



Shaqah

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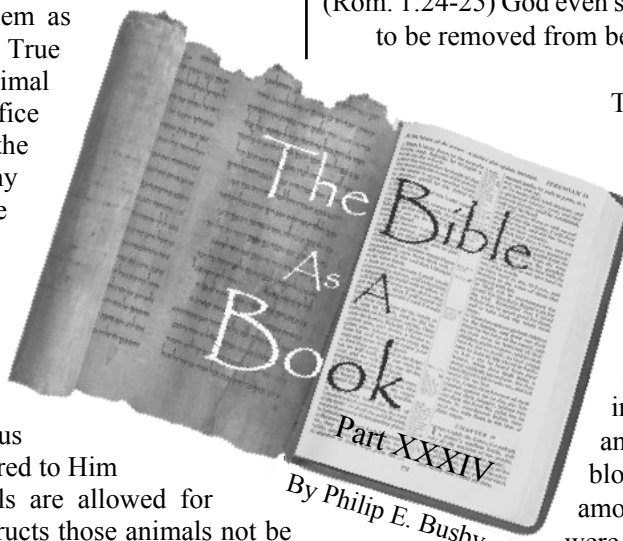
*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

In continuing our overview of the book of Leviticus, we ended last time talking about the ceremonies belonging to the yearly rededication of the people of Israel and the tabernacle (and later temple). This is to be done on the tenth day of the seventh month, and the day is called Yom Kippur, which is the Day of Atonement. Talking about this brought us through the end of Leviticus chapter 16, and we will begin this segment with verse 1 of chapter 17.

Chapter 17 begins with instructions pertaining to the fact many pagans slaughter animals, they intend to eat, by offering them as sacrifices to their gods. The One True God does not demand every animal killed for food be offered as a sacrifice to Him, nor is there instructions in the Law for the sacrificing of just any animal. However, there is the stipulations for bringing peace offerings where the person bringing the offering is allowed to take much of the flesh for consumption. The handling of the flesh after the sacrifice comes with stipulations to remind us our God is Holy and all things offered to Him are as well. Only specific animals are allowed for peace offerings, and here God instructs those animals not be killed as offerings just anywhere, but only at the tabernacle. It does not matter if the person is close to the tabernacle or a long way from it, there is no exception. These animals are either killed as a peace offering at the tabernacle or they should simply be slaughtered for food purposes without being offered to any god, even The True God!

Now, it should go without saying that animals, not stipulated in the Law as usable for peace offerings, were not to be offered to God when used for food, and that is why only the category of those allowed for peace offerings are mentioned here. Israel was not to believe they were doing the right thing just because they were, at least, killing an animal allowed for a peace offering and saying they were offering it to God. This would be shedding blood in an inappropriate

manner and actually count as sin, not something God would be pleased about. The fat of the animal, which Israel was not to eat in any case, was to be burned on the altar of burnt offering, not just any altar. The animal's blood was to be sprinkled on the altar, which can't be done if you're not at the tabernacle. All this has to do with the overall point God was restricting the worship of Him through sacrificing animals to the strict confines of the Law. Israel (and even those outside Israel) should have given up on, and never learned the pagan concepts of worshiping the creature rather than the Creator. (Rom. 1:24-25) God even says a person doing such things was to be removed from being considered part of Israel.



This is made even clearer as God goes on to specify no sacrifices were to be done outside the tabernacle. The general practice of sacrificing animals to God, or anything man thinks of as a god, was simply not to be done in Israel outside the specifications laid out in the Law. This was true for anyone of Israel or any not of the bloodline who for any reason may be among them. Those doing such things were, again, to be removed from among

the nation. This same punishment is said to be something God Himself would put His hand to do to those who eat blood. The consuming of blood is strictly prohibited in more than one place in the Law. Blood represents the life of a human and in animals. This is why animal offerings are treated differently than other offerings, as was demonstrated to Cain and Abel even before animals were allowed by God to be used as a food source. (Gen. 4:1-8) If the blood of animals was to represent the necessary element for salvation of our souls, it's only properly handled at the tabernacle and later the temple. This means at any point such a structure is not in operation, or for those outside Israel not allowed to bring offerings to it, there simply should be no animal sacrificing performed.



