

613 Laws of Torah

Laws 150 – 199

(150)

Not to eat a worm found in fruit (Lev. 11:41) (CCN98). See Animals that may not be eaten.

Do not eat a worm found in fruit. “And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.” (Leviticus 11:41-42) What’s worse than finding a worm in your apple? Finding half a worm! Moses is clarifying here the description of what constitutes an unclean “creeping thing.” It includes worms, caterpillars, grubs, centipedes— things with many legs or no legs at all. If they crawl around on their bellies and don’t have hopping apparatus like locusts, they’re not good to eat.

(151)

Not to eat of things that creep upon the earth (Lev. 11:41-42) (CCN97). See Animals that may not be eaten.

Do not eat of things that creep upon the earth. “And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth — these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.” (Leviticus 11:41-42) This is pretty much a restatement of #150, as are #152-154. It’s interesting to note that Yahweh’s issue with pork (among other things) has a lot to do with the avoidance of inadvertently eating “creeping things” that the Israelites couldn’t even see—creeping things that would nevertheless cause disease and death. They weren’t being asked to analyze and understand microbiology, however; they were merely being told to trust Yahweh for guidance.

(152)

Not to eat any vermin of the earth (Lev. 11:44) (CCN100). See Animals that may not be eaten.

Do not eat any vermin of the earth. “For I am Yahweh your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any

creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Leviticus 11:44) I can’t really see the distinction between “vermin” and “creeping things” in this context. But it’s clear that the Israelites had quite enough information to avoid eating unhealthy foods. Failure to observe God’s statutes in this regard carried its own natural consequences with it: “It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you...Yahweh will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. Yahweh will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever...” (Deuteronomy 28:15, 21-22) God didn’t have to make a special effort to come and “punish” those who didn’t keep His dietary Laws. The fruit of disobedience was built in. The whole point of giving them the “law” was to spare them from the consequences of breaking it. The creepy crawlies of God’s creation all have their place, their jobs, their functions, whether the pollination of plants, breaking down organic matter into usable soil, cleaning up the carcasses of the dead, or any number of things. If we take them out of their proper environments and put them within our bodies, they’re going to do their jobs there instead if they can. And that could be a bad thing.

(153)

Not to eat things that swarm in the water (Lev. 11:43 and 46) (CCN99). See Animals that may not be eaten.

Do not eat things that swarm in the water. “You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them.... This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.”

(Leviticus 11:43, 46-47) These rabbinical directives are often maddeningly imprecise, but Yahweh’s words are crystal clear.

Swarming in the water is not the issue; many clean fish, from sardines to tuna, “swarm,” that is, they swim in schools. When we elevate the commentary of man over the precepts of God, we’ll fall into error every time. As far back as the Garden of Eden, we have been twisting God’s words to our own harm. It seems funny to say it, but we need to constantly ask the very thing Satan asked Eve: “Has God really said that?” When men and angels presume to tell us what Yahweh wants, we need to go back and check—Has God really said that? (By the way, that

goes for what I'm telling you as well. Test everything I say in the crucible of God's Word. I've been known to make mistakes.)

(154)

Not to eat of winged insects (Deut. 14:19) (CCN96). See Animals that may not be eaten.

Do not eat winged insects. "Every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be eaten." (Deuteronomy 14:19) "All flying insects that creep on all fours shall be an abomination to you." (Leviticus 11:20) In contrast to bugs that merely crawl along the ground, flying insects are singled out here as being unclean. We have already seen the exception to the rule: locusts and their hopping cousins—even though they also fly—have been declared clean. It's worth noting that while flying insects themselves are unclean, the product that one of them manufactures—honey—is not. John the Baptist is said to have eaten "locusts and wild honey" in the wilderness. Yum.

(155)

Not to eat the flesh of a beast that is terefah (lit torn) (Ex. 22:30) (CCN87). See Kosher slaughtering.

Do not eat the flesh of a beast that is terefah (literally, torn). "You shall be holy men to

Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs." (Exodus 22:30) It's fascinating that Yahweh links the concept of "holiness" to obeying His rules concerning what and what not to eat. Here we see that animals—even those that would ordinarily be considered clean, or edible, must not be eaten if they have been killed by carnivorous beasts in the wild—even if the kill is fresh. The Israelites couldn't have known what was going on at the microbotic level, how the bite of a scavenger or carnivore could spread deadly microorganisms to the victim, or how the blood left to pool within the carcass could be harmful (see #167). If a shepherd saw a wolf kill one of his sheep, the natural reaction might be, Well, it's dead but it's fresh—we might as well go ahead and eat it. Waste not, want not. Yahweh didn't bother telling them that it could be hazardous to their health; He just said, I have set you apart from the peoples around you, those who wouldn't hesitate to eat road kill like this. So trust Me to know what's best for you: you can feed it to your dogs—part of whose job is to be scavengers—but don't eat it yourself. Part of being "holy," or set apart to Yahweh, is trusting Him enough to obey Him, even if we don't understand His reasons.

(156)

Not to eat the flesh of a beast that died of itself (Deut. 14:21) (CCN86). See Kosher slaughtering.

Do not eat the flesh of a beast that died of itself. “You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people to Yahweh your God.” (Deuteronomy 14:21) Here we have a slightly different scenario: an otherwise clean animal that has died of “natural causes,” either old age, disease, or accident not involving a carnivorous predator. An Israelite, being set apart for Yahweh’s purposes, was not to risk eating such meat, presumably for two reasons: first, it would be difficult to tell if the blood had been completely drained from the carcass, and second, it would have been hard to determine what role harmful microorganisms had had in the animal’s death. (Yahweh didn’t explain any of this, of course. He just said: trust Me.) Yet this situation clearly wasn’t as risky as eating the meat from an animal that had been killed by a wild predator (see #155), so Yahweh gave permission to give away or sell the meat to the foreigners living in close proximity with the Israelites.

This is one of the rare cases where Yahweh makes a specific distinction between “laws” that must be kept by Israelites but may be ignored with impunity by non-Israelites. This distinction goes a long way toward verifying my contention that the Law of Moses was to be acted out by Israel as the sign of a people set-apart from all others for Yahweh’s purpose. Its requirements, though useful and meaningful, were not religiously binding on gentiles—for instance, goyim believers were not asked to show up in Jerusalem three times a year to participate in the Feasts of Yahweh. That doesn’t mitigate the instructional value of the Torah for gentiles: we will joyfully and attentively heed its spirit and lessons if we know what’s good for us. And in cases like this, if steaks from a steer that died of old age were offered for sale by a Jew who wouldn’t eat them for religious reasons, it might behoove the discerning gentile buyer to pass on the deal.

(157)

To slay cattle, deer and fowl according to the laws of shechitah if their flesh is to be eaten (Deut. 12:21) (“as I have commanded” in this verse refers to the technique) (CCA48). See Kosher slaughtering.

Slay cattle, deer and fowl according to the laws of shechitah if their flesh is to be eaten. “When Yahweh your God enlarges your border as He has promised you, and you say, ‘Let me eat meat,’ because you long to eat meat, you may eat as much meat as your heart desires. If the place where Yahweh your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may

slaughter from your herd and from your flock which Yahweh has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart desires. Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the unclean and the clean alike may eat them.” (Deuteronomy 12:20-22) According to the rabbis, the phrase “as I have commanded” in this passage refers to the technique of Jewish ritual slaughtering known as shechitah. The authorized butcher, called the shochet, is to kill the animal with a quick, deep stroke across the throat with a perfectly sharp blade. This method is relatively painless, causes unconsciousness within two seconds, and allows a rapid and complete draining of the blood. Because it is recognized as the cleanest and most humane method of slaughter possible, this method is used widely, even in non-kosher slaughterhouses.

I’ve got no problem with their method of shechitah. But the context of the Deuteronomy passage reveals another issue, one more definitive of Yahweh’s admonition: “as I have commanded.” After telling them (again) not to adopt the pagan practices of the nations the Israelites were supposed to displace, Yahweh told them, “But you shall seek the place where Yahweh your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before Yahweh your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you.” (Deuteronomy 12:5-7) God knew that His people were going to want to eat meat wherever they settled in the Land. And He said that was okay, as long as the meat was from a clean animal and the blood had been drained out properly (see verses 23-24; see also Mitzvah #168). But ritual sacrifices in which the meat was to be eaten were part of the prescribed Levitical worship, and these were to take place only at a designated central location He would choose (eventually to settle at Jerusalem). You could enjoy a nice steak wherever you were, but Yahweh didn’t want offerings made anywhere except where the

Tabernacle/Temple and the Ark of the Covenant were. If you want to party with Yahweh, you have to go where Yahweh is hosting the party.

