutes and loyalty to God-1 Kings 17:1; Mal. 4:5, 6)**

These **two witnesses** (as candlesticks remaining in a world of darkness) stand in the

**Judgment Day to condemn the World to death.** God's laws will not change (not one jot or tittle) until the great controversy is ended. Solomon had summed it up in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes (12:13, 14):

*Let us hear the conclusion of the **whole matter**: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.*

So, a statute gives, once again, a peek into God's character and government. It is how the Supreme God Almighty runs the universe, and He reveals His articles of government to those He trusts. Thus, we see that, through this statute, we may follow the court proceedings in the great controversy between good and evil, until their culmination in the final Judgment and condemnation of this renegade planet, by the testimony of Two Witnesses.

**An Israelite was never to slander or lie in court (be an evil witness), nor follow the lead of others who would do so, Ex. 23:1, 2; Lev. 19:16.**

The commandment states, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor* (Ex. 20:16). Here, "false witness" is extended to slander, as well as lying; and Lev. 19:16 adds, *neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbor, or rise up against the life of thy neighbor*. The intent of the last part of the verse has been interpreted by the Jews to mean that one must not avoid offering help to anyone whose life was endangered, either by turning away from the scene of a crime or by refusing to give testimony in court. Anyone who would do so would be guilty of "*standing against the blood of thy neighbor*."

How should this statute impact our lives? In three ways, all of which relate to being our brother's keeper. First, we are sinning against God if we lie, or hedge the truth, in court, from the pulpit, or in conversation. Second, we are breaking God's law if we spread slander or gossip, whether in court or over the telephone. And third, to decline to help someone in trouble (either by withholding testimony or by avoiding action that might save a life), is to respond in apathy toward your neighbor. That, too, is sin.

Central in the *Torah* is the foundational principle of love to God and man. Just as God sent His Son to rescue us because He loves us, so we are sent to "rescue" others because we love one another (1 John 4:9-11). The setting of these verses is God's reaching out to save man. In a similar manner, we are to reach out to save, never to destroy or discourage. Continuing through the chapter (1 John 4), we come to verses 17 and 18, which read:

*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love;*

*but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

We have often heard these verses expounded to refer to our daily interchange with people in our lives. The meaning given has normally been, that if we treat others in love we will be able to stand boldly in the Day of Judgment. Thus, our good behavior will give us self-confidence to face the Judge. Is that what the Apostle John is saying?

Consider the evidence that these New Testament verses are an explanation of the principle found in the above statute. We are daily tested. What kind of testimony do we give of our love for God? We give that testimony through our love for our fellowman, so that when we come to the Judgment, we will stand with testimony, not in our own defense, but in appeal for others. That may be a new thought to some. Before disregarding the concept as heresy, consider the evidence.

In the above passage we see a parallel stated: *As Christ is, so are we. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, (John 15:13).* Our example is Christ's perfect love. In verse 20 of that chapter, John continues the words of Jesus, showing the intended parallel. *Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours also.*

*We have reason for everlasting gratitude to God for in that He has left us a **perfect example**. Every Christian should strive to earnestly follow in the footsteps of the Saviour. We should offer grateful praise and gratitude for giving us such a mighty helper, a safeguard against every temptation, against every species of impropriety in thought, deed, and word, ("Letters from Ellen G. White to Sanitarium Workers," page 23, Emphasis supplied).*

*Christ worked out before his disciples and before the world a **perfect example** for true religion. And when men show that patience, sympathy, and love for the souls of their fellowmen that Christ showed, Christ will be revealed in his followers. "We are laborers together with God," writes Paul...If we would work as Christ worked, we must look to Christ to give our work efficiency and perfection. We must depend upon Christ, our risen and ascended Saviour, our substitute, our surety, our power, and our sufficiency, ("The Work of Christ," Signs of the Times, 12-09-1897).*

*What fruit does Christ expect from His disciples? The exerting of an influence like the influence exerted by the Redeemer. He expects us to follow **His example of perfect goodness, living in obedience to all His commandments.** Thus it is that we become Christlike. Only thus can we bear much fruit (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 18, page 96).*

*Christ says to us, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." **He is our Example.** During His life on earth, He was ever kind and gentle, His influence was ever fragrant, for in Him dwelt*

*perfect love. He was never sour and unapproachable, and He never compromised with wrong to obtain favor. If we have His righteousness, we shall be like Him in gentleness, in forbearance, in unselfish love. Shall we not, by dwelling in the sunshine of His presence, become mellowed by His grace? (Ibid, page 206).*

*Christ came to give an example of the perfect conformity to the law of God required of Adam, the first man, down to the last man that shall live on the earth. He declares that His mission is not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it in perfect and entire obedience, (Ibid, Vol. 10, page 292).*



We know that Moses was a type of Christ (Conflict and Courage, page 111; Patriarchs and Prophets, page 330). What was there in this man that brought him such honor? It was the perfecting of his love for a sinful people.

*And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written (Ex. 32:31, 32).*

Moses interceded for Israel as Christ intercedes for us. To prepare Moses for his solemn task, he was led into the wilderness where he learned the lessons of Yahweh through the humbling experience of leading sheep. When Moses had practiced on sheep for forty years, God gave him a multitude of willful and bitter slaves to guide.

Back to our passage from John: *As Christ in the world, so are we.* Here is the point which links between our **witness** and our **boldness** in the Day of Judgment.

Moses	Christ	Remnant People
Knew God face to face. Willing to give up his life for others.	Came from God. Willingly laid down His life for others.	Will know God intimately. Will be willing to lay down their lives for others.
Interceded for sinners.	Now intercedes for sinners.	Will be between the porch and the altar interceding.
Received the words of God to give to God's people.	Spoke the words of the Father, not His own.	Will receive all the oracles of God to give to others; man-made teachings gone.

Therefore, let the reader understand that the saints of God in the Day of Judgment, the last period of earth's history, the closing of probation will be praying for others rather than engaging in slander. The saints will be, as Joel writes (Joel 2:17), "between the porch and the altar" interceding for others.

*Now here are the people of God and God wants you to be getting ready for the great day of salvation, that you may be getting others ready. He wants you to have a fitting-up, that you may have a message for the people that will cut its way through the fleshy heart, and that you may go crying through the porch and the altar, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach" (Joel 2:17). Now open your ears to the truth you have had and put away your doubts, unbelief, and Christless surmisings, (Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, p. 305).*

That experience, yet to be entered into, will perfect our love for our Saviour and the Heavenly Father. It will perfect our love for one another. It will bring us into a more perfect understanding of our privilege and responsibility to follow the example of love and obedience demonstrated by the Messiah. Hereby are we given boldness in the Last Days, not for ourselves, but for others.

When the nation took its census, the people were to pay their taxes without murmuring, showing thankfulness for Divine Providence in giving them life and security as a nation, Ex. 30:12. That tax must not be determined by income; it must be the same for all, whether rich or poor, Ex. 30:13-15.

From ancient times, people have felt that taking a census was an omen of bad luck. Bible commentaries report some of the history of this superstition:

*Even as late as 1753, fear was expressed by one member in the British House of Commons that the proposed census would be followed by "some great public misfortune or epidemical distemper," and in 1926 the authorities were afraid that there would be trouble with certain tribes in Kenya when the intention of taking a census became known (The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 1, page 1054).*

Census taking today is generally viewed as an invasion of privacy. Certainly, questions about income and religious preference make one uneasy. Is it the continuance of folk lore that has created this discomfort, or are there legitimate reasons to be resistant to census taking?

Moses was instructed to number Israel during their wilderness wandering. Everyone twelve years old and older was to bring an offering unto Yahweh (vs. 14). This first numbering of the Children of Israel was conducted to receive a ransom offering for having been delivered from Egyptian bondage. The gold and silver brought to Aaron was to be used in the completion and maintenance of the sanctuary.

The next time a census was taken, the purpose was not for spiritual thanksgiving, but for the assessment of military power. And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1). Joab tried to reason with David, warning him that Israel's strength was in the LORD. To number Israel would be a sin against the real

Captain of the host (see vs. 2, 3). Verse four continues, *Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab.* Joab did as ordered by his king.

The census was taken, and the curse followed. In 2 Samuel, Chapter 24, the parallel passage, we read that, after David had received the numbers, he knew he had sinned and had ordered Israel to sin. The prophet Gad, came to David with the word of the LORD: *Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee* (vs. 12). His choices were equally terrifying: 1) seven years of famine in the land, 2) three months of flight from his enemies, or 3) three days of pestilence on the land.

To stay the hand of God against the land, David was told to purchase the threshing floor of Ornan (Araunah) on Mt. Moriah. Here Abraham had built an altar on which to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:1-14). Here Solomon later placed the temple of the Lord. But that was then...

This is now. There is a lesson to be learned from this statute and the history of its abuse. We know, as did David when he numbered Israel for the wrong reason, that it is a sin to shift our trust to the arm of flesh. Our God is our refuge and our strength. He is the One who gives strength to the nation. He alone offers real security in the land.

*The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him, (Nahum 1:7). Render therefore to all what is due to them: tax to whom tax is due, toll to whom toll, fear to whom fear, respect to whom respect (Rom. 13:7).*

A secondary issue in this statute is the attitude in which we pay taxes. In the theocracy, the collection of taxes was to support the house of God. In a democracy, the tax was to support the military in a time of war. We are, as they were, to be grateful for protection and security provided by the government from the collection of taxes. The New Testament reminds us to render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's (Matt. 22:21. Let us stop doing it begrudgingly.

**An Israelite must never revile or curse those who ruled over them, Ex. 22:28.**

The King James rendering of this law reads, *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.* The Scriptures, a Hebrew translation into modern English, says: *Do not revile Elohim, nor curse a ruler of your people.* "Elohim," being the generic plural for "gods" in the King James Version, has left the meaning obscure. Is this statute a command to watch your tongue when speaking about the Supreme God Almighty, as well as those leaders who hold offices of government? Or, is this statute merely commanding respect for earthly potentates?

Is the King James Version simply recording a parallelism in structure, so that "gods" and "ruler" have the same identity? The Modern Language Version supplies "judges" in

place of "gods," as do several other versions. Since the word "Elohim" may be used in reference to governing beings, whether in heaven or on earth, we will be safe to conclude that we are to speak respectfully of any ruler. Certainly, we will speak carefully about our Heavenly Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit. This concept is implied in the third commandment (Ex. 20:7): *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.*

As for the second part of the statute, "*nor curse the ruler of thy people,*" Paul taught the Gentiles the same principle. *Let everyone be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from Elohim; and the authorities that exist are appointed by Elohim* (Rom. 13:1). At the same time, we are cautioned in the New Testament against excusing ourselves from disobeying the Supreme God in order to comply with earthly authorities, and thereby look out for ourselves.

We find no examples of a subject standing against a ruler or priest in Israel without receiving the curse of God for it. Miriam gossiped about her brother Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian. The attacks grew into criticism of his leadership. The curse followed swiftly and effectively (Num. 12:1-10). Nevertheless, there were times, especially when in captivity to a foreign power, the Hebrew follower of Yahweh was forced to choose between the commands of a secular power and the requirements of a Holy God. Such was the situation for the three youths in Babylon and for Daniel, found praying to the God of Heaven. Even when they were forced to oppose an edict of the king, these Hebrews exemplified the utmost respect.

Similarly in the New Testament, the apostles sometimes found themselves in defiance of the laws of the Romans, or the corrupted regulations of the Pharisees. Examples of this are found in Acts 4:19-20, where Peter and John imply the folly of obeying man above God; and in Acts 5:29, where Peter and the other apostles answered, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*"

Peter later wrote: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, so that you may be known as a law-abiding citizen* (See 1 Pet. 2:13-17). The writer of Hebrews (13:17) brings out the same truth. Indeed, we are instructed to obey the laws of the land in as far as they do not conflict with the oracles of God. In addition, we are to refrain from criticism and slander against world leaders, even men like Bill Clinton, not because they are worthy of respect, but because the office they hold is worthy of respect.

If this principle applies to corrupt governmental leaders, how much more does it apply to corrupt leaders of the church? Once again, we return to the principle of compassion for your enemies (Matt. 5:44), focusing one's life on what is good, even when the evil seems stronger.

God's people are now learning the meaning of the scripture:

*Whatsoever things are true,  
Whatsoever things are honest,  
Whatsoever things are just,*

*Whatsoever things are pure,  
Whatsoever things are lovely,  
Whatsoever things are of good report;  
If there be an virtue (uprightness),  
And if there be an praise,  
Think on these things (Phil. 4:8)*

## Loyalty to Our God – Then and Now

### Chapter 10

*"The Lord Jesus gave these commandments from the pillar of cloud, and Moses repeated them to the children of Israel and wrote them in a book, that they might not depart from righteousness. We are under obligation to fulfill these specifications, for in so doing, we fulfill the specifications of the law of God" (Review and Herald, Vol. 3, p. 213, Dec. 18, 1894).*

Anyone who sacrificed to any god other than Yahweh must be put to death, Ex. 22:20. No one must ever give their offspring to a foreign god, Lev. 20:2,3.

To understand why the act of sacrificing to an alien god was punishable by death, one must recall the meaning of the sacrifice. The entrance of sin into a perfect world had brought immediate sorrow. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a sickening procedure. Although instructed by God, Adam recoiled in horror at the slaying of the first sacrifice. Never before had he witnessed death.



*As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty (God's Amazing Grace, page 15).*

*After his expulsion from Eden, Adam's life on earth was filled with sorrow. Every dying leaf, every victim of sacrifice, every blight upon the fair face of nature, every stain upon man's purity, were fresh reminders of his sin. Terrible was the agony of remorse as he beheld iniquity abounding and, in answer to his warnings, met the reproaches cast upon himself as the cause of sin. With patient humility he bore for nearly a thousand years the penalty of transgression. Faithfully did he*



*repent of his sin and trust in the merits of the promised Saviour... (Adventist Home, page 540).*

Thus, we see that the offering of a sacrifice was to represent the dying Son of God whose death would ransom the human race from the clutches of sin and its originator. To offer a sacrifice (ultimately, the Lamb of God) to Satan, the proclaimed “god of this world,” would constitute the most despicable abomination to our Holy God. He who would give His most priceless, precious Son, and not without struggle, looked in righteous indignation upon those who had listened to the plan of salvation, but had turned to offer the symbol of His blood to devils!

*For it is impossible to bring anew to repentance those who have once for all been illumined, have tasted the heavenly gift, have been participants of the Holy Spirit, have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away; for they repeat so far as they are concerned the crucifying of the Son of God and are exposing Him to public disgrace, (Heb. 6:4-6, Modern Language Version).*

The seeds of sin contain the deadliest disease in the universe. Although the Flood destroyed the works of sin, it soon spread again through the human race, through the very ones who had witnessed the power in the word of God.

Today, the results of this deadly disease cause the saints to tremble. Indeed, it is incomprehensible to us that Hebrew parents, with such a mighty heritage, could turn to idols of wood or stone. We cannot fathom the corruption that would lead parents to give their children as sacrifices by fire to devils (See Ps. 106:37, 38). But they did it throughout the land of Canaan.

Having our senses under attack for six thousand years, the human race has nearly obliterated the image of God in mankind. Even among professed Christians, children are today being sacrificed to devils in a “socially acceptable” fashion. Not on an altar of stone, but with the same results, children are offered to the gods of this world, through association and conformity with the ways of the heathen.

God is now calling out a people who will fill their lives with love and conformity to all His words revealed in Scripture.

*For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him (2 Chron. 16:9)*

No Israelite was allowed to set up a grove of trees near the altar of the Lord, nor were they permitted to set up any image which the Lord hated, Deut. 16:21,22.

The most subtle and dangerous enemy of true worship of Yahweh is not the disregard for the religion, but rather the corruption of that religion. Syncretism, the simultaneous worship of opposing ideologies, was well established during Israel's occupation of Canaan. In the previous chapter, some reasons why God hated anything having to do with idol worship were presented. God had been faithful to Israel; He expected loyalty from them. Moses had given them this statute in anticipation of their arrival in Canaan; but, like Spiritual Israel today, the vast majority adopted the ways of the heathen, changing only the labels to quiet their consciences.

