

## Leviticus Chapter 25 Second Continued

Verses 39-55

The principles for dealing with slavery are laid out.

Verses 39-46

The enslavement of a fellow Hebrew ("brethren"), was to be rare; if servitude was unavoidable, it was to be handled with grace and kindness, treating that individual as a hired worker rather than as a "slave".

Gentile slaves ("strangers"), were exempt from the restrictions detailed here, so they could be enslaved for life and inherited as "property".

**Leviticus 25:39 "And if thy brother [that dwelleth] by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant:"**

The above laws and instructions seem designed to prevent such extreme poverty as obliged to what follows.

Namely, a brother being sold either to an Israelite or to a stranger, by relieving his wants or lending him money.

But when these were insufficient to support him, and keep him from sinking into the lowest state of distress and misery, then he was obliged to be sold, as follows.

"And be sold unto thee":

Either by himself, being ready to starve and perish, or by the Sanhedrim, having stolen something, as Aben Ezra observes.

In such a case the civil magistrate had a power of selling a man (Exodus 22:3).

"Thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant":

Such as were Heathens, and bought of them, or taken in war and made slaves of.

But an Israelite sold was not to serve as they, either with respect to matter or manner, or time of service.

Such as were bondmen were put to the hardest service, the greatest drudgery, as well as what was mean and reproachful, and were used in the most rigorous and despotic manner.

And were obliged to serve for ever, and were never released.

But a brother, an Israelite, sold to another through extreme poverty, was not to be put to any low, mean, base, and disgraceful service.

By which it would be known that he was a servant, as Jarchi notes.

Such as to carry his master's vessels or instruments after him to the bath, or to unloose his shoes.

But, as the same writer observes, he was to be employed in the business of the farm, or in some handicraft work.

And was to be kindly and gently used, rather as a brother than a servant, and to be freed in the year of jubilee.

**Leviticus 25:40 "[But] as a hired servant, [and] as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, [and] shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee:"**

Who is hired by the day, or month, or year.

And, when his time is up, receives his wages and goes where he pleases.

And while a servant is not under such despotic power and government as a slave is.

"And as a sojourner":

An inmate, one that dwells in part of a man's house, or boards and lodges with him, and whom he treats in a kind and familiar manner.

Rather like one of his own family than otherwise.

"He shall be with thee":

As under the above characters, and used as such.

This the Jews refer to food and drink, and other things, as they do (Deut. 15:16).

And say that a master might not eat fine bread, and his servant bread of bran.

Nor drink old wine, and his servant new.

Nor sleep on soft pillows and bedding, and his servant on straw.

Hence, they say, he that gets himself a Hebrew servant is as if he got himself a master.

"And shall serve thee unto the year of the jubilee":

And no longer; for if the year of jubilee came before the six years were expired for which he sold himself.

The jubilee set him free, as Jarchi observes.

Nay, if he sold himself for ten or twenty years, and that but one year before the jubilee, it set him free, as Maimonides says.

Whether you are for slavery or not, does not enter into this lesson.

At the time this was written, it was the practice to have slaves.

We see from the verse above, that Hebrews who were sold into slavery to their Hebrew brothers, were to be treated as brothers.

They were not to be treated like the Roman slaves or the Egyptian slaves.

In this God is reminding them that all men are His.

The Hebrew would serve up to seven years, or if jubilee occurred earlier, they were freed at jubilee.

Not only were they freed from slavery, but their land was returned to them as well.

They would be back on equal footing at jubilee.

**Leviticus 25:41 "And [then] shall he depart from thee, [both] he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return."**

His sons and daughters, and his wife also, who is included in himself.

If a man had a wife and children when he sold himself, or married afterwards, with his master's consent, he was obliged to maintain them.

Though they were not sold to him, nor properly his servants, and so had a right to go out with him.

"And shall return unto his own family":

His father's family, and that of his near relations.

Having been out of it during his time of servitude, and which the year of jubilee restored him to (Lev. 25:10).

"And unto the possession of his fathers shall he return":

The estate his father left him by inheritance, and which he was obliged to sell in the time of his poverty.