Because blood does hold meaning but there are times such as when slaughtering animals for food and hunting for animals in the wild sheds blood, the blood is to be drained from the body in the best possible way, and disposed of by not just allowing it to soak into the ground but making sure it is buried! Also, because this handling of the blood is not done for animals that die of themselves or are killed by other animals, not to mention the unknown true reasons for such an animal's death, it was not wise to eat of the flesh of any such animal. If for any reason a person did so, they were to wash their clothes, bathe in water, and be considered unclean until the sunset. If they did so, they would be considered clean with no other action required; but if they did not, they were guilty of a sin! God wanted Israel to be clear, those who serve Him are not like the pagans. They are not to incorporate things they learned in Egypt nor things they would see being done by those in the land God was taking them to. They were not to be doing things they came up with in their own minds. If a person wanted to follow God and, especially, worship Him, they would confine their actions, and certainly any ceremonial representations, to only what God told them in His Law!

God would turn next to the principles of physical relationships, which would effect who one chose to marry. Considering the genetic deterioration growing within man since falling into sin, these stipulations only become more important as time passes. Generally, God tells them not to be choosing those who were close family members. Obviously this would start with parents and their children not being together. However, it is also stipulated that someone who has been with your parent is to be looked at in the same manner, even if that person is not biologically your parent. Brothers and sisters are also not to be together. Because people may or may not understand the genetic reasons for these limitations, and to help Israel come to understand these were for genetic reasons, it is even specified that it makes no difference whether you grew up together or not. Only the fact the person is biologically close in relation, matters.

The wording meant to help bring an understanding that there is a genetic reason for these stipulations continues; for it is specified the children of your children are off limits because it's like being with someone who is the same as you. Those who may not be your siblings by both parents are not to be with you. One is also not to be with a sibling of one of their parents - what we would call an aunt or uncle - because this is too close a family member. One is not to be with a person who has been with your biological aunt or uncle, regardless of the fact that individual is not close biologically to you. All these rules making it true the spouses of others in your family should not be close biologically to you, but keeping clear the interrelationship of all the resulting children as you look down the family tree, matters as well. Thus, a person who has been with your child is not someone you can be with, and a person who has been with your sibling is also not to be considered. Now, there is a stipulation in the Law about a brother taking his brother's wife if his brother has died and left no children, and this not just to care for her, but bear a child with her who would assume his dead brother's name.

(Deut. 25:5-10)

This issue would seem to conflict with the stipulations here. Some would even say these stipulations are not really about genetics as much as they are adultery. However, we should keep in mind a brother taking a brother's wife is only to be done when the brother has had no children and is dead. The good practice of generally avoiding relations with even non-biologically related family members, as well as the adultery issues, remain intact. Again, there is the fact if a group of people follow the rules laid out here, any brother's wife should not be close biologically, nor someone who has already had relationships with others who are, aside from the deceased brother, and possibly in the case of more than one brother dying without producing children with her. However, even one brother having to take the wife of a sibling would be somewhat rare, and all this avoids promiscuous living, along with the constant intermingling of people, which develops and spreads diseases.

The next stipulations stress a setup aimed at keeping genetic lines clear-cut as well: for a man is not to be with a woman and her daughter, or the child of any of the woman's children. In light of what has already been covered, this is stipulating these things even if the woman's children are from a previous relationship and none of these individuals are close biologically. Also, there is to be no taking of a wife and marrying her sister, unless the original sister dies first. The wording here makes it clear this stipulation has specifics to exactly what Jacob ran into in having sisters for wives. There can be animosity caused in doing this, and as much as any multiple marriage can come with this, there can, and likely will be worse effects between sisters, and these can easily ripple into both earlier and later generations within the family.

Rules for general health, adultery, and false religious practices are included here in a very blunt way just to be clear, even though most of this should have been clear from other instructions. It is flatly stipulated that while a woman is going through her monthly cycle of purging blood, it is not just that it will make a male unclean to be with her, but it just isn't to be done. Again, it is stressed that acts of being with someone married to another are always wrong! It is interesting to note that following this statement is that children are not to be offered to false gods, and the specific god Molech is named. This is because the way to worship this god was popularly known, and it was not to go through the bloody affair of offering a child on an altar, but the throwing of children into great fires kindled for this god, which would kill the child and incinerate the bodies. No doubt this was often done to dispose of children for the same reasons many abortions are done today. People who had children who were deformed, sick, the result of a relationship a person should not have had, did not choose to have, or children who were simply "unwanted" for one or more of many reasons, were easily disposed of in a socially accepted, even revered, way. This "noble" sacrifice of one's child to such a god, actually was a convenient way of ridding society of - as the Nazis put it - "undesirables." Thus, in truth, God was forbidding His people from involving

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

We ended our last segment by coming to the end of Genesis chapter 14, and the story of how Abram had driven the kings from the East back to their homes and recovered the spoils of war they had taken from the area around the Dead Sea. We are now ready to move into Chapter 15, which contains a very interesting story and illustration that allows Abram to see a glimpse of the representative Law God would later give the chosen nation, which God was building through Abram.

