

Triennial Torah Study – 4th Year 29/06/2013

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Deut 24	2 Chron 1-5		Philemon
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29/06/2013 Deut 24 2 Chron 1-5 Philemon

Divorce; Concern for Others Mandated (Deuteronomy 24:1-25:4)

Moses, because of the hardness of the hearts of the people, allowed for divorce—although Christ later explained that “from the beginning” it was not so. For converted Christians, only a few valid reasons for divorce exist—such as fraud before marriage, sexual immorality while married and desertion by an unconverted mate (compare Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:12-15). Indeed, in Matthew 19, Christ was apparently explaining that people had been applying even the words of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 far too liberally, taking the word “uncleanness” to mean anything the husband didn't like and allowing him to divorce his wife for virtually any reason at all. In fact, in Christ's day it was not even necessary to state a reason. A husband had only to tell his wife, “I divorce you” before witnesses. The same liberty was, in this corrupt tradition, not extended to wives. With this understanding, we can perhaps see how the certificate of divorce, while a concession to human weakness, could actually prove helpful to a wife whose husband wrongfully divorced her, allowing her to remarry and still be provided for (compare verse 2).

Yet, if her next marriage ended in divorce or widowhood, the first husband was not permitted to take her back after she had become the wife of another man in the intervening time. This law is still valid today.

Verses 6 and 10-13 demand mercy and compassion for a poor person who had to give a pledge or security for a debt. The creditor was not allowed to accept certain necessities as a pledge (verses 6, 17), and he was, in any event, to return whatever he had received from a poor person as a pledge before sunset (verses 12-13). Further, he was not given the right to go into the poor person's house without permission to get the pledge (verse 10), thus preserving personal privacy and dignity. Although a poor person might find himself in a temporary financial predicament, he was still made in the image of God as a potential member of His very family, and thus was to be treated with respect.

In the same context, an employer was to pay his employee his wages on time. In ancient times, employees or hired servants were paid daily, and God declares it to be “sin” not to do so —regardless of whether the employee was an Israelite or a foreigner (verses 14-15). The principle is that employees be paid at mutually agreeable intervals.

Verse 16 sets forth an important principle: “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.” We are all individually responsible for

what we do. Parents must teach their children, but the children must choose. The same is true for converted children who can teach their unconverted parents God's way of life—but it is again the parent's responsibility to accept or reject the truth.

Verses 19-22 address compassionate conduct again—this time of landowners towards the poor. Rather than greedily harvesting every last sheaf in the field, or every last grape or olive, God commanded generosity. Thus, some of the harvest was to be left for the stranger, the fatherless or the widow, i.e., the poor in the land, “that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” He reminds Israel that they, too, had been slaves in the land of Egypt, and how much they would have appreciated it if such a law had been in Egypt for them (see verse 22).

Deuteronomy 25:1-3 demand justice in court. A wicked person is to be condemned, and a righteous person is to be acquitted. In ancient Israel, to inflict physical pain on a convicted criminal was not considered inhumane, cruel or unusual. Rather, it was to satisfy the victim's demand for some sense of justice, to deter others from committing crime and to reinforce to the criminal himself the fact that sin and crime brings pain and suffering. We might ask ourselves whether it is more “humane” to lock up a convicted criminal for months or years in a tiny cell, caging him like an animal. God saw to it, however, that the offender was not to be “humiliated” in the sight of Israel when he received the beating—the maximum number of blows could not exceed 40. Thus, rather than being inhumane, this law recognized the guilty person as a human being whose dignity should be preserved. In other nations, people were sometimes beaten with a lash or rod to extract a confession (Acts 22:24). This was not allowed under God's code of law. Blows were to be used only to punish after guilt had been established.

Verse 4 of Deuteronomy 25 teaches compassion for animals. An ox that works should be fed. Indeed, to restrain an animal from eating food that it continually before it is frustrating and torturous to the animal. Moreover, there is a practical benefit: To keep an ox engaged in its job of treading grain, it is best to allow it to eat the very grain it is treading. The principle even has practical applications in the human realm. Paul would later apply it to the ministry, who for their service should have their living expenses paid out of the tithes and offerings collected from the members and supporters of the Church (1 Corinthians 9:7-11). This also allows them to devote more time to their ministerial responsibilities rather than an outside occupation.

2 Chronicles 1-5

We read about Solomon a few weeks ago in 1 Kings. 2 Chronicles focuses less on examples of Solomon's wisdom and more on the details of having the Temple built on Mount Moriah on land that David, his father, had purchased from Araunah the Jebusite where the angel had stopped the plague, and David had worshipped. Solomon contacted Hiram, King of Tyre, about the plans to build the Lord God of Israel a temple – a place not to contain Him, but to offer sacrifices to Him. For the project supervisor, Solomon contracted with Hiram to send HiramAbi, a skilled craftsman whose mother was from Dan and whose father was from Tyre. Hiram accepted the price Solomon offered for Tyre woodsmen to cut and deliver valuable logs from the forests of Lebanon.