There is, of course, a practical application for us, even if we’re not Jews, even if we don’t live in the Land of Promise. We must meet God on God’s terms or not at all. People from Nimrod to Nadab and Abihu, from Ananias and Sapphira to Osama bin Laden, have attempted to force their way into the Kingdom of God, to sneak in through the side door, to do things their way. But Yahshua said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

(158)

Not to eat a limb removed from a living beast (Deut. 12:23) (CCN90). See Kosher slaughtering.

Do not eat a limb removed from a living beast. “Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat.” (Deuteronomy 12:23) The rabbis must have laid awake all night thinking up this stuff. I mean, whose mind works like that? All the Torah said was “Don’t eat blood.” (See #167.) So if that means you can’t cut the hind leg off a living animal and eat it, then okay, we won’t do that. Some things ought to go without saying, and this is one of them—which is probably why God didn’t say it.

(159)

Not to slaughter an animal and its young on the same day (Lev. 22:28) (CCN108).

Do not slaughter an animal and its young on the same day. “Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to Yahweh. Whether it is a cow or ewe, do not kill both her and her young on the same day.” (Leviticus 22:26-28) Remember what we discovered back in Chapter 3 (see Mitzvot #59-63) about the human parent/child relationship being symbolic of the relationship between our Creator and us? The present precept extends and clarifies the concept. This is actually a prophecy that predicts Yahweh’s amazing—dare I say illogical—mercy. All of the Levitical sacrifices ultimately point toward Yahshua’s death on a tree. Think of Him as the “parent” in this equation. Yahweh manifested Himself as a human being, only to be nailed to a tree bearing the sins of all mankind. If you or I had been God, we would have angrily turned the earth into a charcoal briquette before the sun had set, would we not? Don’t look so pious; you know it’s true.

But what did Yahweh do? He calmly continued with His plan of redemption, the course of action He had put in motion before the foundation of the world: no judgment “by fire” would be made until “seven days” had passed. Seven days? Yes, metaphorically, the complete appointed time of man on this earth—7,000 years (see II Peter 3:8), beginning with the fall of Adam, and ending with the close of the Millennial Kingdom. There is far more here than a mere plea for humanity and tenderness when dealing with livestock. This is an indication that no judgment (called here “an offering made by fire”) will fall upon sinful mankind until we have been given all the time in the world to repent and turn to Yahweh. But one way or another, God’s wrath is coming upon all of mankind. Either we will be protected from it—sheltered by the blood of our Messiah—or we will face it on our own. It’s our choice.

(160)

Not to take the mother-bird with the young (Deut. 22:6) (CCN189). See Treatment of Animals.

Do not take the mother-bird with the young. “If a bird’s nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.” (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) As we saw in the previous mitzvah, the parallel relationships, parent-child and God-man, are in view. Here, however, neither judgments nor offerings are in the picture. Rather, God’s provision is seen: Yahweh’s Spirit (as the mother bird) is the one making the sacrifice; we are to thankfully accept the provision of sustenance and salvation being offered—at such great personal expense. The relinquishing of the hen’s “young ones or eggs” is a picture of God’s sacrifice of the Messiah.

But in this context, what would it mean to “take the mother with the young”? You can’t capture or kill God the way you might a bird in the field. Or can you? Some in this world, not content to gratefully acknowledge God’s provision, want to be seen as gods themselves—to be looked upon as providers, admired in all their fine-feathered glory, worshiped as lords of the air, while they exploit God’s people for their own gain. They covet the place and power of Yahweh, and by blocking others’ access to God (since they can’t actually kill Him) they conspire to take His place in the hearts and minds of the people who might otherwise benefit from Yahweh’s great gift. These verses in Deuteronomy are a warning to those who would usurp the place of God, whether through religion, politics, or commerce. Accept the Gift with thanksgiving; revere the Giver, and thereby “prolong your days.”

(161)

To set the mother-bird free when taking the nest (Deut. 22:6-7) (CCA74). See Treatment of Animals.

Set the mother-bird free when taking the nest. “If a bird’s nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days.” (Deuteronomy 22:6-7) This, of course, is merely the affirmative permutation of the previous mitzvah. Notice something, however: the instruction comes with a promise—the same promise that accompanied the Fifth Commandment. That shouldn’t be too surprising, since the precept, at its heart, is virtually the same: “Honor your father and your mother, that

your days may be long upon the land which Yahweh your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12)
Honoring our earthly father and mother is symbolic of our honoring our Maker, Yahweh. Leaving the mother bird unmolested while gathering her eggs is also a picture of honoring our Creator—gratefully availing ourselves of God’s sacrificial gift of salvation.

(162)

Not to eat the flesh of an ox that was condemned to be stoned (Ex. 21:28) (negative).

Do not eat the flesh of an ox that was condemned to be stoned. “If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.” (Exodus 21:28-29)
This has nothing to do with diet and everything to do with principles. First principle: no good comes from evil—the end must not justify the means, nor should the guilty prosper at the expense of the innocent. If one’s actions (or inactions) lead to death, there should be no “upside” to it for the negligent or guilty party. A modern twist on this is the idea of convicted criminals writing best-selling books about their crimes—making a fortune on others’ misfortune from behind bars. Thankfully, there are now laws prohibiting the practice. The Torah, it should be noted, always had one.

The second principle is that of personal responsibility. Accidents happen, but if they could have been prevented—even if such prevention meant inconvenience, expense, or risk to the one responsible—then they are no longer accidents, but crimes. I don’t think it’s too much of a stretch to apply this rule to one of Yahweh’s pet peeves: false teaching. If we tolerate false doctrine in our midst when it is in our power to bring the truth to light, we ourselves share the fault (see Ezekiel 3:18-19). To whom much is given, much is required.

(163)

Not to boil meat with milk (Ex. 23:19) (CCN91). See Separation of Meat and Dairy.

Do not boil meat with milk. “The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of Yahweh your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.” (Exodus 23:19; cf. Exodus 34:26, Deuteronomy 14:21) This is a mitzvah that observant Jews today can really get their teeth into, so to speak. It’s a great example of how things can get totally out of hand if we refuse to pay attention to what Yahweh actually said and obviously meant. The first thing to go was the parent-child connection: instead of a young goat being boiled in its own mother’s milk, it

was any kid being boiled in any goat's milk. Then it was any meat being boiled in any kind of milk. Pretty soon, that became a blanket prohibition against eating dairy products (milk, cream, cheese, etc.) in the same meal with meat. Then the rabbis extended this simple instruction to forbid eating milk and poultry together. (Better safe than sorry, right?) The Talmud subsequently took the game to the next level, prohibiting the cooking of meat and fish together or even serving them on the same plates. For some unknown reason, though, it's supposed to be okay to eat fish and dairy together. You can also eat dairy and eggs in the same meal. Confused yet?

All this behavioral evolution is brought to you by people who swear that an "oral law" explaining everything was delivered to the elders at the same time Moses was being given the written Torah. These traditions, they say, were orally transmitted, flawlessly, from rabbi to student for almost two thousand years until somebody finally wrote it all down, calling it the Mishnah—which in turn became the basis of the Talmud—which in turn is chock full of contradictory rabbinical opinion. An oral law, orally transmitted for millennia without corruption?

Yeah, picture that. Face it, guys. The oral law isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

But it gets worse. According to the rabbis, not only can't you eat meat with dairy products (and so forth), you can't even use the same utensils—pots, pans, dishes, silverware, etc.—to prepare and serve them. And cleaning up is a problem, too: you have to use separate sinks, or run fleishik (meat) and milchik (dairy) paraphernalia separately in the dishwasher (admittedly a compromise—you're ideally supposed to have two dishwashers). We are solemnly assured that G-d is terribly impressed with people who actually negotiate this outrageous obstacle course.

What's really going on here? Go back to where the rabbis made their first wrong turn. "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." It's a parent-child illustration—again. And again, it's a Messianic prophecy with an instructive principle attached. The "mother" once again represents Yahweh's Spirit in this illustration, and the "young goat" represents the Messiah, specifically in His role as sin-bearer in our stead. And the "milk" is that which comes from the Spirit to sustain us, to help us grow, to keep us healthy—it's nothing short of God's holy Word. So what is the mitzvah telling us? We are never to use God's Word as a weapon against God's work.

Ironically, the Jews have made a contact sport out of this very practice for thousands of years, and we just saw a classic example of it. Another example: TV preachers whose "ministries" have more to do with funding than with fundamental truth. Another: sects or denominations that use a few carefully selected passages to create doctrines and dogma designed to subjugate, control, and fleece the would-be faithful. Another: politicians who piously play the "Christian card," wooing the religious right while sacrificing the clear precepts of Yahweh on the altar of

political expediency. Another: businessmen who think of the church or synagogue merely as fertile fields for new commercial contacts. I think you get the picture.

