

Deuteronomy

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 - a. Introduction, 4:44-5:33
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[The general outline below, with some slight changes, is taken from *Covenant Sequence in Leviticus and Deuteronomy* by James Jordan, p. 61-67. The interpretive comments are my own, gleaned from many sources. I begin with the second commandment because that's where Dr. Nelson Kloosterman begins in his study book on Deuteronomy which was used in conjunction with this outline at Redeemer URC. RAP.]

- I. The second commandment, 12-13
 - A. The second commandment requires, *That we in no way make any image of God, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded us in His Word. God may not and cannot be imaged in any way; as for creatures, though they may indeed be imaged, yet God forbids the making or keeping of any likeness of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them.* HC Q&A 96-97.
 - B. How to worship God—the second commandment—true worship is at the central place of worship designated by God, 12:1-31. [Note parallel structure below between 1 & 9, 2 & 8, 3 & 7 and 4 & 6 which puts a central focus on 5.]
 1. Admonition to obey all God's commands, 12:1
 2. Destroy the Canaanite places of worship and objects of worship, and rename the places, 12:2-4
 3. Discontinue methods of worship used in the wilderness since leaving Egypt. Bring the consecrated gifts to the central sanctuary and rejoice before the Lord there with one's whole household, 12:5-14
 4. The butchering of clean animals for food is permitted anywhere but no drinking of blood, 12:15-18
 5. Do not neglect the Levites, 12:19
 6. The butchering of clean animals for food is permitted anywhere but no drinking of blood, 12:20-25
 7. Bring the consecrated gifts to the central sanctuary, 12:26-28
 8. Do not worship the way the Canaanites do. God is destroying them because of the way they worship, 12:29-30

9. Admonition to obey all that God commands, 12:31
- C. Knowing God's will—the second commandment continued.
 1. Do not be seduced by the false prophet, 13:1-5
 - a. The ability to perform signs and wonders is no guarantee of authenticity, 13:1-2
 - b. Measure the prophets words against the words and commands of God, "the Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul," 13:3-4
 - c. The false prophet must be put to death, "purge the evil from among you" (see 1 Cor. 5:11-13), 13:5a
 - d. The crime is terrible because it seeks to turn people away from the Lord who had redeemed Israel from the house of bondage, 13:5b, 10
 2. Do not be seduced by the false brother, 13: 6-11
 - a. Loyalty to God must be greater than to intimate family and friends (see Matt.10:37 and Luke18:29), 13:6-7
 - b. The false brother must be brought before the assembly (a trial) and put to death first by the witnesses against him (i.e. they must throw the first stones) and then by all the people, 13:8-11
 3. Do not be seduced by the idolatrous town, 13:12-17
 - a. The charge of apostasy must be investigated and be proven, 13:12-14
 - b. The guilty town must be completely destroyed and no plunder taken, 13:15-16
 - c. The Lord's continued blessing on the nation depends on their willingness to purge evil from their midst, 3:17-18
- II. The third commandment—the distinctive character of the people who bear God's name, 14:1-21a
 - A. The third commandment requires: *That we must not by cursing, or by false swearing, nor yet by unnecessary oaths, profane or abuse the name of God; nor even by our silence and connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and in summary, that we use the holy name of God in no other way than with fear and reverence, so that He may be rightly confessed and worshiped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works.* HC Q&A 99.
 - B. Certain mourning practices forbidden, 14:1-2 (cf. Lev. 19:28a)
 1. Israelites are "the children of the Lord," "holy," "special," and a "special treasure."
 2. Because of their special relationship to the living God, Israel must live differently than the pagan nations around them. Making oneself bleed was a way of identifying oneself with the dead. Shaving the head was a sign of being in bondage. God's people must adopt practices that affirm the triumph of life over death—a victory promised by God.
 - C. Clean and unclean animals—an expression of covenantal distinctiveness. Generally those animals that are associated with the wild, with preying on other animals, with scavenging dead animals or with the occult are forbidden. However the reason for the classification of some animals remains obscure, 14:3-21.
 1. Large land animals, 14:4-8
 - a. Animals that have a split hoof and chew the cud are clean.
 - b. Animals that chew the cud but do not have a split hoof are unclean.
 - c. Animals that have a split hoof but do not chew the cud are unclean.

