

LESSON TWELVE 14:22—15:23

c. DIFFERENCES IN ECONOMIC PRACTICES (14:22—15:23)

22 Thou shalt surely tithe all the increase of thy seed, that which cometh forth from the field year by year. 23 And thou shalt eat before Jehovah thy God, in the place which he shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there, the tithe of thy grain, of thy new wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herd and of thy flock; that thou mayest learn to fear Jehovah thy God always. 24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it, because the place is too far from thee, which Jehovah thy God shalt choose, to set his name there, when Jehovah thy God shall bless thee; 25 then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thy hand, and shalt go unto the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose: 26 and thou shalt bestow the money for whatsoever thy soul desireth, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul asketh of thee; and thou shalt eat there before Jehovah thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household. 27 And the Levite that is within thy gates, thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee.

28 At the end of every three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase in the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: 29 and the Levite, because he hath no portion nor inheritance with thee, and the sojourner, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hand which thou doest.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 14:22-29

258. What would happen to ten-percent of the see? To whom was it given? What use was made of it?
259. How could the tithe be given to the Lord if it was eaten by the worshipper?
260. Why would the exception of verses 24, 25 help some of the twelve tribes?
261. Does verse 26 give permission for the drinking of strong drink? Discuss.
262. Explain the special provision made in verses 28 and 29.

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 14:22-29

22 You shall surely tithe all the yield of your seed, produced by your field each year.

23 And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place in which He will cause His name [and presence] to dwell, the tithe (tenth) of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstlings of your herd and your flock, that you may learn (reverently) to fear the Lord your God always.

24 And if the distance is too long for you to carry your tithe, or the place where the Lord your God chooses to set His name [and presence] is too far away for you, when the Lord your God has blessed you,

25 Then you shall turn it into money, and bind up the money in your hand, and shall go to the place [of worship] which the Lord your God has chosen;

26 And you may spend that money for whatever your appetite craves, for oxen, or sheep, or new wine or stronger drink, or whatever you desire; and you shall eat there before the Lord your God, you and your household.

27 And you shall not forsake or neglect the Levite [God's minister] in your towns, for he has been given no share or inheritance with you.

28 At the end of every three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your increase the same year, and lay it up within your towns;

29 And the Levite [because he has no part or inheritance with you], and the stranger or temporary resident, and the fatherless, and the widow, who are in your towns, shall come and eat and be satisfied; that the Lord Your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

COMMENT 14:22-29

TITHE . . . FROM THE FIELD YEAR BY YEAR (v. 22)—The produce of the soil is to be tithed each year. This was to be brought to the central sanctuary—"the place which he [God] shall choose" (v. 23). There, the giver would share in a sacrificial feast with the Levites (See chapter 12). Obviously, the giver was not to eat *all* the tithe, as some have erroneously implied. If a man's little farm yielded barely enough to feed his family, this interpretation of the law would require him to eat up at one feast what would keep his family for *five weeks!* The law allowed for this single meal *from* the tithe, before it was given into the care of the priests and Levites. ". . . simply providing that, when the farmer came up annually with his tithe and his firstlings, he should unite with the beneficiaries of it in a feast on part of it ere he left the remainder for its appointed purpose. It was a very wise provision;

because it had the tendency to make the giver part from his gifts more cheerfully." (McGarvey). He continues, "There is still another reason, a very imperative one, for thus understanding the law. If the whole tithe were to be eaten at one feast, the Levite would certainly be well stuffed at the time, but what provision would this be for the rest of the year? He would have nothing to eat except when he could find some farmer coming up with his tithe, and there would be intervals of feasting and longer ones of fasting throughout the year—a mode of living not conducive to good health or long life."

