

STRUCTURE

From Carter, on Deut 15:1–18:

- vs. 1-6: Dealing with the markers of poverty
 - vs. 1-3: Command
 - God commands His people to forgive debts because poverty is a slight on God.
 - vs. 4-6: Blessing
 - His people must obey His commandments to receive the blessing of prosperity, which, when other nations see, will speak to the glory of God.
- vs. 7-11: Caring for people in poverty
 - Poverty will inevitably strike, so God's people must extend an open hand of grace to those in poverty (the same open hand of grace that God has shown them).
- vs. 12-19: Liberating people in poverty
 - Vs. 12-15: Provision
 - Giving generously to meet the needs of people in poverty will allow for their flourishing moving forward and freedom from the slavery of poverty.
 - Vs. 16-18: Safeguard
 - Voluntary servitude is a safeguard for people returning to poverty as well as a safeguard for God's blessing.

From Mary, on Deut 14:22–15:23:

Handling the Yield the LORD Will Give You Along the Liturgical Calendar, with Special Focus on Justice for Impoverished Israelites

14:22–29 Instructions about Your Annual Tithe [*proportionate to your yield*]

- **14:22–27** | The first and second years, bring your tithes to the LORD's chosen dwelling place and eat in the LORD's presence alongside your household and the Levites. [*on years 1, 2, 4, 5*]
- **14:28–29** | The third year, bring your tithe to your town's storehouse for the Levite, the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow (that is, the landless poor) to eat. [*on years 3, 6*]

15:1–18 Instructions about Release Granted to Fellow Israelites on Seventh Year

- **15:1–6** | Release of loan-pledges: Israelite creditors must release loan-pledges of fellow Israelites every seventh year (sabbatical year), since the LORD will bless them in the land if they remain faithful and he will exalt them internationally
- **15:7–11** | Warning against begrudging stinginess, relating to the LORD's release: If fellow Israelite becomes poor, do not harden your heart or shut hand to impoverished Israelites in the land of Canaan, but open-handedly lend to them, despite the nearness of the-LORD's-release year
- **15:12–18** | Another instance of sending out in seventh year of service (though not necessarily on "sabbatical year"); Hebrews who have sold themselves into debt-servitude:
 - **15:12–15, 18** | As one whom the LORD redeemed out of slavery, you must release fellow Hebrew bondservants and furnish them liberally, not least because of their service rendered
 - **15:16–17** | Provision for Hebrew bondservant in the case of his/her choosing to remain forever with your household

15:19–23 Instructions about Firstborn Male Dedication and Annual Sacrifice

- **15:19** | Dedication at birth: rightly treating all firstborn males of your flock
- **15:20** | Sacrifice each year: eating firstborn males of flock at the LORD's chosen dwelling place alongside your household
- **15:21–23** | Prohibition: Do not sacrifice blemished animal, but you may eat them in your towns

UNIFYING THEME

From Carter, on Deut 15:1–18: God has shown His kindness and grace in giving the Israelites this land to inherit, and therefore, they must extend the same hand of kindness to those in their midst who fall into a temporary bout of poverty.

From Mary, on Deut 14:22–15:23: As those *redeemed* by the LORD from Egyptian slavery, *blessed* by the LORD in the land that he has given you, and *promised* to receive his ongoing blessing if you faithfully follow his instructions, you must steward the land of Canaan's yield by tithing to the LORD each year, by granting the LORD's release to impoverished, indebted Israelites on the seventh year, by loaning liberally to impoverished Israelites, by supplying the needs of your Hebrew bondservants after six years of service, and by dedicating and sacrificing every firstborn male among your flock each year at the sanctuary.

AUTHOR'S AIM

From Carter, on Deut 15:1–18: Moses's aim in writing this instruction is to show the people why it is their responsibility to care for those among them living in poverty by reminding them of God's continued kindness to them, their role as stewards, not owners, of the land God has given them, and the weight that following these commands has on safeguarding the blessing of God.

From Mary, on Deut 14:22–15:23: Moses aims to continue showing the implications of Israel's corporate "sonship" (see Deut 14:1–2, 21) in terms of how they must steward the material resources the LORD gives them in Canaan as his holy nation dwelling in his land that he has given them [agrarian context]: specifically, regarding annual tithes, releasing loans among one another on the sabbatical year, liberally loaning to impoverished fellow Israelites, releasing and liberally providing for Hebrew bondservants after six years of service, and dedicating firstborn cattle to the LORD at his chosen dwelling place.

Israel's Grace-Shaped Rhythms: Rooted in Past Redemption, Pointing to Future Redemption

- **Weekly sabbath** (every seventh day): solemn assembly [Deut 5:12–15, emphasis on mercy]
- **Three annual festivals** (involving patterns of seven)
- **Sabbatical year** (every seventh year): land lies fallow/ "keeps a sabbath" [Exod 23:10; Lev 25:2–7]; loan-pledges released [Deut 15:1–2]
- **Year of Jubilee** (seven times seven years; 50th year): return of ancestral property/inheritance to clan; release of Israelite bondservants; land lies fallow this year also [Lev 25:8–22]

Four (select) socio-economic implications of Israel's grace-shaped rhythms, if they are obeyed:

- Preclusion of predatory lending [usury] among Israelites—a practice that oppresses the poor, who often accept unfavorable terms in lending out of desperation
- Preclusion of cynical self-righteousness in action or attitude against impoverished Israelites
- Preclusion of generational poverty through indefinite indebtedness, which often occurs through personal loss of land property and its yield
- Preclusion of wealthy accumulating land property across generations, since the ancestral inheritance returns to the original clan every fifty years

15:1–3 Command to Release Loan-Pledges of Israelites

15:4–6 Motivation for Release

15:7–8 Warning and Command to Lend Open-Handedly to Impoverished Israelites

15:9–10 Further Warning

15:11 Summary

15:12–14 Command to Send out and Supply Hebrew Bondservants

15:15 Motivation for Sending out and Supplying

15:16–17 Provision for Bondservants Choosing to Remain Forever

15:18 Motivations for Sending Out and Supplying