These groves set up near an altar of the Lord were not groves of trees, as we visualize the term. The word translated "grove" in the King James Version comes from the Hebrew word "*asherim*," and is rendered "grove" in more than thirty places in the Old Testament. Most modern versions have supplied a more accurate rendering, "sacred tree," or "sacred pole." These were wooden idols used in the worship of the Semitic goddess, Asherah. They must not be set next to, or near, an altar of their Elohim.

Note the clearer wording or some Bible versions (vs. 21):

American Standard	-	Thou shalt not plant thee an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Jehovah thy God
New American Bible	-	You shall not plant a sacred pole of any kind of wood near the altar of the Lord.
New International	-	Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the Lord your God.

The SDA Bible Commentary notes that while wooden pillars, or poles, [perhaps carved like totem poles] were dedicated to the worship of Asherah, stone pillars were objects of worship dedicated to Baal (1BC p. 1011). In verse 22 of Deuteronomy 16, the word "image" should be "pillar." This is adding to the previous thought: Don't set up a pole to Asherah, and don't set up a pillar to Baal, for stone pillars were often part of phallic worship associated with Baal.

Actually, phallic worship began in Egypt with Osiris, their god of the underworld. The myth held that Isis, his wife, dug up his mutilated body minus his penis. She later taught the people that his missing immortal organ had impregnated Mother Earth to bring forth Spring. Added to the worship of the sun, began by Nimrod and Semiramis, the Babylonian pillars -obelisks- with



Osis' all-seeing eye at the top, combined the worship of the phallus with the celebration of Spring. Asherah and Baal were the supreme gods of the Canaanites. Some suppose Baal, the male deity, to correspond to the sun, and Asherah, the female counterpart, to represent the moon. By the time of the Roman Empire, Baal had been renamed Jupiter, and Asherah, Venus, with whom Paul was familiar (See Act. 14:12,13; 19:35). Regardless of the name changes through time and cultures, it remained the same abomination to our God.

During the reign of the kings of Israel, with beginnings from Solomon, this abominable religion became the official religion of the court (1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:19-22) and remained so throughout the ten tribes after their split with Judah. This is not to suggest that Judah was faithful to the covenant. One king would tear down the "groves" (idols), and the next would put them up again. But that was long ago.

Today, in secret halls and hillsides, the sick, idolatrous, and licentious rituals continue. While true Christians avoid such moral corruption, the spirit of the rivalry is very much alive in respectable homes and churches, where many are still acting out service to two masters.

**An Israelite must not take graven images unto himself, nor bring one into his house. He was not even to melt down the gold or silver for some other use. It was an abomination and a cursed thing, Deut. 7:25, 26.**

Not only are we not to bring the icons of these gods into our homes, our Holy God tells us not to go to the places where the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone, are on display. It is verse 25, however, which hides an important principle, often overlooked. The verse reads in the New International Version:

*The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the Lord your God. God Almighty will, one day, destroy all the works of evil by fire; do likewise. **Burn up those objects which you know have been associated with demons.** Don't even reason that they have value, so you might sell them.*

The person who is so tempted, might reason that others don't place the same meaning on the object that he or she does; therefore, one might be rid of the icon (sell it), and at the same time convert its value (in gold or silver) into something useful to oneself. The above scripture tells us this reasoning is a snare. Not the money acquired by the sale of an idol, but the reasoning that rationalizes the act of benefiting from its silver (in exchange), is the snare. Stated simply, our God expects complete loyalty to Him. What He names detestable, we are to regard as detestable. Don't have anything to do with it!

Some of us have visited the homes of Sabbath-keepers where obelisks have been on display, or sun disk faces form stepping stones in the garden, or statues holding crystal balls grace the flowerbed; where African masks or Grecian goddesses, and a host of other icon of questionable origin and meaning, are displayed for their aesthetic value. Do we think our God has forgotten their meaning or origin just because we don't want to think about their history?



Our scripture is warning all, who desire to be on the side of Jehovah at last, to pray for discernment in areas of aesthetics. May we learn to hate what God has hated for millennia.

**God's people were never to mention the name of any other god, but serve Yahweh, exclusively, Ex. 23:13.**

The concept from Exodus 23 (above) implies a cause and effect relationship. Because one has an exclusive loyalty to Yahweh, he will not speak about any other god. To make an application to this last generation, let the reader determine what are the "names" of the gods of this world.

Today the names given to God's archenemy are casually and flippantly tossed into conversation. This statute suggests that our familiarity with these names is not in God's design. Perhaps the cause and effect in the text suggests the same relationship to us today. Could it be that the reason there is not more hatred for sin is because we have not seen the necessity of loathing its originator and his name? Certainly the Bible names enemy deities as well as Satan, Lucifer, and devil. But the acceptance of these names as somehow "neutral" in their effect upon us, may be contributing to our acceptance of sin; thus, the cause and effect.

The statute is no doubt emphasizing the need to focus both our meditation and spiritual thoughts upon the things of our God rather than on the things of the god of this world, which are abominations to our Holy God. With this application, would come the admonition, then, to keep our minds from preoccupation with the "gods of this world."

**Any male who had his private parts wounded or cut off (an ancient rite in the service of foreign gods) was considered a bastard, and could not enter the house of worship, -not even his descendants, -for ten generations, Deut. 23:1, 2.**

Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Dictionary assures the reader that a "bastard" was not an illegitimate offspring, while Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies, page 28, defines the

term much the same as our modern dictionaries. Fortunately, the SDA Bible Commentary is more helpful.

A bastard. *The root of the word thus translated is uncertain. Rabbinical tradition applies this term not to anyone born out of wedlock, but limits it to one born of incest, or else takes it to mean a non-Israelite, or a stranger of unknown ancestry (Vol. 1, page 1033).*

Still practiced in India, the intentional mutilation of the male organs was practiced in religious rites by the heathen. The statute combines two very different forms of perversion, both regarding the male organs, as reasons for exclusion from the sanctuary worship. In the first instance, mutilation of the male organ brought a ban on sanctuary worship. In the second verse, being born of incest or harlotry resulted in exclusion from the congregation. This was not enforced against eunuchs (Jer. 29:2; Acts 8:27-40), but against those only who had participated in mutilation rituals as acts of devotion to other gods, or had been born from sexual perversion. Since our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8), and we know He came to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), how are we to understand this statute?

Strong's Concordance finds the word, "bastard," either singular or plural, in only three scriptures. The first is the above text from Deuteronomy. The word is used a second time in Zechariah (9:6), which says that a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod (one of the strongholds of the Philistines assigned to the tribe of Judah, but never subdued by them). The third and final usage of the word is found in Hebrews 12:8, where it is used in contrast with "sons" who receive parental correction from the Heavenly Father (vs. 6). Strong defines this illusive term as meaning one born of a forbidden marriage: to a foreigner, or of a despised class (#4464).

Insights begin to immerge when we follow the story of Judah's sin with Tamar. One may review the story recorded in Genesis 38. There we read that this unholy union brought forth twins (vs. 28-30), one of whom was named Pharez. He is thereafter mentioned in the genealogy of Judah (Gen. 46:12). The connection is finally made to our statute under consideration, when we turn to the story of Ruth. Boaz, a law-abiding, God-fearing gentleman was about to marry Ruth, the Moabitess (Ruth 4:9,10). All the people who witnessed the ceremony praised the couple with this blessing: *And let thy house be like the house of Pharez whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the Lord shall give thee of this young woman* (vs. 12).

The book of Ruth ends with the genealogy beginning at Pharez. Certainly, the pronouncement would not include a curse to the newlyweds on their wedding day. We must, then, look to the removal of the curse as the blessing prophesied. With the help of Matthew's account in his first chapter, one will find ten generation from Pharez to King David. The judgment was lifted at the birth of David. But, that was a long time ago.

What can we learn about God's dealings with His children through this statute? What does this law teach us? Starting with the most obvious, we may understand clearly what our Elohim thinks of incest and harlotry. There are other lessons, equally important,

although perhaps less apparent.

First, the birth of children was recognized as a miracle of life from the Creator. Children were received as blessings. To force that miracle of God in the setting of perverse morals would be repugnant to the Lifegiver, both in fact and symbolism.

Secondly, the male organ had become an object of worship from the days of Nimrod and Samaramas. A statue to the sun god was sometimes in the shape of a phallus, commonly displayed with a sun disk resting on the top of the shaft.

Finally, consider the covenant of circumcision. It involved cutting a part of the male organ. The circumcised Israelite carried in his body the fact that he, by commitment or by birth, belonged exclusively to Yahweh. To pervert the symbol of man's covenant with the Almighty, and to do so as an act of worship of false gods, was an abomination to Jehovah.

**No child of God was permitted to worship idols, nor make any molten gods, Lev. 19:4. They were not even to inquire how the heathen worshipped or what they believed, Deut. 12:30.**

Having previously considered the issue of worshipping idols, let us notice the second half of Deuteronomy 12:30: *Do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods?"* (See the New King James Version.)



It was believed anciently that it was fatal to disregard the gods of the local area. Thus, when Israel entered Canaan, their Land of Promise, there was cultural pressure to respect the gods of the territories they conquered (see 2 Kings 17:26). But, God had anticipated this influence. He gave to Moses this safeguard for His people.

"When you take the land and destroy the idols there," God had instructed Israel, "be careful. Don't even be curious about their gods. Don't ask questions about their religion. You don't want to know, for it could snare you," (Deut. 12:30, paraphrased).

Had Israel observed the command, Bible history would have been written differently. The Babylonian captivity would have been averted. Solomon would not have been seduced into syncretistic devotion. The idolatry that pervaded nearly all religious thought throughout Israel's sad history could have been prevented by obedience to this one statute. Sin has often risen, in an unsuspecting victim, from the seed of curiosity – the same curiosity that kept Eve under the forbidden tree.

By the first century AD, the amalgamation of heathen and holy was well established. While the Messiah pointed the people back to the Oracles of God, traditions blending truth with cultic theosophy blinded the leadership. The disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, boldly attacked the amorphous ideologies bonding the spurious teachings from the then-known world, -Greek, Samaritan, Phoenician, Indian, Babylonian, and Roman- to Scriptures. Paul continually labored to draw the early believers away from the popular philosophies inflating man's head and damning his soul.

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial [Satan]? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

*Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.*

"Don't even ask how they worship their gods!" had been the intended safeguard. But, throughout history Satan has been tirelessly vigilant to undo, to confuse, to obscure, to blend, to alter, and finally eradicate the name of Yahweh and His life-giving Words. The enemy has stealthily worked to prepare the world, including the Christian world, to fit together under his government, his philosophy, his worship.

Now we face the steady movements toward a one-world government with a one-world religion under a god. A Catholic world? A Protestant world? A Moslem world? An Islamic world? A Spiritualist world? A Humanist world? or all of them combined? Will the effort succeed? Yes! - For about as long as the phallic tower remained on the plane at Babel; about as long as conglomerate feet can hold up a solid metal image. Then all heaven will break loose. This earth has yet to witness the wrath of God against His archenemy and those who have willingly followed his cunningly devised fables.



Where will Sabbath-keepers be then? The answer to that question depends upon what they do now, in these fleeting days of final warning. Those who accept the worship styles of the religions around them, who attend their worship- services, worships, and retreats to learn new evangelistic techniques, eulogy styles, and celebration music, may soon find they have more and more in common with the New Age conglomerate, but less in common with their founding fathers. God says, "Come out from among them. Don't even

get curious about how they worship their gods, or you might be tempted to try to add their eulogy in My worship."

Look at where we are today, in terms of worship services? Believing that some truth is better than no truth, we have been lead to embrace and incorporate the elements from the worship services of "liars." (One would not dare speak so boldly if the Bible had not already spoken so boldly.) Is that not what the Bible calls those who refuse to keep God's *Torah* (all His commands), yet say they know Him (1 John 2:4)? Today we have borrowed the songs of the Pentecostals, the celebration service from the Catholics, and the neurolinguistics of the pseudo-psychologists (Humanists). Transliterations of Scripture are promoted in the pulpit, originating from the World Council of Churches, in which our leaders maintain membership in order to fit-in. Easter and Christmas services are ignorantly celebrated in our schools and churches, adding to the abominations of which ancient Israel's devotion could not surpass.



*He who presides over His church and the destinies of nations is carrying forward the last work to be accomplished for this world. To His angels He gives the commission to execute His judgments. Let the ministers awake, let them take in the situation. The work of judgment begins at the sanctuary. "And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with*

*linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar." Read Ezekiel 9:2-7. The command is, "Slay utterly old and young, both maidens, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house." Saith God, "I will recompense their way upon their head," (Testimonies to Minister, page 430).*

The Children of Israel were to be holy, sanctified, for their God was holy, Lev. 19:2; Lev. 20:7. Because they belonged to Yahweh, they were to reflect His holiness. Lev. 20:26.

*The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand,*

*who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people (Herald and Review, September 23, 1873, Emphases supplied).*

Again, the Children of Israel were to be wholly dedicated to God; thus, not delaying to bring to the Lord what was due Him – the first-fruits, or tithe, Ex. 22:29. The second tithe was to be brought every third year, the year of tithing, Deut. 26:10-12. They were given one week to prepare the first-fruits, or tithe of livestock; then it must be given to God, Ex. 22:30. All of the tithe was the Lord's, Deut. 12:11. If anyone wanted to change the method of payment, that person must pay 20 % interest above the 10% required, Lev. 27:30-33. The Israelite must pay the tithe by bringing his corn, wine, yearling, or grain to the sanctuary; but if it were too far to travel with the load, he was allowed to turn the firstfruits into silver (money) and take that to the sanctuary to be shared with the Levites there, Deut. 14:22-29.

Genesis 14:20, the first place to mention tithe, finds Abraham paying tithe to Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High (vs. 18). Melchizedek and Abraham feasting together on that occasion. In Deuteronomy 12, where the Lord God's instruction to Moses is reviewed, we discover that the great feasts were "funded" by the ingathered tithe from the harvest (See verses 5-7). Nehemiah instructed the people during the restoration of Jerusalem to bring their tithes and offerings to the sanctuary for the support of the priests, the custodians, and musicians (see Nehemiah 10:39). According to Nehemiah, David had added to the statutes the provision for the musicians and custodians (12:44-47), also from the tribe of Levi, to receive their compensation from the tithe.

The one statute that few Christians contest is the requirement to return to God the tithe of all one's increase. Because we are totally dedicated to our God, all that we possess is at His disposal. Yet, He asks only for ten percent. This statute, in part, is not new to Sabbath-keepers. That tithing is a statute, written in a book by Moses as God gave the instructions, may be a new concept to those who have spent limited time in the *Torah* (first five books of the Bible). Although not exhaustive, we will herein briefly present tithing from the Scriptures:

- What was to be tithed and for what use?
- When was it to be prepared and gathered?
- Was there a penalty for tardiness?
- Where was the tithe to be given?

The Hebrew description of what was to be tithed has been translated in the LXX as "first fruits." Exodus 22:29 states what is to be tithed in two parts:

- 1) The produce of fruit tree, grain, and vine;
- 2) The first born son.

All tithe belonged to Jehovah, showing His ownership of the land, the produce of the land, and the custodians of the land. In Leviticus 27, where tithing laws are discussed at length, the firstlings of livestock were to be sacrificed unto the Lord (vs. 26). Thus, we see the intermingling of tithes and offerings as we are to understand them. Even though the tithe was specifically for the support of the priests, the priests themselves were required tithe a tenth (Num. 18:28-32) of that received. All Israel, including His ministers, were, through tithes and offerings, to acknowledge the rightful ownership of the land, its products, and their very lives.

The Children of Israel were given until the completion of harvest to prepare their tithe, according to Leviticus 14. The harvest tithe of the barley was to be presented at Pentecost, called the Feast of Harvest. (See SDA Bible Dictionary, page 839.) The wheat harvest, which came in the fall, was tithed at the Feast of Ingathering, also called the Feast of Tabernacles. Since first fruits and tithe are often associated in the same passages, they have come to mean the same, are here mentioned together.