Or which fell to him since by the death of his father.

To this also he was restored in the year of jubilee, as is expressed in the text referred to.

We see from this a further separation.

Even though a child had been born to him in captivity, the child still belonged to the man who was freed.

In fact, his whole family was freed with him.

He and his family would move back on to the land of his inheritance at jubilee.

**Leviticus 25:42 "For they [are] my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen."**

“For they are my servants”:

The spirit of Old Testament slavery is revealed in these words.

God, in effect, ordered that slaves be treated like family, i.e., better than employees, because they are His slaves which He redeemed out of the slave markets of Egypt.

God owned not only the land (verse 23), but also the people.

**Leviticus 25:43 "Thou shalt not rule over him with rigor; but shalt fear thy God."**

Those who are in authority over others are not to treat their subordinates harshly (with “rigor”), but according to the fear of God.

This remains an important verse for those in positions of leadership of any kind.

These people were God's.

In fact, all of humanity are God's servants.

If they ruled over their brother harshly, they would have to deal with God, whose servant they were.

Verses 44-46: "Of the heathen that are round about you": These slaves included people whom Israel was to either drive out or destroy (i.e., slavery was a humane option), and those who came to Israel in the Exodus from Egypt.

**Leviticus 25:44 "Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, [shall be] of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids."**

Such it seems were allowed them, if they had need of them.

But if they had them, they were to be not of the nation of Israel, but of other nations.

This is an anticipation of an objection, as Jarchi observes.

If so, who shall I have to minister to me?

The answer follows, they;

"Shall be of the heathen that are round about you":

Of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids":

That is, of the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Syrians, as Aben Ezra.

That were their neighbors, that lived round about them, of any but the seven nations, which they were ordered utterly to destroy.

Wherefore Jarchi observes it is said, "that are round about thee"; not in the midst of the border of your land, for them they were not to save alive (Deut. 20:16).

Of the heathen that are round about you.

These are to be purchased to do the necessary work.

They were not permitted to buy any slaves from the seven nations who were in the midst of them, and whom they were ordered to destroy.

An Israelite could own slaves who were not Israelites.

That is what bondwoman or bondman means.

They had no special privileges.

A bondman would be their property.

**Leviticus 25:45 "Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that [are] with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession."**

The uncircumcised sojourners as they are called in the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan.

Proselytes of the gate, such of the nations round about who came and sojourned among them, being subject to the precepts given to the sons of Noah respecting idolatry, etc.

But were not circumcised, and did not embrace the Jewish religion.

"Of them shall ye buy":

For bondmen and bondmaids.

"And of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land":

But, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, are not of the Canaanites.

Though the Jewish writers say, that one of the nations that lies with a Canaanitish woman, and begets a son of her, he may be bought for a servant.

And so if a Canaanitish man lies with one of the nations, and begets a son of her, he may also be bought for a servant.

"And they shall be your possession":

As servants, as bondmen and bondmaids, and be so for ever to them and their heirs, as follows.

These bondmen or bondwomen were actually the possession of the person who purchased them.

They were their property as long as they lived in most cases.

These bondmen and bondwomen could not be Israelites.

They had to be of another nationality.

Even though an Israelite was poor and had to work for another Israelite, they were brothers and must be treated as such.

**Leviticus 25:46 "And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit [them for] a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigor."**

Which they might leave them at their death to inherit, as they did their estates and lands.

When the person died that owned the bondman or bondwoman, the bondman or bondwoman were to be given to the family of their owner.

This was part of their inheritance, just as a piece of land was.

Verses 47-55

This section deals with an alien who has an Israelite slave.

A person could be redeemed from bondage (25:48), from poverty (25:25), or from widowhood (Deut. 25:5-6).

The redeemer was a family member who agreed to marry the widowed woman or to buy back the enslaved person or the mortgaged property, providing help and security in adversity.

**Leviticus 25:47 "And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother [that dwelleth] by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger [or] sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family:"**

An uncircumcised one, as the Targums.

A proselyte of the gate, who by living among and trading with the Israelites, might grow rich and wealthy in money.

At least so as to be able to purchase a Hebrew servant, though not his lands, which he might not buy.