2. Animals living in water, 14:9-10
 - a. Aquatic animals with fins and scales are clean.
 - b. Aquatic animals without fins and scales are unclean.
 3. Birds, 14:11-19. Certain birds are unclean.
 4. Insects, 14:20-21. Creeping (or swarming) insects that fly are unclean.
 5. Anything found dead is unclean though it may be sold to a foreigner, 14:21a.
- III. The fourth commandment, Sabbaths and festivals, 14:21b-16:17
- A. The fourth commandment requires *In the first place, God wills that the ministry of the Gospel and schools be maintained, and that I, especially on the day of rest, diligently attend church to learn the Word of God, to use the holy sacraments, to call publicly upon the Lord, and to give Christian alms. In the second place, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, allow the Lord to work in me by His Spirit, and thus begin in this life the everlasting sabbath.* HC Q&A 103.
 - B. The law of the kid, a young goat may not be cooked in its mother's milk, a symbolic commandment, 14:21b
 - C. The annual tithe, 14:22-27. A tithe is not considered a gift to God but is like a tax—that which is owed to God by those who benefit from the use of land lent by God. The tithe is different from free will offerings which are above and beyond the tithe. There appears to be two types of annual tithe or two ways the tithe was presented to God.
 1. The annual tithe of Numbers 18:21-24 belonged to the Levites every year. From this tithe, the Levites would give a tithe to the priest (Aaron's descendents).
 2. A second annual tithe is described here which is offered up to God and enjoyed by the worshippers in a fellowship meal in the presence of the Lord at the central sanctuary. It was a joyous celebration including wine or other fermented drink (Psalm 104:15). If God blessed by extending Israel's borders far from the central sanctuary, the produce for the tithe meal could be converted to cash and replaced with supplies purchased upon arrival at the central place of worship.
 3. It is possible that these two tithes are the same tithe, with a portion used for the worshippers meal and the balance (the majority of it) given to the Levites at the sanctuary.
 - D. The triennial tithe is the same as the second tithe above but was not brought to the central sanctuary. Instead it was stored locally and made available to the Levites not at the sanctuary, to strangers and to the fatherless and widows, 14:28-29.
 - E. The year for canceling debts, 15:1-11
 1. The biblical background to this section is Sabbath rest and the Exodus (liberation from bondage) in order to enjoy rest in God's good creation. Israel is called to be a free people and their economic relations may never be used to enslave one another. They must grant economic freedom to one another, knowing and trusting that God will provide richly for them.
 2. The law required the release of all debt every seventh year. The exception: this did not apply to debts owed by foreigners (temporary residents or traveling merchants). See Ex. 23:10 and Lev. 25:2-7, 20ff
 3. The rationale – the Lord will bless abundantly, i.e., the Lord will see to it that the creditors suffer no loss but instead experience great blessing.
 4. God promises that if the Israelites are careful to observe these commands they will lend to many nations and borrow from none. They will reign over many nations rather than be reigned over.

5. This law especially applies to the poor to whom money is lent. They must not be hard hearted and refuse to lend to the poor because the year for canceling debts is coming soon and they won't get their money back. To see the poor in need and withhold help is sin. If they lend to the poor the Lord will compensate.
 6. The NT application of this is seen in Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:35 and 2 Cor. 9:7.
- F. Hebrew servants to be freed after six years of service, 15:12-18
1. A man who had a debt and no money to pay, or who was generally poor, could indenture himself to his creditor, i.e., he worked without wages to pay off the debt, but he could not be made to work more than six years. At the seventh year (of service, not the Sabbath year), he was to go free and not go away empty handed but with enough material means to get back on his feet.
 2. He is to be treated with compassion because all Israelites were once slaves in Egypt. As the Lord had freed them, so they must free their brothers.
 3. Bondservants may choose to remain with their masters for life. Such "lifers" were to be marked with a pierced ear, by being nailed to the house to which they would belong. See Ex. 21:2-6 and Lev. 25:39ff; also Jer. 34:8ff.
 4. If the Israelites would obey and not regret having to give freedom to a fellow Hebrew, the Lord promised abundant blessing.
- G. Offering first born male animals, 15:19-23
1. The background to this is that Israel is God's "firstborn" among the nations. Because Pharaoh did not release God's firstborn, God punished all the firstborn in Egypt. Afterward, God required that every firstborn, both of men and animals, be given to Him. The firstborn of men were redeemed with money, but the first born of animals were sacrificed to the Lord (only clean animals—donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb). See Numbers 18:15-17.
 2. No Israelite may derive any benefit from the firstborn of his flocks or herds (work it or shear it) but must take it to the central place of worship and offer it to the Lord. The Lord then returned it to the worshipper as a fellowship meal.
 3. A firstborn animal with a defect was not to be offered to God. Only that which is perfect and whole may be offered to the Lord, cf. Mal. 1:7-8. However, even though imperfect, it too could not be worked. It had to be eaten at home but not as a religious ceremony since the unclean as well as clean persons could eat it. However no one could eat the blood, as described in Deut. 12.
- H. The three annual festivals requiring attendance at the central place of worship, 16:1-17
1. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Deut. 16:1-8
 - a. Regulations for Passover are in Ex. 12; Lev.23:5-8 and Num. 28:16-25. Three examples of it being celebrated in the land: Josh 5:10-12 and 2 Chron. 30 & 35.
 - b. Passover began on the 14th of Abid (later called Nisan) with the slaughter of a year old lamb (selected four days earlier) just after sunset. The slaughtering and pouring out of the blood was an act of expiation (took away guilt) and the meal was a fellowship meal with God. The animal was roasted whole and any leftovers were burned so that leftovers would not be used for common purposes (a non fellowship meal). The 15th and 21st were Sabbaths—no work other than food preparation.
 - c. Seven days of feasting began on the 15th of Abid during which the only bread which could be eaten was unleavened bread. It was called the "bread of affliction" not because it tasted bad but because it recalled the

haste in which the Israelites had left Egypt when there was no time to make yeast breads (Ex. 12:39 and Deut. 16:3). It was a week of joyous celebration, remembering their deliverance from bondage and bad tasting food would be inappropriate in such a context, cf. 2 Chron. 30:23 and Ezra 6:22