Animal offerings of the first-born of livestock, and the dedication of the first-born sons were both required on the eighth day. When the tithe of the lambs or calves was to be paid, the rabbis tell us, the rod was used (Lev. 27:32), the same symbol used in Revelation 11 where the worshippers at the temple are measured and selected by the rod. It was an instrument of judgment. The rancher enclosed all the lambs or calves in a pen, with the ewes and cows waiting outside the gate.

Then the gate was opened to allow the young to reunite with their mothers. As they ran, single file, through the narrow gate, the rancher would tap every tenth youngster with his rod, which had been dipped in vermillion or red ocher. Regardless of the condition or health of the animal, it was thereafter received as tithe (See SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 1, page 818).

Are we today comforted by the Shepherd's "rod," as the psalmist suggests we should be (Ps. 23)? That rod, symbolically, taps us with the blood that sets us apart. It disciplines us, and then separates us from the crowd. It measures us against the standard at last.



Exodus 22:29 begins with the phrase, "Thou shalt not delay," suggesting that some temptation to be tardy in tithe paying might be predicted. Since it was not allowed, no provision was made for withholding the tithe. Centuries later, Malachi records (Mal. 3:8) the question "*Will a man rob God?*" Verse 9 pronounces a curse, or consequences, on the whole nation for having robbed God in tithes and offerings. Conversely, verses 10 and 11 promise a blessing upon the ones who are faithful in tithes and offerings.

In addition to the tithing, which followed the birthing among the herds and flocks,

and the harvest times of olive, grain, and grape, there was appointed a year of harvest for which another tithe was gathered each third year. The third year tithe (Deut. 14:28, 29; 26:12) was collected for the poor. Some might think of the needy as being so by their own negligence, excess, or foolishness; that was no excuse to withhold aid in the spirit of generosity. No judgment was to be made as to worthiness. All were brethren, and God had been merciful to the ones so blessed.

If one felt he could not pay his tithe in kind, -perhaps due to poor health resulting in a late harvest, or some major catastrophe or setback, -he could add twenty percent and pay the tithe in another method (Lev. 27:31). Some have misapplied this provision to cover tardiness, but the intent of the scripture is a question of how the tithe would be paid, not when. For example, if a farmer had more land planted in barley than in wheat, he could use some of his stored barley to pay his tithe at the wheat harvest, but he must bring twenty percent more than the tithe required. This regulation applied only to farm and garden produce; livestock could not be so redeemed, or substituted.

As for the location of the ingathered tithe, the central sanctuary was the usual destination. There the gathered tithe would be distributed among the priests and their families (since it was a statute that they would have no inheritance, Num. 18:23), and in the third year, apportioned also to the widows, fatherless, strangers, and others in need. For families who lived too far from the central sanctuary, usually at Jerusalem, to bring their wagon-loads of harvested produce in time for Pentecost or Feast of Tabernacles, the family could join other families nearby in requesting a priest to officiate in the local community. Wherever they served, the tithe could be paid to the local priest and a feast enjoyed with the family who had provided it (verses 15-19).

This convenience did not negate the requirement that all attend the yearly feasts at Jerusalem, but it did make the trip possible for those living in the Far North, who, with a caravan of animals and wagons of produce, might not have made the journey in time for the festivals. In the later years of National Israel, Bethel and Gilgal were sites where tithes could be brought, according to Amos 4:4. But that was all long ago.

Because there has never been a point in time when our Elohim has concluded that His struggling people no longer needed the reminders, amplifications, and safeguards of His Holy will and purpose, we now seek to make direct application to our understanding of tithing. That the blessing is still for God's people who faithfully follow this statute is clear from the words of Jesus, "*These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,*" Luke 11:42. Let us consider, then, what we ought not to leave undone.

Today, the tenth of one's increase is still collected for the support of the ministry. The leaders in spiritual Israel still designate places where the tithe is to be stored for distribution as needed to pay the salaries of ministers and salaried teachers. The original pattern has been closely followed with a few exceptions. Wanting to be good stewards (Matt. 25:14-30), and having understood the Parable of the Talents, the leaders determined that investing the "stored increase" in stocks and bonds would fulfill the Old Testament injunction while adding the apparent meaning from the parable. Here is where applications of the principle have been adjusted to fit the times.

Human nature being what it is, however, the investing soon became a business, with financial advisors, brokers, and corporate officers. The sacred gifts to God became pawns for "high-fashion gambling." Many of the little people in the pews became worried.

Misapplying the temple experience, where Jesus commended a poor widow for giving all her money to God (Matt. 12:42,43), many members continued to loyally commit their tithe to the general collection. Even when staunch believers knew that "present truth" had disappeared from the weekly pulpit, these honest members trustingly placed their gifts to the Almighty in the hands of errant stewards. A few dusted their history books, writings of Ellen White, and commentaries. This is what they found:

*It has been presented to me for years that **my tithe was to be appropriated by myself** to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient properly to support their families. When my attention was called to aged ministers, white or black, it was my special duty to investigate into their necessities and supply their needs (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 2, page 99, emphasis supplied).*

Among the hundred and fifty references to leaders binding the consciences of members, or members yielding up their responsibility, searching, concerned members found these statements to be typical.

*The man who magnifies his own office in working in any line to bind about the conscience of another, be he president of the General Conference, president of a small conference, or the elder, or deacon, or lay member of a church; he is out of God's line (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 5, page 90).*

*It is selfishness also that prompts the feeling, on the part of the workers, that their judgment must be most reliable, and their methods of labor the best, or that it is their privilege in any way to bind the conscience of another. Such was the spirit of the Jewish leaders in Christ's day (Jehovah Is Our King, page 25).*

To turn over our increase to be appropriated where our tithe is most needed, is in harmony with Scripture. But, when one suspects that God's money is being misappropriated, or placed in the hands of those who speculate for profit, it may be time for the above counsel to apply. Money has become a problem for the church. Where and when to give the tithe is a point of much discussion, and even disillusionment, among conscientious Adventists.

Actually, the tithe statute was originated by Yahweh to support those who taught *Torah*. Any teacher who did not teach all the oracles of God was regarded as an apostate, and unworthy of this financial provision. The tithe was sacred, and its use was sacred.

One may conclude that tithe is just as sacred today as in the day it was first instituted. As with Israel of old, we are to support the worldwide ministry of the Word, which still includes the *Torah*, since all has not been fulfilled (Matthew 5:18). The expenses of the local facility should come from offerings given beyond the tithe, and a second tithe should be gathered for the widows and orphans, the poor and needy within the church family.

This latter provision has been lost through the centuries of growing greed and dying generosity. Speculate if you will, the blessed results of the third-year tithe set apart for the needs of the widows and aged among us. What if this special tithe were re-establish among God's people? Would any harm come from it? Could any benefit come from returning to the old paths? -in terms of recognition of the sovereignty of Yahweh? -in terms of unity and commonality of purpose?

Nutritious, prepared food would be delivered to the homes of shut-in's. Those on a tight budget could have their car repaired or their washing machine replaced. While we may imagine the abuses of this tithe, let us envision the generosity the Loving Lord must have had in mind when He gave it. We have too long allowed custom to control conscience when the needs of others are concerned. We have too long pushed responsibility over to the state, or to the needy ones themselves.

Tithe belongs to God, but is trusted to us, His stewards, to show and honor His property rights. It is a matter of love and loyalty to give first of our monthly increase to Him. He supplies a blessing or a curse (loss of blessing) to match the spirit of our gift. The blessing bestowed may, or may not be monetary, nevertheless, The promise is a sure principle of God's care (Phil. 4:19).



**Israel was not to give a gift unto the Lord that was defective or inferior; that was an abomination, Deut. 17:1.**

Although related to the above discussion of tithes and offerings, this statute explains an aspect of giving not yet presented. When an Israelite selected from the flocks and herds the animals to be given as tithe, he was to follow a random selection (by the red on the rod); this meant that some animals selected could be defective and weak. They were all gathered and presented as an "acceptable sacrifice" unto the Lord. But when a gift was made to the Lord in generosity and thanksgiving, that gift must have no flaw.

Spiritually, the principle is to make the gift worthy of the One to Whom it is presented, namely, our Elohim. This principle is born out in the New Testament when Annanias and Sapphira withheld some pledged gift money (Acts 5:4), and were condemned with the words, *"Thou has not lied unto men, but unto God."* Whatever we give, as a thank offering, i.e., let it be from total commitment, honesty, and love.

**If an Israelite cursed God, he must bear his own sin. If he blasphemed the name of the Lord, he must be put to death, Lev. 24:15, 16. Never profane the name Yahweh, Lev. 19:12.**

In the New King James Version, Leviticus 24:15 reads, *"Whosoever curses his God shall bear his sin."* Verse 16 continues, *"And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death."* Why does cursing God bring an unspecified punishment, and blaspheming the name of Yahweh result in death? What is the difference between cursing God and blaspheming His name?

Strong's Concordance reveals the degrees of difference and similarities:

Curse (v) - (H) To recede, to be vile, to disdain, despise

(G) To curse, malign, speak evil of	
Blaspheme (v) -	(H) To bore (a hole), to pierce
	(G) Insult, slander, defame, revile

Actually, the context of this judgment (statute) answers the above questions (Lev. 24). An argument (fight) had taken place between an Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel. And the young man blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed (vs. 11). The incident was reported to Moses, who had the young man brought in for questioning. In the end (vs. 14), the young man who had cursed Yahweh was stoned.

Having seen the death decree carried out against blasphemers, the Hebrew people refused to speak the name of God at all. Instead of reverencing His name and using it in holy worship and adoration, they worshipped foreign gods and dropped the use of the holy name. They would easier avoid His name than revere it. Consequently, throughout Scripture, wherever the name LORD appears, we now know that these capital letters signal the omission of that most sacred name, "Yhwh," or as the name has come from the Hebrew transcription, "Yahweh," the Most High Almighty. (See The Scriptures, page 1217.)

Today there is a movement throughout this land and beyond, to restore the holy name of our Elohim. Not only His holy name will be respected and revered by His Remnant in the last remnants of time, but also His Oracles -all His commands, judgments, and statutes - will be treasured in the hearts of those who make up that responsive remnant.

There are several ways one may profane the holy name of our God. One obvious way to break the third commandment, which this statute protects, is by claiming to be spiritually minded when one is quite worldly minded -most of the time. Another way this command is disregarded is by using any of God's names or characteristics in cursing or jesting. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Matthew 12:34).

Notice the NIV's rendering of Matthew 12:31-37:

*And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*

So, the Old Testament statute is taught as a New Testament truth. The death

decree on the heads of those who blaspheme away the Holy Spirit (their only means of salvation), will still be executed by a sorrowful Saviour on Judgment Day.

**An Israelite must be aggressive to overthrow the Satanic influences and religions in the world. No tolerance was to be shown, Ex. 23:24 (See also Ex. 34:13; Num. 33:52). Destroy their places of worship on every hill and under every tree. Break down their altars and pillars, and burn their groves, Deut. 12:2,3.**

This war against Satanic counterfeits and masterpieces of deception is not a physical war, as bin Laden's terrorists would have the world believe. Ironically, the Koran contains similar passages to this statute, which taken literally, have spawned the Al-Qaeda, or Holy War, by which bin Laden and his Islamic devotees have determined to stamp out other religions. Whereas Israel was to stamp out other gods in their own land, Islam has determined to stamp out other religions in its neighbors' lands. God's purpose for the aggression was to keep the religion of Israel pure within their borders, not to force their religion into territories beyond.

Let us go directly to the application of this statute, seeing that the physical and metaphysical fronts of this battle will be contested in the near future by He whose vesture reads: *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. Our duties in this final confrontation are to be watchmen on the walls, to warn the lethargic, to defend the faith, to reverence His Holiness, and to unmask the hidden agenda bringing about denominational destruction and national ruin. It is dangerous to tolerate compromise in this time of limited probation.

In the hallway of my home hangs a homemade plaque, the letters calligraphed over a splash of lightly tinted water paint. It has hung in our home for nearly thirty years, and never have I found its message more needful than now.

*Those who come up to every point, and stand every test and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain and thus be fitted for translation, (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, page 187).*

Will we stand every test without compromise? Or will we rationalize each situation in terms of personal reputation, love of ease, and peace at any price? We have been warned that we are repeating the history of Israel. As it was then, so it is now. Consider the reaction of the listeners to the stirring words of the True Messiah, and test your own heart by it:

*The people had been deeply moved by the words of Christ. The divine beauty of the principles of truth attracted them; and Christ's solemn warnings had come to them as the voice of the heart-searching God. His words had struck at the very root of their former ideas and opinions; to*

*obey His teaching would require a change in all their habits of thought and action. It would bring them into collision with their religious teachers; for it would involve the overthrow of the whole structure which for generations the rabbis had been rearing. Therefore, while the hearts of the people responded to His words, few were ready to accept them as the guide of life, (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, page 147, Emphasis supplied).*

Disheartening? Perhaps. But, it is nonetheless our holy mission to *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins* (Isa. 58:1). The same principle is born out in the New Testament:

*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).*

Today the strongholds are not so often found on the hillsides, but in the hearts occupied by enchantments with the world, a savage regard for money, and self-sufficiency. Among us are the “double-minded.” For these we “cry aloud.”

**Israel must not enter a covenant with the heathen, or with their gods, Ex. 23:32; 34:10-16.**

At the time Israel was entering Canaan, treaties between nations seeking peace always contained the authority of their gods. Just as Sabbath-keeping worshipers recognize the elements of God's seal in the fourth commandment of His Everlasting Covenant, so the heathen nations drew up their covenants with recognition of their gods. Thus, it was impossible for Israel to enter a covenant for peace, security, or other support, with a nation without it recognizing their gods.

Our Omniscient Elohim, knowing the end from the beginning, warned Israel of the dangers of making covenants with the heathen and their gods. The sad truth is that, after all the divine providence and astonishing miracles, after all the evidence of His tender, loving care, Israel walked in the statutes of the heathen and made covenants with their gods (2 Kings 17:7-16)!

Will we do any better than they? Will we void all contracts with non-believers that compromise the righteous relationship with Jehovah? Or, will we put our jobs, our personal need for income to pay our bills, on a priority status above the "thus saith the Lord"? May we determine to choose, the "narrow-thinking" path, that pathway that makes no provisions for popularity or prosperity at the expense of principle.

In the broad road, all are occupied with their persons, their dress, and the pleasures along the way. They indulge freely in hilarity and glee, and think not of their journey's end, or the certain destruction at the end of the path...

*I saw many traveling in this broad road who had the words written upon them: "Dead to the world. The end of all things is at hand. Be ye also ready." They looked just like all the vain ones around them... There conversation was just like that of the gay, thoughtless ones around them; but they would occasionally point with great satisfaction to the letters on their garments...*

*I saw that many who profess to believe the truth for these last days think it strange that the children of Israel murmured as they journeyed; that after the wonderful dealings of God with them, they should be so ungrateful as to forget what He had done for them. Said the angel: "Ye have done worse than they" (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, pages 128, 129).*

For the Remnant, the "*Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers*" (2 Cor. 6:14) principle still prevails. God's people guard against personal alliances with partners revering a different god.

Israel must utterly drive out the heathen, lest by living among them, the heathen would become a source of temptation to Israel to follow these foreign gods, Ex. 23:33; Num. 33:52; Deut. 7:4-6.

By now, Dear Reader, it must be clear that our Holy God seeks to renew His Covenant with the remnant of the Last Generation. He seeks a people who will come apart and enjoy fellowship with Him more than friendship with the World. He seeks a people who will find a sanctuary away from the artificial, the ego-centered, and frenzied roulette with Time.

We have been given counsel to live in the country, away from the lure of sinful pleasures. Have we followed it? We have heard the counsel to raise our children where they may learn to enjoy industry and nature. But have we listened?



Televisions in many Christian homes may rise up in witness against this generation. For example, on February 17, 2002, KGO-Radio reported in the morning news the results of research, which linked cigarette smoking with television viewing. A direct correlation was

found between the hours children spend watching smokers on television and the number of children and teens taking up smoking. And what of the dress standards, or lack of them,

displayed on TV? The entire philosophy of television entertainment is adverse to appreciation of holiness. Will we, today, drive out the heathen from our homes, or will we allow them to live among us, ever a source of temptation to follow the gods of this world?