Chapter 15 verse 1 begins with one of those conversations God so often has with us as humans living in a world of sin. God comes to Abram simply talking about preserving him in this life and bringing him to the true eternal rewards after this life has passed. However, Abram wants to know more about earthly things. This is not such a bad reflection on Abram as it is on most individuals when we do such a thing, because Abram had been promised to be used for things pertaining to this life. However, God was using Abram to get the ball rolling - so to speak - and Abram, as is noted in Hebrews 11:8-13, would die without seeing the fulfillment of these promises. Thus, God wanted Abram to ultimately look to Him for the true rewards that would come upon Abram as an individual, both in this life and in leaving it!

When we seek to serve God, we must be clear that each of us are simply workers in the field of God's plan. Our reward in doing this work is that our lives were able to mean something while on this earth, because unlike the masses who choose to simply live for what this world has to offer and die without hope, we have purpose. In the end it does not matter how little or how much we may actually accomplish in our eyes, for God knows the truth of what each person's service to His kingdom actually has meant! Individuals such as Abram may be remembered and revered for generations beyond their life, but an individual who knows very little about what they might have accomplished, and might never be remembered by name by anyone, may have played a very significant part in God's plan unfolding in this world as well. We just can't say, it only matters that we served and allowed God to use us as He willed. To us as individuals, it really only comes down to the fact, God is our great reward; and this is why our relationship with Him (faith) is the true substance of what we hope for and the evidence of what we have not seen! (Heb. 11:1)

This is what God was telling Abram, and how much of this point he grasps at this moment and how much Abram's mind is just centered on not seeing a way for his life to be used the way God had said it would be is hard to tell. In any case, the conversation goes on to focus on God helping Abram to know, by using physical illustration, that God is able and has a plan, even if it's in ways and in timing he didn't understand. In reference to the fact God had told Abram before he ever left

Mesopotamia that God would make a great nation out of him, Abram asks specifically about the point - not only is he not becoming a large family in having children left and right, but when Abram died tradition dictated an individual born in his house would inherit all. Not having even one son, Abram wants to know if God's intent was not to make a great nation out of him biologically, but maybe just out of the circumstances Abram's life had created. This would mean instead of Abram being the true physical parent of a later nation, his servant or servants would be.

Abram specifies his servant Eliezer as that head servant who, being referred to as "of Damascus," we presume was a servant born through one of those souls obtained in Haran, and as such, this servant became part of Abram's house. Abram would not possess those souls of his father Terah's house, but the house Terah facilitated Abram building for himself, while in Haran, went with Abram as he leaves his father. (Gen. 12:4-5) This head servant would be in line to inherit Abram's house in the absence of a biological son. This is a reference to that same servant who, while not being called by name, would later be given the task of going back to Mesopotamia and specifically to Abram's original family in order to obtain a wife for Isaac. Lord willing, a point we will eventually get to talk about in more depth in this study is how much the Godhead is beautifully represented in this trio of men. As Abram worried his life was not unfolding as he thought it might need to be in order to accomplish God's will, it was not possible for him to see how much the process of God using him, his family, his household, and the later chosen nation to represent truths about God and His plan for salvation was already underway! You see, Abram is representative of God The Father. Isaac would be representative of God The Son or Yashua (Jesus) by name, The Messiah. However, Eliezer, being very special and yet not being a son of Abram, was in many ways Isaac's counterpart in the household, a point made clear by Abram here in these verses. This servant is representative of God The Holy Ghost. This representation should become even more distinct in our eyes as we later read how Abram is directly the one - not Isaac - who sends this servant to go from the promised land to seek out, prepare, and bring a bride to Isaac! (Gen. 24:1-6, Matt. 9:14-15, 25:1-13 John 14:15-17)