- d. When celebrated at the central sanctuary, the blood could not be applied to the doorframes of the home but was given to the priests to sprinkle on the altar. Any head of household could slaughter the animal. Levites did the slaughtering only if the head of household was ceremonially unclean.
2. The Feast of Weeks, Deut. 16:9-12
 - a. It is also called the Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16) and Pentecost (Acts 2:1, from the Greek for “fifty days”). The regulations are in Lev. 23:15-22 and Num. 28:26-31.
 - b. It was a one day celebration, sabbatical in character, on the fiftieth day (6th of Sivan) after the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a sheaf of the first fruits of the grain (wheat) harvest was to be waved before the Lord. Fifty days later (a jubilee of days), the completed grain harvest is celebrated.
 - c. It was not associated with any historical event but the joy of the harvest was heightened by remembering they were once slaves in Egypt and where they had not been able to call any harvest their own.
 - d. The people were not required to bring sacrifices to the central sanctuary but the Levites offered specified sacrifices on their behalf.
 3. The Feasts of Booths, Deut. 16:13-17
 - a. It was also called the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34) and the Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). The regulations are in Lev. 23:33-43 and Num. 29:12-38.
 - b. It was a seven day celebration, with the first day and the eighth day observed as Sabbath days. It began on the 15th of Tishri corresponding to September or October of our calendar.
 - c. Living in booths made with cuttings from palm fronds and leafy branches (Lev. 23:40) recalled living in booths when God had brought them out of Egypt.
 - d. This was a celebration of the entire harvest including fruits, oil and wine. It was a joyous celebration of all God’s abundant provisions.
 4. The people brought free will gifts and provisions for meals to all these festivals. Not appearing empty handed included bringing plenty to ensure a joyous celebration.
- IV. The fifth commandment, submission to authority, 16:18-18:22
- A. The fifth commandment requires, *That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me, submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction, and also bear patiently with their infirmities, since it is God’s will to govern us by their hand.* HC Q&A 104
 - B. Judges, 16:18-20
 1. Judges are to be appointed in all the tribes and towns, cf. Deut. 1:9-17.
 2. The judges are not to pervert justice by bribes or favoritism, cf. Hab. 1:1-5.
 3. Practicing justice is necessary to continue to live and enjoy the land the Lord gives.

- C. Visible (public) submission to God, 16:21-17:5
 - 1. Do not worship other gods along side of God.
 - 2. Do not sacrifice a defective animal to God. Such dishonors God and accomplishes the opposite of what a sacrifice is supposed to do, cf. Mal. 1:6-8.
 - 3. Those found guilty of worshiping false gods must be put to death. Since Israel is a theocracy (God is King), worshiping false gods is national treason.
- D. Witnesses, 17:6-7
 - 1. Two or three witnesses are required to put someone to death.
 - 2. The witnesses are to be the first to cast stones, then all the people must participate.
 - 3. The evil must be purged from among the people, lest God's anger rest on the whole nation and the whole nation be destroyed (cf. 16:20).
- E. Verdicts, 17:8-13
 - 1. If cases are too hard for the tribal (local) judges (not an appeals court), it must be taken to the "priests who are Levites" at the central place for worship. Their judgment is final.
 - 2. Local officials and the disputants must follow all the central court decrees, lest anarchy ensue. Contempt for a judge or priest is a capital offense.
- F. Kings, 17:14-20
 - 1. Moses predicts they will ask for a king to be "like all the nations around us," i.e., they will not be content with a theocracy but will want an earthly king. Though the desire may be unrighteous, God is not opposed to such a king and makes rules for him. A king is permitted but not commanded. Judges are required.
 - 2. Israel must appoint the king whom God chooses. (Notice who appoints and who chooses.) The king must be a true Israelite, not a foreigner.
 - 3. The king must not acquire great numbers of war horses, of which Egypt was the chief source. Israel must not to go back to Egypt for any reason.
 - 4. The king must not take many wives, by which foreign alliances might be forged. If he does, he will be led astray.
 - 5. The king must not accumulate great quantities of silver and gold, the source of excessive personal power.
 - 6. The king must make his own copy of the law and read it daily. The priests keep the original copy of the law, making the king dependent on the work of the priests.
 - 7. The king must not consider himself better than others (above the law) but must obey the law diligently and carefully. Careful obedience will insure a long and prosperous reign and an heir from among the king's children.
 - 8. The rules for the king teach Israel not to put their trust in military might, foreign alliances or great wealth. They may have a king but they must continue to put their trust in the Lord. The king was called to shepherd Israel; leading, feeding and protecting God's flock, cf. 1 Chron. 11:2 and Ezekiel 37:24.
- G. Levites, 18:1-8
 - 1. The income and support of the priests, including all the Levites, 18:1-5
 - a. The Levites were assigned 48 towns throughout all the tribal allotments, and pasture land around their towns for flocks and herds but they were not given a tribal territory of their own, Num. 35:1-5 and Josh. 21.
 - b. They had no crop land, vineyards or orchards.

- c. What land was for the rest of Israel, the Lord was for the Levites—their inheritance. The Lord would provide for them through the offerings brought to the Lord by the rest of Israel
 - 2. The right of priests who live elsewhere to serve at the central sanctuary, 18:6-8
 - a. Since some of the towns of the Levites were distant from the central sanctuary, some Levites could not participate regularly in the daily sacrifices.
 - b. These verses lay down a principle that priests living far away have just as much of a right to the gifts brought to the sanctuary as those living near, even if they have another source of income.
 - c. The principle led to the adoption of a system of monthly rotation for the sanctuary duty for the various family groups among the Levites, see Luke 1:8.
- H. Prophets, 18:9-22
 - 1. Pagan counterfeits for true prophets and for discerning the will of God forbidden, 18:9-14
 - a. Who will be the authority figures in Israel? To whom will Israel go for guidance?
 - b. The nations turned away from God but still felt a need for guidance and wisdom. They turned to sorcery, witchcraft and the like to try and find the answers to life's perplexing questions.
 - c. Because they would not listen to God and, instead, turned to demons, God is driving the pagans out of the land and giving it to Israel. If Israel follows pagan ways, they too will be driven from the land.
 - 2. A true prophet is promised, 18:15-18
 - a. The NT (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37; and John 1:26) points to Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise that God would raise up a prophet like Moses. But the promise also refers to all the prophets given by God to Israel throughout her history from Moses until Christ.
 - b. Although the promise is singular, it can refer to many prophets because Peter tells us that all the prophets spoke by the "Spirit of Christ in them" 1 Peter 1:11.
 - c. God puts His words in the prophets mouth so the prophet is God's mouth.
 - 3. Obedience to the prophets required, 18:19.
 - a. Since the prophets words are God's words, obedience is the only acceptable response.
 - b. Disobedience will be punished by God.
 - 4. False prophets must be put to death, 18:20
 - 5. How to distinguish true prophets from false, 18:21-22
 - a. How can Israel be sure that some is a mouth piece of God? There are three ways.
 - b. First, the prophets must speak in the name of the Lord and not some other god.
 - c. Second, If what he says "is not." That is, if what he says is not in accord with the known will of God then he is not a true prophets. Prophets don't contradict previous prophecies.