**Israel must show reverence for, and in, God's sanctuary, Lev. 19:30.**

When I was a child, my grandmother often volunteered to clean our small, country church. At times I helped her after school, as much as a six-year-old could help. Even if I had been wearing slacks and a sweater to school, when I accompanied my grandmother to the church, I had to first change into a clean dress. "This is God's house," my grandmother would remind me. "Even when we come to work here, we must talk softly, be clean, and reverent. And, we don't run in God's Sanctuary!" She would add with a note of warning.

Many of us who have grown up "in the Faith," remember the JMV Pledge and Law, which we memorized in elementary school. It ended with "Walk softly in the sanctuary," and "Go on God's errands." Are elementary school children still taught this Pledge and Law? Do their parents follow it?

For many, reverence implies solemnness. Some other churches have, for decades, "whooped and hollered" in their worship services. They proclaimed the same Saviour, and they seemed to be having fun -"rejoicing," they called it. They brought in nightclub instruments and singers to draw the youth. The youth came, so we tried it, too. "Your church is too dead!" the World complained. So nominal Adventist churches invited the World to enliven them.

**An Ammorite or Moabite could not enter the house of worship because he had caused much trouble for Israel, and had hired Balaam to curse Israel. From that time, ten generations must be counted before anyone of that nationality could participate in the sanctuary worship of Yahweh again, Deut. 23:3-6; See Neh. 13:1-8; 2:10. See also Ruth 4:21.**

Summarizing the point, there were four groups who were excluded from the sanctuary worship for ten generations: Those males who had been mutilated, children of illegitimate relations, Ammorites and Moabites. Having discussed the "ten generations" aspect with the statute about "bastards" banned for the same length of time, we will here consider the background of the Ammorites and the Moabites to recognize what brought this prohibition upon them.

North of the Dead Sea, between the Arnon and Jabbok Rivers, lived the Ammonites. They were the descendants of Lot by his younger daughter (Gen. 19:38), and although they did allow the Israelites to pass through their land in route to Canaan, what they did later resulted in the judgment brought against them. It may be noted here that this

statute must have been added to the *Torah* after the entrance into Canaan, since the experience, which triggered the ban, happened in the time of the judges.

Joshua had died (Judges 2:7-9); so had all the elders who had seen the miracles of Yahweh. Almost immediately after Joshua's burial, Israel fell into idolatry. Thus, began Israel's sad history with their neighbors. The sons of Ammon, -who, by the end of Moses' life had displaced the Rephaim (giants). These had once frightened the Israel's spies. Now Ammon took possession of the land at the headwaters of the Jabbok.

We first learn of the Ammonites' hostility toward Israel when, recorded in Judges 3:12,13, they joined the Moabites to come against Jericho. From then on, the Ammonites were avowed enemies of Israel, causing them much heartache throughout the years of the kings. David took their capital city during his reign, but Israel continued to experience surprise attacks and raids (See 2 Sam. 10; 12:26-31), according to the Bible record. Even after the exile years, we read of the trouble caused by the descendants of Ammon. Tobiah, an Ammonite, was excluded from the temple (Neh. 2:10; 13:1-8) because of this statute.

Our statute under consideration above contains a big hint, as to the reason the Moabites were considered enemies of Israel. The story of Balaam conspiring with the Moabites to curse Israel (Num. 22:4-7) is a familiar one, even to Adventist children. Moab, the brother nation of the Ammonites (Gen. 19:37, 38), settled the southeastern sector of trans-Jordan where the brook Zered entered the Dead Sea. This put their land in Israel's route to Palestine. The Israelites requested permission to cross their land, but were refused (Judges 11:17). Nonetheless, because these nations were relatives of Israel's ancestors, Moses was not allowed to attack them (See Deut. 2:4, 5, 9, 19).

The Moabites, in the period of the early judges, took Jericho, the "city of palms," from Israel and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years. At the end of this period of time, Ehud, from the tribe of Benjamin, assassinated Eglon and drove the Moabites back to where they came from, delivering Israel (Judges 3:12-30) from years of servitude to Moab.

In later years, Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, went in the power of God against Moab with its compatriot armies of Ammonites and Edomites, in an effort to free Israel from their tyranny. Jehovah fought for Israel causing the hostile nations to turn against their own (2 Chron. 20:1-30) men. To the time of Elisha's life (2 Kings 13:20), Moabite raiders continued to ambush, rob, and pilfer the land during the times of grain harvests and festivals. The Moabites remained enemies of Israel and their God until Moab was conquered by the Assyrians, and later the Romans. Moab's identity had been completely lost before the first century BC.

Are there people, nations, or religions that should be excluded from the congregation today? This a question you will need to answer for yourself in light of the principle found in this statute. With the New Age Theosophy -Theosophy is a philosophy about god to replace theology- has come an insane tolerance of evil and an inordinate pressure for "brotherhood" among all creeds and religions. To show loyalty to the God of Heaven to the extent of this statute will bring the believer into a life-threatening

confrontation in the near future. Hints of new behavioral labels already have begun. “Under God” in our Pledge of Allegiance has come under question. Where is it all going? It is headed toward the New World Order, we have been told. On the Plain of Durah, three Hebrews of the Remnant stood alone. Will you?

When a religion and its proponents have terrorized the Protestant faith and people for centuries, it is incomprehensible to see that power's representatives occupying positions of authority in our colleges, hospitals, and sometimes Sabbath pulpits! Why are we, as a denomination, so eager to reach across the abyss and clasp the hand of Rome, when we KNOW her only objective is to ultimately conquer and control! Why did our delegates stand and applaud, in great wonder and admiration, when the Roman cardinal paraded the Pope's standard down the aisle and planted it in the midst of the congregation at General Conference in Switzerland (Remember?).

Now, as so long ago, the principle of this statute is to hedge God's people from the “hellish torch” the servant of the Lord warned against.

*Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan. If doubts and unbelief are cherished, the faithful ministers will be removed from the people who think they know so much. “If thou hadst known,” said Christ, “even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes,” (Testimonies to Ministers, page 409).*

No Israelite was allowed to make, for his or her own personal incense, the fragrance used as incense in the sanctuary; it was holy. To use it for a common purpose would indicate disrespect for the things of God, Ex. 30:37,38. They were reminded to keep distinctly separate the holy from the common, Lev. 10:10.

If a church member were to make a copy of the communion table with its chalices and special silver plates for the bread and wine, having these sacred (set apart for holy use) things so replicated would incense the congregation. The reminder to keep separate the things of God from the things of secular life (Lev. 10:10), comes at the end of a discourse concerning the swift and terrible punishment which resulted when Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord.

*The use of fermented wine caused Nadab and Abihu to confuse the sacred and the common, and death was their penalty. After this, severe restriction was placed on those connected with the sacred service. They were prohibited from touching wine or using grapes in any way, that they might avoid the consequences of becoming familiar with fermented wine, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 10, page 200).*

It would profit each of us to prayerfully consider the ways we may be tempted to mingle the common with the sacred, in our daily lives, and on the Sabbath. Seeking lawyers to settle church matters, keeping Sunday in place of the holy Sabbath, and using theatrical devices to gain an audience for Jesus are three of many ways some may be offering "strange fire," mingling the sacred and the secular. By so doing we diminish the sacred, leveling the lofty to common placed.

*God's people should stand as a distinct, holy people, separate from the world. But the Lord has been greatly dishonored because they have consulted lawyers in regard to church matters. They have lost their spiritual discernment, and in the place of using the sacred fire of God's own kindling, they have used the common fire... (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 13, page 179).*

*Those who ignore the Lord's Sabbath to keep holy the first day of the week, offer strange fire to God... They have taken a common day, upon which God has placed no sanctity, and have clothed it with sacred prerogatives... (Signs of the Times, Mar. 31, 1898).*

*Those who make use of devices that are theatrical in nature, to hold the attention of the people, lose the realization of the presence of Christ... They mingle the common with the sacred... (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 9 page 287).*

Although the artifacts may have been placed in a museum, we may see that the issues of mixing the common with the sacred are ever a temptation today, unless we ask and receive discernment from the Holy Spirit. As Nadab and Abihu could not discern because of intoxication, so many cannot discern because of self-indulgence. We must guard our minds lest physical or mental choices rob us of our ability to discern.

*Self must die. The appetites and passions must be brought into strict conformity to the Word of God. Selfish indulgence is weakening physical, mental, and moral power, so that there is no distinction between the sacred and the common, (Signs of the Times, Dec. 23, 1897).*

No one was allowed to touch an animal which had been offered as a sacrifice, Lev. 7:18-21

As Israel was admonished to "touch not the unclean thing," so they were instructed to touch not that which was holy (set apart for holy use). It was to be food for those who were set apart, or burned as a sacrifice to their God. Like the statute above, this prohibition aimed at distinguishing between the common and the sacred. Whereas the former pointed out the necessity to keep objects set apart for holy use, this statute adds the dimension of sacred office. Those set apart for sacred duties have privileges and

responsibilities, which must be recognized as being holy.

*In the minds of many there are no more sacred thoughts connected with the house of God than with the most common place. Some will enter the place of worship with their hats on, in soiled, dirty clothes...Ministers themselves need to elevate their ideas, to have finer susceptibilities in regard to it, (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, page 498).*

*There are some of our ministers engaged in active service who have some sense of the importance of the work, but there is a large number who are handling sacred truth about as they would engage in any common business, (Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce, page 195).*

*Ministers, by carelessly introducing the name of God into their conversation, may teach lessons of irreverence. By mingling His holy name with common matters, they show that they are not spiritually minded; for they mingle the sacred and the common, (Sermons and Talks, Vol.2, page 185).*

*But things that are wrong often transpire in the sacred desk. One minister conversing with another in the desk before the congregation, laughing and appearing to have no burden of the work, or lacking a solemn sense of his sacred calling, dishonors the truth and brings the sacred down upon the low level of common things, (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 2, page 76).*

There are many more statements to be searched out, which will put that which is sacred in proper perspective in our thinking. May the reader, minister and layman alike, study to find the truth that has been obscured by secular mindedness.

*"Every ordinance of the church [baptism has been the subject] should be so conducted as to be uplifting in its influence. Nothing is to be made common or cheap, or placed on a level with common things. Our churches need to be educated to greater respect and reverence for the sacred service of God (Evangelism, page 314).*

How often do we find the sacred (set apart for holy use) pulpit used to announce social events, share finance committee reports, or discuss nominating or other committee actions? To some of our elders any action having to do with the church is the same as another; it is all just part of the machinery of the church. This should not be, for it is filling time with the common, as if the congregation could turn on spiritual preparedness at the sound of a chord on the organ. "Our people need to be educated to greater respect and reverence for the sacred service of God," is the admonition to pastors. Pastors need to learn and teach the difference between common and sacred. Everything associated with the service, in preparation for it, and during it, will then be on a higher plain.

Any woman found to be a witch must be put to death, Ex. 22:18. Witchcraft was an abomination to God, Lev. 20:27. God's people were not to have recourse with magicians or spirit mediums, Lev. 19:31. Anyone who did, would be cut him off from His people, Lev. 20:6.

The first use of the term, "familiar spirits" appears in Job 32:19, translated "skin bottles, as the Hebrew word, *'oboth* meant literally. The SDA Bible Commentary suggests that the word came to be associated with spirit mediums probably because of their "unnatural, indistinct, and sonorous quality of voice" ( Vol. 1, page 791), similar to that produced when blowing in a bottle. Similarly, the word for "mutter" in Isa. 8:19 can mean to whisper, growl, or murmur. In the Isaiah 8 passage, the other word that is rather obscure in the King James Version is the word, "peep." A clearer translation of this scripture would be to "mumble and murmur." In each of these warnings against turning to familiar spirits, the Scripture ends with an appeal to trust Yahweh for guidance and insight.



Necromancy, or witchcraft, was strictly forbidden in Israel (See 1 Sam. 28:3). Yet, in rebellion to the "Thus saith the Lord," on the subject, various kings turned to spirit "counselors" during their reign. The nations around seemed to advantage their rule by the aid of spirit counselors. It was a very real temptation for the kings of Israel and Judah to do the same. Witchcraft was one of the sins of Manasseh. It was later prohibited by Josiah (2 Kings 21:6; 23:24).

Witches and wizards had been common in Egypt (Isa. 19:3) and were regularly sought in heathen nations such as Babylon (Dan. 2:2; Isa. 47:9). They were to be put to death if found in Israel (Lev. 20:27). Witches were to be put to death when found in Israel (Lev. 20:27). In the story of Nehemiah's return from Babylonian captivity, this was one of the sins he had to deal with, according to Malachi 3:5. Can it be a temptation to God's people today?

Jesus met witchcraft in the first century A.D. and cast out the spirits. The Early Christian church met it (Acts 8:4-11; 13:6-8), and warned members that sorcery was among the vilest of sins (Gal. 5:20). Those who are lured into witchcraft, channeling, fortune telling, and other spiritualistic phenomena will share the same fate with those who practice it and profit from it. All spiritualistic phenomena is born of Satan, our Lord's archenemy. All who think they know God, but then play with ouija boards, for example, know nothing as they ought. Their end will be in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8), if the practice is not forsaken and repented of.

The statute against witchcraft, in all its forms, is for all curious ones who would like to know their future while knowing their God. To seek knowledge of the future is an effort

to control the future. We are not to know what tomorrow will bring; we are to know the One who gives us a tomorrow. Jehovah says, "Know Me, in Whom is life eternal" (See John 17:3). So, very little has changed. The statute is the same, and the punishment is ultimately the same: Death to those who practice witchcraft, or seek answers (as did Saul in 1 Samuel 28) from fortunetellers, or other spirit mediums. Will not a people seek their God?

**No one is to use enchantment, nor observe "lucky" times (astrology), Lev.19:26.**



Let the reader observe, by the number of statutes which prescribe our relationship to our Heavenly Father, that our God is a jealous God. He is visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate [Him]; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love [Him], and keep [His] commandments (Ex 20:5,6).

This statute forbids curiosity about astrology. These "dividers of the heavens" (Isa. 47:13) chart the zodiac to determine one's destiny, or foretell events on earth. Like the statute above, this behavior shows distrust of our Omniscient God, while placing interest that may potentially grow into trust of other powers. Any dabbling into stargazing, or signs of the zodiac, is an abomination unto our God. Let us, today, strengthen our dependence upon the promises in Scripture, and scorn the appeals to our carnal curiosity.

**All the firstborn belonged to God, Num. 3:13, 40. Only the Levites could substitute for a firstborn son, Num. 3:14, 41, and become the redemption for another's firstborn, Num. 3:45-51.**

While the term "firstborn" may, in a figurative sense, refer to the rank, strength, or pre-eminence in character or position, in this statute the meaning is literal. God has placed a special importance upon the firstborn of man and beast. In fact, the first part of anything and everything we own belongs to Yahweh. Let us follow the principle as God gave it.

The first literal use of "firstborn," occurs in Genesis 10:15-19, where the Bible tells us the origin of the Canaanites was through Sidon, Canaan's firstborn son. From the Exodus, we find the first use of the term in a figurative sense: *Israel is my son, even my firstborn* (Ex. 4:22), Moses was instructed to tell Pharaoh. In the next verse (23), we have the combining of the two meanings in parallel thought. God tells Pharaoh, "If you don't let my firstborn son (figurative) go, I am going to slay your firstborn son (literal)."

As soon as the Children of Israel were out of Egypt, God gave on that very day (Ex. 12:51) the command to set apart for holy purpose all firstborn among man and beast (13:2). Since only the males had been in danger from the tenth plague in Egypt, this ordinance applied to sons only. Since the firstborn sons had been redeemed by the blood on the doorpost (12:13), They belonged, henceforth, to Jehovah. Later, the firstborn of livestock were, also, to be redeemed by a purchase price.

The law of the firstborn was amended at Sinai when the sons of Levi responded to the ultimatum, "Who is on the Lord's side, come to me" (Ex. 32:26). Then in Numbers (3:12, 13, 40-51), we read where the Lord appointed the Levites to belong to Him for a "set apart" purpose in place of the firstborn sons of every tribe. At Sinai God told Moses to number the firstborn sons, one month and older, and replace them man for man with the sons of Levi. But there were not enough sons of Levi to match the total number of firstborn sons from all the other tribes. So, the remainder were redeemed by five shekels of silver each, about ten dollars. This redemption tax was subsequently paid on the eighth day, at the time the son was circumcised (Ex. 22:29-31).