"And thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor":

Comes into low circumstances, and is reduced to great poverty, even extreme poverty.

For only in such a case might he sell himself to an Israelite, and much less to a stranger, if this was not the case.

Jarchi suggests, as in the phrase, "by thee", points at the cause or occasion of the sojourner or stranger becoming rich.

His nearness unto, or cleaving to all Israelite.

And so here the phrase, "by him", directs to the cause or occasion of the Israelite's becoming poor.

His being near and cleaving to the sojourner or stranger.

But they seem rather to be used, to show the reason of the poor Israelite falling into the hands of a rich sojourner.

They being near neighbors to one another, and having a familiarity, the following bargain is struck between them.

"And sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee":

The uncircumcised sojourner, as the Targum of Jonathan.

"Or to the stock of the stranger's family":

Or "root", one that sprung from a family.

Which some understand of one, who though he be descended from such a family, was now rooted among the people of God, and incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel.

And yet such a one could not detain a Hebrew servant longer than the year of jubilee.

But the Jewish writers generally interpret it of an idolater.

**Leviticus 25:48 "After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:"**

“Redeem him”:

Redemption, a contractual agreement which existed in the slave culture, offered the potential for emancipation to indentured individuals under certain conditions.

Slaves could be bought out of slavery or some other sort of indentured status by family members or other interested parties who would pay the ransom price.

**Leviticus 25:49 "Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or [any] that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself."**

“Nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him”:

The verse refers to Israelites who, in poverty, sold themselves into slavery for survival.

A near kinsman could redeem and grant to the slave again his freedom by paying an appropriate price.

This is the basis for the redemption of Ruth by Boaz (Ruth 4:1-12).

It is also a type of Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer who paid the supreme price on the cross to redeem out of the slave market of sin, all who will come to Him and receive Him.



We see from this that many times people who were not Israelites who were living as neighbors to the Israelites, were successful and sometimes bought an Israelite, who was poor.

In this case, the sale would be conditional.

The Israelite could be redeemed at any time, he or some of his relatives, could raise the money to buy him back.

**Leviticus 25:50 "And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of a hired servant shall it be with him."**

That is, either the man himself should reckon with him, or whoever undertook to redeem him.

"From the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubilee":

And so count how many years he had served, and how many were yet to come.

And by this it appears, that one thus sold was not released at the end of six years, or the sabbatical year did not free him.

"And the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years":

Whether more or fewer, as after explained.

"According to the time of a hired servant shall it be with him":

The time of service he had served his master shall be reckoned, as if he had been hired for so much a year.

And according to the number of years he had been with him, so much per annum was to be deducted from the original purchase.

And the rest to be made for his redemption to him that bought him.

The price of the Israelite, even though a stranger had bought him, would be figured by the number of years until jubilee, when he would have to be set free anyway.

If the Israelite had been sold to another Israelite, he would go free after 7 years or at jubilee.

The difference when a stranger bought him, was that he would not be set free until jubilee.

The Israelite could not be sold for a bondman or bondwoman.

They were to be treated as servants, not bond people.

Verses 51-54

“Price of his redemption”:

The cost of buying him out of slavery was affected by the Jubilee year, when he could be set free.

**Leviticus 25:51 "If [there be] yet many years [behind], according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for."**

To the year of jubilee, and more than he had served.

"According unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for":

Suppose, for instance, when a man sold himself, there were twenty years to the year of jubilee.

And he sold himself for twenty pieces of money, gold or silver, be the value what it will.

And when he comes to treat with his master about his redemption, or a relation for him, and he has served just as many years as there are to the year of jubilee, ten years.

Then his master must be paid for the price of his redemption ten pieces of money.

But if he has served but five years, and there are fifteen to come, he must give him fifteen pieces. And so in proportion, be the years more or fewer, as follows.

We see that the person who bought him, would be paid the full price, if most of the time was still left until jubilee.

**Leviticus 25:52 "And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubilee, then he shall count with him, [and] according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption."**

Fewer than what he has served, then the less is given for his redemption.