As to the issue at hand, God would correct Abram's thinking in verse 4, telling him this servant would not be the heir. Abram would have a biological son to fill that role. This, again, is specifying the role of making one chosen nation, not the more general fact God would in truth make Abram the father of many nations. However, God would not leave it at that. God goes on to emphasize how foolish it was for Abram to doubt he would have a biological heir, just because the timing for Abram to have any children had not yet come. God

tells Abram to look out at the stars and see if he could number them. This is a task scientist today might say they have accomplished in that they can number all the stars visible to the naked eye from the earth's surface. However, even before humans were able to number all the visible stars, a man invented a telescope and found there are more stars than that. Later still, humans built crafts able to go out and orbit the earth finding there are even more stars. However, what is more important to this conversation is, as technology advanced, man came to realize many of the actual stars we see are just part of a specific galaxy we live in, and there are many other galaxies. Even some of what we think of as "stars" are, in fact, other galaxies so far away the numerous stars in them only appear to be a single point of light to us!

Not only has man come to realize the task of exploring, charting, and numbering all the stars of the universe is a task only an arrogant person would claim is possible, the fact some of what we see as single stars are actually other galaxies, means it literally was impossible for Abram to number what he could see! God told Abram this would be the nature of his actual descendants. This would not happen in Abram's life, nor his son Isaac's, or even Jacob's. In truth, for all those who could claim Abram as their forefather, it was not even true at the time Israel left Egypt to head back to the land Abram had sojourned in, and Ismael and Esau's descendants still lived in proximity of, not to mention Abram's six sons through Keturah! (Gen. 25:1-4) This is because God was not talking merely about who would exist at any given moment in time, but the fact, Abram's descendants would play a role in the earth's affairs from then till eternity rolled! Again, God's plan on this earth is about saving individuals, but the overall work of doing that is not about just each individual's life, it's about God using multiple individuals throughout time to do a work for God's kingdom in the now of each life to knit together an entire plan!

The words of verse 6 tell us Abram may or may not have appreciated all of what God was saying, especially as we should be able to today. However, the important fact for Abram, and for us, is that Abram believed what God was telling him. He believed God had a plan, was working that plan, was capable of completing that plan, and was going to do so! Regardless of with what attitude Abram may have initially approached this conversation, or how much he truly grasped of what God was saying, this belief, brought about by Abram's direct relationship with God, was counted unto Abram in place of the fact he, as we are, was not a perfect man. That is what we all should seek, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness with the understanding God has provided Himself a Lamb able to make a way where there was no way! (Matt. 6:31-34)

Next, the conversation moves to an equally important point concerning physical things, and that was location, location, location. God reminds Abram that He brought Abram out of Mesopotamia because the land where Abram now stood was where God was going to focus His physical work on this earth. God had not just promised Abram He would make a great nation out of him, but give Abram's seed

a specific place on the planet. This is another fact we should see as very important, because as the world hates the things of God, so too, it hates those who serve Him and represent His plan. (John 15:17-21) While off their land, the Jews have been pursued and hated in all places. We even have a specific term for this hate, "anti-Semitism." While on their land, we hear calls of those who say they're going to drive them into the sea, or wipe them from the face of the earth. Well, as much as we know from God's Word this will never be accomplished, God's land would still be there even if it could! If it is the land God said the chosen nation was to have, then so it is God's, and He will work His will in it.

We see this clearly in our time. Many people did not want the modern nation of Israel to exist before and after it was established, but it happened. As Israel's enemies attacked in order to keep or turn back the fact the modern nation of Israel became a reality, those who fought for it were far outnumbered by those who were against, yet it's still there. Wars and rumors of wars, missile attacks, terror attacks, and even the threat of nations building nuclear arsenals to rid the world of Israel have been and will be prolific, but there she stands nonetheless, and there she'll stay! How can man be so foolish as to believe they will ever succeed in their cause? When God moves to do something man wishes to hold back or dismantle, man's efforts mean nothing. God promised this land to Abram as an inheritance, and as God wills it to happen, the chosen nation will be there.