The role of the firstborn was at Sinai slightly altered. Thereafter, someone else (a Levite) would redeem the firstborn sons, and stand before God in their place. The laws of the birthright still applied. Indeed, the eldest son still had the pre-eminence in the family in terms of responsibilities to parents and younger siblings, including spiritual encouragement; but these sons were allowed to have their own occupations, since the Levites replaced them in the sanctuary services.

From the literal to the figurative, from physical birth to spiritual rebirth, we may see the awesome mercy of our Saviour. Here is how the story might read spiritually. At Mount Sinai, when we were shown our sin, a Brother stepped up near to God. Many died that day for lack of repentance. Those who confessed and forsook their idolatry would thereafter have a Brother in the Sanctuary for them. We may now live our lives ever aware that we have been redeemed, for had we tried to fill our obligation as "firstborn," we would have perished in the Holy Presence.

More wonderful than human words can describe is the picture of the marvelous plan of redemption rehearsed in the daily and yearly services in Israel. As part of spiritual Israel today, we may stand in reverent awe at the representations of God's unfathomable love in the Passover, the dedication of the firstborn, and the transfer of obligations to the Brother who stands before God for you and me.

*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God (See Micah 6:6-8).*

An Israelite must never allow their offspring to be sacrificed to Moloch, nor, in any other way, allow God's name to be profaned, Lev.18:21; Deut.12:31. If one was to be aware of a neighbor having given his child to Moloch (any foreign god), the one who knew it must report the abomination so that that man could be punished. If the witness did not report it, God promised to set His face against that family to destroy it, as well, Lev. 20:4, 5.

Here we face another facet of the "you are your brother's keeper" principle. Don't give your children as sacrifices to foreign gods, is one part. The other aspect of this cluster of statutes is that one must "tell" if someone was seen doing it. First of all, what kind of parents would kill their own child, for any purpose? And to think that they did it to be like the heathen! It is incomprehensible. But, secondly, if such a despicable crime was committed, the witness must "snitch." Furthermore, if one heard that someone in their town was following other gods, serving the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, the hearer must investigate to see if the rumor were true. If it was, it must be reported and those wicked persons must be stoned, as explained in Chapter 9, "at the testimony of two witnesses" (Deut.17:6). That was then...

This is now. Speculate what would happen within the Church today if each member believed this statute applied to each individual church member. It is difficult to even imagine it; it seems so alien to the reality of the Christian life. Dare to take a closer look. First the simple, direct application, or implication:

- Don't allow your children to choose their own religion.
- Don't exchange your children for prestige or power.
- Don't compromise your children's salvation for your reputation with the neighbors.
- If you see a church member doing any of the above, report it for church discipline.
- If you are aware of a church member delving into astrology, report it to the church board for discipline.
- If you see your whole church following astrology, or following the icons of the world, you must report it to be dealt with by a nearby loyal church body.
- Anyone who fails to care enough about his brother and sister in Christ does not care about Christ either, and will have part in the lake of fire.

What would happen to the "judge not" rule in light of the above summary? Is Christ's injunction to "judge not" in conflict with this statute? Certainly not! Christ told us "by their fruits ye shall know them," (Matt. 7:16, 20). We ARE to discern sin. It is not our job to determine someone's eternal destiny, however. The act of prayfully pointing out our brother's roadblocks to salvation demonstrates true Christian love, when done lovingly.

Unfortunately, the term “Christian love” has come to mean “tolerance” in the new order of religion accepted by most SDA’s. This may be the outgrowth of an inaccurate application of the “Judge not, lest you be judged” injunction.

The eighteenth chapter of Matthew contains light on the subject; principally, what would Jesus do? Here are the steps from Matthew 18:15-18, showing our responsibility.

1. Go to the rebellious one personally, alone. If he won't listen...
- 3) Take someone with you and go back again. Prayerfully entreat the errant one. But, if he still wants to argue...
- 4) Present the rebellion to the church body. Let the whole church surround the erring one with loving appeals. And, if he is still defiant...
- 5) Cast him out of your congregation, and the action will stand in the books of heaven.

As well meaning as the church leaders have been in carrying out this godly order, it is rarely used for what it was intended. It has been easier to discipline difference than the disease of sin. As long as the wanderer wanted to be on the church books, he or she has remained. Today, one may work on the Sabbath, eat in a restaurant after church, privately drink and smoke, use recreational drugs, have an illicit affair, send his children to the schools of the heathen, attend the theaters, go biking, sailing, diving, and mountain climbing on the Sabbath. Indeed, one may do almost anything one may think of -as long as the person can match the behavior with a plausible justification. And who would dare to draw it to the compromiser's attention, lest the messenger be stoned! Situation ethics prevail; tolerance is in vogue.

What can we do then? First of all, we must distinguish between “sins;” God did. It was not the error of personal ignorance, weakness, or judgment, which was to be brought to the attention of the congregation. Personal support and gentle instruction would best fit the situation, as the Saviour used with the adulteress. No, the statute addressed blasphemous rebellion against the Almighty, worshiping heathen idols, and committing immoral acts under the guise of worship, while proclaiming the name of Yahweh.

In principle, the statute has remained. Nowhere in Scripture is there release from altruistic concern for a spiritual brother. What some call Christian love (tolerance for Biblically defined sin), is actually spiritual apathy; and apathy is the antithesis of love. This statute commissions us to go after the backslider; God did.

**When a man or a woman took a vow to be dedicated wholly to the Lord, that individual**

vowed to eat or drink nothing that came from the vine (Num. 6:4). No razor must touch his/her hair (vs. 5), and the person must stay away from funerals and any dead body, even of a parent or child (vs. 7). If any of those things happen without his/her consent, the Nazarite must end his/her time of vowed dedication. (See all of Numbers 6.)

If a man made a vow (i.e., Jacob's vow at Bethel, Gen. 28:20; Jephthah's vow, Judges 11:30, 39), he must keep it (Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23). Fulfilling the vow may take longer than the consecrated one expected, but he or she must fulfill the vow regardless of time (vs. 23). Not all vows were Nazarite vows, but all were to be regarded just as sacredly.

The nazarite vow, although not more sacred than other vows, were more publicly restrictive than others. Some confusion has been attached to the word "nazarite." It has sometimes been misapplied to those native to the city of Nazareth. Consequently, Bible readers have sometimes come to the conclusion that Jesus was a Nazarite because He grew up in Nazareth. A clearer spelling of the word would be "nazirite," which means "to separate." In Bible versions using this corrected spelling, confusion is avoided. However one spells the word, the Nazirite vow was a consecration vow that carried certain physical signs. The person making the vow must not:

- eat or drink the fruit of the vine
- get a haircut
- touch a dead body

Nazarite vows, at least the ones recorded for our understanding, were made by parents for their expected sons. The Bible records few examples of people having taken this vow. The most commonly known is the story of Samson. We read that an angel appeared to Samson's mother with instruction to raise her child as a Nazarite (Judges 13:7). Since she had not conceived this son yet, she was told to abstain from strong drink and unhealthy foods (vs. 4). Thus, there is some evidence that Samson's mother lived by the vow as she raised her son. We also see

that Yahweh was concerned about prenatal influences, for beyond the scope of symbology is this intriguing cause and effect relationship between the prenatal care and grooming a son to become Israel's deliverer:

*Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of*



*the Philistines (Verses 4, 5).*

If a woman made a vow, that vow was subject to the approval of her father or husband, Num. 30:3-8, 10-15. But, if the woman was divorced or widowed, her vow stood binding on her soul, Num. 30:9.

Since Samson's mother had to have her husband's approval in order for her to keep a vow (see chapter 3, and Numbers 30), this mother-to-be sought her husband to tell him her exciting experience. Manoah gave his permission only after he himself had spoken with the messenger from God: *And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass (Judges 13:11, 12).*

There are only three recorded Bible characters who took the Nazirite vow for life: Samson, Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11), and John the Baptist. In each of these cases, the parents made the vows for the child. Interestingly, the vow to be a Nazarite was quite similar to the requirements for a high priest. Note this list in Lev. 21:10-12:

- He must avoid touching the dead
- He must marry a virgin
- He must not shave his head, nor his beard
- He must refrain from strong drink

In each of these men -Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist -we find a singling out for a great responsibility. Each was selected before birth for his task. None had anything to do with the choice, but each chose to follow it as taught to him from childhood. In each case, the parents were instructed by an angel. But that was long ago.

Have not God's Remnant today been singled out for a life of great responsibility? Have not our spiritual fathers been taught by angels? Do we need the reinstatement of the Nazarite vow to enliven us for total dedication in the cause of our Elohim? Would some external evidence convince others and assure ourselves of our election? These are some of the questions one might resolve as one's personal commitment compels aggressive participation in last day events.

Just as, anciently, men were selected for a holy purpose and that purpose was externally evidenced by the uncut hair, abstinence from strong drink, and restrictions in diet; so, in principle, we have been called and set apart for a holy purpose with certain restraints accepted. While self-denial is spurned by most in the Christian world, as an evidence of one's trying to earn salvation, a few enter a "fitness program" to prepare them to do some special work. The Gospel is the "calling out" for a holy purpose few grasp. It is the New Testament expression of the Everlasting Covenant: *I will be your*



*God and you shall be My holy people* (See Ex. 19:5, 6). When fully appreciated, this wonderful covenant is signed in commitment to our sacrificing Saviour, who asks us to be about our Father's business as He was. No, it isn't exactly a parallel to the Nazirite vow, but there are similarities.

Today, public baptism is one way we may show the fellowship of believers that we have made a commitment for life.

**Anyone who was set apart for leadership in Israel must purify his body, soul, and spirit before performing his service to the congregation, Lev. 22:3.**

In principle, this statute reminds us to never take a leadership role in a worship service without first purifying oneself, body, soul, and spirit, Lev. 22:3. There are ministers, elders, and Sabbath-school teachers still among us who take their responsibility very seriously. These would not think of delivering a message without taking time first for "the coal off the altar."

This statute may be applied to offices in church ministry and to the responsibilities which are delegated to members on various occasions. We would sense a more serious attitude among the congregation toward the times, toward the duties entrusted, and toward the worship service, if church officers and pastors would spend needed time to "purify the vessel" before asking God to fill it. God cannot fill a heart that is already full of self.

**No Levite who had a mental or physical handicap or chronic condition could serve as a priest, (Lev. 21:17-23; 22:4). If a priest was permanently injured, he must be retired with financial support for his years in the ministry, (Lev. 21:22). A priest could serve in the sanctuary services between the ages of 30 and 50, (Num. 4:39, 47).**

Christ, our Great High Priest in the Heavenly, was without blemish in the performance of His sacred duties. The lamb must be without blemish, and the priest must be without blemish. Otherwise, neither would have been a fit type of the flawless Saviour. Those priests with physical handicaps, infirmities, or other physical defects were given duties in support of those who would serve in the sanctuary. They themselves could not serve there. Everything about the sanctuary services pointed to some aspect in the perfect ministry of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Whereas the priests held active duty beginning at age thirty, it is fitting that the Messiah began his earthly ministry at the age of thirty. Why the cut-off age of fifty, is generally unknown. Certainly, man's best years had been given in service. What a retired priest did after the age of fifty is speculative. Some think that singing in the Levite choir was what ended at age fifty, for we know Samuel served as High Priest until he died. The implication of the age limit, however, suggests that the priest was to be without infirmity. Whether or not Samuel served at the altar of sacrifice and in the Most Holy Place after the age of fifty is unclear. Artists usually portray a high priest as befits the Ancient of Days in the Heavenly Sanctuary. We know Samuel anointed Saul to be

the first king in Israel (1 Sam.8:1-22), and later courageously anointed David, while Saul was still on the throne (1 Sam 16:1-13).

As mentioned in a previous chapter, there is some evidence that between the years of Sinai and Samuel statutes were added to the *Torah* as necessity demanded. Furthermore, Scripture is clear in pointing out that some statutes were known and kept by Abraham and his descendants.

*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him, (Gen. 18:19). Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws, (Gen. 26:5).*

Those statutes, ordinances, and commandments of God pertaining to the sacrificial services have been omitted from this book because they met their fulfillment at the cross. There is some evidence from ancient Hebrew writings that the priesthood began long before Sinai. Even Abraham is said to have learned the teachings of Yahweh from Shem, whom some believe to have been both king and priest of Salem, later called Jerusalem. Whatever the facts, we will have to wait until the New Earth to have all the pieces to the puzzle over the origin of the priesthood, particulars regarding duties and limitations, and the communicating of God's laws during the centuries before their formal delivery through Moses.

*In consequence of continual transgression, the moral law was repeated in awful grandeur from Sinai. Christ gave to Moses religious precepts which were to govern the everyday life. These statutes were explicitly given to guard the ten commandments. They were not shadowy types to pass away with the death of Christ. They were to be binding upon man in every age as long as time should last, (Review and Herald, May 6, 1875).*



Sufficient evidence suggests that statutes were added throughout the Hebrew and pre-Hebrew history. Rules of conduct continued to be authorized as needed until the death of Samuel. Today we still need the Moral Law, and we still need the statutes to guard it. Times have changed, but the principles shared through the prophets are eternal. "It was not enough for them [Israel] to be God's people in name only. Their love to him, their right to the name of the Israel of God, would be manifested by their obedience," (Signs of the Times, March 10, 1881). The same is true of us today.

God calls spiritual leaders of this last generation to a higher level of commitment and consecration than is commonly witnessed among them. Whereas a blueprint for leadership has usually been borrowed from the nations (churches) around them, God is calling out a people who will pattern their lives, personally and collectively, after the blueprint given in the *Torah* by the prophets of old.

The Gospel is not a new formula for salvation. It is rather the embodiment of the eternal principles of God's government demonstrated among men. Together with the *Torah*, the two revelations from a complete picture of God's will and character. Together in the life the two revelations, *Gospel* and *Torah*, give the world a complete testimony of the righteousness that is by faith in the heavenly Father. The Remnant redeemed from the earth will demonstrate before the universe the miracle of God's transforming grace. It was God plan from the beginning, then and now.

*And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, Revelation 12:17.*

*In these last days there is a call from Heaven inviting you to keep the statutes and ordinances of the Lord. The world has set at naught the law of Jehovah; but God will not be left without a witness to His righteousness, or without a people in the earth to proclaim His truth, (Signs of the Times, February 3, 1888).*

No one who was not appointed by God was allowed to eat that which had been sanctified to Yahweh, not even someone who claimed to be a priest from another country, (Lev. 22:10). If the priest's daughter married a layman, she was excluded from the priest's portion of the sacrifices, (Verse 13).

The sacrifice was holy, therefore, only those set apart for the sacred ministry could eat of the set-apart food. No servant in the household, no priest from another country, no stranger to holiness could partake. Every member of the family was set apart to minister to Israel, so that if the daughter of a priest married someone of another tribe or country, she could not thereafter partake of the holy food.

We must remember that all the festivals, ceremonies, and other activities associated with

the sanctuary were rehearsals of what the Messiah would do in the “fullness of time.” Although yet future, the day will come when the Great High Priest sets a table for the redeemed. At that table will sit no one who has not been totally given to faith that yields obedience to all His words. *Man shall live by...every word of God.* See Luke 4:4. How then may we apply this statute to our present situation? Here are some possibilities, all of which are useful in our homes and congregations.

First of all, if we liken “food” to spiritual insight, we may find cause to reserve certain spiritual “food” for those who are spiritually minded. Sharing new or greater light with those whose hearts are attracted to the world is like what the Saviour called, “casting pearls before swine” in Matthew 7:6.

Secondly, the gospel ministers, who are called to be stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1) are to nourish the family with deep spiritual insights, which no infidel could comprehend or appreciate. If they “water down” the sacred message to feed strangers in the land (visitors in church), it is as if these administrators of holy “food” have taken their children’s bread to feed the ignorant and profane ( See Matt. 15:26). Thus, we see that ministers are to make special times to nurture the family of God with the pure Word of God. If that time is not the church service, and their church board agrees that it is not, then let the minister teach solid doctrine, prophecy, and reform at the mid-week service. As inferred from the statute, this is his first duty. Then, on other occasions specified for outreach, the food may be “watered down” appropriately for the digestion of strangers to the meat of the Word (See Heb. 5:14).

