

Leviticus Chapter 27

Verses 1-34: Standard legislation is given for dedicated persons, animals, houses, and lands.

The final chapter deals in detail with vows, dedications and tithes. The major sections are:

- (1) Vows involving the people and animals (verses 2-13);
- (2) The dedication of houses and lands (verses 14-24); and
- (3) Miscellaneous regulations about vows including the standard payment (verse 25), the treatment of the firstborn (verses 26-27), the ban (verses 28-29), and then tithes (verses 30-33).

The vows could consist of offering service at the tabernacle of:

- (1) Persons;
- (2) Cattle;
- (3) Houses; and
- (4) Fields.

Verses 1-34: The concluding chapter includes rules for redeeming people (27:2-8), animals (27:9-13), houses (27:14-15), and fields (27:16-25) that had been dedicated to Yahweh. If someone vowed any possession or property to the Lord's use, and extra "one-fifth" of its value had to be paid to "redeem" it, or get it back (27:9-25). A "firstborn" animal could not be dedicated to God because it already belonged to Him (Exodus 13:2).

Leviticus 27:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

After he had delivered the body of laws in the preceding chapter, which by the close of the last seem to have been finished. But here some rules and instructions concerning vows are given, which a man was not obliged to make, but which he did of his own freewill and good pleasure.

"Saying": As follows.

Verses 2-7: Make a ... vow": This sets the gift apart from the rest of his household and possessions as a gift to the Lord and His service.

Leviticus 27:2 "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow, the persons [shall be] for the LORD by thy estimation."

This being an affair which only concerned them. For the Jewish writers say, by this phrase, the children of Israel, Gentiles are excluded.

"When a man shall make a singular vow": An unusual, an uncommon one, a very distinguished one, and even what is wonderful, as the word signifies. As when a man, through uncommon zeal for God and his service, devotes himself, or his children, or his cattle, or his houses or fields, to the Lord. The word "man", the Jewish writers say, includes every male, and even a Gentile. Yea, it is said all estimate and are estimated, vow and are vowed, priests, and Levites, and Israelites, women and servants.

"The persons shall be for the Lord by thy estimation": That is, when a man has vowed himself or another person to the Lord, the priest shall declare the amount at which the person vowed is to be redeemed.

This last chapter of Leviticus is about the seriousness of making vows to God. These Israelites, many times made vows to God, when they were asking something from God. We see in the verse above, that a person could vow their own selves to God. This was a practice of the Israelites. They knew that they could be redeemed from God for a certain figure that God had set for each person. We Christians have been redeemed from sin and death by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Silver shekels were used as redemption money, because silver means redemption.

Verses 3-8: The most basic kind of vow was to dedicate oneself to the service of God as Absalom did in exile (2 Sam. 15:8), or as the psalmist (Psalm. 116:14-18). The present verses merely state the rules in accordance with which a person dedicated by vow could be redeemed. This involved a special tariff similar to that paid for the redemption of the firstborn offspring of animals and human beings (Exodus 13:13; 34:20; Num. 18:15). The basis for the difference in the valuation of men and women in the special vows in this chapter was simply the value of their services in the tabernacle. People who had been "vowed" to serve in the tabernacle could be "redeemed" from fulfilling this vow at certain rates. It had no relationship to intrinsic worth. One of the chief occupations of the sanctuary was the slaughtering and offering of animals, and in the wilderness, of disassembling and transporting the tabernacle. This it is easy to see that the service involving heavy manual work made the value of the service of men in the prime of their life much costlier to replace once they had been vowed to this work. This is clearly stated in verse 8 as "according to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him.

Leviticus 27:3 "And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary."

The estimation of the man himself that vowed, or of the priest for him, was not left to be made by either of them at their pleasure. But was to be made according to the following rules, in proportion to the age a person was of to be estimated.

"Of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old": The account begins with these, because men of an age from the one to the other are fittest for labor. And therefore to be set at the highest price, as they are in the next clause.

"Even that estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary": These shekels were to be of the full weight, according to the standard that was kept in the sanctuary, and were the highest price that was set upon any. And this was paid equally by all of the same age, whether rich or poor. Hence it is said, "in estimations there is nothing less than one shekel, nor more than fifty (see note on 5:15).

Leviticus 27:4 "And if it [be] a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels."

That is, of the same age, full twenty years of age, and not more than sixty.

"Then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels": The price of a servant (Exodus 21:32). The reason of this difference of estimation between a man and a woman is, because the woman is the weaker vessel, and her labor and service of less importance and worth, such as spinning, washing, etc.

Leviticus 27:5 "And if [it be] from five years old even unto twenty years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels."