<http://www.keithhunt.com/Kidmilk.html> In 1195, Maimonides suggested:

“As for the prohibition against eating meat [boiled] in milk, it is in my opinion not improbable that – in addition to this being undoubtedly very gross food and very filling – idolatry had something to do with it. Perhaps such food was eaten at one of the ceremonies of their cult or one of their festivals” (The Guide to the Perplexed 111:48).

Maimonides admitted, however, that he could find no support for his theory:

“[Although] this is the most probable view regarding the reasons for this prohibition... I have not seen this set down in any of the books of the Sabeans [pagans] that I have read.”

Both the Ugaritic text and the Bible contain references to cooking a kid in milk. Ginsberg concluded that the ritual described in the Ugaritic tablet was the “same idolatrous custom that the Torah forbade.” In the Canaanite ritual, the milk in which the kid was cooked symbolized the milk that the newly born gods were given when suckled by the pagan goddesses Athirst and Rahmay. The cooking of a goat in milk was forbidden in the Bible because it “symbolizes the suckling [by the pagan goddesses] of the newborn gods!”

So here at last was the explanation of the biblical prohibition. Maimonides’ intuition was right; the biblical prohibition was a reaction against a Canaanite ritual involving the boiling of a kid in its mother’s milk.

In the ensuing years, this explanation gained wide acceptance among both Ugaritic and biblical scholars, and indeed became almost a dogma of scholarship. Anton Schoors concluded that “the parallel is most striking and the biblical prohibition is certainly directed against the practice described in this text.” Umberto Cassuto said, “It is clear that this was the practice of the Canaanites on one of their holidays” and we can now “guess that this custom was widespread in the ritual of the [Israelite’s] pagan neighbors.” And Edward Ullendorff found that the two texts “astonishing verbal resemblance helps to illuminate some of the obscurities of both: it is clear that the Pentateuch is inveighing against an obnoxious Canaanite custom, perhaps a fertility cult or some other ritually significant ceremony.”

(164)

Not to eat flesh with milk (Ex. 34:26) (according to the Talmud, this passage is a distinct prohibition from the one in Ex. 23:19) (CCN92). See Separation of Meat and Dairy.

Do not eat flesh with milk. “The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of Yahweh your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.” (Exodus 34:26)

According to the Talmud, this passage is a distinct prohibition from the one we just reviewed. But as you can see, the wording in the Torah is virtually identical. The rabbis are hallucinating again. Notice that in both instances, this precept is contextually linked to the offering of firstfruits. In general, this indicates a spirit of grateful acknowledgement of Yahweh’s provision. In particular, the Feast of Firstfruits was one of seven specific annual holidays, or *miqra*, set aside as prophetic markers of significant events in Yahweh’s plan of redemption—in this case the resurrection of the Messiah: the *miqra* was ultimately fulfilled on the Feast of Firstfruits in 31 A.D. Both of the Exodus passages are also concerned in a larger sense with the congregational worship of Israel, specifically the directive for all males to appear before Yahweh three times a year, at Passover/Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits in the spring, then at the Feast of Weeks, then at Trumpets/Atonement/Tabernacles in the fall. (But for what it’s worth, the precept is mentioned in the context of dietary rules in Deuteronomy 14:21.)

The first thing we need to ask ourselves is: why would Yahweh say something like this three times? What’s so all-fired important, and what could it possibly have to do with the third *miqra*? It is a well-documented fact that both Egypt and Canaan practiced pagan fertility rites that included boiling a kid in its mother’s milk. By sprinkling the resulting broth on their gardens and fields after the harvest, they hoped to placate the gods into granting them a bountiful harvest in the coming season. By tying this odd commandment to the Feast of Firstfruits, Yahweh was in effect saying, Don’t petition the false gods of your neighbors or give them thanks; they can’t do anything for you—or against you. Worship Me alone, for I am the sole source of your blessing, the One True God. As a matter of fact, a few verses later He specifically reminded them: “You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.” (Exodus 23:24)

The specifications for the Feast of Unleavened Bread stated that a male lamb (not a goat) a year old was to be sacrificed, an offering made by roasting it in fire (not boiling it in milk) (see Leviticus 23:12). If the Israelites substituted the pagan practice for the one Yahweh had instituted, the picture He was painting would be obliterated. The lamb was a picture of innocence—ultimately a metaphor for Yahshua the Messiah—whereas the goat symbolized sin (as in the prescribed services of the Day of Atonement). Likewise, it was fire, not hot water (or milk), that stood for judgment. So boiling a goat in its mother’s milk spoke of something quite different than Yahweh’s intended picture lesson—a sinless Yahshua bearing our well-deserved punishment Himself, a sacrifice for which we should be eternally grateful. This is all a long, long way from “Don’t put cheese on your burger.”

(165)

Not to eat the of the thigh-vein which shrank (Gen. 32:33) (CCN1). See Forbidden Fats and Nerves.

Do not eat the of the thigh-vein which shrank. “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob’s hip in the muscle that shrank.” (Genesis 32:30-32) Based on this incident, Jews even today consider the sciatic nerve and the adjoining blood vessels forbidden as food—it must be cut out. As a practical matter, however, this tissue is so difficult to remove, Jewish sochets normally don’t deal with it; they just sell the hindquarters to non-kosher butchers. Moses states that the practice was a longstanding tradition even in his day (five centuries or so after Jacob’s wrestling match). But nowhere in the Torah is there a hint of divine instruction about this. It’s nothing but what it purports to be—a man-made tradition.

Believe it or not, I’ve got no problem with tradition. Traditions help us get through our days without having to re-invent the wheel every ten minutes. Think of them as habits on steroids. But while I see traditions as useful, even necessary, components of our collective human psyche, I have a serious issue with the equating of our traditions with God’s commands. They are not the same thing. As a case in point, this mitzvah is clearly a tradition, not an instruction from Yahweh. Of course, there’s no particular reason not to keep the custom if it helps you define your place in the world. But don’t go saying that God told you to do it. He did nothing of the sort. This convention has no legitimate place in any listing of Yahweh’s instructions.

(166)

Not to eat chelev (tallow-fat) (Lev. 7:23) (CCN88). See Forbidden Fats and Nerves.

Do not eat chelev (tallow-fat). “Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: You shall not eat any fat, of ox or sheep or goat. And the fat of an animal that dies naturally, and the fat of what is torn by wild beasts, may be used in any other way; but you shall by no means eat it. For whoever eats the fat of the animal of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, the person who eats it shall be cut off from his people.’” (Leviticus 7:22-25) The context here is instruction concerning the peace offering (which could be either a thank offering, a freewill offering, or an offering consecrating a vow). This was a sacrifice that was to be consumed by the one offering it, shared with the priests, and dedicated to Yahweh.

The “fat,” Yahweh’s portion, was defined thus: “The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat which is on the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove, as it was taken from the bull of the sacrifice of the peace offering.” (Leviticus 4:8-10) In other words, the fatty portions of the animal that existed in separate or unmixed areas, not necessarily the fat that was marbled in among the musculature. As it turns out, there are chemical differences between this “chelev” and ordinary muscle and sub-dermal fat which may explain Yahweh’s warning in a practical sense.

These fat portions of an offering were to be burned in homage to Yahweh, not eaten. The cultural baggage attached to the Hebrew word *heleb* tells us why. It not only means fat, but also “the best, the choice parts.” For instance, the word is used in Genesis 45:18 to describe the best the country had to offer—the “fat of the land.” So by burning it instead of eating it, one was symbolically offering Yahweh the best part of his sacrifice. It wasn’t until the twentieth century that we understood the health risks of a fatty diet. Yahweh however, having designed us, knew what was best for us—and it wasn’t fat.

Interestingly, Yahweh wasn’t particularly interested in “getting the fat portions for Himself,” only in making sure we dumb humans didn’t eat it. If a clean animal was unfit for sacrifice (having been attacked by wild beasts, for instance—see #155) its owner could still make use of the fat for purposes other than eating—making candles or soap, for example.

(167)

Not to eat blood (Lev. 7:26) (CCN89). See Draining of Blood.

Do not eat blood. “You shall not eat any blood in any of your dwellings, whether of bird or beast. Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.” (Leviticus 7:26-27) The rabbis got this one right. If the number of times we are instructed about something is any indication of the significance God attaches to it, then Yahweh considers not consuming blood to be really important. No fewer than fourteen separate times is the practice specifically condemned in scripture. Beyond these, passages like Psalm 16:4 link the drinking of blood to pagan religious rites, which were to be avoided at all costs.

Yahweh actually gave us a reason this time, explaining why blood was to be avoided—in biological terms that shed light on the spiritual aspects of the subject. “Be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water.” (Deuteronomy 12:23-24) This concept wasn’t new with the Mosaic Law, either. It was first introduced way back in Noah’s day, right after the flood.