Thirdly, this statute may be applied to the communion table. Just as that which had been consecrated to symbolize the removal of sin was reserved for those who were part of the priest’s family, so some today have chosen to hold closed communions with their members so as to foster reverence for the sacred, the “set-apart.” When we hold open communion in our churches, we may be interpreted as saying to the world that, “all ‘good’ paths lead to heaven.” If there is nothing set apart for the fully consecrated, then why hold baptisms? Some argue that to close the communion to non-members is to place oneself in the precarious position of judge. To some, this argument begs the question.

Let the reader note that the Bible directs us to distinguish between public profession and the secrets of the heart. While we may know one’s declaration of profession, we may not know the inner relationship with the Saviour. Those who favor a closed communion with others of like profession do so on the strength of this statute.

In Israel, not even a priest from another country could sit at the table. Would that not apply to visitors from other denominations? Think about it. There was a time in the recent past when the announcement would be made that anyone who had been baptized by immersion was welcomed to participate in the Lord’s Supper. That announcement suggests that any religion, which endorses baptism by immersion, is “family” regardless of practice or beliefs. We now rarely hear anything about who may and who may not take part in this intimate meal.

One might choose to take the position that the Lord’s table has nothing to do with

the priest's food and family so long ago. That might make sense to those who don't understand the function of statutes among the remnant today. Students of Scripture should know that every event, every ceremony, every sanctuary teaching was a type of some aspect of the Redemption Plan to be carried out by the Saviour in Heaven and upon Earth. Follow the type and antitype of this meaningful service.

Type	Antitype
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The food represented the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.</li> <li>2. The family was set apart for holy service</li> <li>3. The meal symbolized partaking of the Divine nature.</li> <li>4. No priest from another country could be given a place at the table.</li> <li>5. If a daughter married outside the extended family of Levites, she was excluded from the table.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The bread and the grape juice symbolized the Messiah's broken body.</li> <li>2. We belong to a holy (set apart) nation, a royal priesthood, when we are baptized.</li> <li>3. The communion table symbolizes partaking of Divine nature to cleanse and purify the life.</li> <li>4. No one from outside the family (The disciples were family) should take part of the sacred emblems.</li> <li>5. To preserve the purity of its meaning anyone who leaves the "family of faith" would be excluded from this intimate ceremony.</li> </ol>

Throughout the Torah and the New Testament we see that our Elohim craves a much closer union with His people than most have experienced. The unity that is promoted in the church today is too superficial for a holy God who is creating in us a holy people. When we unite on the teachings of the *Torah* (which reveal the character and intent of our Most Holy Father), we will understand that less ended at Calvary than we have been taught. Other than the sacrificial system, which was completed in the **death** of the Messiah, the civil penalties, and the rite of circumcision that was abused and misunderstood, nothing was lost. The New Testament teachings are an **extension** and **clarification** of the Old, not a replacement of it. More on that is in the next chapter.

What does the Lord require of us? Just what He has always looked for in His children:

*To fear the Lord, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve him with the whole heart and soul, and to keep his commandments and his statutes.*  
*Deut. 10:12,13.*

If someone claimed to be a messenger from God (a prophet), and then taught His people to walk in the ways of the world turning them away from the sacred oracles, that person was deemed a false prophet and worthy of death, (Deut. 13:1-5).

Even though the prophet, or dreamer of dreams, shows you signs and miracles and his prophecies come to pass; still, don't follow him if he teaches you to trust in your own intellect, or to trust in popular beliefs of those around you. Any so-called prophet who would lead you away from complete trust in the Heavenly Father, is not a true prophet. Don't tolerate him among you. That was God's communication on the subject then, and it remains the same now.

*We are not to regard any human being as one to be believed and trusted, unless it is evident that he is established in the truth of the word of God. Some who have been leaders in the work of God are seeking to make of none effect the work that God has placed in the world to educate His people, and to prepare them to stand the **test of the miracle-working powers that would make void the precious facts of faith** that have for the last sixty years been given under the power of the Holy Spirit, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 5, page 351, Emphasis supplied).*

*The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith, will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine... (Ibid, Vol. 7, page 357)*

*Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles... These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test. Many who have had great light will fail to walk in the light, because they have not become one with Christ, (Ibid, Vol. 9, page 358).*

Only those who are grounded firmly in the Word of God will discern the sophistry of Satan in the pleasing message delivered with convincing power from many pulpits in these last days. New philosophies are even now replacing the "thus saith the Lord."

*"Satan is a cunning worker, and he will bring in subtle **fallacies to darken and confuse the mind and root out the doctrines of salvation**. Those who do not accept the Word of God just as it reads, will be snared in his trap, Selected Messages, Book 2, page 52, Emphasis supplied).*

Dear Reader, do think seriously and singularly on this matter. There will be a great multitude of Christian people who have taken the easy path, believing justification to be all there is to the Gospel. These are even now being snared in Satan's trap.

Let us "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and **disobedience** received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, Heb. 2:1,2.

Men were not allowed to trim their beards or hair in order to follow the fashions of the world, (Lev. 19:27).

Erroneously, some have taken this passage (verses 26-28) to mean that men of God grow beards. Others have taken it even further. They assert that the prohibition means a man should not groom his hair or beard. To make a good impression would be to these an evidence of pride and devotion to fashion. But, this statute is not about the length or neatness of hair or beard. It is an issue of loyalty.

Again, a statute is given to safeguard the first commandment: **no other gods**. It was customary among the heathen to offer trimmed hair in sacrificial burnings. When one saw someone with a trimmed beard, one could be sure the owner worshipped false gods. The Israelite was to avoid even the appearance of evil. Furthermore, he must not compromise his visual identity for the sake of personal advantage among the heathen. If an Israelite man wished to get ahead in business by looking like the nations around, he was expressing dishonor for His own religion and Yahweh. That was then...

This is now. God is calling out a people who are willing to act like Christians, talk like Christians, and look like Christians. At a time when the institutionalization of churches is storming the denominations, God appeals to His own, His Remnant, to stand apart: to think and act under the influence of the Holy Spirit and Scriptures; to talk of His character, His will, and His soon coming; and to reject the loud, lewd, and perverse fashions of the Age. The principle for us, then, is avoid fashions which give a double message.

*Now one fashion and then another takes the attention, and souls are drawn away by fashion from the things that pertain to their eternal interest. None can afford the outlay necessary for dressing in the height of style, for it involves robbery toward God, nor can any afford the loss of spirituality that is sure to follow. They will become bankrupt in the things of God, (Review and Herald, June 2, 1891).*

*Satan is constantly at work to divert our minds from God, to bring us where we will glorify and honor self... One of the greatest reasons for this state of things is this pride of dress, in the styles and fashions of the world. You want the first, the best, and last of everything to be given to Jesus Christ, and forsake this foolish spirit of fashion, (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 21, page 225).*

No tattoos or scarring were allowed, (Lev. 19:28). No one in God's service could shave their head, or cut off their beard, or scar or tattoo their flesh, because the servant of God is holy unto God, (Lev. 21:5,6). Because they belonged to the Lord God, they could not cut themselves or shave part or all of their heads, (Deut.14:1).

“Sitting shirtless at Sid’s Tattoo Parlor in Santa Ana, Pastor James Rasmussen [pastor of True Vine Christian Fellowship, a Garden Grove affiliate of Calvary Chapel] didn’t flinch as Rob Silva worked the long, silver needle into his pale skin,” writes Elaine

Gale, *Times* staff writer in “A New Point of View: Tattoos: Across the U.S.” “Rasmussen had decided the faded blue tattoo of a biker on his right shoulder wasn’t in tandem with his born-again lifestyle and wanted it covered with his church’s symbol: a dove and a cross,” she continues.

“I want to be a walking billboard for Jesus Christ,” said Rasmussen, clicking his tongue stud between his two front teeth.

“Tucked away in a strip mall,” Gale reports, “Silva and his colleagues are the new missionaries of the flesh. With images of Christ, crucifixes and banners that blaze ‘Born Again,’ the tattoo artists at Sid’s proclaim their faith in permanent ink. Under the counter, a dog-eared Bible lies on a shelf next to bottles of alcohol and jars filled with ink caps and razors,” continues the *Los Angeles Times* staff writer.

The tattoo business is growing even among Christians, as they, like in the field of music, blend the sacred and the secular into a new brand of highly controversial Christianity. The Bible still reads, *To the Law and to the testimony...*(Isa. 8:20). And the Law (*Torah*) still includes the injunction to stay away from body mutilation and scarring. The question is, does the motive justify the means? Does the case override the code in this instance?

The practice of tattooing was anciently done in rituals for the dead. Even today in some countries shaving the head, tattooing, and scarring are a part of religious ceremonies. God says, “**Don’t do it;**” not, “Don’t do it for the dead, but it is all right for any other purpose.” Today, as then, it is a challenge for our teenagers to avoid the fads and fashions of the world and send a message to God and peers that they serve the Creator God alone.

Indeed, Tattooing has become a major temptation and source of debate among Adventist youth. Would the Christian youth want tattoos if worldly youth were not sporting them? This discussion came up in a Bible class at an Adventist academy not long ago. The Bible teacher sided with the students who wanted to get tattoos. Conservative parents were shocked. Yet, this experience would never have happened had the Bible teacher, parents, and/or the students understood that the prohibition against tattooing is more about **loyalty to God** than about disfiguring one’s body, although important also, since we are created in the image of God. One cannot serve God and mammon. One’s appearance sends the message of identity and association.

This statute presents another directive to take one’s appearance seriously. We are not to look like the world in dress, hair colors and styles, jewelry, gaudy or scanty clothing, or anything that makes us appear to be admiring the goddess of fashion. Tattooing and head shaving, popular so long ago, have returned to tease the double-minded (James 1:8). God is looking for young people who will follow a “pure religion,” keeping themselves “*unspotted from the world*”(James 1:27).

While it is true that tattooing and body piercing may be a danger to one’s health, it is their function of looking like or identifying with the godless world that is the focus of the statute prohibiting such anti-Christian ideologies among us. The Bible is clear and timeless

in principle: Make sure you speak like, act like, and look like what you claim to be. The neo-heathen fads and fashions give a confusing and misleading message when sported by claiming Christians. Stay away from such ideologies that blend the sacred with the profane.

Today "Skinheads," are a group, or gang, of anarchists who are prejudiced against certain races, cultures, and religions. God requires clarity of mission and devotion to His Word, lest any be drawn into the snare of compromise with ideologies offensive to our Saviour. Honestly, when we are aligning our lives with the Bible principles, and the codes of conduct, which witness to our devotion to the Heavenly Family, tattooing will lose its appeal.

*When man is a partaker of the divine nature, the love of Christ will be an abiding principle in the soul, and self and its peculiarities will not be exhibited, Testimonies, Vol. 6, pages 52.*

## Loyalty - Appointments With God

### Chapter 11

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching, Hebrews 10:25.*

Three times a year all Israelite men were to keep the feast unto God at Jerusalem. At these feasts they were to bring a sacrifice (Ex. 23:14-19), or offering, (Deut.16:16, 17).

Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover)  
 Feast of Harvest (Pentecost)  
 Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles)

These were God's Feasts, Holy Convocations, (Lev. 23:2-44); Seven days out of the year were to be observed as holy convocations, in addition to the weekly Sabbaths, Lev. 23:41. No matter where they were in the world, the Israelite would keep the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, doing no work, but using the day to contemplate God's Judgment (Lev. 16:29, 30, 34).

Many people are surprised to learn that God has His own holidays (holy days). Once realized, it becomes clearer why Satan has gone to so much trouble to distort, disguise, and destroy them by substituting his own. Like the holidays the world celebrates, these special festivals were to be a time of great joy, fellowship, good food, and reminiscing. Because they were appointments for physical and spiritual refreshment they were called festivals or feasts.

*Anciently the Lord instructed His people to assemble three times a year for His worship. To these holy convocations the children of Israel came, bringing to the house of God their tithes, their sin offerings, and their offerings of gratitude. They met to recount God's mercies, to make known His wonderful works, and to offer praise and thanksgiving to His name. And they were to unite in the sacrificial service which pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Thus they were to be preserved from the corrupting power of worldliness and idolatry. Faith and love and gratitude were to be kept alive in their hearts, and through their association together in this sacred service they were to be bound closer to God and to one another. If the children of Israel needed the benefit of these holy convocations in their time, how much more do we need them in these last days of peril and conflict! (Testimonies, Vol. 6, pages 39, 40, Emphasis supplied).*



Actually, these appointments with God began long before Israel was called out of Egypt. Celebrations of fellowship, worship, and great joy were in the mind of the Creator when He set the heavenly bodies in the sky. *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs** [signals of fulfilling prophecy], and for **seasons**, and for days, and years, Gen. 1:14.*

In the Hebrew, the word translated “seasons” is *moed*. It does not mean the “four natural divisions of the year,” as a modern dictionary might define “seasons.” No, “seasons” (*moed*) in the original language meant “feast,” or “festival,” or “appointment with God.” So, from the very beginning of time the Creator prepared time for fellowship with His created family. The **weekly** Sabbath, the **monthly** markers (new moons), and the **yearly** convocations were from Creation set-apart time markers for holidays, holy days!

Many modern translations of the Bible accurately translate the meaning of the word “seasons.” Note the reading of the *Good News Bible*, for example:

*Then God commanded, let lights appear in the sky to separate day from night and to show the time when days, years, and **religious festivals** begin, (Gen. 1:14).*

The ancient did not calculate the year from midwinter as is done today, but from the first new moon after the vernal equinox in the spring. The priests in Israel were careful to record the first sighting of the new moon every month, not only because it marked the beginning of their month, but it also determined when the festivals should be held. Sufficient evidence remains to convince the honest student of Scripture, that the patriarchs observed these appointments with God long before Sinai.

*But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this **set time** in the next year, Gen. 17:21*

The word **set** is from the Hebrew word, *moed*, or festival. God wanted Abraham to know that at this specified time of the feast during the next year, Sarah would give birth to Isaac. The emphasis on the *moed* appears two more times in this story.

*Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time **appointed** I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son, Gen. 18:14.*

*For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the **set time** of which God had spoken to him, Gen. 21:2.*

According to some extant writings and traditions brought down through the rabbis, not only was Isaac born on a festival, but several other prominent patriarchs including Abraham and Moses. These, too, are reported to have been born on one of the “appointments with God.” As in Genesis 17:21, so Genesis 18:14 and 21:2 both contain

the Hebrew *moed* to establish the birth date of the son who would father, or lead the nation of God's people. Important events were calculated from and to feast days. Following that word, *moed* through the Old Testament, we may see that these appointments with God, from Creation onward, were highlights in the lives of the patriarchs.

*Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt," Ps. 81:3-5* [Here the word "solemn" is from the Hebrew word *moed*. This would indicate that the occasion in reference was the Feast of Trumpets leading to the Day of Atonement.]

A study of Leviticus 23 will help the reader understand the above reference, for there it explains the blowing of the trumpet to announce the Feast of Trumpets. Also, this feast is the only festival that begins on a new moon. The above passage in Psalms clearly points out that Joseph knew and gave testimony of the feast while he carried on his responsibilities in Egypt.

Then you come to the preparation for the Exodus, *Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness,* (Ex. 5:1). In spite of Pharaoh's hardness of heart, Israel left Egypt on a feast day (Passover), in time to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the wilderness. God's people had always been aware of the "appointments with God." From Sinai God **repeated** what had already been known.

These convocations were campmeetings, by our modern definition. When established in Canaan, the children of Israel came from every corner of the land to meet with God and His people for a wonderful time of rejoicing. The purpose of the gatherings has not changed. Only the sacrificial offerings and their ceremonies were left at the cross. In fact, the nearer we come to the return of our Saviour, the more we will want to gather together with others who are seeking and obeying all the light God sheds on our pathways.