In Israel, Solomon took a census of the 153,600 aliens living there, and assigned some to be carriers, some to be stonecutters, and some to be foremen, overseeing that the work got done. The temple plans called for the building to be about 90 feet long and 30 feet wide. Obviously the writer of the book of Hebrews had closely studied the description in Chapter 3, of how the temple was built, and compared it (Hebrews 3:3-6 and 9:1-10) with the temple of Christ's New Covenant. Hebrews also revealed that the plans for Solomon's Temple and the articles made to be used in it were all based upon the Temple and the cherubim in heaven.

Solomon's choice of wisdom, His strength and wealth.

SOLOMON began his reign with a pious, public visit to God's altar. Those that pursue present things most eagerly, are likely to be disappointed; while those that refer themselves to the providence of God, if they have not the most, have the most comfort. Those that make this world their end, come short of the other, and are disappointed in this also; but those that make the other world their end, shall not only obtain that, and full satisfaction in it, but shall have as much of this world as is good for them, in their way. Let us then be contented, without those great things which men generally covet, but which commonly prove fatal snares to the soul.

Solomon's message to Hiram respecting the temple, His treaty with Hiram. Solomon informs Hiram of the particular services to be performed in the temple. The mysteries of the true religion, unlike those of the Gentile superstitions, sought not concealment. Solomon endeavoured to possess Hiram with great and high thoughts of the God of Israel. We should not be afraid or ashamed to embrace every opportunity to speak of God, and to impress others with a deep sense of the importance of his favour and service. Now that the people of Israel kept close to the law and worship of God, the neighbouring nations were willing to be taught by them in the true religion, as the Israelites had been willing in the days of their apostacy, to be infected with the idolatries and superstitions of their neighbours. A wise and pious king is an evidence of the Lord's special love for his people. How great then was God's love to his believing people, in giving his only-begotten Son to be their Prince and their Saviour.

The building of the temple.

There is a more particular account of the building of the temple in 1 Kings 6. It must be in the place David had prepared, not only which he had purchased, but which he had fixed on by Divine direction. Full instructions enable us to go about our work with certainty and to proceed therein with comfort. Blessed be God, the Scriptures are enough to render the man of God thoroughly furnished for every good work. Let us search the Scriptures daily, beseeching the Lord to enable us to understand, believe, and obey his word, that our work and our way may be made plain, and that all may be begun, continued, and ended in him. Beholding God, in Christ, his true Temple, more glorious than that of Solomon's, may we become a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Spirit.

The furniture of the temple.

Here is a further account of the furniture of God's house. Both without doors and within, there was that which typified the grace of the gospel, and shadowed out good things to come, of which the substance is Christ. There was the brazen altar. The making of this was not mentioned in the book of Kings. On this all the sacrifices were offered, and it sanctified the gift. The people who worshipped in the courts might see the sacrifices burned. They might thus be led to consider the great Sacrifice, to be offered in the fulness of time, to take away sin, and put an end to death, which the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly do. And, with the smoke of the sacrifices, their hearts might ascend to heaven, in holy desires towards God and his favour. In all our devotions we must keep the eye of faith fixed upon Christ. The furniture of the temple, compared with that of the tabernacle, showed that God's church would be enlarged, and his worshippers multiplied. Blessed be God, there is enough in Christ for all.

The ark was a type of Christ, and, as such, a token of the presence of God. That gracious promise, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world, does, in effect, bring the ark into our religious assemblies, if we by faith and prayer plead that promise; and this we should be most earnest for. When Christ is formed in a soul, the law written in the heart, the ark of the covenant settled there, so that it becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, there is true satisfaction in that soul.

Commentary on 2 Chronicles 5:11-14

God took possession of the temple; he filled it with a cloud. Thus he signified his acceptance of this temple, to be the same to him that the tabernacle of Moses was, and assured his people that he would be the same in it. Would we have God dwell in our hearts, we must leave room for him; everything else must give way. The Word was made flesh; and when he comes to his temple, like a refiner's fire, who may abide the day of his coming? May he prepare us for that day.

Philemon

Philemon is a letter from the Apostle Shaul along with Timothy, to a man and brother in faith named Philemon. Shaul calls him beloved, brother, and fellow worker. He also mentions some others in the opening of his letter to Philemon, namely Apphia (a woman), Archippos (a fellow soldier), and all the assembly at the house of Philemon. He tells Philemon how much of a good report he has heard of him concerning great love and tenderness towards the set apart ones of Messiah.

Shaul is writing to Philemon to share with him his desires concerning one Onesimos who seems to have previously either been struggling in the faith or a slave. Shaul is appealing to Philemon for Onesimos to be able to stay with him and be of service and live as a brother. Whatever Onesimos has obtained in matter of debts or wrongs, Shaul states he will assume those things and pay or repay all.