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Lesson 58 – Deut. 25:11-19
Calibrated Social Standards as a Restraint on Coveting
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I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God’s spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6 - 4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <i>motivation</i> to obey from (1) past gracious actions of Yahweh and (2) sovereign <u>destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1-26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = <i>proper response</i> to Yahweh in heart and soul
5:1 - 11:32	Loving Yahweh with <i>all the heart</i>
12:1 - 26:19	Loving Yahweh with <i>all the soul</i> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)
12:1 - 13:18	Theological unity of Israel’s tribes and its Enforcement (esp 1 st , 2 nd , and by implication the corresponding 9 th , 10 th commandments)
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (a witness consistent with Yahweh’s name, see 3 rd commandment)
14:22 - 16:17	A Distinct Culture of Theocentric Faith in God’s Economic Order (with emphasis upon the 4 th and by implication the corresponding 8 th commandment)
16:18 - 18:22	A Distinct Culture of Human Authority Under God’s Justice (emphasis upon human authority starting in the home—the 5 th commandment and by implication the 7 th commandment)
19:1 - 21:23	Protocols for Implementing True “Social Justice” (emphasis upon dealing with deployment of civil authority’s lethal force—6 th commandment)
22:1 - 23:18	A Distinct Culture of Life-Protecting Boundaries (emphasis upon purity of national life—the context of the 7 th commandment)
23:19 - 24:7	A Distinct Culture of Respect for “Human Rights” (emphasis upon the implications of the 8 th commandment)
24:8 - 25:4	A Distinct Culture of True Representation (emphasis upon the implications of the 9 th commandment)
25:5-19	Heart rebellion against Yahweh’s Rule (emphasis upon the implications of the 10 th commandment)

10th commandment deals with heart rebellion against Yahweh’s design of society and His provisions for living within that design

Deut. 5:21 “*You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.*”

II. HEART REBELLION AGAINST YAHWEH’S RULE or “I’LL DO IT MY WAY” (Deut 25:5-19)

A. Rejection of responsibility of an unmarried brother toward his brother’s family (25:5-10)

The thought here is that taking on the responsibility of a brother’s widow with all the costs involved and effort to raise a godly seed without eventual economic benefit is a burden that ought to be avoided if possible. Amounts to [coveting a brother’s assets].

B. Disregard for the procreative function in Israel’s existence (25:11-12)

25:11 two men fight

- Personal fighting had to be within bounds of Yahweh’s contract (e.g., Ex. 21:22-25—respect for life & lex talionis).
- Yahweh’s contract sign was circumcision because of the prior Abrahamic contract. Circumcision physically pictured the impairment to procreation of the fall—the promised seed must come supernaturally (hence the Isaac/Ishmael story preparatory to the virgin birth).

rescue her husband. . .seizes him by the genitals

Common tactic used in the ANE—Assyrian law code mentions it. But in Israel this pagan tactic was forbidden out of respect for the procreative function and its role in God’s plan for Israel. Inclusion of this case law in this section elucidates the 10th commandment’s meaning of “covet”—The woman disregards Yahweh’s intent for Israel and [reverts to] a coveted pagan response to life

25:12 cut off her hand

Only other instance besides circumcision of authorized bodily mutilation in the Bible—lex talionis used here (“cutting off”).

This case could also have been included under C 3

C. Disregard for integrity of currency (25:13-16)

25:13 differing weight (lit: bag of stones -- weight)

25:14 differing measures (lit: ephah – volume ~ 5 gallons of water)

25:15 just. . .days lengthened

Weights & Measures are STANDARDS for ALL people

Yahweh’s concern: **Prov. 11:1; 16:11; Amos 8:4-5; Micah 6:9-13**

1. Immediate context—business transactions: heavy weight for the buyer; light one for the seller (who likely has the advantage of better information).

2. Larger context: justice itself (note “just”)
 - Revelation of God’s integrity as the basis of our relationship with Him (only +R satisfies → exclusivity of the gospel) which is the 3rd and 9th commandment area; why the 10th here?? Answer: *because in the end we must be content with the creation as God designed it and learn to live in accordance with His designs.*
 - Abiding standards of justice are essential to a functioning society:

Hayek: *“There is probably no single factor which has contributed more to the prosperity of the West than the relative certainty of the law which has prevailed here. This is not altered by the fact that complete certainty of the law is an ideal which we must try to approach but which we can never perfectly attain. . . .But the degree of the certainty of the law must be judged by the disputes which do not lead to litigation because the outcome is practically certain as soon as the legal position is examined. It is the cases that never come before the courts, not those that do, that are the measure of the certainty of the law.”*

Principle: The clearer and stable the standard, the [easier and cheaper] it is to work and live; complicate the standard or keep it changing (either by rewriting or by reinterpreting), the harder and more expensive it is to live.