Some critics argue that we gather together seasonally (by our heathen calendars) for convocations and spiritual assemblies, so we don't need these feasts recorded in the *Torah*, the first five books of Moses. This idea of getting together at an appointed time according to the Old Testament record of Creation and Covenant sounds rigid and legalistic by present day interpretations of New Testament scriptures. We live by the New Covenant of love and grace, not law and pre-existing dogma, some argue. A careful examination of common passages hurled against feast-keepers will reveal an overwhelming misunderstanding of texts. God's people in every generation from Eden to Eden have been, and will be, instructed to live by faith. Remember that it was loving grace that Noah was protected and preserved through the Deluge (Heb. 11:7); Gen. 6:8). Speaking of Noah, there is some evidence that Noah entered and exited the ark on an "appointment with God" date. You see, Trust and obey, law and grace, faith and works have always been inseparable. To tear them apart is to destroy the government of God and the True Gospel.

The battle in these last days is for the mind. Satan, as a roaring lion, works in the world and. Yes, even in the church, disguising his purpose while luring minds away from confidence in the Word of God. Today a philosophical approach to scripture is promoting a paradigm shift to the New Age theology, the One World Religion, spreading its tranquilizing venom against Yahweh and His exalted government and perfect Law. The enemy of true righteousness motivates those who would nullify the authority of our God Almighty. The alpha of lies was over obedience (“Hath God said?” Gen 3:1). The omega of lies is over obedience, as well. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God* (Luke 4:4), spoken by Jesus Christ Himself, is the basis of theology, philosophy, ethics, and direct confrontation with the devil!

In the Introduction and Chapter 1 of this book many quotations are recorded to assure the reader that *all the ceremonies of the Jewish law were prophetic, typical of mysteries in the plan of redemption*, (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 6 page 1095, Emphasis supplied). Sadly, the vast majority of Christians today believe that the festivals of Yahweh were nailed to the cross. In there place have been put the ancient ceremonies and celebrations of the heathen. These, of course, have been renamed to disguise their heinous origins. Like the characters portrayed in the stained glass windows of the fifteenth century Gothic cathedrals, these christened “Christian” holidays have been foisted upon the unsuspecting believers in Jesus Christ.

*There are glorious truths to come before the people of God. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, they will know more and more of the oracles of God, and be established in right doctrine (That I May Know Him, page 114, Emphasis supplied).*

Here we read that wonderful new light is reserved for God's Remnant as they follow Him. These glorious truths will reveal more and more depth of truth in the Oracles of God. The whole *Torah* is included in the *Oracles of God*, for the *Torah* was given to Moses by our Elohim.

Some teach that reference to “the law of God” only refer to the Ten Commandments. But the Greek work for “law” as used in Matthew 5:18 (*one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled*) is equivalent to the Hebrew word *Torah*. (See Strong's Concordance, # 3551) We can be sure that all the statutes about “appointments with God” are in place “*till all be fulfilled*,” and that they are indeed part of the “*every word of God*” (Luke 4:4)! We need them more today than they ever in the past, for Satan's desperate battle to destroy all that is of God is more sophisticated now than ever before. The New Age front with its intellectual philosophy of religion has spread tolerance for sin at an alarming rate throughout the assembly of saints at a time when our Elohim is calling for overcoming, not overlooking.

We should not be surprised that the enemy of souls has so cleverly sought to wipe out our devotion to God's holy days, His special appointments for rehearsing reminders of salvation and end time prophecies. Daniel warned us, but we have been blind for so long!

*He [the little horn power] will speak against the Supreme God and oppress God's people. He will try to change their religious laws and festivals... (Dan. 7:25, The Good News Bible in Today's English Version).*

“The Catholic Church abolished, not only the Sabbath, but all the other Jewish festivals,” (Father Enright, June 1905). The *Catholic Catechism* admits the same: “The new law has its own spirit... and its **own feasts** which have taken the place of those appointed in the law of Moses. If we would know the days to be observed... we must go to the Catholic Church, not to the Mosaic law,” (quoted in *Signs of the Times, Nov. 4, 1919*).

Believers in the festivals along with the seventh-day Sabbath were chased down, badgered, and hounded for twelve centuries of persecution until the only followers of Yahweh left were hidden away in the high mountains of Translavia. These continued to obey God's statutes, commandments, and feast days. The woman of Revelation 12 *fled into the wilderness where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days (Rev. 12:6)*. These faithful ones were the remnant of fourteen centuries of commandment and statute keeping Christians from the first century evangelists and missionaries.

If we would be a part of God's remnant, we will not be seeking truth from any man. We must go to the words of God. We must examine what He set up to be a nation of priests to correct and convert the pretenders and heathen. What did the original look like?

Just as a remnant of cloth matches the original bolt in all characteristics, so the people of God in the end of this sinful age will match God's original design by following the oracles God gave at the beginning of this sinful age. The just lived by faith (Hab. 2:4) looking ahead to the Messiah's death and resurrection. The last Remnant live by faith looking back beyond the Cross and forward beyond the Coming.



We will build on the foundation of patriarchs and prophets. The Remnant will mark the fulfillment of prophecy by the “waymarks,” the signs in the heavens, and the festivals ordained on earth.

*These types were fulfilled [spring feasts], not only as to the even, but as to the time... In like manner the types which relate to the second advent must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic services, (Great Controversy, pages 399, 400).*

*For at the time appointed [mo'ed] the end shall be, Daniel 8:19.* Look up this word “appointed” in Strong's Concordance. It is number 4150. There you will read that

the Hebrew word is *mo'ed*, or feasts. So, we may understand that the end of the age will come on one of God's appointed times, a great festival to the redeemed!

Passover, indeed, met its fulfillment with the death of the Lamb of God. The wave sheaf (His ascension into heaven) also was fulfilled in exact time and event for He ascended to His Father on the day after the Sabbath (see Lev. 23:10, 11), as carried out for centuries in type. But the other festivals were types not yet fulfilled in prophetic history. Not even Pentecost was fulfilled at the first advent of our Saviour. Fifty days **after** His ascension Christ sent the Holy Spirit to fill the early Christian believers with power to endure persecution, and to evangelize the world. This spring-summer fulfillment was the Early Rain, prophesied by Joel (See Joel 2 and Acts 2:16-21), but the Latter Rain will fall during the last Time of Trouble (See Joel 2:23), thus suggesting that Pentecost (coming in the third month, we call June), will have its final application in the countdown to the Second Coming of Christ.

In the fall, comes Feast of Trumpets, which lasts for ten days. A growing number of Sabbath-keeping feast-keepers are recognizing that the Trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9 will somehow fit into this antitype in the end. These ten days of warning were preparation days for the Day of Atonement, or Judgment Day. These were solemn days when the books were opened and any arrogant and rebellious Israelite was to be cast out of the camp. Since we have no record of that punishment ever being administered, we may conclude that the Feast of Trumpets was taken seriously by all, at least in the wilderness and in the early years in Canaan.

*Speak unto the children of Israel, saying In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation, Lev. 23:24.*

For ten days the Children of Israel were to review their experience with God and renew their devotion to the Covenant. Nothing sinful could remain in the camp. When all had confessed their faults, purified their hearts and houses, and brought a sacrifice for their sins, they were ready for the awesome day of Atonement.

There is reason to believe that the voice of God announcing the day and hour of Christ's second coming will occur on the Feast of Trumpets. As Israel must have their sins blotted out of the book before the day of Atonement arrived, so we will have every sin confessed and forsaken before the antitypical day arrives, when Michael stands up (Daniel 12:1) and the proclamation goes forth as a voice of a trumpet:

*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city, Revelation 22:11, 12, 14.*

Today, as we observe the Day of Atonement, we remember that Jehovah, our God, will one day soon blot out all our sins *when the time of refreshing has come from the presence of the Lord the* (See Acts 3:19 and Joel 2). It will come in more glory than the former rain on the day of Pentecost. The memory of sin will then be no longer a torment or temptation.

*Their sins have gone before hand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance, Great Controversy, page 620.*

The Remnant are then sealed, praise God! Sealed for eternity! Nothing can touch them. The Time of Trouble intensifies, so terrible that no flesh would be left if the days were not cut short (Matt. 24:22), but the righteous Remnant will be unaffected. Fire, dirty bombs, chemical warfare, radiation – nothing can harm them during the last fifteen days on Planet Earth.

*All the righteous are untouched by the flames. They can walk through the fire, as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked in the midst of the furnace heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated. The Hebrew worthies could not be consumed, because the form of the fourth, the Son of God, was with them. So, in the day of the coming of the Lord, smoke and flame will be powerless to harm the righteous. Those who are united with the Lord will escape unscathed. Earthquakes, hurricanes, flames, and flood cannot injure those who are prepared to meet their Saviour in peace, The Upward Look, page 261.*

*The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, 2 Peter 3:10.*

*In the day of the Lord, just before the coming of Christ, God will send lightnings from Heaven in His wrath, which will unite with fire in the earth...God will plague the wicked inhabitants of the earth until they are destroyed from off it...The great general conflagration is but just ahead, when all this wasted labor of life will be swept away in a night and day. There will be...great destruction of human life. But as in the days of the great deluge Noah was preserved in the ark that God had prepared for him, so in these days of destruction and calamity, God will be the refuge of His believing ones, Maranatha, page 283.*

According to the symbolic services, five days after the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles ushered in the celebration of the harvest and new beginnings. Jesus said, *The harvest is the end of the world*, (Matt. 13:39). With the death decree on their heads, the Remnant wait from the “secret place of the Most High” (Psalm 91) for the grand reunion day.

The fact that Christ fulfilled the spring feasts in exact time and event is evidence enough that the autumn feasts will be fulfilled in exact time and event, just as they were taught to the people of God in ages past. Any interpretation of Revelation that does not follow the sanctuary model, with its spring and fall appointments with God, misses the mark.

In fact, all the tomes filled with historic, futuristic, recapitulations, and all other scholarly endeavors to interpret the Book of Revelation and other eschatological scriptures fail to do anything but mislead, if they deviate from the plan of salvation revealed in the sanctuary (*mo'eds*) appointments. No matter how reasonable the interpretations, no matter how impressive the credentials of the proponents, unless the teaching fits the sanctuary model in feast-day-types, that teaching will only prepare the world -Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Catholic, Atheist, New Ager, and all other -for the final overmastering deception! And it will deceive **all**, -except the Remnant (See Matthew 24:22-24).

The Feast of Tabernacles represents “homecoming,” and what a glorious homecoming that will be! For seven days this festival was celebrated. That was no arbitrary time period. It was a type, a rehearsal, of the seven-day homecoming trip to heaven! **We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass... (Maranatha, page 305).**

At the end of the typical Feast of Tabernacles week of reunions and rejoicing came the feast. The antitype? To culminate our seven-day, homecoming reunion flight, we will gather around the great table to be served by the same humble Master who had once served His disciples at a table centuries before. Now, crowned King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He welcomes home His children to the great banquet we have waited for. He serves the fruit of the vine once again, (Matthew 26:29). It is the antitypical year of Jubilee, and what jubilation there will be!

**Observing the Sabbaths is a sign between God and His people that they are being sanctified (Ex. 31:13-17; Lev. 19:3) The seventh day Sabbath is for a weekly convocation (Lev. 23:3). Keep all God's Sabbaths (Lev. 19:30). Keep the Sabbath to rest from all labor, including the cooking of meals (Ex. 35:3).**

The history of the weekly Sabbath should not be extracted from the other convocations, for **their history is the same** until the thirteenth century of the common era. Furthermore, those among us who wish to minimize the “duty” in the Covenant, use the same arguments as the Sunday-keeping crowd uses to minimize the weekly Sabbath. Sunday-keepers acknowledge the Law in principle, but not in literal obligation.



From this reasoning, one could conclude that we may choose any day of the week for worship, as long as we have one rest day. Sabbath-keepers object to this liberal point of view, arguing that the set-apart, sanctified, and hallowed nature of the day from Creation, makes the literal interpretation vital. Extrapolating the principle of resting one day a week is not acceptable to Seventh-day believers. Most Sabbath-keepers, however, look at the same passages as their Sunday-keeping counterparts, and conclude that the weekly Sabbath should be kept, but not the other convocations, or rest days.

Inconsistency, it is, to many who have studied the subject and have followed the history of the Sabbaths to the present time. When all the evidence is in -from the context of Scripture, from word studies, and from history - and all the objections are answered, some retreat to their defense lines of "It is not salvational."

Not salvational? Is there any word from God that is not salvational? Jesus didn't think so. According to Luke 4:4, Christ responded in His hour of testing, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word of God**." Actually, our Savior was quoting the words He had given Moses (Deut. 8:3) fourteen centuries before. Nothing salvational had changed. Type had met antitype in the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Messiah; but only the types of the spring feasts were fulfilled at His first coming. We look forward to the literal fulfillment of the autumn feasts to take place at the time of His Second Coming, (See Great Controversy, pages 399, 400).

Paul and the other disciples kept and taught the festivals along with the weekly Sabbath to the Greek converts as well as the Jews. Furthermore, the early evangelists to Europe and Asia spread the teaching the seven yearly Sabbaths as part of the gospel. During the Dark Ages Christians died at the stake for keeping the yearly appointments with God just as often as they died for keeping the weekly appointments with Him.



The Waldenses had their own hymnbook with sections of hymn for each of the seven yearly Sabbaths, as well as the weekly one. Historians tell us that some faithful groups were still keeping the New Testament Passover (Lord's Supper style) on the correct date in the seventh century in Scotland!

King Arthur of the Round Table fame, favored the seventh-day Sabbath and the feasts of the Lord. He selected his cabinet each year on the Feast of Tabernacles, and honored the Jubilee.

St Patrick, sainted by the papacy after killing him for thwarting their efforts in Ireland, was a Sabbath observer who started a college and seminary to teach young men the gospel and the *Torah* together.

Remember, it was the purpose of the little horn power to change **times and laws** (Daniel 7:25). We used to hear evangelists explain how "times" had been changed, by

removing ten days from the calendar. But, the Hebrew word for **times** in Daniel 7:25 (*mo'ed*), as we have previously discovered, is the same word as used in Genesis 1:14 where the heavenly bodies were placed in the sky for “seasons, appointed times,” or literally “an appointment to meet.” Over and over, thereafter, *mo'ed* is rendered feast, or festival. In addition, the word “laws” that were “changed” refer to the **Torah**, the entire collection of the **Oracles of God**, or the first five books of the Bible.

How is it that so many of us could be Seventh-day Adventist Christians for fifty years, and even serious students of Scripture, without seeing these things? I marvel that we who take pride in memorizing Scripture have allowed traditions of men to blind our eyes to the clearly revealed Word of God! *Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law [Torah]*, writes the Psalmist (Ps. 119:18).

Many of our ministers have become adept at extrapolating meaning from Scripture while ignoring the obvious. Twenty-four times in the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, David exonerates the statutes. They were given to safeguard the Ten Commandments, the summary statements of Yahweh’s character and government. That perfect character and government has ever been the target of Satan’s wrath since his fall. His challenge to the universe was essentially that he thought he could run it better.

*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the **Mount of the Congregation** in the sides of the north (Isa. 14:13).*

Here, Satan is literally challenging Yahweh to war. And, indeed, that was has already brought some scrimmages. Satan is threatening the Supreme God of the universe, declaring that he will preside over the **Mount** (place of rule) of the **Congregation** (those who gather to the feasts). Yes! The word in the Hebrew for ‘congregation’ is “*har-mo'ed*,” which includes that special word, *mo'ed*, meaning feasts, festivals, and appointments with Yahweh.

***Har = mount***  
***Mo'ed = feasts, appointment with God***

Satan is attempting to take over the Mount of the Congregation by confusing and destroying the **sacred time** God has appointed to renew His own. Thus, to a growing number of Bible students Lucifer’s intent is clear: Confuse and destroy God **SACRED TIME**. The earth and its inhabitants alone are controlled by time. The archenemy has, quite successfully, replaced God’s appointments in **TIME**. Just as he has replaced the seventh-day Sabbath with his own pagan day, sun’day, in which from the kingdom of Babel (Babylon) he has led men into the worship of the sun. God’s challenger has deceived the whole world by replacing God’s holidays (holy days, appointments with Him) with his own. And we have thought it unimportant!!