- d. Thirdly, the prophets predictions must come true to be a true prophet, i.e., he must have supernatural wisdom or knowledge. This includes, in principle, any display of supernatural power including miracles. Jesus ministry was also confirmed by miracles, Acts 2:22. However, performing miracles or making predictions was not the chief function of prophets. Their chief function was to make known the will of God.
- V. The sixth commandment, preserving life from violence, Deut. 19:1-22:8
- A. The sixth commandment requires, *That I do not revile, hate, insult or kill my neighbor either in thought, word or gesture, much less in deed, whether by myself or by another, but lay aside all desire of revenge; moreover, that I do not harm myself, nor willfully run into any danger. Wherefore also to restrain murder the magistrate is armed with the sword. . . . in forbidding murder God teaches us that He abhors its very root, namely, envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that in His sight all these are hidden murder. . . . in condemning envy, hatred, and anger, God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and kindness towards him, and to prevent his hurt as much as possible; also, to do good even unto our enemies.* HC Q& A 105-107
 - B. Life is the gracious gift of God. Jesus came to restore the gift of life to those who deserve to die. The sixth command protects and preserves human life by forbidding the unlawful taking of life: murder. Capital punishment is for individual murders and war for groups of murders.
 - C. Violence
 - 1. Manslaughter, 19:1-13
 - a. Cities of refuge provided protection to those guilty of negligent homicide but not for those who deliberately murdered.
 - b. The avenger of blood, whose duty was to bring a murderer to trial and see that justice was done, might, in the heat of anger kill an accused person (something perhaps permitted but not prescribed). Therefore there needed to be cities of refuge, strategically located for easy access throughout Israel so those accused of murder could have their cases heard.
 - c. Moses had already designated three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River (Ex. 21:13 and Num. 35:6-28) and now prescribes three more when they enter the land on the west side of the Jordan. Additional cities must be added as their territory increases so that there is always a city of refuge relatively near to where any Israelite might receive his inheritance from the Lord.
 - 2. Assault by stealth, 19:14
 - a. Coveting your neighbor's property—his inheritance—and moving the boundary marker is an assault on your neighbor's life. Life and land are tied together in the covenant.
 - b. Generally this would only be done by the rich against the poor, that is by those who thought they were in a position to get away with it.
 - c. One of the curses of the covenant is specifically directed against this activity, Deut. 27:17. 1 Kings 21:1-3 shows that Ahab's desire for Naboth's vineyard resulted in the murder of Naboth.

3. Assault by tongue, 19:15-21
 - a. At least two witness, never fewer, are required to convict a man of any crime.
 - b. If a case develops where there is just one man's word against another, then the case is to be referred to the central tribunal—the priests and judges currently serving at the sanctuary of the Lord. They must make diligent inquiry into the case.
 - c. The penalty for perjury is the same as the penalty for the crime about which testimony is being given. Except for murder, the “law of retaliation” was not interpreted literally (Exodus 21:23-27). It set forth a principle of proportionate compensation—the punishment should fit the crime. 1 Kings 21:7-13 shows how false testimony regarding Naboth resulted in his murder.
- D. War
 1. Militia, 20:1-9
 - a. The Immanuel principle. The priest, as representative of God's grace and mercy, is to assure the army before going into battle that God is with them and will give them the victory. Israel had seen God give them the victory when He brought them up out of Egypt and they were to be reminded of that each time they go into battle so they will not be afraid.
 - b. Three exemptions were given to potential soldiers in order to preserve the life of Israel and thus insure the coming of the Messiah. Those who had built a new house, planted a new vineyard or were engaged to be married were allowed to go home so they would not die in battle. The purpose of going to war was to insure that Israel could continue to enjoy the promised land. These exemptions were granted to those who had not yet had opportunity to do that. Occupying the land (houses and the productively of the land) and having children were essential to Israel's existence as a nation and for the coming of the Messiah.
 - c. A fourth exemption was granted to any who lacked faith—who were afraid. “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” 1 John 5:4. Since victory is by faith and fear is contagious, there is no room for the faithless among the ranks of those who are called to do battle for the Lord.
 2. Normal war—war with Israel's neighbors, 20:10-15
 - a. This concerns those cities or kingdoms outside the borders of the promised land who are hostile to Israel and against whom Israel must defend itself.
 - b. The first act of war is the offer of peace. God's people are not to be blood thirsty and destroy those willing to be servants of Israel (and thereby Israel's God).
 - c. If a city refuses the offer of peace, only the men were to be killed. Women and children were to be taken alive and brought into the covenant community.
 3. Holy war—war against the Canaanites who no longer have a right to the land, 20:16-18
 - a. Those cities or kingdoms within the promised land were to be completely destroyed because they had come under the wrath of God for their sins.