3. Rise of lawyer class, since law is so unclear it needs “experts”

North: *“There is little doubt that the proliferation of lawyers in the United States in the later years of the twentieth century was a sign of a major breakdown of its moral and legal order. The United States in 1990 had some 730,000 lawyers – 70 percent of the world’s total. In 1990, Japan had 11 lawyers per 100,000 in population; the United Kingdom, 82; Germany, 111; the United States, 281. Japan had 115 scientists and engineers per lawyer; United Kingdom, 14.5; Germany, 9.1; United States, 4.8”*

4. Rise of lobbying class since changes occur

College economics prof, P. J. Hill: *“We’ve become a society in which the rules are in flux, thereby prodding people to spend a large amount of their time and resources trying to change the rules to their benefit. Our book argues that in the beginning the Constitution was a set of rules for a few areas that pretty much encouraged the entrepreneurial type of person to go out and make better mousetraps, to create wealth. Somewhere around the 1870’s the constitutional climate started changing dramatically, not by amendment but by interpretation. The Constitution became interpreted in a more casual way. There was a rise in what we call ‘reasonable regulations;’ the Supreme Court said the state legislatures could pass any sort of regulations they wanted about economic affairs so long as they were ‘reasonable.’ That meant, of course, that people spent a lot of time trying to get regulations written to their advantage or to the disadvantage of their competitors. . . almost nothing in the economic arena is unconstitutional.”*

[cont’d]

“Today, much of the economic game is in the political arena. It is played by getting rules on your side, or making sure that somebody else doesn’t get the rules on their side against you. The action is in Washington, D.C. It’s interesting to look at the statistics of many large companies and see how much of their time goes into lobbying, where their business headquarters are, who the big players are, etc. It turns out that it’s just as important to try to make sure that the rules favor you as it is to produce better products. Any society in which the rules are not clearly defined, whatever they are, is at risk. You need a society of stable, legitimate, and just rules in order to have people productively engaged.”

10th commandment: *In the end we must be content with the creation as God designed it and learn to live in accordance with His designs rather than covet via government to get “our fair share”.*
Could also be considered under the 9th commandment as a misrepresentation.

25:15 days lengthened

Same result as the 5th commandment because this is a cause-effect principle that God has built-in to the economic dimension of creation.

25:16 an abomination

Strong word used here because this sin entails destruction of all [social stability] by altering the standards people live by and rely on.

Another illustration from the “real” (God’s) world. Baltimore SUN editorial of 9/27/11 by an economics prof at Towson State, Dr. James Dorn, dealing with inner city poverty in Baltimore (“Poor choices”). [Dr. Dorn’s article]

“The poverty rate for married-couple families with related children under 18 in Baltimore is only 7.4%. . . Education is also important: female-headed households with less than a high school degree have a poverty rate of 44.1%; the rate is 11% for those with a college degree. . . Government policies can influence one’s choices and the level of responsibility one takes. The growth of the welfare state has eroded personal responsibility and made the poor more dependent.”

[cont’d]

“A huge underclass has captured politicians for their cause of maintaining and increasing [welfare payment] transfers rather than limiting the size and scope of government to make people more responsible and foster economic growth. . . Part of [Baltimore’s poverty problem] lies in the rise of government welfare and the decline in morality. . . It’s time to think about how to reduce latent poverty and make people more responsible for their choices.”

D. Abandonment of holy war against Amalek (25:17-19)

25:17-18 remember what Amalek did to you when you came out of Egypt

These were descendents of Esau and attacked Israel in the desert (Ex.17:8-16).

King Saul was to eliminate Amalek (1 Sam 15:1-7), but he did not complete the holy war (15:8ff).

David finally did it (1 Sam 30:1ff).

25:19 you shall not forget.

Coveting the rest of God without finishing holy war violates the 10th commandment. Could also be considered a violation of the 2nd commandment as well.

God calls us out of rest to engage in His war with evil.

III. CONCLUSION

- We’ve finished with the case laws, the statutes and judgments, and have only Moses’ conclusion to this long 2nd exposition about loving the Lord with our hearts and minds.
- We need to see the multifaceted nature of each of the 10 commandments, how they encompass far more than what first appears.
- By the Law is knowledge of sin!! (and awakening of our need for a Savior).