Not that one of five years old is supposed to vow or to make an estimation. But one grown up, that says, the estimation of this little one, who is five years of age, be upon me. And such a one was bound to pay the value of him, which is as follows.

"Then thy estimation shall be of the male twenty shekels, and for the female ten shekels": These were valued at a less price than the former, partly because, generally speaking, there are more that die between the age of five and the age of twenty years than between twenty and sixty. And partly because within that time they are not capable of so much work and service as in the latter. And it may be observed, that the females of this age are not valued in proportion to the females of the other. The estimation of these being just half that of the males, whereas that of the other is more than half. The reason is, that women above twenty years of age, their service bears, a better proportion to that of men, than that of young women to young men under twenty.

Leviticus 27:6 "And if [it be] from a month old even unto five years old, then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver, and for the female thy estimation [shall be] three shekels of silver."

That is, if a man devotes his child to the Lord within such an age, and says, the estimation of this my son or my daughter be upon me. Then he was to pay the value, as next directed. For one under a month old no estimation was to be made. The Jews say, "one less than a month old may be vowed, but not estimated."

"Then thy estimation shall be of the male five shekels of silver": Somewhat more than ten shillings of English money.

"And for the female thy estimation shall be three shekels of silver": About seven shillings, which is the least value put on any. And though the lives of male or female at this age are equally uncertain, and the service of either of little worth when near the full time fixed. Yet the

preference is given to the male, as being of the more perfect kind, and its life generally most desirable.

Leviticus 27:7 "And if [it be] from sixty years old and above; if [it be] a male, then thy estimation shall be fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels."

When man is almost past his labor, and it is high time to leave off business.

"If it be a male, then thy estimation shall fifteen shekels, and for the female ten shekels": It may be observed that there is not the disproportion between a man and a woman in old age as in youth, with respect to the estimation of them. The reason of which is, because there is but little difference in their labor and service. Nay, sometimes the woman is most useful and serviceable. For when a man, through age, is quite worn out and his labor gone. An older woman is capable of managing the affairs of the family, and is of great use and service, either by directing and advising, or by doing. So Jarchi observes, when persons come to old age, a woman is nearly to be reckoned as a man, and quotes a proverb of theirs. An old man in a house is a broken potsherd in the house (some interpret the word, a snare or stumbling block, that is in the way). An old woman in a house is a treasure in a house, a good sign in a house, of great use in the management of the affairs of the family.

We see from this, that the very old and the very young were priced less than for a full grown person. This was because they were not capable of working as hard as an adult. The price of a female of equal age of a male was less, because they were not as physically strong to work as the male.

Leviticus 27:8 "But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him."

If he is so poor that he is not able to pay the value that is set upon him, according to the rules before given.

"Then he shall present himself before the priest": That has made the estimation, according to the above directions, observing the difference of years, and of male and female. But if a person could not pay the said sums that were appointed, he might apply to the priest, and tell his case.

"And the priest shall value him": Put a price upon him he is able to pay, as follows.

"According to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him. He was to examine into his circumstances, and as they appeared to him he was to put a value on him, which was to be paid, but not less than, a shekel. For if he could not pay that, it was to remain as a debt until he could. And it was the ability of him that made the vow that was to be inquired into, and according to which the estimation was to be made, and not of him that was vowed. So it is said in the Misnah, "ability is regarded in the one who vowed, and years in the vowed, and estimations in the estimated, and according to the tithes of the estimation. Ability in the one who vows, how? A poor man that estimates a rich man, pays the value of a poor man. And a rich man that estimates

a poor man, pays the value of a rich man. If he is poor and afterwards becomes rich, or rich and afterwards poor, he pays the price of a rich man. But the sense which Jarchi gives is, that a priest in such a case was to judge according to what a man has. And so order him to pay, but was to leave him so as he might live, a bed and pillow, and working tools. And if he had an ass he might leave him that.

A person who was unable to pay the set amount for redemption, would be priced by the priest. They would have to pay the amount the priest thought them capable to pay. They were not exempt from paying, because they were poor, but their price was figured on their ability to pay.

Leviticus 27:9 "And if [it be] a beast, whereof men bring an offering unto the LORD, all that [any man] giveth of such unto the LORD shall be holy."

That is, it such a creature is devoted. Which is of that kind which are used in sacrifice to the Lord, such as bullocks, sheep, goats, rams, and lambs.

"All that any man giveth of such unto the Lord shall be holy": Shall be set apart to sacred uses, and not applied to profane or common uses. But either were for the use of the altar or of the priests. Or the price of them for the repair of the sanctuary, according as they were devoted.

Something vowed to God, became holy because it had been dedicated to Him. It did not matter whether it had been delivered to the temple or not. It became God's, when it was vowed.