We now must ask the question, how many tithes did the faithful Israelite give to the Lord? Albert Barnes, commenting on Matt. 23:23, states, "The law requires the Jews to devote a tenth part of all their property to the support of the Levites, Num. xviii. 20-24. Another tenth part they paid for the service of the sanctuary, commonly in cattle and grain, but where they lived far from the place of worship they changed it to money, De. xiv. 22-24. Besides these, there was to be every third year a tenth part given to the poor, to be eaten in their own dwellings (De. xiv. 28, 29); so that nearly one-third of the property of the Jews was devoted to religious services by law. This was besides the voluntary offerings which they made."

This quote represents a fairly common and popular concept. But as we have already seen, the latter part of it is obviously erroneous. The three-year tithe of vv. 28, 29 was not solely for the poor, but simply *provided* for them.

Now the question as to whether our present scripture is a "second tithe"—additional to that given in Numbers and Leviticus: We see no need of so understanding it. It appears, rather, that the differences that are here are rather to be considered as further stages of *legislation*, particularly in view of the fact that (excepting the three-year tithe) no mention is made of more tithes than one. This, of course, does not include the many special and free-will offerings (Mal. 3:8), sacrifices, etc. See below.

THE FIRSTLINGS OF THY HERD AND OF THY FLOCK (v. 23)—These were God's (Num. 18:15-17, Ex. 34:19). See 12:6, 15:19-23 and notes.

STRONG DRINK (v. 26)—Heb. *shecar* (akin to our word *cider*) defined by Gesenius, "strong drink, intoxicating liquor," mentioning that it might be made from barley, honey, grapes or dates, but usually distinguished from wine, as, of course, it is here. The word appears in

a similar connection in Num. 28:7. In Lange's commentary, A. Gosman remarks, "The distinction here is not between two kinds of wine, one intoxicating and the other not, but between wine and a drink made from some other substance than the grape; from honey or barley."

AT THE END OF THREE YEARS THOU SHALT BRING FORTH ALL THE TITHE (v. 29)—See also 26:12-15. "In this instance, as in the other [See above], it would be impossible to eat all the tithe in one feast; and if it were thus eaten, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow would alternate between enormous feasts and excruciating fasts. The meaning evidently is that out of the supply laid up and kept on hand the Levites were to be provided for, and the poor to be kept from suffering. But here, again, the law in Numbers [Num. 18:21-32, Cf. Lev. 27:30-33] is presupposed. It had already provided for the support of the Levites out of the tithe, and this law simply adds the provision that the poor of the cities in which the tithe was stored should also be fed from it . . . It is like the provisions of a man's will in which by an early clause he bequeaths certain property to one of his children, and in a later clause directs that this child shall give an annual feast to his brothers and sisters, and keep from suffering any of them who might become very poor." (McGarvey)

Surely Israel was to be a *giving* nation. Vows, free-will offerings, burnt-offerings, drink-offerings, meal-offerings seem to come in an over-whelming deluge as one reads through the last four books of the Pentateuch. Then there were the festivals (Chap. 16) where the command was, "they shall not appear before Jehovah empty." Add to this such laws as the releasing from debt in the seventh year (15:1 ff.), helping and lending to the needy, and allowing for the poor in harvest time (24:19-22), and what characteristic would you have in a faithful Israelite? *Generosity*, both toward God and man!

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Israelies are not to adopt superstitious customs in mourning, 1, 2. The different kinds of clean and unclean animals, 3-20. Nothing to be eaten that dieth of itself, 21. Concerning offerings which, from distance cannot be carried to the altar of God, and which may be turned into money, 22-26. The Levite is not to be forsaken, 27. The third year's tithe for the Levite, stranger, widow, &c., 28, 29.