- b. They were also to be destroyed so Israel would not learn their sinful ways.
- 4. War and devastation, 20:19-20 (2 Kings 3:19-27)
 - a. Israelite soldiers were to show restraint (unlike most armies of their day) and not destroy wantonly. If they needed wood to build siege works, they were not to use the fruit trees.
 - b. Self control and respect for God's good creation must be exercised even in war but the lives which war is meant to protect should not be sacrificed to save the environment.
- E. Violence and Persons
 - 1. The discovered corpse, 21:1-9
 - a. When someone is murdered, justice requires retribution, Gen. 9:6. Cain understood this principle and feared it, Gen. 4:10.
 - b. When the murderer is unknown, the guilt rests on all the people of Israel. The elders of the nearest city must make atonement for that guilt to remove it.
 - c. A valuable heifer (not yet having been used for anything else) must be killed as a substitute for the unknown murderer and the elders (representing all the people) must confess their innocence and wash off the guilt in a place where running water can carry the guilt away.
 - d. The prayer of verse 8 shows that the killing of the heifer and the washing of the hands were a symbolic ceremony, not actually removing the guilt. They must still ask the Lord to accept the atonement and not hold them guilty. It still depends on the mercy of the Lord—the Lord who had “redeemed” His people.
 - 2. Captured women, 21:10-14
 - a. Women taken in battle could be married (but not from the seven Canaanite tribes, all of whom had to be killed, 7:3; 20:16-17).
 - b. Cutting hair, trimming nails and exchanging clothes together with a month for her to mourn indicated she was to put behind her, her old way of life and culture.
 - c. The month to mourn and the fact that she could not be sold showed the woman that the God of Israel protected the rights of those who had no rights—that He was a God of compassion.
 - d. Why is the husband displeased? He was initially attracted to her. What changed? Was she rebellious, resentful, uncooperative? Did she blaspheme? Did she want to leave? Letting her go may be similar to the provision of 1 Cor. 7:15 which allows a believer to let an unbelieving spouse go. Her willingness to leave may indicate that she is unconverted.
 - 3. Rights of the firstborn, 21:15-17
 - a. Polygamy (although not forbidden) was regulated to protect the rights of those involved. If the firstborn son was of an unloved wife, his rights as first born could not be given to a subsequent son of a beloved wife. A double share of the inheritance was the right of the first born since the first born was responsible to support the widows and minors of the family.

- b. To deny a man his rightful inheritance is to rob him of his livelihood which, metaphorically, is to rob him of his life, cf. 1 Kings 21.
- 4. The rebellious son, 21:18-21
 - a. In ancient Roman pater-families, fathers had the absolute right of life or death over their families, as also Judah with Tamar, Gen. 38:24. But in Israel, parents of a stubborn and rebellious son, a glutton and drunkard must bring that son to the elders. The fact that the son is brought first to the elders and not just to the whole town, indicates that the elders are to consider the charge and decide if it is true before allowing the whole town to carry out the punishment.
 - b. This law strengthens parental authority while also providing a check against the murderous abuse of that authority.
 - c. He who leads a self indulgent life in rebellion to God's authority as it comes to expression in parental authority, forfeits his life. Perhaps this is something like California's "three strikes and you're out" law.
- 5. The displayed corpse, 21:22-23
 - a. Part of the punishment for a capital offense was to display the body of the executed murderer in a public place where all could see—on a tree or pole. This is the opposite of the respect and dignity normally accorded the bodies of our loved ones.
 - b. But although the display of the body was part of the punishment, to leave the body of an accursed murderer on display overnight would bring defilement to the land. Eph. 4:26, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger."
- F. Additional laws relating to the sixth commandment
 - 1. Promote your neighbor's good (anti violence), 22:1-4
 - a. The sixth commandment forbids murder. The positive requirement is that we love our neighbor and seek his welfare. See HC Q&A 107.
 - b. Just as stealing a man's land is an attack upon his life, so is taking his livestock for he depends on that livestock for his livelihood.
 - c. Therefore if your neighbor loses his livestock and you find it, or he needs assistance with his livestock on the road, you should do what you can to help him.
 - d. In Exodus 23:4-5 there is a similar requirement regarding your enemies livestock.
 - 2. Women are not to wear "men's gear" and vice versa, 22:5
 - a. The Hebrew word translated "men's clothing" refers also to weapons and other items associated with men, thus "men's gear."
 - b. Because this is found in the context of the sixth commandment and among issues concerning war, it seems to indicate that women are not to go into battle like men and men may not dress as women as a military tactic of deception.
 - c. At the very least this law requires that we respect the distinction between the sexes as part of the God given order of creation.
 - 3. The bird law, 22:6-7
 - a. In rabbinical tradition this is known as the "least commandment." See Matt. 5:19.