“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” (Genesis 9:3-4) This is the first time in the Bible that God specifically put meat on the menu (although Abel kept flocks, so who knows?). And right here at the beginning, Yahweh instructs Noah not to eat blood with his meat because the life of the animal was in the blood—or as stated here, it was the blood. Again, we read: “Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” (Leviticus 17:10-11) Yahweh is declaring those who consume blood to be His enemies. He’s really serious about this point.

Finally, the admonition was repeated for the benefit of the gentile believers of the fledgling Ekklesia: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these requirements: You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or eating the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well.” (Acts 15:28-29) The few words of admonition that were handed down were considered absolutely essential for their spiritual growth and well-being, and these included Yahweh’s long-standing prohibition against eating blood.

It doesn’t take a trained medical professional to understand that “the life is in the blood.” If blood isn’t constantly flowing to the tissues of the body, the result is death, in very short order. It doesn’t matter where the problem is—if the pump that’s supposed to push it through the body has been damaged, or the arteries have been obstructed, or the blood has left the body through a wound—the body doesn’t care. No blood, no life. It’s that simple.

From a bio-spiritual viewpoint, blood serves several functions. First it brings oxygen and nourishment to the tissues. Think of the erythrocytes—the red blood cells—as being analogous to the Holy Spirit’s sustenance in our lives. If God’s ruach/breath is not supplying every nook and cranny of the body of Christ (the Church), the parts not receiving nourishment will be in danger of dying and falling away. Just as physical life requires oxygen, spiritual life requires God’s Ruach Qodesh—His Holy Spirit. In this world, you’re not truly alive unless you have both.

Second, the blood is the vehicle through which the body is cleansed. Metabolic waste products are collected by the blood and brought to collection centers like the liver and kidneys, where they are safely extracted. If this were not done, our tissues would absorb and collect toxins and pollutants, making us sick and ultimately killing us. This is analogous to the Spirit’s influence in

our lives: removing the toxicity of sin allows the growth of love, which in turn leads to joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Third, the blood protects us from disease. Its leucocytes, or white blood cells, attack microorganisms that attempt to invade our bodies from outside. Think of this function as being roughly equivalent to the Holy Spirit's role as Comforter, the Spirit of Truth (cf. John 14:17) who gives believers discernment, the ability to fight off the attacks of Satan and spot the false teaching of his minions. If the Spirit is not present within us, we have no defense at all against these things.

There's far more to it, of course, but I think you get the picture. On a strictly practical note, I should point out that the toxicology study we saw earlier, the one by Dr. David Macht that demonstrated the remarkable scientific accuracy of the Mosaic dietary laws (see Mitzvah #148), also had something to say about eating blood. In every animal tested, both clean and unclean, the blood turned out to be more toxic than the flesh. If we know what's good for us, we will never question God's word.

Blood is sacred. It bears life. That's why the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats was deemed acceptable for the temporary atonement of man's sins in the Old Covenant economy. As we saw above, "It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." (Leviticus 17:11). Blood does for our bodies what the Holy Spirit does for our souls, providing the breath of life, food, protection, and cleansing. So after being told time after time not to consume blood, how is it that we hear this provocative—no, revolutionary—statement leaving the lips of Yahshua? "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.... Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:47-51, 53-58) He's not talking about us all becoming cannibalistic vampires here—He's not talking about consuming his body and blood, but rather incorporating His life and Spirit. Yahshua is saying as bluntly as He can that we must assimilate Him—that he must become a part of us—if we are to experience the eternal life that only He can provide.

His flesh is His nourishing Word, and His blood is His Spirit—the breath of eternal life. “Life is in the blood.” No metaphor in the world is going to explain this adequately, but this comes close.

As we might expect from Yahweh, however, it’s not all metaphor. I’ll preface the following information with the blanket admission that I don’t have a shred of physical proof for what I’m about to tell you. I’m taking the word of men—some now passed on—who have nevertheless consistently honored Yahweh in their life, words, and work. I told most of this story in somewhat more detail in Future History, Chapter 13: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” so I’ll just cut to the chase. In 1982, an amateur archeologist named Ron Wyatt discovered the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant—in Jerusalem, in a cave located directly beneath the site of Yahshua’s crucifixion. The cross was held upright in a square hole cut in the limestone bedrock, and a prominent crack extended from this carved recess all the way to the hidden chamber some thirty feet below. This crevasse was apparently caused by the earthquake mentioned in Matthew 27:51. Wyatt found the inside of the crack coated with a black substance, some of which had splashed onto the top of the Ark—the mercy seat. Chemical analysis revealed the substance to be human blood. Whose? The One whose blood was supposed to be sprinkled on the mercy seat—the Lamb of God, Yahshua Himself!

It’s a great story so far, but it gets better. Wyatt, sometime before his death in 1999, had a lab in Israel test the blood (without telling them where it came from, of course). I’ll let Bill Fry, of Anchor Stone International, pick up the narrative:

“In order to perform a chromosome count (karyotype) test on human blood you must be able to isolate and culture living white blood cells. This is because white blood cells are the only cells in the blood that carry genetic material. These cells must also be alive because they have to be cultured so they mature and divide. At a certain stage of cell division the chromosomes within the cell become visible under a microscope. When this stage is reached a dye or chemical is added that stops the growth cycle. Then the chromosomes are counted by sight through a microscope.... Best case scenario, blood cells can live outside of the body approximately two weeks. A sample older than this would not contain living cells so there would be no way to perform a karyotype test. This is the reason Ron [Wyatt] so specifically pointed out that the blood of Christ was alive. Even though the dried blood sample was 2,000 years old, when rehydrated and examined under a microscope, it contained living cells, including white blood cells....

“The results of the chromosome test conclusively affirms the identity of this man as the Christ because it testifies that he was the product of a virgin birth! Under normal circumstances all human beings have 46 chromosomes, 23 from their mother and 23 from their father. There are

22 pairs of autosomes which determine things such as our height, hair and eye color, etc. The 23rd pair is the sex determinant pair. They consist of either X or Y chromosomes. The mother only has X chromosomes. The father has both X and Y chromosomes.

“If the sex-determinant pair is matched XX, the child is a female. If XY, the child is a male. Thus we see that the single chromosome provided by the father in this chromosome pair determines the gender of the child. When the blood sample Ron Wyatt took from the crack in the rock ceiling above the Mercy Seat was tested, it contained 24 chromosomes—23 from the mother and one Y chromosome from the father, 24 chromosomes. As Dr. Eugene Dunkley states in his article on the genetics of the blood of Christ, 24 chromosomes is exactly what would be expected if a man was born of a virgin. There are 23 chromosomes from the mother and a Y chromosome from a father. But that father cannot be a human father because the other 22 chromosomes on the father’s side are missing. Therefore the existence of a Y chromosome is at the very least a mystery, if not a miracle.”

This puts the maxim “The life is in the blood” in a whole new light, doesn’t it? Yes, while our bodies are alive, our blood is the conveyor of life. But in the case of Yahshua, life—eternal life—really was in the blood. It still is. In any number of ways.

(168)

To cover the blood of undomesticated animals (deer, etc.) and of fowl that have been killed (Lev. 17:13) (CCA49).

Cover the blood of undomesticated animals (deer, etc.) and of fowl that have been killed.

“Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.’” (Leviticus 17:13-14) The draining of blood is not just a ritual sacrifice procedure. It’s a health rule (in addition to its weighty symbolism), and therefore applies to wild game hunted for food as well as to domesticated animals. If meat is to be eaten safely, it must fit within the definition of a “clean” animal (with divided hooves and chewing cud) or a “clean” bird (not a carrion eater) and be completely drained of blood shortly after being killed (see #157). Moreover, the blood thus drained out must not be allowed to pool above ground, where carnivores, scavengers, and vermin could find it, but must be covered with earth. Yahweh designed us. He knows what it will take to keep us healthy.

(169)

Not to eat or drink like a glutton or a drunkard (not to rebel against father or mother) (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 21:20) (CCN106).

Do not eat or drink like a glutton or a drunkard (not to rebel against father or mother). “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) And you thought spanking was over the top. The ACLU would love to get their hands on this one. This particular mitzvah puts teeth into the Fifth Commandment, “Honor your father and your mother....” (See #59.) The values Yahweh’s law instilled into Israel’s Theocratic society (and hopefully on some level, our own) manifested themselves in a citizenry that was devout, hard-working, and respectful of God and man alike. A man who despised these values and God’s instruction was likely to be just the opposite—rebellious, lazy, and self-indulgent. He would have been what was described in Mitzvah #3 as a man who blasphemes (Hebrew: naqab, meaning to puncture or perforate, figuratively to libel, blaspheme, or curse”) God, or one who, as in Mitzvah #61, curses (qalal, meaning to take lightly, to bring into contempt, or despise) his parents. Both of these offenses carried the death penalty. In the present case, the focus is brought to bear on the likely symptoms: gluttony, drunkenness, and disobedience. But it’s all the same idea: Yahweh was protecting His chosen people against apostasy and rebellion.