(2) THE YEAR OF RELEASE (15:1-6)

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. 2 And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he hath lent unto his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother; because Jehovah's release hath been proclaimed. 3 Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it: but whatsoever of thine is with thy brother thy hand shall release. 4 Howbeit there shall be no poor with thee; (for Jehovah will surely bless thee in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it;) 5 if only thou diligently hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command thee this day. 6 For Jehovah thy God will bless thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over thee.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 15:1-6

263. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of releasing all creditors every seven years.
264. Is there a distinction in legal and moral obligations? Discuss.
265. Are we promised freedom from poverty if we are obedient to Jehovah?
266. How account for the treatment of "foreigners" and "other nations" as in verses 3 and 6?
267. Are there present-day laws like those of Deuteronomy 15:1-6?
At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release.

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 15:1-6

2 And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release that which he has lent to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother; for the Lord's release is proclaimed.

3 Of a foreigner you may exact it; but whatever of yours is with your brother [Israelite] your hand shall release.

4 But there will be no poor among you, for the Lord will surely bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess,

5 If only you carefully listen to the voice of the Lord your God, to do watchfully all these commandments which I command you this day.

6 When the Lord your God blesses you as He promised you, then you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.

COMMENT 15:1-6

It is interesting that a number of our states have very similar laws as this one. A man cannot be held indefinitely for a debt, and in most states if the overdue money is not collected by the creditor within a specified number of years, the borrower is no longer *legally* held responsible for the debt.

The year of release apparently corresponds with the "sabbatical year" in which the land was to rest and lie fallow (Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:1-7, 18-22.) In that year there was to be a general remission of debts. It was a wholesale "year of recovery" in every quarter. As every seventh day was to be a sabbath day, every seventh year was to be a sabbath year.

Did this *permanently* release the debtor of his responsibility? On this, the critics are divided. "This does not imply that the debt was to be remitted, but only that the debtor was not then to be pressed for payment . . . A law that every seventh year debts should be remitted, would have frustrated itself, for on such conditions no one would lend, and so there would be no debtors" (Pulpit). Similarly, A. Gosman states, "The clear reference to the land-rest or release, which was for the year, and the force of the Hebrew word [*nagas*] rendered *exact*, more correctly *urge* or *press*, and the whole spirit of the Mosaic law, which was not to destroy obligations of this kind, but guard the poor and unfortunate against undue severity or oppression, are all in favor of the interpretation which regards the release as for the year."

Whether the release was permanent or temporary, the godly Israelite should not have been hesitant to loan no matter what year it was. It might have been a temptation to withhold a loan from the needy in the 5th or 6th year when there was little hope of having it repaid, but was it therefore *right* for one to refuse help to his brother? Jesus' teaching goes far beyond this, instructing us to give to those in need out of love—repaid or not, Matt. 5:42, Lk. 6:34, 35. Of course, this does not cancel any Christian's *moral* and *spiritual* obligation to repay anything he borrows. "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; But the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth" (Ps. 37:21). Surely a Christian's sense of *responsibility* in this area goes beyond mere civil code.

On the question as to whether this release is permanent or not, see further remarks with vv. 7-11, below.

THERE SHALL BE NO POOR WITH THEE (v. 4)—That is comparatively. If they were obedient, and followed God's directions and commandments. And if the very directions given *here* and elsewhere concerning *helping* the poor were followed, no one would go cold or hungry.

FOR JEHOVAH THY GOD WILL BLESS THEE (v. 6)—The blessings of this verse, as elsewhere in Deuteronomy, were promised and assured an *obedient* Israel.

(3) THE POOR (15:7-11)

7 If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother. 8 but thou shalt surely open thy hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need *in that* which he wanteth. 9 Beware that there be not a base thought in thy heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou give him nought; and he cry unto Jehovah against thee, and it be sin unto thee. 10 Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto. 11 For the poor will never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 15:7-11

- 268. How can we reconcile the thought of verse 4 with that of verse 7? Cf. verse 11.
- 269. Are we not to inquire as to the worthiness of the "poor brother"? Suppose he can not pay back the debt?
- 270. With what attitude should we give to the poor? Why is the attitude so important?