- b. It is designed to instill respect for life by avoiding wonton destruction and is similar to the law preventing the destruction of fruit trees.
 - 4. The roof law to prevent negligent manslaughter, 22:8
 - a. The sixth commandment requires that we do all we can to protect, promote and preserve human life. That includes safety measures in the design of our homes.
 - b. Flat roofs are still common in the middle east since that is where people sleep on hot nights in homes with no air conditioning. See also Josh. 2:6.
- VI. The Seventh Commandment, 22:9-23:14
 - A. The seventh commandment teaches, *That all unchastity is accursed of God, and that we should therefore loathe it with our whole heart, and live chastely and modestly, whether in holy wedlock or single life. Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, it is His will that we keep both pure and holy; therefore, He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever may entice thereto.* HC Q&A 108-109
 - B. Three symbolic commandments regarding sexual purity, 22:9-12
 - 1. The vineyard – do not mix seeds in the plants (vegetables) planted between the rows of grapes. Israel is God’s vineyard consisting of the seed of Abraham. For Israelite women to marry non Israelite men would introduce foreign seed and defile God’s vineyard.
 - 2. The yoke – do not yoke together a donkey and an ox. This is also a prohibition against believers being yoked together with unbelievers which would be spiritual adultery, 2 Cor. 6.14.
 - 3. The garment – do not weave wool and linen together in the same garment. Again the need to remain pure is symbolically indicated.
 - C. Marriage laws, 22:13-30
 - 1. Taking a wife and discovering she is not a virgin, or lying about it, 22:13-21
 - a. A woman who is found by her new husband not to be a virgin is treated like a prostitute and is punished by stoning. The location dishonors her father who should have exercised more discipline and is appropriate since she sinned while in her father’s house.
 - b. If the man makes a false accusation, he must compensate the father with twice the bride price for the shame he attempted to bring on his house and he may never divorce her, making it hard for him to afford more wives.
 - 2. Committing adultery with a married woman, 22:22. Both parties are to be stoned.
 - 3. Committing adultery with an engaged women in town (both must die) or in the country (the woman is considered innocent), 22:23-27
 - 4. Committing fornication, 22:28-29. If the woman is not engaged, the man must pay the bride price and marry her, although the father may refuse permission to marry (Exodus 22:17).
 - 5. Prohibition against incest, 22:30. In a polygamous society, your father’s wife is not necessarily your mother, although that also is expressly forbidden in Lev. 18:7. Deut. 20:11 prescribes the death penalty for both and Deut. 27:20 places God’s curse on the man who does this.

- D. The purity of the people of God, 23:1-14. The following rules concern who may be included in the “assembly of the Lord,” that is, the worshipping community.
1. No emasculated male may enter the assembly of the Lord. Emasculated animals were also unacceptable as sacrifices to God, Lev. 22:24. The mutilation of a man’s body is a violation of his nature as image of God and is incompatible with the holiness of God. Such a man is unable to be fruitful and multiply. However, Isaiah prophesied of a day when God’s grace would overcome even this defect and allow eunuchs to enter into fellowship with God and enjoy His blessing, Isaiah 56:3-8. The same prophecy promises grace to excluded foreigners.
 2. No one born of a forbidden (incestuous) marriage may enter the assembly of the Lord to the tenth generation. To the tenth generation means, in effect, forever.
 3. No Ammonite or Moabite (who were all descended from Lot’s incest – Gen. 19:37-38) could enter the assembly of the Lord because of their hostility to Israel. God had promised Abraham to curse those who curse Abraham’s family, Gen. 12:3.
 4. Edomites and Egyptians may enter the assembly of the Lord in the third generation. Although these nations also were hostile to Israel at the time of the Exodus, their former relationship to Israel (as brother and as giver of refuge) allows for a more benevolent attitude toward them. The third generation of Edomites or Egyptians living in Israel could (by circumcision) enter the “assembly of the Lord.”
 5. When the army is encamped and ready for battle, they must avoid anything which would make the camp unclean, thus hindering God’s presence among them. Victory was completely dependent on God’s willingness to dwell among them. Two ordinary, natural occurrences which might otherwise be overlooked show how careful God’s people must be to be holy.
 - a. A nocturnal emission makes a man unclean for a day (as did sexual intercourse Lev. 15:16-17; Ex, 19:15 and 1 Sam. 21:4). Anyone experiencing this must go out of the camp for a day and then wash before he could be readmitted to the camp.
 - b. Human excrement must be buried so God will not see it and be offended.
- VII. The Eighth Commandment, 23:15-24:7
- A. In the eighth commandment, *God forbids not only such theft and robbery as are punished by the government, but God views as theft also all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we seek to get our neighbor's goods, whether by force or by deceit, such as unjust weights, lengths, measures, goods, coins, usury, or by any means forbidden of God; also all covetousness and the misuse and waste of His gifts.* The eighth commandment requires, *That I further my neighbor's good where I can and may, deal with him as I would have others deal with me, and labor faithfully, so that I may be able to help the poor in their need.* HC Q&A 110-111.
- B. Various laws dealing with property and work.
1. Runaway slaves, 23: 15-16. Slaves that run away from pagan masters and seek refuge in Israel are not to be returned to their masters. God, the Owner of all men, grants freedom and protection to those who take refuge among His people. This foreshadows the day when slaves of sin from all nations can find true liberty and safety by joining the people of God.
 2. Forbidden employment, 23:17-18. Not every form of employment is permitted. No Israelite may work as a shrine prostitute even though most of Israel’s

neighbors approve of such activity. No income produced from such employment may be brought to the Lord.

