

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St.
Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 14
DEUTERONOMY
CHAPTERS 25 & 26**

INTRODUCTION

We have come to the last part of Moses' sermons to the children of Israel. It culminates in the renewal of the covenant God made with them (26:16-19). Moses introduced his address to the Israelites concerning God's commandments, ordinances and statutes in Deuteronomy 5:1,

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

Later in Deuteronomy 12:1, Moses declared,

These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

Now in Deuteronomy 26:16, Moses ended his discourse by reminding the children of Israel to keep the commandments of the LORD their God,

This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments:

thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

In all these commandments, ordinances and statutes, we observe that God gave His people great laws that will benefit His people. In obeying and doing what God required of them, they will become a peaceful, prosperous and powerful nation above all the other nations. Interestingly, God displays a concern for the most detailed aspects of the lives of the Israelites both individually and as an assembly of the LORD. Our continued study of these chapters which climax with the various sermons of Moses should give us valuable insights into the kind of life that delights God and the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son.

OUTLINE

A. Two Feuding People (25:1-3)

1. The elders would seat in judgment between two feuding people (25:1).
2. The righteous must be justified and the wicked punished (25:1b).
3. The punishment on the wicked (25:2-3).
 - a) He would be punished according to his crime.
 - b) Not more than forty stripes might be inflicted on him.

B. The Ox which Threshed the Corn (25:4)

1. The ox must not be muzzled.

C. The Duty of a Man to His Dead Brother (25:5-10)

1. The bereaved wife had not child (25:5-6).
 - a) She was forbidden to marry outside the family.
 - b) Her husband's brother must take her as his wife so that she could bear a child in the name of his brother.
2. The man's brother refused to perform his duty (25:8-10).
 - a) She had the right to bring the matter to the elders.
 - b) The elders reasoned with him.
 - c) If the man still persisted in his refusal, his brother's bereaved wife could disgrace him publicly.

D. Two Fighting Men and Their Wives (25:11-12).

1. The wife of one must not help her husband by injuring the private parts of the other (25:11).
2. If she did so, her hand ought to be severed (25:12).

E. Honest Weights and Measures (25:13-16).

1. A person must not have various fraudulent weights (25:13-14).
2. A person must have perfect and honest weights (25:15).
3. Dishonesty and unjust weights are an abomination to God (25:16).

F. The Amalekites (25:17-19).

1. The cruelty of the Amalekites on Israel remembered (25:17-18).

2. The remembrance of the Amalekites had to be wiped out after they settled in the land (25:19).

G. Firstfruits and Tithes (26:1-15)

1. Firstfruits (26:1-11).
 - a) The Israelites should offer to God the first-fruits of the land which God gave to them (1-2).
 - b) The Israelites should bring the first-fruits to the priest and acknowledge God's promise in bringing them to the land (3-4).
 - c) When presenting the first-fruits, the Israelites would acknowledge their deliverance from Egypt (5-10a).
 - d) The Israelites should worship God with great rejoicing (10b-11).
2. Tithes (26:12-15).
 - a) The Israelites should fulfil all their tithes in the third year (12).
 - b) Having fulfilled that, they should confess that they had taken care of the Levite, the resident foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow (13).
 - c) They should also confess that they had not the hallowed things (14).
 - d) Pray for God's continual blessing upon His people (15).

H. The Endorsement of the Mosaic Covenant (26:16-19).

1. The call to keep and do God's commandments (26:16).

2. The Israelites had declared that they would walk in the ways of God (26:17).
3. God had declared that Israel was His special people (26:18).
4. God promised to make Israel the greatest nation if they obey Him (26:19).

COMMENTARY

Corporeal Punishment

This passage relates to the proper administration of corporeal punishment on the guilty offender. Two brothers have a dispute. The dispute is brought to the judges. The judges will decide who the guilty party is and whether the offence warrants corporeal punishment. If it does, the maximum flogging (either by cane or whip) was forty lashes. Tradition reduced the forty lashes to thirty-nine lest they miscounted. Paul mentioned that five times he received forty lashes save one (2 Corinthians 11:24). We see the compassionate nature of justice. The punishment must be performed in the presence of the judge.

Muzzling an Ox

This law shows a real concern for animals, especially those that are put to work by men. The ox was used in those ancient days to separate the ears of grain from the stalks. The ox either trampled on the stalks of grain or pulled a millstone, or a threshing sledge. The regulation requires that the owner must not muzzle the ox in order that the ox could eat from time to time the grains of corn. This rule protects the ox from being abused or exploited. The ox which

works to produce the food should not be deprived of a share of the food.