The religious establishment of Yahshua’s time smelled an opportunity. They thought they might be able to invoke this precept in a misguided attempt to rid themselves of that inconvenient young rabbi in their midst who kept poking holes in their pretensions. Like lawyers today, they knew it wasn’t the evidence; it was what you could make out of it. First, they’d thought (and said) that John the Baptist was a demon-possessed lunatic for dressing up like a sack of potatoes and eating locusts and wild honey in the desert—and preaching the uncomfortable truth about them. But when Yahshua came along, refusing to fast while His disciples were with Him, drinking (and making) wine—and preaching the same uncomfortable truth about the religious bigwigs—they figured they might be able to arrange a stoning party for him based on Deuteronomy 21. They figured wrong. Yahshua observed that these hypocrites were awfully hard to please: “To what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the

marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.' For John [the Baptist] came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." (Matthew 11:16-19)

It isn't eating (or even over-eating) that the Torah is warning against in this mitzvah. Nor is it drinking alcoholic beverages (though its excess is reprov'd time and again in scripture). God is warning His people about rebellion, about taking His Law lightly, about stubbornly refusing to heed His word. Deciding what (and how much) to eat is just the tip of the iceberg; all of God's Torah has practical ramifications for us, either because it helps us live our lives according to Yahweh's design, or because it points directly toward His plan of redemption. Disregarding the Mosaic dietary laws in the name of "freedom under Christ" is a big mistake, for these aren't so much "laws" as they are instructions. As often as not, they carry their own penalty—the natural consequence of failing to heed the Owner's Manual.

(170)

Do no wrong in buying or selling. "If you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another." (Leviticus 25:14) Because the sentiment is covered by a boatload of other Mosaic precepts (don't steal or covet; keep honest scales, don't move boundary markers, etc.) the rabbis aren't exactly wrong with their reinterpretation of this mitzvot. But the context of the supporting verse reveals a meaning deeper than merely being honest in one's business dealings. It is within the Law of Jubilee (something we'll look at more thoroughly later in this chapter). If we look at the surrounding verses, Yahweh's real agenda becomes clear: "In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you. According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to you according to the number of the years of the crops. Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am Yahweh your God. So you shall observe My statutes and keep My judgments, and perform them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill, and dwell there in safety." (Leviticus 25:13-18) Jubilee came once every fifty years (i.e., once in a lifetime, for all practical purposes). Every Israelite who had "sold" his land during the preceding half century (see #226) would get it back at Jubilee. In practice, this meant that the land was worth less and

less as the year of Jubilee approached, for its lease value was related to how many crops one could raise on it. The admonition, then, is for both buyer and seller to refrain from taking opportunistic advantage of the situation—the approaching Jubilee. Buyers were to respond in love and fairness to a brother in need, and sellers were not to capitalize on their brothers' kindness or generosity.

The Jubilee is a metaphor for the coming eternal state, a time when believers' debts (read: sins) will be forgiven in practice as they now are in promise. Because of its symbolic nature, Jubilee was intended to be rehearsed by Israelites. For gentiles, its message is: Yahshua has provided for our redemption, though our debt was impossibly large; therefore we are to also to forgive those who "owe" us. Freely we have received; freely we should give. Don't oppress your fellow man.

(171)

Do not make a loan to an Israelite on interest. "If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit. I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God." (Leviticus 25:35-38) Again, this passage is related to Jubilee— God's quintessential picture of gracious forgiveness. Which of us has not fallen on hard times? Oh, not materially, necessarily, but spiritually we have all become debtors. Yahweh has taken pity upon us, paid off our debts, and put us on our feet. Should we not do the same thing for our brothers?

It is with deep sorrow that I must note that our entire monetary system today is based on a violation of this precept. In America, as in most of the rest of the world, money is based on debt. With little or nothing of intrinsic value to back it up, wealth is created out of thin air in tandem with loans—if every debt were paid off today, our entire money supply would cease to exist. Hardly anybody understands how our central banking boondoggle—I mean system— really works, of course; if we did, we would descend on Washington and New York en masse, pitchforks and torches in hand. Required reading:

The Creature from Jekyll Island: A Second Look at the Federal Reserve, by G. Edward Griffin.

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We (or is it just me?) are entirely too reluctant to trust Yahweh with our finances. Rather than living simply and within our means, we indulge our every whim and then feverishly scheme and

calculate how to make ends meet. All too often, our solutions involve short changing the charitable end of the spectrum—not just by giving less to advance Yahweh’s cause, but also oppressing our brothers by selling what we should be giving away or taking advantage of others’ misfortune by buying things cheaply. One I am personally guilty of: The house is priced under-market because the owners are getting a divorce and need a quick sale—we can make a killing here. When are we going to learn that our Father owns everything? It’s an insult to Him to doubt His willingness to meet our needs—and to demonstrate that doubt by taking advantage of our fellow man.

(172)

Do not borrow on interest (because this would cause the lender to sin). “You shall not charge interest to your brother—interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest. To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess.” (Deuteronomy 23:19-20) It’s a fine sentiment, I suppose: don’t cause your brother to stumble by offering incentive to sin. But the rabbis have missed the point. The burden is upon the lender: he must not take advantage of a brother in need by making a profit on his misfortune. If God has blessed him to the point that he has more than he needs, he is not to leverage that blessing into a growth industry.

Yahweh makes a distinction here between “brothers” and “foreigners.” Those outside the fellowship of faith are not under God’s protection—by their own choice. Yahweh understands that there is a time-value to money. But we are to conduct our business relationships with fellow believers as if we were dealing with God Himself. Would we charge Yahshua interest? Would we demand guarantees and collateral from Him? Of course not. We should be aware that He regards what we do for “His brothers” as being done for Him—personally. Remember the admonition concerning the separation of the “sheep from the goats” in Matthew 25. In the real world, especially today, especially in

America, we needn’t be “poor” to feel like we need to borrow. But it’s an illusion, for the most part. We have forgotten how to distinguish between needs and wants. If we borrow, we become debtors, and debt is a chain: one from which Yahweh would spare us. “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.... Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Romans 13:8, 10)

(173)

Do not take part in any usurious transaction between borrower and lender, neither as a surety, nor as a witness, nor as a writer of the bond for them. “If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbor’s garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious.” (Exodus 22:25-27) Although I don’t disagree with what the rabbis said here, it isn’t supported by the text, not all of it, anyway. The transaction in view is once again between the lender and the borrower (not a middleman). Yahweh is giving a real-world example of how collateral ought to work. The acceptance of a pledge is never to hinder or endanger (or as Leviticus 25 put it, oppress) the lender. A man’s coat may be the only thing of value he could leave with you to ensure that he pays his debt, but if it’s the only thing between him and pneumonia, make sure he gets it back when it gets cold. Use your imagination. I’m sure you can come up with half a dozen examples that fit our contemporary situation: a man’s car, tools, home—you get the picture. In practical terms, if you can trust his word, what good is collateral? And if you can’t, why are you expecting him to pay you back?

Again we see that the lending relationship in view is between “any of My people.” That is, if the borrower honors Yahweh, you (the God-fearing lender) ought to be able to trust him to keep his word and pay you back, for he didn’t make his promises to you as much as he made them to God Himself. If he stiffes you, he’ll answer to Yahweh—and he knows it (or ought to). Contrast this to what Solomon says about loaning money to strangers (i.e., those with whom you don’t share a familial relationship with Yahweh): “He who is surety for a stranger will suffer, but one who hates being surety is secure.” (Proverbs 11:15) A “surety” is an old fashioned word for a guarantee. It’s true on personal, corporate, and national levels: if we guarantee the performance of those who don’t answer to Yahweh, we will suffer for it.

(174)

Lend to a poor person. “If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him: you shall not charge him interest.” (Exodus 22:25) The word “if” (Hebrew: *'im*) is more positive than it may seem in the English. It means “when” or “whenever” as much as “if.” It is a given under the Law that an Israelite with means will not oppress his less fortunate brother by refusing him a timely loan, nor, as we see here, is the lender to charge interest—to make a profit on his charity. Conversely, it is also a given that a man will not borrow money if he is not in dire straits—and certainly not if he has no intention of repaying the loan. Accepting a loan under such false pretenses is tantamount to stealing (see Exodus 20:15). Bear in mind that Yahweh put mechanisms in place in Israel through which the

poor could provide for themselves (see Mitzvot #4152 in Chapter 2). And in the larger sense, Israel was promised (Deuteronomy 28:1-14, etc.) abundant temporal blessings that would make poverty in the Land an aberration rather than the status quo, if only they would heed Yahweh's laws. In other words, this never should have been much of an issue.