Leviticus 27:10 "He shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good: and if he shall at all change beast for beast, then it and the exchange thereof shall be holy."

Some think these two words signify the same, but Abarbinel makes them different. According to him, to "alter" is for one of another kind, as one of the herd for one of the flock, or the contrary. And to "change" for one of the same kind.

"A good for a bad, or a bad for a good": Or, as the Targum of Jonathan, "that which is perfect for that which has a blemish in it, or what has a blemish in it for that which is perfect." A change might not be made neither for the better nor for the worse, but the creature devoted was to be taken as it was. If not fit for sacrifice it was to be sold, and its price put to other uses. For, as Abarbinel observes, whatsoever was devoted to sacred use was never to be put to any profane one. And this was also to teach men not to be hasty and fickle in such things, but to consider well what they did, and abide by it. For if such alterations and changes could be admitted of, a man after he had vowed might through covetousness repent, and bring a bad one instead of a good one. Or, under presence of bringing a good one instead of a bad one, might bring a bad one and say it was good, as Bechai observes. Even one worse than he had brought, thinking to impose upon the ignorance of the priest. And indeed, if he was sincere in it, and had a mind to bring a better than what he had vowed, it was not allowed of. If he made any change, though it was for the better, he was to be beaten, as Maimonides affirms.

"And if he shall at all change beast for beast": Whether of the same or of a different kind, or whether for better or worse.

"Then it and the exchange thereof shall be holy": Both of them were to be the Lord's, and appropriated to sacred use, of one sort or another. Either for sacrifice or for the priest's family, or the price of it for the repairs of the sanctuary.

This is just saying that things vowed to God cannot be taken back, unless they are unclean. Instead of getting the first animal back in trade, they would now both belong to God. Let us depart for a moment, here and use an example of Ananias and Sapphira to show the seriousness of vowing things to God, and then not doing what you vowed. There are a number of lessons to be learned in this. They were not required to vow at all, they did it of their own free will. They did not have to promise all the money from the sale. They could have given whatever portion they wanted to. The sin involved is not keeping the vow to God, and even worse, lying about the price of the land. Notice also, that each of them sinned. She would not have been guilty of sin, if she had told the truth. She was not guilty, because of her husband's sin, but because of her sin. Each was punished individually for their own sin. The main lesson we are to learn in this, is keep your vows to God, and never lie to God. Look for these lessons in the following Scriptures.

Acts 5:1-10 "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession," "And kept back [part] of the price, his wife also being privy [to it], and brought a certain part, and laid [it] at the apostles' feet." "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land?" "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." "And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things." "And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried [him] out, and buried [him]." "And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in." "And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much." "Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband [are] at the door, and shall carry thee out." "Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying [her] forth, buried [her] by her husband."

Leviticus 27:11 "And if [it be] any unclean beast, of which they do not offer a sacrifice unto the LORD, then he shall present the beast before the priest:"

Any creature, excepting a dog, the price of which was not to be brought into the house of the Lord. Besides oxen, sheep, goats, rams, and lambs. Though some understand it even of such that have blemishes on them, and so not fit to be offered unto the Lord; so Jarchi and others.

"Then he shall present the beast before the priest": To be viewed, examined, and judged of as to its worth, and a value put upon it, that it might be sold or redeemed, as no other but a beast might. So it is observed birds, wood, frankincense, and ministering vessels, have no redemption, for it is only said a beast.

Leviticus 27:12 "And the priest shall value it, whether it be good or bad: as thou valuest it, [who art] the priest, so shall it be."

Put a price upon it according to its worth, as it shall appear to him.

"As thou valuest it, who art the priest, so shall it be": That shall be the price at which it shall be sold. Not to the owner or devotee of it, for he must give more, as appears from (Lev. 27:13). But, as Jarchi observes, to all other men who come to purchase it.

If by accident a man has brought an unclean animal to the priest to pay his vow to God, the priest shall determine whether it is unclean or not. If it is unclean it would belong to the priest.

Leviticus 27:13 "But if he will at all redeem it, then he shall add a fifth [part] thereof unto thy estimation."

Unclean animals could be vowed into service, even though they could not be sacrificed. If, however, the man preferred to keep his animal, he could redeem it for 20 percent more than the priest's valuation.

If the man desires to buy it back from the priest, he must add 20% to the estimated value for the priest's trouble.

Verses 14-15: Houses were subject to a penalty of one-fifth the evaluation price if the original owner decided to redeem what he had vowed.

Leviticus 27:14 "And when a man shall sanctify his house [to be] holy unto the LORD, then the priest shall estimate it, whether it be good or bad: as the priest shall estimate it, so shall it stand."