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 15:7-11

7 If there is among you a poor man, one of your kinsmen in any of the towns of your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your [mind and] heart, or close your hand to your poor brother;

8 But you shall open your hand wide to him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, which he lacks.

9 Beware lest there be a base thought in your [mind and] heart, and you say, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and it be sin in you.

10 You shall give to him freely without begrudging it; because for this the Lord will bless you in all your work and in all you undertake.

11 For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to your needy, and to your poor in your land.

COMMENT 15:7-11

These verses (in spite of the comments above) cannot help but cause us to favor the interpretation of vv. 1-3 as indicating a total relinquishing of all debts at the end of the seventh year—at least such debts as contracted by a poor man, especially if the year of release was only a year or two off. But it appears these verses were designed to guard against just such a "base thought" (v. 9). A magnanimous spirit and feelings of compassion, mercy, and generosity would take precedence over selfish or personal motives.

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
 When it is in the power of thy hand to do it.
 Say not unto thy neighbor
 Go, and come again, And tomorrow I will give;
 When thou hast it by thee.

—Prov. 3:27, 28

See also Prov. 11:24-26.

FOR THIS THING JEHOVAH THY GOD WILL BLESS THEE (v. 10)—God loves a cheerful giver, and will invariably grant blessings to him. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and the man that waters shall be watered himself. See Lk. 6:38, Acts 20:35.

THE POOR WILL NEVER CEASE OUT OF THE LAND (v. 11)—A principle Jesus cited (Mk. 14:7, Matt. 26:11, Jn. 12:8) as shown that *he* must be honored, worshipped, and glorified *while time allows*, for the poor are ever-present. Jesus did *not* teach that the poor were to be neglected. See Matt. 19:21, 25:31-46. But he would not have us *side-tracked from his worship* for humanitarian reasons. Christ will not take second place—even to the poor!

(4) SLAVERY (15:12-18)

12 If thy brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. 13 And when thou lettest him go free from thee, thou shalt not let him go empty: 14 thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy threshing-floor, and out of thy wine-press; as Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. 15 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God redeemed thee; therefore I command thee this thing today. 16 And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go out from thee; because he loveth thee and thy house, because he is well with thee; 17 then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maid-servant thou shalt do likewise. 18 It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou lettest him go free from thee; for to the double of the hire of a hireling hath he served thee six years; and Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all that thou doest.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 15:12-18

271. Does this text sanction some form of slavery? Cf. Exodus 21:2-6; Leviticus 25:39-46.
272. Why be careful to provide the livelihood of the former slave? Cf. verse 18.
273. Wasn't it unreasonable to expect anyone to become a lifetime slave? Discuss.

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 15:12-18

12 And if your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold to you and serve you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.

13 And when you send him out free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed;

14 You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress; of what the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.

15 And you shall [earnestly] remember that you were a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I give you this command today.

16 But if the servant says to you, I will not go away from you, because he loves you and your household, since he does well with you.

17 Then take an awl and pierce his ear through to the door, and he shall be your servant always. And also to your bondwoman you shall do likewise.

18 It shall not seem hard to you when you let him go free from you; for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years, and the Lord your God will bless you in all you do.

COMMENT 15:12-18

Is this the same seventh year as referred to above—the "sabbath year"? Probably not. It seems to refer to *any* six years during which the individual has been in bondage. As vv. 13, 14 specify, this servant was not to be "left to the elements," but the spirit of love was to prompt a generous furnishing of his needs, so he could set up house for himself. If, however, he desired to stay, he could, and would be "branded" as specified in vv. 16, 17. Compare Ex. 21:2-6; also Lev. 25:39-46.

IT SHALL NOT SEEM HARD FOR THEE (v. 18)—An appreciative and grateful spirit, as well as a generous one, should have kept the master from disobeying this law (Cf. v. 9).

