

SESSION #37 (23 November 2010); Deut 15:19 – 16:17; Israel’s Distinctive Theocentric Faith in God’s Economic Order—Part 4

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 = <u>motivation</u> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) <u>sovereign 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 = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul
5:1-11:32	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>
12:1 - 26:19	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)
12:1-31	Theological unity of Israel’s tribes (1 st , 2 nd , 10 th commandments)
12:32-13:18	Enforcement of Theological Orthodoxy (1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , 9 th , 10 th commandments)
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (all 10 commandments)
14:22-29	A Distinct Culture of Financial Faith-Rest (all 10 commandments with emphasis upon the 4 th and 8 th commandments)
15:1-18	A Distinct Culture of Economic Liberation (esp. 4 th and 8 th commandments)
15:19 - 16:17 A Distinct Culture of Theocentric Economics (esp. 4th and 8th commandments)	

Economics & Israel’s distinctive culture

Last two sections (14:22-29 and 15:1-18) have to do with economics as does the present section (15:19 - 16:17) – three major sections in “loving the Lord with all your soul”. Why?

A. Dominion (Gen. 1:26-28) necessarily involves economic dimensions—*biblically acceptable* labor produces objects that ought to be valued by a *biblical* society. Planned out labor is absolutely required to generate wealth (Luke 14:28-30, 31-32, 33). Carefully planned labor is necessary, but it isn’t [sufficient] because of God’s providential override on human plans (James 4:13-16).

B. Valuation (imputation) involves trying to ascertain the [worth] of labor’s production, i.e. assigning a *price* for it. Three approaches to assigning price:

1. “Free market” approach whereby [vast numbers of individuals] assign their price estimates (subject to limitations of human knowledge).
2. “Elite” approach whereby [powerful few] claim superior insight into assigning price estimates (e.g., Marxist-Socialist regime of bureaucrats, corporate monopoly regime of businessmen or labor unions in collusion) (subject to limitations of human knowledge).
3. “Ultimate judgment” approach where [absolute true value] is given by God to each person’s labor (NOT subject to limitations of human knowledge).

C. Israelite demonstration of the Kingdom of God

Unique revelation of economic cause-effect being built upon a [contractual agreement] involving a graciously-opened relationship with God; potentially could have culturally conquered corrupt Noahic civilization.

1. Israel's unique relationship to the true God manifested through its culture.

International awareness of its culture via world trade businesses (**Deut 15:4 certainly bless** – infinitive absolute amplifies the “mood”).

2. Depended upon Israel's faithful obedience for such a theocentric economic system to function properly (**Deut 15:5 only if you carefully obey**).

II. GOD GETS THE FIRST AND THE BEST OF LIFE (15:19-23)

15:19 all the firstborn males

(1) “Firstborn” sons mark the viability of the family in that their existence insures the [continuity] of the family name in history (**Gen. 49:3**); in Israel they inherited twice what other sons did. In the Gentile culture the firstborns were similarly honored (note firstborn daughter treatment in **Gen. 29:26**).

(2) God considered the nation Israel as His firstborn son (**Ex. 4:22**).

(3) The 10th plague of the exodus judgments aimed at the firstborn sons—without blood on the door (**Ex. 12:29-30**).

(4) Thenceforward Israel's firstborn—man and beast—were God's property (note **Ex. 13:1, 12** occurs in the midst of a narrative about Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, also cf **Num 3:13**).

(5) The firstborn—whether of man that carries on the family's legal existence or of the beast that proves future production—are a sign of the [future], an aid in developing a future-oriented culture.

do no work. . .do not shear. . .

Economic cost to the family to care for the animal for up to a year without any economic return on their investment.

15:20 year by year

15:21 if there is a defect in it

God was “choosy” and wanted the best valued animal (the first and the best).

This requirement was to act as a learning device to prepare for His Son Who would be of supreme value because He would be without sin.

15:22 clean and unclean can eat it within your gates

Locally consumed because it didn't meet the high requirements of the central sanctuary, but still could not be economically productive for the Israelite family.

15:23 not eat the blood

Consistent witness that consumption of animals for food is a *substitutionary atonement for our life* (animal life is not to be a casual by-product of sport nor just another cafeteria feature); it was not part of original creation's *modus vivendi*.

III. THE TWO VERY COSTLY ANNUAL SPRING FEASTS (16:1-12)

A. Israel’s feasts were calendar fixed because Israel is *under a set of historical national “contracts” with God that require verification*. The Church is not a nation and has no such calendar (replacement theology tries to carry over such elements including priesthood, priestly liturgy, baptism as a counterpart to circumcision, etc.).

B. Israel’s feasts contrasted theologically with pagan agricultural feasts (higher critics love to argue that Israel merely copied the pagan feasts and added some Jewish ideas to them).

1. Differed in that they affirmed Yahweh as the Creator and Lord over nature by relating agricultural productivity to _[ethical conformity]_ with Yahweh’s contractual stipulations.

2. Differed in that the individual feasts were and are adumbrations of God’s supernatural redemptive acts in His integrated plan of salvation that _[culminates in victory]_.