Paul used this law to apply to provision for those who work to spread the gospel; those who work full-time in the church:

1 Timothy 5:18 *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is **worthy of his reward.***

These servants have no means of support except from the church, where they served to further the kingdom of God. The church is responsible for taking care of all the needs of her servants or workers by giving them the honour that is due to them.

Levirate Law

The law of levirate (Hebrew, "levir" means brother-in-law) required that a man married his widowed sister-in-law, whose husband died childless. Two conditions applied: (1) the brother of the deceased had been living with him, and (2) the deceased died childless (male or female). It was very important in ancient Israel that a man should have a child to carry on his name and to inherit his property. It is the duty of the brother of the deceased to marry his sister-in-law and raise his brother's family.

However, the brother had the right to refuse to marry his sister-in-law. There could be two possible reasons. He might be covetous or greedy and wanted his brother's property; he refused to perform his duty. Another reason was that he might not like her and so refused to marry her. In such a case, the sister-in-law could lay a charge against him for not doing his duty before the elders at "the gate,"

which was the public place of administration. The elders of the city would call and speak to him. If he still persisted, he would be publicly humiliated. The sister-in-law would take one of his sandals, spit in his face, and curse him (v.9). His house would be called the man who “hath his shoe loosed” (v.10). It was that serious. The marriage between the widowed Ruth and Boaz is such a case (Ruth 4). The Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection referred to this rule when they confronted our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 12:18-23). This law is not kept today. A Christian widow could marry another Christian of her own choice.

Indecency Forbidden

Two men were fighting (25:11-12). One of the wives wanted to save her husband out of the brawl. She did this by grasping the genitals of the other man. She would be shown no pity, and her hand should be cut off! This is the only occurrence of the law in the Pentateuch. The reason for the severe punishment could only be that her act could cause the other man the inability to father a child. This law indicates that the ends do not justify the means.

Honest Dealings

The using of different weights to cheat is detestable to God (25:13-16). The bigger weights are used when the merchant make his purchases, but when he sells, he uses the smaller or lighter weights. The customer is at the mercy of the vendor. The children of Israel are commanded to use “perfect and just” weights. God promised that if they diligently observe this law, they would dwell long in the land.

The children of Israel could not live in peace and prosperity in the land if dishonesty and cheating were the order of the day. Those who perform such practices are an abomination to God. One cannot prosper when God condemns him. This law teaches us the importance of honesty and integrity. Our dealings among ourselves and with others should be irreproachable.

The Amalekites

The Amalekites had been under the condemnation of God (25:17-19). Israel had an encounter with them when they left Egypt. The Amalekites were cowardly when they attacked Israel from the rear, and smote those who were weak and weary. God reminded Israel that when they had settled in the land, and God had granted them rest from all their enemies, they must blot out the remembrance of the Amalekites. This was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah about 700 years later (1 Chronicles 4:42-43).

Showing Gratitude

Moses instructed the children of Israel that when they had entered the land given by “the LORD thy God” for an inheritance, and possessed or lay a claim over it, and dwelt in the land or lived in it, they should take the first-fruits of the land in a basket and offered it to “the LORD thy God” at the place where He would put His Name; and should give the basket to the priest and confess before “the LORD thy God” that He had kept His promise to their forefathers to give the land which flowed with milk and honey (26:1-4). The significant factor in this requirement of the Israelites is the progression of laying a claim on the promise of God to give the land

to them. They must first enter the land, possess it, and then dwell in it.

They must offer their first-fruits to the LORD. This is to acknowledge that “the LORD thy God” is the source of all their blessings! And the offering of the basket of first-fruits is the practical way of expressing their gratitude to “the LORD thy God.” This title “the LORD thy God” is used no less than 15 times in chapter 26; and someone has counted that it is used 299 times in the book of Deuteronomy alone. The phrase thus expresses a personal, exclusive and intimate relationship between the LORD (YAHWEH) and the God (ELOHIM). He is also the LORD our God to all who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son!