Thus, for instance, in the above supposed case, if he has served fifteen years, and there remain but five to the year of jubilee.

"Then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption.

As in the fore mentioned case, he shall give him five pieces of money.

And thus the law of justice and equity was maintained between the buyer and seller, the purchaser and the redeemer.

In a like righteous manner, the people of God are redeemed by Christ.

We see that if the time was a short time, the price would be figured according to the time left before jubilee.

**Leviticus 25:53 "[And] as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: [and the other] shall not rule with rigor over him in thy sight."**

Being redeemable every year, and upon his redemption might quit his master's service, as a hireling may.

And the price of his redemption to be valued according to the years he served.

And as if he had been hired for so much a year; as well as he was to be treated in a kind and gentle manner, not as a bondman.

But as if he was a hired servant, as follows.

"And the other shall not rule with rigor over him in thy sight".

The person he is sold unto, his master, a sojourner or stranger, he might not use a Hebrew he had bought with any severity.

For if a Hebrew master might not use a Hebrew servant with rigor, it was not by any means to be admitted in the commonwealth of Israel for a proselyte to use one in such a manner.

And that openly, in the sight of an Israelite his neighbor.

He looking on and not remonstrating against it.

Or acquainting the civil magistrate with it, who had it in his power to redress such a grievance, and ought to do it.

Israelites belong to God.

They were not to be treated like the stranger's property, even though he had bought him.

He was to be as a paid servant.

**Leviticus 25:54 "And if he be not redeemed in these [years], then he shall go out in the year of jubilee, [both] he, and his children with him."**

The Targum of Jonathan supplies the text as we do, in any of the years from the time of his sale to the year of jubilee.

And so Aben Ezra interprets it, in the years that remain to the jubilee.

But he observes there are others that say, by the means of those above mentioned.

That is, by his nearest of kin, or by himself.

For the word "years" is not in the text, which may be supplied, either with "years" or "relations".

And so the Vulgate Latin, Septuagint, and Oriental versions read, "by these" means, things or persons.

"Then he shall go out in the year of jubilee":

Out of the house and service of him that bought him, he shall go out free and freely.

Without paying anything for his freedom, having served his full time, unto which he was bought.

"Both he, and his children with him":

And his wife too, if he had any, who, was comprehended in himself, and whom, both wife and children, his master was obliged to maintain during his servitude.

As we said a little earlier in this lesson, the Israelite belonged to God.

He could not be sold for ever.

Even though the stranger was not an Israelite, he had to abide by the rules of the Israelite in this situation.

This land belonged to the Israelites.

God had given it to them.

This stranger was living in the Israelites' land.

He must abide by the laws of Israel.

**Leviticus 25:55 "For unto me the children of Israel [are] servants; they [are] my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I [am] the LORD your God."**

The Israelites emancipated from Egypt by God were all God's servants; therefore, they were to treat their own slaves with the same grace and generosity as God had granted them.

God had paid the price for them, when He brought them out with a mighty hand from Egypt to this land of promise.

These are God's chosen people.

God is the God of everyone, but the Hebrew (Israelite), was His people that He chose to give the law to.

In Romans, we read over and over (to the Jew first and then to the Gentile).

These are God's people.

He is their protector.

### **Leviticus Chapter 25 Second Continued Questions**

1. Those who bought another Israelite for a servant was not to treat them as what?
2. How long shall he serve thee?
3. What else happened to the Hebrew that was freed?
4. Who shall he be able to take with him, when he is freed?
5. Where shall he go when he is freed?
6. Why did God say, they were not to be sold as bondmen?
7. God warned not to rule over them with \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Who was it alright to have as bondmen?
9. What was the difference in a bondman and a servant?
10. What was a bondman really?
11. Could bondmen be passed down from generation to generation?
12. Was it possible for a stranger to buy a Hebrew?
13. Who could redeem him?
14. The sale would be \_\_\_\_\_.
15. How would they figure the price of redemption?

16. If it was a long time to jubilee, what was the price?
17. Who do Israelites really belong to?
18. Why did the stranger in the land have to abide by God's law?
19. Where had God brought the Israelite out from?
20. Who are God's chosen people?