Cycle	Celebration by Israel	Fulfillment for Israel
Spring Cycle	Passover to remember the exodus judgment/salvation	Crucifixion—availability of complete redemption from Satan’s rule
	Unleavened bread (7 days) to dramatize the cultural break from Egypt	Availability of a cultural break with the world
	First-Fruits to rejoice over the 1 st spring harvest--barley	Resurrection of Christ is the first fruit of the resurrection process
	Pentecost to rejoice over the last of the spring harvest now laid up for use--bread	Pentecost
Fall Cycle	Feast of Trumpets	to be revealed
	Day of Atonement	to be revealed
	Feast of Tabernacles (8 days)	to be revealed

C. Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, First-Fruits (16:1-8)

16:1-2 brought you out of Egypt

Not a “cyclic event” as the pagan calendars; exact day remembered as part of real history. Jesus was crucified on the exact date –14 Nisan—(literal fulfillment reveals the sovereignty of God and the planned nature of history). Deliverance from Pharaoh’s rule pictured deliverance from Satan’s rule.

16:3-4 no leaven

Stressed the break from Egyptian culture by breaking the continuity of bread-making, a central cultural fixture (remember the dietary rules in chap 14?). The reality of a cultural break from the world by the nation Israel was and is potentially available from the

crucifixion forward IF it would trust in the redemption of the cross (see Peter's attempts to make this point in Acts 2 and 3).

16:5-8 eat at twilight. . .six days. . .no work

Not only the exact day, but the exact time of day.

Costly loss of productivity for Yahweh's sake; emphasis upon gratitude to Him for redemption without which there would be NO productivity.

First-Fruits (Lev. 3:9-14) commemorated the 1st production of the fields; it typified the 1st piece of the [resurrection] program of God in bringing into existence eternal life and immortal flesh to house it, thus ending the reign of death.

C. Pentecost (16:9-12)

16:9-10 seven sevens. . .freewill offering as the Lord has blessed you

More costs, this time from the Spring harvest cycle, but the amount was related to the economic prosperity that Yahweh had given to each family.

16:11-12 rejoice before Yahweh your God

son, daughter, male slave, female slave, Levite, stranger, orphan, widow

all the permanent members of their communities regardless of status under the covenant

remember you were a slave

Israel treated all people equally under the law, something not found in surrounding pagan nations—here is TRUE “social justice”: impartiality under God's law—not talking about equal economic status like the Socialists that use the term for political manipulation.

Pentecost—to the exact day¹—marked the coming of the Holy Spirit to empower Israel and begin the Kingdom of God on earth, the “times of refreshing” (**Acts 3:19**). But Israel rejected the reality of the 1st feast (Passover-Crucifixion) and so failed to appropriate the potential blessing of God.

IV. A COSTLY ANNUAL FALL FEAST (16:13-17)

A. Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25)

One day of preparation for the coming events; occurred on the 1st day of the 7th month and no “customary work” was to be done on that day. A national alert for the coming events. Fulfillment might be some dramatic act in the Fall of a future year, such as destruction of threatening Gentile armies, that will set up the nation for a national repentance over the Person of Jesus Christ on the Day of Atonement.

B. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) (Lev. 23:26-32)

Occurs on the 10th day of the 7th month, less than two weeks after the Feast of Trumpets. This day was a solemn reflection on sin and repentance toward God that was to exclude all kinds of work, including getting meals, and was to include every Israelite. It came to

¹ The Holy Spirit did not come on Pentecost because the disciples “tarried”; they were to tarry because the Holy Spirit was to come on that day.

be considered as the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar. Perhaps this will be the day that the nation Israel understands Isaiah 53.

C. Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:33-43; Deut 16:13-17)

Occurs on the 15th day of the 7th month.

- An entire week of celebration with no work at the end of the fall harvest. Emphasis upon God’s provision and protection, spiritually and physically.
- Peter was perhaps thinking this way on the Mt. of Transfiguration in **Matt 17:1-5**.
- During the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus made in His day two dramatic announcements.

V. CONCLUSION

- These feasts were costly—probably 20% of the GNP—so they were central events in the life of Israel.
- They involved extensive and costly travel, mostly on foot (which enforced a priority for maintaining health—no obesity here!)
- Most importantly they were theocentric:
 - Obedience to Him resulted in more than enough economic prosperity to supply the great costs of these national feasts.
 - Yahweh was moving history forward to a grand consummation of final rest.
 - Thus these feasts set the entire national culture against pagan nature worship and pagan cyclic views of history.

God’s Design of Society	
LIFE (protected)	LIFE (jeopardized)
MARRIAGE & FAMILY (strong & functioning)	MARRIAGE & FAMILY (weak & dysfunctional)
LABOR & PROPERTY (respected & productive)	LABOR & PROPERTY (demeaned & wasted)
INTEGRITY of COMMUNICATION (consistently states truth)	INTEGRITY of COMMUNICATION (deceitfully professes truth for agendas)
HEART ALLEGIANCE (to God)	HEART ALLEGIANCE (to self)

One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you (Ex. 12:49).

One law and one custom shall be for you, and for the stranger that dwells with you (Num. 15:16).

Ye shall have one law for him that sins unintentionally: for him who is native-born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger who dwells among them (Num. 15:29).