There are Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Halloween to draw the family together in celebration, feasting, fellowshipping, and drawing the min (Remember, the battle is for your **MIND**) to materialism, paganism, and occultism. No matter in what garb they are dressed,

these holidays (holy days) mark the time, observed from Babel to usurp the authority of the Creator of TIME. You see, the question comes down to whose holy days will you keep? All but the very elect will be deceived (Matt. 24:24; Mk. 13:22). Satan has declared war on God to take over TIME. Our relationships are set in time. Our very lives are controlled by time. If he is to make of non-effect the sacrifice of the Saviour in our behalf, he must do it in the context of TIME.

Dear Reader, how are you delegating your **time**? Do you wrench from Satan's grasp some time each day in which to fellowship with your Saviour? **Time is of the essence!** Do you guard the seven-day Sabbath for bonding with your Heavenly and earthly families? Do you remember the Passover time when your sins were laid upon the Sinless Son of God? Do you enter the Lord's Supper at that time to reflect upon The Gift provided at Calvary? And we thought time was unimportant!

Along with the special time for a focus on Calvary, comes the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the time (seven days) for putting the leaven of sin -all sins -out of one's life. Next, comes Pentecost, the holiday for celebrating the giving of God's Law on Mount Sinai, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit for reformation and evangelism. Three months later, the Feast of Trumpets sounds, calling God's own to assess their lifestyle and heart condition, for they will soon be "set-right," "at-one" with the Father. This ten days of awe are exciting days. The greeting is heard throughout the camp (campmeeting, house-meeting, i.e.), "May your name be in the Book of Life!"

At the end of the ten days, the Day of Atonement, the only fast day of the appointments, was a solemn time of judgment. Each child of God stood ready to hear the last trump, for it would call each one to join in the pronouncement that each one's sins were forgiven and cleansed from the record. They could then enjoy "at-one-ness" with God and each other. This event will be literally fulfilled in the near future when the last trump sounds and the dead in Christ are raised and we are all changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15:52).

Let us return to the "mount of the congregation" phrase from the previous page. There we had made the point that Satan was saying he would sit upon the **mount of the mo'eds**, which means *feasts, congregations, assembly*. Melody Drake, in her paper, "God's Holidays," pointedly summarized this meaning. She writes, "God's people **congregate** to have a **feast** or **assembly** as described in Leviticus 23." That is what the seasons were designed to accomplish for this planet, so desperately in need of re-creation time with the Creator.

There is a further point of interest with this word, *har-mo'ed*. *In Isaiah 14:13, it is translated* "mount of the congregation." But, this word is rendered "Armageddon" in Revelation 16:16. Here is where Lucifer intends to set up his throne, aspiring to replace God as Sovereign Ruler. The archenemy of our Lord has worked intently to destroy trust in the Bible, to undermine faith in the Words of Scripture, and to replace every "appointment with the Re-Creator." But God will have a people who will love Him enough to obey His every word. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes (See Rev. 14:4).

When the last battle is fought, whose side you are on will be partly determined by whose Calendar of Sacred **Time** you have observed. It reveals who has your loyalty.

Somewhat sketchy are the few hints in our early church writings of any such light being known then. Statements like, “*At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully*” (Early Writings, pages 33 and 85), has been thought by some to include the yearly Sabbaths. Some believe that the seven Sabbaths together with the seventh-day Sabbath may form the complete sign of God stamp on our lives. Conversely, some draw back from any Biblical understanding, which is not clearly reiterated in Sister White’s writings. But, for a growing number of Bible students, the Scripture’s clear statements that truth is progressive, that light will grow more and more until that “perfect day” (Prov. 4:18), plus Mrs. White’s own statement that there is **much more light to come**, is sufficient evidence that honest investigation of “new light” is in order.

In reference to this new light, it should be of interest to the reader the circumstances around the founding of this denomination. Seventh-day keeping groups were springing up among the Baptists, the Worldwide Church of God, and the Adventist. These Adventists were first identified as the “Seventh Month Movement” because they were not only studying the feasts, they were also observing the feasts, believing that Christ would return on the Day of Atonement. With the disappointment, came increased ridicule and persecution. Many returned to their former churches. Some went on their knees to the Scriptures. By 1888, Jones, and especially Waggoner, were urging the flock to re-examine the *Torah*, with its statutes regarding festivals, as part of the 1888 message.

Ellen received no vision on the subject and the subject was therefore suppressed. She did write in the “Signs of the Times” that year, “*In these last days there is a call from Heaven inviting you to keep the statutes and ordinances of the Lord...*” (ST 02-03-88). While many, seeing the importance of the statutes, are now holding out against the festivals of the Lord declaring them to be part of the ordinances of the altar, there is no such reference in the Bible or writings of the Modern Messenger that would support such a claim. Indeed, the sacred appointments with God are clearly labeled “statutes,” which are followed up with judgments against those who refuse to obey all God’s commandments and statutes. See Leviticus 23.

Then there are the cynics who protest the word “generations,” in Leviticus 23:14, for example. They argue that these “generations” ended at the Cross. But where is the scripture for that theory? “Generations,” in the above text means “throughout your lifetime.” The New Testament declares that we Gentiles are grafted in (Romans 11), to become Abraham’s see (Gal. 3:29). We are **added** to the tree, by God’s grace through Christ Jesus. How have we become so haughty thinking we Gentiles have replaced it?

The great error with churches in all ages has been to reach a certain point in their understanding of Bible truth and there stop. There they anchored. They ceased to “Go forward,” as much as to say, “We have all-sufficient light. We need no more.” To these the Spirit of God speaks, saying:

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked (Rev. 3:15-17).*

*God's people in these last days are not to choose darkness rather than light. They are to look for light, to expect light... The light will continue to shine in brighter and still brighter rays, and reveal more and more distinctly the truth as it is in Jesus, that human hearts and human characters may be improved, and moral darkness -which Satan is working to bring over the people of God -may be dispelled (That I Might Know Him, page 347).*

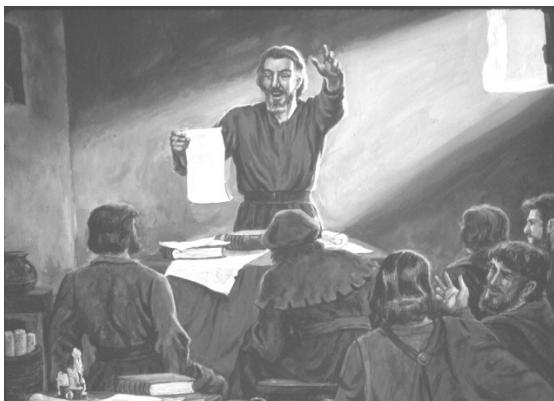
There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that `there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. **The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible.** Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation... Many who claim to believe the truth have settled down at their ease, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," (Review and Herald, Dec. 20, 1892, Emphasis supplied).

Israel was to read all the laws of the Torah every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles in a service of re-consecration to God, (Deut. 31:10-12)

How appropriate that in the "year of release," God's people should hear the complete Pentateuch, the *Torah*, during this important week. Although it was read on other occasions (Joshua 8:34; Nehemiah 8:1-3), the Feast of Tabernacles was one of the most joyful occasions of re-dedication to the Oracles of Yahweh. The week celebrated the entrance into our heavenly home and the New Earth, when all debts and burdens would be forever gone. In that New Earth, we will gather together, as originally designed, from one Sabbath to another, and from one new moon to another. Then we will assemble and feast and celebrate the mysteries and marvels of salvation! (See Isaiah 66:23) The we will pick up where sin interrupted, gathering to worship and celebrate on God's appointed festivals from Creation to Eternity.

As in the past, so now: law and liberty still go together in the life of the one who is preparing to be a part of that Kingdom of God. On the one hand, we are to re-consecrate our live to obey Yahweh, our God; on the other, we are to express devotion and gratitude for deliverance from spiritual Egypt, and Babylon. This has ever been the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles in the lives of God's people, then and now. Perhaps that is what Mrs. White was suggesting when she wrote about camp meetings:

*Well would it be for us to have a feast of tabernacles, a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to us as a people. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God wrought for their fathers, and his miraculous preservations of them during their journeying from Egypt to the promised land, so should the people of God at the present time gratefully call to mind the various ways he has devised to bring them out from the world... We should gratefully regard the old waymarks, and refresh our souls with memories of the loving-kindness of our gracious Benefactor (Review and Herald, Nov. 17, 1885).*



A growing number of Sabbath-keepers are beginning to discover the joy and blessings of returning to the “old paths” and “repairing the breech.” These gather at the *mo’eds (appointed seasons) to be re-established in sound doctrine, to fellowship, and rejoice in salvation. These walk in the light that they might be trusted with more light. Following the history of the Sabbaths, and how and when the seven Sabbaths were lost under persecution;*

knowing the intent of Satanic powers -spiritual and political -to distort, deceive, and destroy; yet, yearning above all else to be in the will, grace, and presence of their Elohim, these of the remnant draw apart at God’s appointed festivals to be renewed.

The book has only begun to expound upon the multitude of references to the subject of the Sabbath and the seven additional yearly Sabbaths extending to the end of time. Much more could be shared about the Bible position, and the persecution which has followed those who observed all these appointments with God through the ages. *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).* It will happen again.

God’s ways have never been the popular ways, even among claiming Christians. God’s Remnant, like their Saviour, are in the end also *despised and rejected of men* (Isa. 53:3), but *they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death* (Rev. 12:11).

Is it salvational to keep the commandments, judgments, statutes of Jehovah -which include festivals, or feast days? A better question might be: Is it safe to ignore the commandments, statutes, and judgments of Jehovah?

*The precious time of probation is passing, and few realize that it is given them for the purpose of preparing for eternity. The golden hours are squandered in worldly pursuits, in pleasure, in absolute sin. God's law is slighted and forgotten, yet every statute in nonetheless binding... (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 4, page 147).*

"It was Christ who had said, 'Ye shall do My statutes, and keep My judgments,'" (Signs of the Times, June 11, 1896). We are not saved by keeping them. We keep them because we are being saved -saved from self-love, from rebellion, from pride and haughtiness, from the lure of worldly-mindedness; saved to follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes.

*To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsakes us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few, -this will be our test.*

*Testimonies, Vol. 5, page 136*



## Appendix

Herein is given a partial list of the Oracles of God from the *Torah* with corresponding references in the New Testament.

1. No partiality toward the wealthy (Ex. 23:3, 6; Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17),  
**James 2:9.**
2. You must not add to or diminish any of God's commands (Deut. 4:1),  
**Rev. 22:19.**
3. God proves us to see if we love Him enough to obey or not (Deut. 8:1-3),  
**Luke 4:4.**
4. He chastens His children to urge us to obedience (Duet. 8:5,6),  
**Hebrews 12:5.**
5. You are a special people, who obey God from love (Deut. 8:18; 9:3-5),  
**2 Tim. 1:9.**
6. Circumcise the foreskin of your heart (Deut. 10:16),  
**Rom. 2:29.**
7. Love the stranger because you were once one (Deut. 10:19),  
**Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:20.**
8. Judgment is establish at the testimony of two witnesses (Deut. 17:6),  
**Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28.**
9. Love one another is the Spirit of God in giving the statutes (Deut. 19:21),  
**Mat. 5:39.**

10. No partiality when dividing an inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17),  
**Luke 15:21.**
11. He who is hanged must be taken down before nightfall (Josh. 8:29),  
**John 19:31; Gal. 3:13.**
12. Don't plow an ox and an ass together (Deut. 22:10),  
**2 Cor. 6:14-16.**
13. Keep your vows to the Lord God Almighty (Deut. 23:21-23),  
**Acts 5:1-11.**
14. You may eat from a field or orchard (Deut. 23:24, 25), but don't fill your bucket. Jesus was condemned for "harvesting" on the Sabbath.  
**Matt. 12:1-7.**
15. The newlywed groom is freed from military and civic duties (Deut. 24:5),  
**Lk. 14:20.**
16. Forty is the maximum number of stripes for a crime (Deut. 25:1,2),  
**2 Cor. 11:24.** See also Isa. 53:5, and Luke 12:47, 48.
17. Blasphemy, the greatest crime, worthy of death (Lev. 24:16),  
**Matt. 26:62-64.**
18. Don't muzzle the ox (Deut. 25:4; Prov. 12:10),  
**1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 3:7.**

## God's "Chain of Command"

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets, Matthew 22:37-40.*

### LOVE GOD Heart, Soul, and Mind

No Other God Commandment #1	No Graven Images Commandment #2	God's Name Is Holy Commandment #3	Remember the Sabbath Commandment #4
Sacrifice only to God Ex. 22:20 Lev. 20:2, 3 Luke 4:8	No Idols Deut. 16:21, 22 Deut. 7:27, 26 Rom. 11:4, 5	Don't Name other gods Ex. 23:13 Phil. 2:9, 10	Keep the Sabbath Ex. 20:8-11 Lev. 23:3 Acts 16:13; 17:2
Do not Honor other Gods in your Body Deut. 23:1, 2 1 Cor. 6:19, 20	Don't Learn Ways from the Heathen Deut. 12:30 Mk. 16:15, 16	Never Blaspheme God's Holy Name Lev. 24:15, 16 Matt. 12:31	Keep all of God's Sabbaths Lev. 23:2-44 1 Cor. 5:8
Be Holy because Our God is Holy Lev. 19:2 Rev. 22:11	Zealously Destroy Satan Worship Ex. 23:24 Lev. 20:27	Speak as God's Servants/ not Carelessly Deut. 13:1-5	Sanctification's Sign Ex. 31:13-17 John 17:17 Isa. 8:16
Honor God with Your tithe Ex. 22:29 Matt. 23:23	No Covenants with The Heathen Ex. 23:32 2 Cor. 6:14		How to Keep the Sabbath Ex. 35:3 Isa. 58:13, 14 Matt. 12:8-12
Give God only Your Very Best Deut 17:1 1 Thes. 4:1-4 1 Thes. 5:23	Guard Against the Lure of the World Ex. 23:33 1 Thes. 5:17-24 Col. 4:7-9		

Thus, we see that all these commandments and statutes do hang on the first great commandment: Love God with all your heart.

## God's "Chain of Command"

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets, Matthew 22:37-40.*

## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

#5 Honor Parents	#6 Do Not Kill	#7 Do Not Steal	#8 Adultery Forbidden	#9 No False Witness	#10 Don't Covet
Respect Leaders Deut. 17:12, 13 Titus 3:1	Avoid Some Meats Lev. 3:16,17 Acts 15:29	No Bribery Deut.16:19,20 1 Cor. 5:9-11	No Inter-marriage Deut. 7:3 2 Cor. 6:14	Judge Fairly Ex. 23:3, 6 1 Tim. 5:21 1 Pet. 1:17	Don't Borrow Deut. 15:6 Matt. 5:40-42
Respect the Elderly Lev. 19:32 1 Tim. 5:17	Don't Touch The Dead Lev. 5:2 Lk. 9:60	Never Take Advantage of Anyone Lev. 19:33,34	Extramarital Sex Forbidden Ex. 22:23 Eph. 5:28-33	No Fraud In Business Lev.19:35,36 Acts 5:1-4	Lend Without Expectation of Returns Deut. 24:10, 11
Parents Teach Statutes/Kids Lev. 10:11 2 Tim. 3:15	Be Kind to Strangers Lev. 19:34 Lk. 10:36,37	Debtors Released in 7 <sup>th</sup> Year Deut. 15:3-5	No Sexual Relations with Animals Lev. 18:23 Rom. 1:24-28	Take Your Oaths Seriously Lev. 5:4 Lk. 1:73	Don't Completely Harvest Fields Lev. 19:9, 10 Gal. 2:10
Rebellious Sons Disciplined by City Fathers Deut. 21:18-21 Prov. 19:18	Don't Hate, Begrudge, or Get Revenge Lev. 19:18	No Interest On Loans Deut. 23:19	Marriage to One Wife Lev. 18:18	Speak Kindly to Others Lev. 19:14 Deut. 27:18	Be Generous To Widows & Fatherless Ex. 22:22-24 Matt. 25:40

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