3. Interest, 23:19-20. In an agricultural economy there was little reason to ever borrow except in times of poverty. Ex. 22:25, Lev. 25:35-38 and Amos 5:11 confirms that lending was something that concerned helping the poor. Charging interest of fellow Israelites is forbidden but not from foreigners. Renting out one's land to a fellow Israelite for a return of the profit (a kind of interest) was not forbidden.
4. Vows must be kept, 23:21-23. In the context of the eighth commandment this is probably a reference to giving your word in a business deal. God keeps His Word; so must His people.
5. Generosity and hospitality, 23:24-25. You may eat from your neighbor's vineyard or field whatever you can eat on the spot but you may not harvest your neighbor's crop and take it from the field to eat elsewhere or to sell. See Matt. 12:1 and Luke 6:1 where Jesus and His disciples ate such food. Don't always be looking to make a profit. Be generous to passers-by in need.
6. Remarriage to one's former wife after her subsequent marriage is forbidden because it would defile the land, 24:1-4. The land of Israel is the land where God's covenant is enacted and enforced. Marriage is symbolic of the covenantal relationship between God and His people. For a man to remarry the woman he had previously divorced, because of her indecency, after she has had an intervening marriage, would symbolize that the covenant of marriage is trite and meaningless, i.e., that one can break the covenant, enter another, break or end the second and then reestablish the first as if nothing had happened. Although God proclaims in Jeremiah 3 that He will take back adulterous Israel after she has been defiled, yet He does so at great cost to Himself, namely the sacrifice of His Son to atone for Israel's guilt.
7. Newlyweds are not to be separated for one year, 24:5. A newly married man shall not be robbed of the opportunity to have children and enjoy the blessings of the land.
8. Do not oppress the poor (i.e., someone seeking a loan) by taking in pledge that which is necessary for him to make a living or necessary for his daily bread, 24:6. Such an action would rob him of his ability to support or feed himself.
9. Kidnapping a fellow Israelite (man stealing) is a crime deserving of death, 24:7. This is what Joseph's brothers did to him when they sold him into slavery and banished him from the land and the blessings of the covenant.

VIII. The Ninth Commandment, 24:8-25:3

- A. The ninth commandment requires, *That I bear false witness against no one, twist no one's words, be no backbiter or slanderer, join in condemning no one unheard and rashly; but that on pain of God's heavy wrath I avoid all lying and deceit as the very works of the devil; and that in matters of judgment and justice and in all other affairs I love, speak honestly and confess the truth; also, insofar as I can, defend and promote my neighbor's good name.* HC Q&A 112.
- B. Laws dealing with truth, justice and honest dealings with others.
 1. Leprosy is an indication of God's anger against the sin of slander, 24:8-10. Such was the case when Miriam and Aaron slandered their brother Moses, speaking ill of him unfairly because of his Egyptian wife (Num. 12). Those afflicted with

leprosy must be careful to obey all that is required of them in the law so as not to incur the further wrath of God.

2. Trust the word of a poor man, 24:11-13. Do not show disdain or distrust for him by retrieving from his house what he has pledged or keeping his pledge overnight if he is in need of it.
3. Keep your word to the poor. Promptly give them the wages you have promised, 24:14-15.
4. Do not condemn the innocent because of any close association with the guilty, 24:16. Judge each man's character on his own merits, not that of his family.
5. Those who are weak and defenseless (the stranger, fatherless and widow) are not to be denied justice, 24:17-18. God defended Israel when they were weak and Israel must do the same for the weak in their midst.
6. Mercy must also be shown to the weak and needy, 24:19-22. At harvest time, the second gleanings are to be left for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. God showed mercy to Israel when they were slaves and Israel must show mercy to the needy in their midst.
7. Just punishments must be given to the guilty, 25:1-3. The punishment must be administered in the presence of the judge (the impartial and unbiased party in the dispute) to insure that the punishment is not excessive due to anger or over righteous zeal. Even the rights, reputation and dignity of the guilty must be protected, for they too are fellow covenant members, "your brothers."

IX. The Tenth Commandment, 25:4-26:19

- A. The tenth commandment teaches that, *not even the least inclination or thought against any commandment of God ever enter our heart, but that with our whole heart we continually hate all sin and take pleasure in all righteousness*, HC Q&A 113. The wording of the tenth commandment focuses attention on your neighbor's wife and property, teaching us to be *content* with what God has given us and *not desiring* that which God has given to someone else.
- B. The laws which Moses gives in conjunction with coveting focuses on one's attitude and actions toward the property of those who are near to us, i.e. their God given inheritance in the promised land.
 1. Do not muzzle the ox as it treads out the corn, 25:4. Moses is concerned that animals not be exploited (Prv. 12:10). But Paul also uses this text in 1 Cor. 9:9-12 and 1 Tim. 5:18 to teach that a worker deserves his wages. If you benefit from the labors of another, you need to share with the laborer or help support him in some way. In the context of Duet. 25 (the levirate marriage—*levir* comes from the Latin word for brother-in-law) it may mean that the man who marries his dead brother's widow to raise up an heir for his dead brother, has a right to benefit from his "nephew's" land while raising him.
 2. The levirate marriage, 25:5. If an unmarried man dies, his land (his inheritance from God) would go to his nearest relative but if a married man dies childless, the near relative must not covet the dead man's land. Instead he must marry the widow to raise up an heir for the deceased relative to preserve the inheritance rights and family line of his brother or kinsman. Levirate marriage is mentioned in Gen. 38:8-11, Ruth 3-4 and Jesus also deals with it when the Sadducees raise the issue in an argument against the resurrection.