(175)

Do not demand from a poor man repayment of his debt, nor press him, when it becomes clear that he cannot pay. "If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious." (Exodus 22:25-27) Maimonides has been caught padding the list again. We've already seen the supporting text of this Mitzvah in #173, and we've seen similar passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The bottom line here is that we are to be merciful, generous, and forgiving, for Yahweh is all of those things toward us. As far as not requiring repayment of loans, Yahweh never actually said anything about it. The closest He got was in a parable told by Yahshua (Matthew 18:21-35) in which a king forgave a gargantuan debt owed by a servant who asked for mercy, only to see him turn around and refuse to forgive a relatively small debt of a fellow servant. The point was not that the king had no right to press the first servant to repay his debts—the debt was real: somebody had to make up the shortfall—and that turned out to be the King Himself. But because the king was merciful, His servant should have been merciful as well. What made the king angry was not the debt, but the first servant's unforgiving attitude. The carryover to our redemption and its intended effect upon our lives is self-evident. The "king" is Yahweh, and the "debt" we owe is due to our sin. Because God has forgiven us, we likewise should forgive those who have wronged us.

(176)

Do not take in pledge utensils used in preparing food. "No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge." (Deuteronomy 24:6) Food has nothing to do with it, and the supporting verse makes that plain (at least to me). The point was that a man's ability to earn a living was not to be infringed upon by requiring that he put up the tools of his trade as collateral. In other words, don't take a miller's millstone, a farmer's ox or plow, a weaver's loom, etc., in pledge for a loan, even if they are the only things of value a borrower may have. I get the feeling that the rabbis specified food-preparation utensils because they wanted to be able to broaden their horizons in the collateral department—thereby circumventing the clear intent of this precept.

Yahweh didn't altogether forbid the taking of pledges to secure loans, for He wanted to protect lenders from potential abuse at the hands of shifty borrowers. At the same time, He clearly doesn't like the concept of resorting to legal means to minimize risk. His ideal is "Let your yes be yes, and your no be no," in other words, be as good as your word. If you borrow, pay your debts—as quickly as you can. If God has blessed you with a little more than you need to get by, don't be afraid to "risk it" helping someone in need. Consider that the overabundance you've received may have been given to you for that very purpose.

(177)

Do not exact a pledge from a debtor by force. "When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you." (Deuteronomy 24:10-11) I'm pretty sure the rabbis got this one wrong. If one found he had to use force to extract a pledge, he would simply refrain from making the loan. I think this has more to do with protecting the dignity of the borrower. He feels bad enough that he's in need of the loan; to have the lender invade his home and extract the pledge in front of the man's family would be adding insult to injury. It's no sin to be poor (though it's no great honor, either). A man should be treated with dignity and respect, whatever his station in life.

(178)

Do not keep the pledge from its owner when he needs it. "And if the man is poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before Yahweh your God." (Deuteronomy 24:12-13) This repeats the precept outlined in #173. In God's economy, mercy outweighs justice, kindness trumps correctness, and compassion is worth more than fairness. When Yahweh called Abram, he "believed God and it was accounted unto him as righteousness." Here we see something very similar. The lender here is seen trusting not in the borrower, not even in the collateral that was offered to secure the loan, but in Yahweh Himself. He's saying, It doesn't matter all that much if I get reimbursed; God will take care of me nevertheless. But I refuse to see my brother shivering in the cold just because he hasn't paid back his debt. I will extend mercy to him, even though justice says I'm not required to. This attitude is seen as "righteousness" before Yahweh.

(179)

Return a pledge to its owner. "And if the man is poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may

sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before Yahweh your God.” (Deuteronomy 24:12-13) This is merely the affirmative statement of negative Mitzvah #178. Maimonides is puffing this thing out like a seventh grader’s term paper. The question may be properly asked, however, why Yahweh repeats this seemingly anachronistic tenet so many times. The answer becomes obvious when we realize that (1) we owe Him an impossibly large debt, (2) that the “pledges” we make to “do better” aren’t worth the breath we expend on them if done in our own efforts, and (3) that if He “held our pledges,” that is, if He held us to our word, we would all die of exposure before the night was over. We are entirely dependent upon His mercy. We are lost forever without His grace. The “garment” He provides—the righteousness of His salvation—protects us from the world and the judgment that follows. He never withdraws that protection, no matter how much we “owe.”

(180)

Don’t take a pledge from a widow. “You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow’s garment as a pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.” (Deuteronomy 24:17-18) Taking a widow’s protective outer garment as collateral against a loan is seen here as an example of “perversion of justice.” Widows, orphans, and “strangers” are scriptural pictures of helplessness, and Yahweh invariably goes out of His way to protect and provide for them in His Law. Here He reminds us that He delivered us when we were slaves to sin—when we were as helpless as widows and orphans, as alienated as strangers in a foreign land. We are therefore to follow His lead by providing mercy and justice to those less fortunate than we are, whether materially or spiritually.

(181)

Do not commit fraud in measuring. “You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume.” (Leviticus 19:35) This is a corollary to the Eighth Commandment, “You shall not steal.” The point was not so much that measurements had to be accurate, but that no “injustice” was to be done in their application (a condition, of course, that was most easily achieved by measuring accurately). The first thing in Moses’ list is the one we tend to skip over: “do no injustice in judgment.” The Hebrew word for judgment, *mishpat*, means a verdict, judicial sentence, or formal legal decree. When weighing and measuring the evidence in a case, those judging are to be careful in their assessments.

Injustice is to be avoided at all costs, whether it’s a case of murder, or a case of pickles.

(182)

Ensure that your scales and weights are correct. “You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them: I am Yahweh.” (Leviticus 19:36-37) Continuing the thought from the previous mitzvah, we see that measuring “justly” depended on using accurate paraphernalia, scales that balance properly and precisely accurate weights against which to measure the commodities being bought and sold. (An ephah is a unit of dry measure, approximately two thirds of a bushel. A hin is a unit of liquid measure equivalent to about one gallon.) The modern equivalent might be: don’t roll the odometer back on that used car you’re selling; don’t pad your hours when billing your clients for the time you’ve spent on their behalf, etc.

Another example: I used to design packaging for a living. One of my clients, a poultry merchandiser, refused to feed their chickens and turkeys antibiotics, even though this was standard industry practice. Why? Not only because of the health risks associated with administering subtherapeutic levels of antibiotics, but also because it was dishonest: these drugs raised the water weight of a growing bird by up to fifteen percent. So Shelton’s Poultry was (no doubt without realizing it) following the Law of God in this respect, though they were practically alone in heeding their convictions and their conscience.

Yahweh is saying something very basic here: don’t cheat each other. Then, as He does so often, He reminds us why we shouldn’t cheat. It’s because of who He is—the One who saved us, the One to whom we owe our very existence. His world, His rules. Bottom line: if we can’t trust Him to take care of us in petty financial matters, we can’t trust Him at all.

(183)

Don’t possess inaccurate measures and weights. “You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which Yahweh your God is giving you. For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to Yahweh your God.” (Deuteronomy 25:13-16) This is the negative counterpart to the affirmative mitzvah we just listed. It’s all the same principle. Restated here in Deuteronomy, we see how the cheating was accomplished: a dishonest merchant would keep two sets of weights, a heavy one for measuring what was being paid to him, and a light one for measuring what he was selling. It’s cheating, theft, dishonesty, robbery, oppression—and Yahweh hates it. Any way you slice it, it betrays a lack of trust in Yahweh’s provision. The precept, however, came with a promise: if the Israelites would be honest in their business dealings, their “days would be lengthened in the land Yahweh was

giving them.” As we know from history, unfortunately, their dishonest, cheating hearts eventually got them thrown out of the Land. Remember—Yahweh doesn’t change: the principle still applies today.

Employees, Servants and Slaves

(184)

Do not delay payment of a hired man’s wages. “You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.” (Leviticus 19:13) Delaying payment (not just for wages, but for anything) is a form of oppression, and Yahweh considers it evil. To withhold payment of a legitimate debt, even temporarily, is seen by God as robbery. I’ve been on both sides of this equation, as an employer and as an employee (and as both contractor and client). I’ve felt the anguish of not knowing if the check was going to arrive on time, of not knowing if I’d be able to feed my family because some bureaucrat was holding my wages “all night.” I’ve also witnessed the puzzled gratitude of my suppliers when I paid what I owed them several weeks early. I can tell you from experience, doing business God’s way is a lot more fun.