Shall set it apart for sacred service, devote it to holy uses, so that it may be sold, and the money laid out in sacrifices, the repairs of the temple, etc. Under this any other goods are comprehended, concerning which the Jews say, "he that sanctifieth his goods, and his wife's dowry is upon him, or he is a debtor. His wife cannot demand her dowry out of that which is sanctified, nor a creditor his debt. But if he will redeem he may redeem, on condition that he gives the dowry to the wife, and the debt to the creditor. If he has set apart ninety pounds (English), and his debt is a hundred, he may add a penny more, and with it redeem those goods, on condition he gives the wife her dowry and the creditor his debt. Whether he sanctifies or estimates his goods, he has no power over his wife's or children's clothes, nor over colored things, died on their account. Nor on new, shoes he has bought for them, etc. "Again it is said, "if anyone sanctified his goods, and there were among them things fit for the altar; wine, oil, and fowls, R. Eliezer says, they might be sold to those that need any of that kind. And with the price of them burnt offerings might be bought, and the rest of the goods fell to the repair of the temple:"

"Then the priest shall estimate it whether it be good or bad": Shall examine it of what size and in what condition it is. Whether a large well-built house or not, and whether in good repair or not. And accordingly set a price upon it.

"As the priest shall estimate it, so shall it stand": According to the price he shall set upon it, it may be sold. Whoever will give it may purchase it, excepting the owner or he that has sanctified it, he must pay a fifth part more, as follows.

A person usually needed their house to live in, so they usually redeemed the house. The price of redemption was set by the estimation of its value by the priest.

Leviticus 27:15 "And if he that sanctified it will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth [part] of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be his."

A house set apart for holy uses might be redeemed, either by another paying the price set upon it by the priest, or by the original owner of it paying a fifth part more. And this was the case, whether of houses in walled cities or in villages. So Maimonides says, "he that sanctifies his house, whether it be one of those in walled cities, or of those in villages, it may be always redeemed. He that redeems one out of the hand of holiness (or which has been sanctified), if it is a house in a walled city, and remains in the possession of the redeemer twelve months, it is absolutely his. But if it is a house in the villages, and the jubilee comes, and it is in the possession of the redeemer, it returns to its owner in the jubilee." But if the owner of it had a mind to redeem it after he had devoted it:

"Then he shall add the fifth part of the money of thy estimation unto it, and it shall be his": That is, he was to give a fifth part more for the house than it was valued at by the priest, or than another might have it for. The reason of which was, to make men careful how they sanctified or vowed their houses or goods. And that it might be certain that the full value was given for it, the worth of which the priest might not know so well as the owner, and the latter, being willing to give the price set by the former, might give suspicion of it. Wherefore, in order to have the full price of it with certainty, and to set a high value on things devoted, the owner was to give a fifth part more than the estimation of it. Thus, for instance, if a house thus devoted was valued by the priest at the price of a hundred pounds (English), the owner was obliged, if he would redeem it, to give an hundred twenty pounds.

Here again, if the person who vowed the house wanted it back, he must pay 20% over the estimated value for the trouble the priest went to.

In all of this, and in the next lesson, we must see that these were not requirements from God to do. These were voluntary vows. Once they were made they must be kept. This is like a minister called of God. The person called has the option to answer the call or not, but once the call is answered, it would be a serious thing to go back on the promise. A minister must count the cost, before he or she answers the call. Lot's wife learned the hard way not to look back to the old life with longing. She was turned to a pillar of salt when she looked back. Two very important lessons to get from this lesson. (1), Do not make hasty vows to God. (2), After the vow is made, you must keep it.

Leviticus Chapter 27 Questions

1. What is chapter 27 of Leviticus all about?
2. Why were vows made to God?
3. What was the price we Christians were redeemed from sin and death for?
4. Why was the redemption money made of silver?
5. What was the price of a male between the age of 20 and 60?
6. What was the price of a female of the same age?
7. Why were the very young and the very old less?
8. What was one reason the redemption money could be less?
9. Who set the redemption price in these special cases?
10. Beasts dedicated to God became _____.
11. Who were the 2 people in the Bible, who vowed a vow to God, and then lied about the price?
12. What happened to them?
13. Were they obligated to make this vow?
14. Could they have vowed part of the money without sinning?
15. Was the woman guilty, because her husband lied?
16. Who did Peter say they lied to?
17. Just exactly what was the sin they committed?
18. What happened, if you accidentally offered an unclean animal?
19. Was it possible to redeem it?
20. What would be the redemption price?
21. Who set the redemption price for the house that was vowed?
22. Why was 20% added to the price to buy it back?
23. What were the 2 main lessons we can learn from this lesson?