3. The disobedient levir, 25:6-10. If a man refuses to marry his kinsman's widow, in the hope of inheriting his relative's land when the widow dies, the widow shall bring the case to the town elders to pressure him to do his duty. If he refuses, the widow is to perform two symbolic actions against him. Spit may be a way of shaming him or it may be a symbol of the seed the man refused to give. Sandals protect one's feet from the ground which God has cursed. Removal of the sandal may symbolize removal of the protection that God gives against the curse on the earth. The man's punishment will come from God who will make the man's own inheritance unprofitable. The promised land of blessing will no longer be a place of blessing for him.
4. The female attacker, 25:11-12. An attack on the means of procreation is an attack on one's family line and inheritance. Exodus 21:22 describes a similar situation but from the opposite perspective. An attack on a child in the womb or on a man's ability to produce children was an attack on covenant continuity through the birth of children.
5. Possessing the tools of a thief is forbidden, 25:13-16. Coveting your neighbors property may cause you to devise ways to steal it from him—a heavy weight or large measure for buying and a lighter weight or smaller measure for selling. You may not make any provision for such theft even by possessing the tools of a thief. Just possessing uneven weights or measures will cause God to deny you the blessings of the promised land, because just having them means you are thinking about using them, which violates the command against coveting.
6. War on God's enemies, 25:17-19. The Amalekites sought to prevent Israel from obtaining their inheritance (Exodus 17:8-17) and employed base and cowardly means to do so. The Amalekites had no fear of God. God's condemnation of the Amalekites serves as a warning against any who covet the inheritance of another and, in general, who have no fear of God.
7. Tithes and rejoicing before God, 26:1-15. The opposite of coveting (and therefore its cure) is generosity, which begins by bringing to God the first fruits and tithes out of all the bounty He has given.
 - a. The offering of the first fruits of the land, 26:1-11.
 - i. After entering the land and taking possession of the land (conquest), each Israelite family head was to bring a basket of the first produce of the ground to the place where the Lord had caused His name to abide (the Tabernacle or Temple).
 - ii. This ceremony took place in conjunction with the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:9-12 & 18:4) and was something new in the life of Israel since it marks the beginning of their being an agricultural society.
 - iii. The gift was handed to the priest who laid it at the altar. The altar is the place of atonement and is central in the life of Israel. All covenant blessings are dependent on atonement being made for sin.
 - iv. The ceremony for bringing the first fruits required each worshipper to recite a litany, testifying to the faithfulness of the Lord in giving the promised covenant blessing of land. The litany remembered that although Jacob was in the land he was a stranger in it and suffered a famine, i.e., he did not possess the

land. In Egypt they were a nation but had no land. Now at last, by the might and power of God, they are a nation and possess the land.

- v. This event was to be celebrated with rejoicing. It was the climax of centuries of waiting and was the result of the faithfulness of the Lord.
- b. Bringing the first of the triennial tithe of the land, 26:12-15.
 - i. In the third year each Israelite household was to distribute to the Levites and to the needy in their own towns (the stranger, the fatherless and the widow) a tithe (a tenth) of the increase of the produce of the land. See Deut. 14:22-29.
 - ii. After distributing the tithe, the worshipper was to make a three part declaration. In the first part he declared that he had given the tithe as commanded, in the second part he denied doing anything that would have corrupted his gift, and in the third part, on the basis of the righteousness confessed in the first two parts, he prays and asks God to bless him according to the promises of the covenant.
 - iii. The offering of the tithe to the needy and the appeal to God on the basis of it, unites the first and second table of the law. Love for God is shown in keeping the tithe from being corrupted. Love for neighbor is shown in giving the gift to the Levites and the needy.
 - iv. His prayer, offered from the worshipper's home, is directed to God "in Your holy habitation" and indicates that the Israelites knew their God to be able to hear their prayers over a "long distance."
- c. This section on the bringing of the first fruits and the giving of the tithe focus Israel's attention on the faithfulness of God and involve Israel in the worship of God. Nothing is better suited to counter the tendency of sinful hearts to covet.

X. COVENANTAL OBLIGATIONS AND PROMISES, 26:16-19

- A. This section brings to a conclusion Moses' sermon on the ten commandments begun in 5:1. In this section:
 - 1. Moses summons the people to fully obey all the decrees and laws of God with all their heart and soul, vs. 16.
 - a. The words, "this day" reminds us that Moses has been giving a sermon to the assembled people concerning God's requirements for them. Deut. 4:44ff describes the place and context of this sermon.
 - b. The call to obey with heart and soul points to a deep, spiritual and inward piety, far different than the outward, legalistic piety of the scribes and Pharisees of later centuries.
 - 2. Moses reminds the people of their pledge or vow to make the Lord their God and to keep His decrees, commands and laws, vs. 17.
 - a. The vow by the people may have been part of a covenant renewal ceremony that had just taken place similar to the covenant renewal ceremony of Josh. 24:15.

- b. In a covenant renewal ceremony the people would declare or vow to make the Lord their God and obey His laws and God, speaking through His prophet (in this case Moses), would renew His promises to bless those who keep the covenant. See also Exodus 24:3-7 and 1 Kings 18:21,39 for similar vows made by the people of God.
 - c. Vss. 17-19 appear to summarize the declarations that have just been made by both parties of the covenant.
3. Moses reminds the people of God's promise to make the people His people and His treasured possession as they obey Him, vs. 18. Although Moses speaks of the vow of the people before he speaks of God's promises, yet the vow of the people is in response to God's prior revelation of Himself as their Creator and Redeemer and in response to the Lord's gracious initiation of the covenant.
4. Moses reminds the people of God's promise to highly exalt the people above all the nations, vs. 19. The law is given in the context of God's covenantal promises to bless and exalt His chosen people. The law is the instrument that God uses to separate His people from the other nations (i.e. make them holy) and it is the means that He uses to elevate His people above the nations (i.e. sanctify and glorify them). Election is unto obedience, or as Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:10, *created in Christ Jesus for good works*, and in Titus 2:14, *our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*. Although we are not saved by our obedience, neither can we be saved without a beginning of true obedience as the fruit of a living faith.