(185)

The hired laborer shall be permitted to eat of the produce he is reaping. “When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.” (Deuteronomy 23:24-25) The rabbis have blown it big time here (and in the next two mitzvot) by applying this precept to hired laborers. Could it be they were trying to engineer a loophole? Sure, I’ll pay you: you can eat your fill of my produce while you’re harvesting my crop, but don’t expect a penny more. This is not about employees, but about “neighbors,” that is, fellow Israelites or strangers who were passing through and got hungry. (Yahshua and His disciples fell into this category from time to time.) As the text plainly indicates, this is part of God’s “welfare” system—it’s designed to take care of travelers and wayfarers. As we saw during our discussion of Yahweh’s provision for the poor (Mitzvot #41-50), God provided the land and its increase; it was therefore His prerogative to make it available to whomever He chose—to the landowner first, but also to those in immediate need.

We read of Yahshua doing this very thing in Matthew 12:1 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

(186)

The hired laborer shall not take more than he can eat. “When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.” (Deuteronomy 23:24-25) There is a wonderfully practical balance here between the rights of the landowner and the needs of the wayfarer. The “neighbor” could walk through a field or vineyard and help himself to as much as he could carry—in his stomach (which only holds about a quart). No sickle or pruning hook, no container to haul away the booty, no equipment at all other than your bare hands and digestive tract would be allowed; this wasn’t a raid God was authorizing—it was charity. Thus there were practical limits to the impact such “harvesting” could have on the farmer’s crop. Again, the precept has absolutely nothing to do with relations between a landowner and his hired laborers.

(187)

A hired laborer shall not eat produce that is not being harvested. “When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.” (Deuteronomy 23:24-25) Pardon me, Maimonides. Your agenda is showing. This is not about making sure your field hands aren’t getting overpaid. This is about reflecting Yahweh’s mercy, sharing God’s bounty, recognizing His provision, and emulating His generosity. It’s the very antithesis of the ugly attitude of imposing submission on those who find themselves beneath you on the economic scale in this world.

(188)

Pay wages to the hired man at the due time. “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to Yahweh, and it be sin to you.”

(Deuteronomy 24:14-15) Is there an echo in here? This is the same precept we saw under

Mitzvah #184. We shouldn’t be too surprised to find a lot of the same things first mentioned in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers to be repeated in Deuteronomy, for it is the record of Moses’ delivering the Law to a whole new generation of Israelites—whose rebellious parents had died in the wilderness. Here we are told (as if we didn’t know) why the hired laborers were to be paid

promptly: they were poor, and their “hearts were set” on receiving what they had earned with the sweat of their brow. Been there; done that. Most of us have cried out in distress to Yahweh at some point, seeking protection from someone’s abuse. I would simply note here that being the oppressor somebody is complaining to God about would be a very, very bad thing.

(189)

Deal judicially with the Hebrew bondman in accordance with the laws appertaining to him. “If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.” (Exodus 21:2-6)

This is only incidentally a precept about temporal master-slave relationships. In actuality, it is an elaborate metaphor of our ability and privilege to choose Yahweh. First, we see the ubiquitous six-plus-one pattern here, which should by now tell us instantly that Yahweh is instructing us about His plan for mankind—six thousand years of

“work” and a millennium of “rest.”

Next, we learn an often-misunderstood lesson about liberty: freedom is neutral. It’s not important in itself; what’s significant is what you’re freed from. Who is the master from whom you wish to be released? Release from the service of a cruel taskmaster would be a good thing, of course. But be advised: escape may be more difficult than it looks. Parts of your old life of servitude could be hard to leave behind. This is obviously a metaphor for the service of Satan, a life of sin. Our acquaintances and addictions are part of our old life: if we aren’t prepared to let them go, we will never be truly free.

On the other hand, what if your Master is kindhearted and generous? What if He has given you “everything that pertains to life and godliness?” What if the work you’ve been given to do has been a joy to perform, significant and fulfilling? And what if you’ve built a family within His household with whom the bond of love is sweet and enduring? If, as the poet said, “Freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose,” then perhaps liberty is not necessarily such a good thing after all. I’m speaking, of course, of having Yahweh/Yahshua as a master. Some of us have spent years in the service of God: we could conceivably say to ourselves, “I’ve paid my dues—I’m through.” But retiring from this life is like leaving the best job in the world—how could we possibly top it? (The paycheck ain’t so great sometimes, but the benefits and retirement plan

are to die for.) Freedom from Christ is like freedom from health, love, security, from life itself—it's something no sane man would want. It's no accident that every letter writer in the New Testament called Himself a servant of Christ at one point or another (Paul, James, Peter, and Jude did so in their salutations, and John spoke incessantly of "keeping His commandments," which is what a servant does above all else.)

So what do we do when confronted with our "freedom" from the God we love? According to the passage at hand, we have the option of declining to leave. We can approach the doorpost (Hebrew: mezuzah: the place where God's word was to be displayed—see #21) and ask the Master—Yahshua—to pierce our earlobe with an awl. In this we are following our Messiah: the piercing is voluntary, involving blood and pain, but the Master subsequently adorns our wound with a golden ring, the symbol of eternity in the service of the King.

(190)

Do not compel the Hebrew servant to do the work of a slave. "If one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. And then he shall depart from you—he and his children with him—and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers." (Leviticus 25:39-41) I find it fascinating that Yahweh never forbade slavery. He regulated it, mitigated its abuses, incorporated a temporary form of it into His welfare system, and used it as a springboard for His metaphors about service, but He never outlawed it. Perhaps He wanted us to come to grips with the fact that this side of heaven, we're all "slaves" to something or other, whether good or evil, God or Satan.

This mitzvah has less to do with the type of work assigned to the bondservant than with the attitude of the master. A slave was property: you could buy or sell him, and if someone injured or killed him, it was the master who was reimbursed. But Israelites were not to "own" their brothers. If a man became poor and "sold himself" into the service of a fellow Israelite, he did not become a "slave," but rather an indentured servant—sort of a "contract laborer." He was not "owned" by the master, but was sort of "leased." There was a term during which he would serve the master in exchange for a financial consideration—paid up front to satisfy a debt or support the man's family. The master was to treat him as he would any hired laborer—with respect and dignity.

Most significantly, there was a time limit to his period of service. Leviticus 25 is all about the Jubilee, a once-every-fifty-year (i.e., once in a lifetime) occurrence, and thus we are being given a picture here of being granted release from our labors at the end of our lives: not our physical

lives, but our lives as slaves—our lives bound to sin. Our freedom from that condition is pictured by Jubilee. There is, however, a variant on this Law that releases the bondservant after six years. “If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.” (Deuteronomy 15:12) As a practical matter, Yahweh didn’t want Israelites selling themselves into bondage for their entire lifetimes. So the Sabbath year represents a sort of mini-Jubilee, in which many of the same things (debts, lands, servitude) were released. In the Sabbatical year, the once-in-a-lifetime picture is lost, but Yahweh’s mercy, forgiveness, and provision are seen even more clearly.

(191)

Do not sell a Hebrew servant as a slave. “...For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves.” (Leviticus 25:42) Continuing the thought from the previous mitzvah, we see that Yahweh’s instructions concerning Israelite bondservants prohibited their being re-sold as ordinary slaves. The stated reason was that they were actually Yahweh’s servants first (being Israelites and believers), and only bondservants to their earthly masters in a secondary role. The lesson for Christians should provide confidence and comfort: once we are Yahweh’s servants—once we have asked the master to pierce our earlobe with His awl against the doorpost of testimony—we will never again be “sold” into sin. Satan can never own us. This is about as strong an evidence for “eternal security” as it gets. I should hasten to add, however, that since we are servants of God, He has the right to administer discipline as He sees fit. Read the story of David in II Samuel, I Kings, and I Chronicles. If Yahweh did not hesitate to discipline one so close to His own heart when he sinned, we should expect nothing less.

(192)

Do not treat a Hebrew servant rigorously. “...You shall not rule over him [an Israelite bondservant] with rigor, but you shall fear your God.” (Leviticus 25:43) A direct parallel is drawn between the fear—the reverence—of Yahweh and the treatment of one’s bondservants. As we saw in #191, the servant is primarily Yahweh’s; he is only being “loaned” to his earthly master, who is also a servant of Yahweh’s. In effect, the “master” was being told not to mistreat the servant of Another. As believers, we need to remember that we all serve the same God. We may find ourselves higher or lower in the “pecking order,” but mercy rolls downhill. If we have received mercy, we should dispense mercy.