FOR TO THE DOUBLE OF THE HIRE OF A HIRELING HATH HE SERVED THEE (v. 18)—"At half the cost of a hired servant" (R.S.V., Amplified). ". . . for at half the cost of a hired workman he has served you six years" (Berkeley, and similarly rendered by several others). The master had used this man's services at a "bargain price"—now let him show his appreciation and gratitude toward him.

(5) THE OFFERING OF THE FIRSTLINGS (15:19-23)

19 All the firstling males that are born of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto Jehovah thy God: thou shalt do not work with the firstling of thy herd, nor shear the firstling of thy flock. 20 Thou shalt eat it before Jehovah thy God year by year in the place which Jehovah shall choose, thou and thy household. 21 And if it have any blemish, *as if it be* lame or blind, any ill blemish whatsoever, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto Jehovah thy God. 22 Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean *shall eat it* alike, as the gazelle, and as the hart. 23 Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it out upon the ground as water.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 15:19-23

274. What significance was there in setting aside the first-born as belonging to Jehovah?
275. Some first-born were not to be sacrificed unto the Lord—why? What was to be done with them?

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 15:19-23

19 All the firstling males that are born of your herd and flock you shall set apart for the Lord your God; you shall do no work with the firstling of your herd, nor shear the firstling of your flock.

20 You shall eat it before the Lord your God annually in the place [for worship] which the Lord shall choose, you and your household.

21 But if it has any blemish, if it is lame, blind, or has any bad blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God.

22 You shall eat it within your towns; the [ceremonially] unclean and the clean alike may eat it, as if it were a gazelle or a hart.

23 Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it on the ground like water.

COMMENT 15:19-23

Note also 12:6, 14:23. The firstlings were God's (Ex. 13:2) and were to be brought to the central sanctuary just as the tithes and offerings. These were to be without blemish, v. 21 (Compare Lev. 22:17-25). The giver could share in partaking of the sacrificial feast (v. 20), just as we learned in chapters 12 and 14.

"It is enjoined that, as all the firstborn were to be sanctified to the Lord (Exod. xiii. 2-13), they were not to work with the firstborn of their cattle, either by yoking the bullock to the plough or wagon or by shearing the sheep; these belonged to God, and were not to be put to any vulgar uses of men; year by year they were to be brought to the sanctuary, offered as sacrifices and eaten before the Lord" (Pulpit).

These animals were "sanctified" (v. 19). The word *qadesh* means to be *pure, clean, holy, sacred*, from a more literal meaning of to *separate, set apart*. The firstling males were to be so separated for God (Ex. 13:12), though an ass could be redeemed with a lamb (Ex. 13:13, 34:19, 20). An unclean beast could also be redeemed, Lev. 27:26, 27.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Sabbatical year of release, 1. The manner in which this release shall take place, 2-5. Of lending to the poor, and the disposition in which it should be done, 6-11. Of the Hebrew servant who has served six years, and who shall be dismissed well furnished, 12-15. The ceremony of boring the ear, when the servant wishes to continue with his master, 16-18. Of the firstlings of the flock and herd, 19, 20. Nothing shall be offered that has any blemish, 21. The sacrifice to be eaten both by the clean and unclean, except the blood, which is never to be eaten, but poured out upon the ground, 22, 23.

QUESTIONS, LESSON TWELVE (14:22—15:23)

1. How many *tithe*s did the faithful Israelite give to the Lord?
2. How did the three-year tithe differ from the "tithe of all the increase of thy seed . . . " ?
3. What if the central sanctuary was a long way from home? What provision was made?
4. What *principles* should a faithful Israelite have learned from these various laws about giving?
5. How often was the year of release from debt?
6. In relation to loaning, what "base thought" might the prosperous man have, and when would he be most likely to have it?
7. Who or what "will never cease out of the land"? How did Jesus apply this principle?
8. What does the expression, "for to the double of the hire of a hireling hath he served thee" (v. 18) mean?
9. For what could an Israelite use the firstlings of the flock?



Conies

Deut. 14, 7



Eagle

Deut. 14, 12