Having done that, the children of Israel should “speak and say,” that is to mean, to acknowledge or testify of the greatness and goodness of God. “A Syrian, ready to perish was my father” is a reference to Jacob. Jacob was called a Syrian or an Aramaen, the country to the north of Canaan, is because he lived for many years there. Moreover, he married Leah and Rachel who were born there. And when Jacob came to Egypt with seventy members of his family, he was a weak old man of 130 years, for before long he died in Egypt. The LORD their God made them into a great and powerful nation in spite of the fact that the Egyptians oppressed them. They cried to the LORD for deliverance. The LORD their God heard them and looked upon their affliction and oppression, and brought them out of Egypt in a mighty way with signs and

wonders. The LORD their God brought them to the land that flows with milk and honey. And now they were presenting the first-fruits of the land which the LORD had given to them (26:5-10). Then they should worship God with the offering of the first-fruits and rejoice in every good thing that the Lord had given them and their families, and also the Levites, and the foreigner who lived with them. Imagine how thrilled and excited, the rejoicing and the outbursts of praises to God when they tasted of the good land! That is how we too ought to approach and worship Him.

This response called by Moses clearly is a practical response of expressing their gratitude to God. They did not deserve the land and all its rich benefits. Moses’ exhortation to them to show their expression of gratitude is also a lesson to us. Christians have been promised an eternal inheritance in heaven, and the blessings of salvation in Christ Jesus. We should not worship God empty handed when He has bountifully blessed us. Some Christians complain about their poor conditions and spiritual life. The fault does not lie with God, but rather with them because they had not entered into the rest that God has promised them. They did not take God at His Word, and obey them. They need to have faith and trust in the Lord, and for some reasons these Christians are afraid to trust and obey God!

Good Stewardship

The above is a one-off expression of their gratitude to God. But yearly the Israelites would bring the tithes of their increase, and every third year. In addition

they would contribute the fruits of their land and labour to provide for the Levites who were not given land inheritance, the foreigner who lived among them, the fatherless or orphans, and the widows. These classes of people are poor and needy. As they would stand before the LORD in the land with their tithes and offerings, they should confess that they had obeyed God's commandments in caring for these needy people. Moses then prayed for God's blessing upon His people and the land which He gave to them (26:15).

Renewal of the Covenant

Moses' sermon climaxed with the call upon the people to "keep and do" all the commandments, and statutes, and judgments, which the LORD their God had given them (26:16). Keeping the word and the will of God in the mind and heart is one part of obeying God. The next necessary step is to do them, to live out what God requires of them.

Although the word "covenant" is not used here, yet the language and the contents display the ingredients of a covenant. An important aspect of a covenant is that it comprises two parties. In this case, it involves God and Israel. Israel must acknowledge and declare "to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandment, and His judgments, and to hearken unto His voice (26:17). The LORD God on His part would acknowledge and declare that Israel would be "His peculiar (treasured) people", to make them a nation that is great above all the other nations in praise, name, and honour; and that they might be "an holy people unto the LORD thy God" (26:28-19).

Just as God's promises and word is true of Israel, it is also true of us who have been reconciled to Him by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son.

SUMMARY

These words truly warmed our hearts. What is most striking is the beauty of God's holiness and His faithfulness, His grace and loving kindness toward His people. God indeed wants the best for His people. It is sad to see that many of His children are not living in accordance to His Word and will, and consequently become disillusioned and sad. May this lesson turn us round to love the LORD our God and the Lord Jesus Christ, our glorious Saviour, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. May God bless us abundantly as we seek to trust and obey Him to the praise and glory of His Name. AMEN.

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 25:1-4; Luke 12:47-48; 1 Corinthians 9:9-14

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 25: 5-16; Ruth 3:12-14

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 25:17-19; Galatians 5:17-24

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 26:1-15; Colossians 1:12-17; 2 Corinthians 9:7-11

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Matthew 5:17-18; Ephesians 2:4-10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What guideline is suggested here when two Christians have a controversy?

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2. What principle lies behind the laws in prohibiting the muzzling of an ox while it is treading out grain? How does it apply today in Christian circles?

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3. Why did God make these laws for the bereaved wife? What are the concerns of the wife?

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4. What social problem does God detest? Why?

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5. Can we use this treatment of the Amalekites as an example to deal with wicked people today?

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6. How do we decide how to allocate the money we set aside for God's work?

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7. Identify those who are in need of support? How can we decide how to help those who are in need?

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8. What covenant obligations did God and Israel respectively undertake? Under the new covenant what has God promised and what do we undertake?

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9. What does it mean to return to God with all your heart and soul?

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10. Which command(s) in these two chapters would you say are the most important for Christians to remember and obey today?

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