(193)

Do not permit a gentile to treat harshly a Hebrew bondman sold to him. “He shall be with him as a yearly hired servant, and he shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight.” (Leviticus 25:53) As we have seen, this entire chapter concerns the law of Jubilee. Here we see what is to happen if the indentured servant’s master is not an Israelite, but a gentile living in the Land. Let’s pick up the narrative in verse 47: “Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger’s family, after he is sold he may be redeemed again.” This, the law of redemption, is the main point of the passage—not the gentle treatment of Jewish servants. “One of his brothers may redeem him; or his uncle or his uncle’s son may redeem him; or anyone who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself....” The servant’s family can, at any time, buy back the man’s “contract” from his master. In other words, even though he has sold his services to another, the bondservant still belongs to Yahweh. He himself cannot be sold.

How is the redemption price determined? “Thus he shall reckon with him who bought him: The price of his release shall be according to the number of years, from the year that he was sold to him until the Year of Jubilee; it shall be according to the time of a hired servant for him. If there are still many years remaining, according to them he shall repay the price of his redemption from the money with which he was bought. And if there remain but a few years until the Year of Jubilee, then he shall reckon with him, and according to his years he shall repay him the price of his redemption. He shall be with him as a yearly hired servant, and he shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight....” As we saw with land that was sold/leased to another, value is determined by how much productivity can be expected between now and Jubilee. The closer the time, the less the bondservant is worth to the master.

“And if he is not redeemed in these years, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee— he and his children with him. For the children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am Yahweh your God.” (Leviticus 25:47-55) Is there more to this than meets the eye? I believe there is. We now live in “the times of the Gentiles.” Israel has “sold herself” into bondage because of the spiritual poverty she has endured since her national rejection of Yahshua at Calvary. Yahweh is not (at present) dealing with His people Israel in any direct way. But that’s about to change. The most ubiquitous prophetic theme in the entire Bible is the eventual restoration of Israel to a place of fellowship with Yahweh through Yahshua their King—an earthly thousand-year Messianic Kingdom.

And when will that begin? On Jubilee—the ultimate Jubilee—commencing with the Day of Atonement spoken of in Zechariah 12:10 in which Israel will at last recognize her Messiah. As time marches toward this prophetic rendezvous, the Jews’ “value” to the world will be whittled

away until there's nothing left, just as stated in the law of Jubilee. As Daniel put it, "When the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished." (Daniel 12:7) A mere five days after this Day of Atonement, after the remnant of Israel has watched their Messiah annihilate their enemies at the Battle of Armageddon, the definitive Feast of Tabernacles will usher in the Millennial reign of Yahshua. The year, unless I've misread the obvious signs, will be 2033—two thousand years, forty Jubilees, since Christ paid the required price to redeem us all from our service to Satan. In the intervening years, some Jews, perceiving that they had been released, left their old master. The rest continued their servitude in ignorance, working for their adversary until released by the Law of Jubilee.

All of this sheds new light on the significance of the mitzvah we originally started out examining, "He shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight." Even though Israel has been in bondage for the last two millennia, their gentile overlords have been warned by Yahweh not to treat them harshly. They have rarely listened.

(194)

Do not send away a Hebrew bondman servant empty-handed when he is freed from service. "If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what Yahweh has blessed you with, you shall give to Him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today." (Deuteronomy 15:12-15) Justice says: You agreed to work for six years for "X" amount of money. You were paid and you have fulfilled your contract. You're free to go, but you will receive nothing more. Mercy says: Your poverty forced you to sell your services for six long years, and you have faithfully fulfilled your contract. But now you're no better off than you were when you started, so as a bonus, your former master will "stake you" so you can begin anew— food, supplies, opportunities: whatever it takes to get an honest, hardworking man like you on your feet for good.

As I said before, mercy trumps justice in God's book. Rectitude is good, but love is infinitely better. It's a fine thing to be correct, but Yahweh prefers us to be compassionate. Beyond that, if this, like the previous mitzvah, has a prophetic component to it, it would be demonstrated in any of a hundred passages like this: "Thus says Yahweh Almighty: 'Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples. They shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. Kings shall be your foster fathers,

and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am Yahweh, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me.” (Isaiah 49:22-23) The restoration of Israel will ultimately be an international affair, with the redeemed gentile survivors of the tribulation joyously aiding in the final regathering and restoration of Yahweh’s people to the Land of Promise. I realize that represents a 180-degree turnabout from their attitude today, but today the nations serve Satan, not Yahweh. And like I said, that’s all about to change.

(195)

Bestow liberal gifts upon the Hebrew bondsman or bondwoman (at the end of their term of service). “If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what Yahweh has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.” (Deuteronomy 15:12-15) This, of course, is merely the affirmative restatement of #194’s negative mitzvah. As we have seen so often in precepts concerning mercy or redemption, there is a reason attached to the commandment: Yahweh has blessed us, restored us, and given us freedom and prosperity. As far as it is within our powers, we are to do the same for our fellow man.

(196)

Redeem a Hebrew maid-servant. “If a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her.” (Exodus 21:7-8) This is a subset of the law of redemption designed to protect women from abuse. The word translated “go out” (Hebrew: yoset) is “used of going forth from one’s homeland into exile.” (B&C) Thus it doesn’t mean, Keep your female bondservants indoors, but rather, There are different rules in effect for female bondservants. The obvious problem was the potential for sexual abuse. Harlotry, especially selling one’s daughter into this life, was strictly forbidden: “Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.” (Leviticus 19:29) There were, of course, many legitimate non-sex-related roles for female bondservants to fulfill in a master’s household, so the practice of “leasing” one’s daughter into indentured servitude was not forbidden.

It was inevitable, however, that occasionally a man who had brought a female bondservant into his household would notice her qualities and decide she would make a good marriage partner—either for himself or for his son (see #198). In that case, if she failed to please her master after the betrothal, he could no longer treat her as an ordinary slave girl, but would be required to let her family redeem her. He was specifically prohibited from selling her to a foreign master.

Of course, slavery and indentured servitude aren't terribly common any more. So is this precept obsolete? No. Once again, think prophetically. Israel has fallen into spiritual poverty, and has sold her daughters into the service of the world. Yahweh is announcing here that they cannot be sold to Satan; He reserves the right to redeem them—to restore them to His family. The “daughters of Jerusalem” have not pleased their masters in exile, but they are under Yahweh's protection. He has already paid the price of their redemption. We now await their realization that they are free to go back home.

(197)

Do not sell a Hebrew maid-servant to another person. “If a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her.” (Exodus 21:7-8) This is the negative counterpart to the previous mitzvah. Maimonides is padding the list again.

(198)

Espouse a Hebrew maid-servant. “...If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her [i.e., the betrothed bondservant's] clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money.” (Exodus 21:8-11) Continuing the thought from the previous mitzvah, we see that the rabbis have done some judicious editing, and have therefore missed the whole point.

There are some big “ifs” here. If the female bondservant is “wife material,” then she is no longer bondservant material. You can't have it both ways. In the same way, Israel, who has become the bondservant of the world through her spiritual bankruptcy, had (and has) the opportunity to be betrothed to the Master (Yahweh), or to His Son (Yahshua), in which case she would cease to be a bond slave, but would become a wife with all the rights and privileges of any wife—no matter what she was formerly. And what was that provision about “another wife?” It's pretty

obvious, this side of Calvary. Yahweh is referring to the Church, the Ekklesia —the other woman, His second wife, the bride of Christ. The Law here is flatly stating that if (actually, when) Israel accepts Yahweh’s marriage proposal, she will not be a second-class wife—a concubine, as it were—but will be a real wife, loved equally with her sister, the Church. As always with metaphors, if you put too much stress on them they’ll start to fray around the edges, but the central truth remains: God loves both Israel and the Ekklesia, even though Israel has sold herself into bondage temporarily.

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Keep the Canaanite slave forever. “Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property. And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them as a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves.” (Leviticus 25:45-46) This one must have driven nineteenth-century abolitionists crazy. Is Yahweh promoting slavery? Not really, although for the sake of His illustration, He is permitting it. Yahweh is making a distinction here between those who would be set free through the law of Jubilee (the central subject of Leviticus 25), and those who would not. In other words, this is a lesson about the eternal status of non-believers.

Yahweh’s people, represented here by Israel, are protected by the Law of Jubilee: every fifty years they are granted total forgiveness. God through His Law redeems them from their bondage and debt. “Strangers,” however, are representative of those who are not under Yahweh’s protection; therefore the general amnesty of Jubilee does not apply to them. I hasten to note that this is not a statement defining one’s salvation or damnation based on race or culture. As I’ve said till I’m blue in the face, Israel’s job was and is to bear the signs of Yahweh’s redemptive plan—and this is one of them: they’re playing the role of the saved, whether or not they are actually followers of Yahweh as individuals. In the same way, the “strangers” are cast in the role of the unsaved. The point is simply that unbelievers will remain in bondage permanently. There will be no day of grace for them because they have no covenant relationship with Yahweh. Jubilee’s forgiveness is for God’s people, not Satan’s.