As God grants Abram's request about knowing these things will happen, the next verses give us a glimpse into the defined Law God would give His chosen nation. Abram is specifically instructed to bring offerings that would make him and the generations of the chosen nation living before the Law a part of those later ceremonies, in a way. At first glance it might seem Abram is doubting God in asking for confirmation, but this is why I always emphasize to people we must stay in reference to the conversation and not fractionalize the scriptures into independent verse! We have already been told Abram's belief was counted unto him for righteousness. There is no reason to interpret Abram's words as doubt here. What Abram is asking of God is a favor, in a way. Abram is getting the idea that he is not going to see all this take place, but as any man who greatly loves the will of God, he wants to see it. This is not unlike the fact that while Moses was getting ready to go on to the great riches of eternity, God still takes him up to physically see the land of promise for himself before he went. (Deu. 34:1-6) Then there's Daniel, who being driven by great concern for his people, was still very much personally interested in seeing ahead what God's plan would bring about. Yet for all he saw he had to finally be told to close up the book for it was not for Daniel to see more. (Dan. 12)

This is much of what happened to Abram. He would not get a total picture of what God would bring about, but, like Daniel, he would see representation about what God was going to do! Abram was instructed to bring various animals which he would offer to God in a particular way. These animals would all correspond to sacrifices prescribed in the later Law God would give to Israel. However, there would be

What About God's Chosen People?

Part VIII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

We ended our last segment by talking about how those Jews who had taken up the call by King Cyrus to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple had made it to the land, and started settling into and refurbishing certain cities of Judah in which to live. Then, they gathered to Jerusalem in the seventh month to set up the temple's altar of sacrifice in the place where it belonged and had been. This was done in spite of the fact the temple itself had not even begun to be rebuilt, and the rubble of the city still lay very much as it had been for the last several decades following the city's destruction. In this, it is very interesting to note that it was the first day of the seventh month in which they reestablished the altar and began again the sacrifices prescribed in the Law of Moses. (Ezra 3:1-6) This day is not just any day, for two distinct reasons.

First, there is the fact, the first day of the seventh month is Rosh Ha-Shana, or what we know in English as the Feast of Trumpets. When God gave Israel the Law, He instructed that two silver trumpets be made for the priest to use in calling the assembly together as well as other purposes related to the nation. (Num. 10:1-10) Trumpets were to be blown on many solemn occasions for the sake of calling for God to remember His people. The trumpets were also used to sound an alarm and gather Israel to defend itself. These facts made the Feast of Trumpets a very appropriate day for the returning Jews to gather at Jerusalem and set up the altar in order to call upon the name of The Lord, asking Him to remember them especially in the task of rebuilding the temple in the midst of a land where there were many people hostile to Jerusalem being rebuilt in any way!

The second distinct way in which this is not just another day is that the Feast of Trumpets is now the day Jews consider the beginning of the year. When Moses was given the Law, God told him the month in which Passover takes place was to be the first month of the year for Israel. (Ex. 12:1-10) This fact made perfect sense because after the death angel passed through Egypt, killing all the first born in any house where the blood of the Passover lamb was not on the door posts, Pharaoh arose and not only let God's people go, but demanded they leave! The month in which this first Passover took place was truly a beginning for Israel as a nation. Thus, Passover has always had a clear historic meaning for the Jews. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins the day after Passover and lasts seven days, and remembers the fact that as Israel left Egypt in great haste they did not have time to knead their dough and let it rise, they would eat the bread they could mix and cook on the go. The Feast of Firstfruits, which coincides with the

second day of Unleavened Bread, historically has meaning because many years later as Israel entered the land of promise, this was the day the manna ceased and Israel began living off the land for the first time. (Josh. 5:10-12) The fourth feast of the year is the Feast of Weeks, better known as Pentecost to many non-Jews. It is directly connected to the time it took Israel to reach Mount Sinai and begin receiving the Law. (Ex. 19:1-6)

The sixth feast is the Day of Atonement and remembers the establishment of the tabernacle. Though the tabernacle was set up and dedicated for the first time in the first month of Israel's second year, and the Day of Atonement is in the seventh month, what happened to Aaron's sons during the dedication was a potent example of what it means to stand before a truly Holy God! (Lev. 16) This incident prompted the giving of the stipulations for re-cleansing and dedicating the tabernacle (and later temple), as well as the people, in each year's cycle. This created the Day of Atonement. The seventh and last feast of the year is the Feast of Tabernacles, which remembers Israel's long journey through the wilderness after leaving Egypt. However, the Feast of Trumpets is the fifth feast just prior to the Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles. It is a day of emphasizing the fact the people always needed to call upon the name of The Lord, listen to His voice, and await His salvation. The setting up of the altar on this day by the returning Jews of the Babylonian captivity gave this day a historic significance that would not be lost on later Jews. While it is not the Biblical new year, it is, to this day, recognized as the Jewish new year!

Some might argue this is an example of how the Jews are not the chosen nation instead of the other way around, but one should note that when the organization(s) claiming to be the Christian church, and replacement of God's nation, proclaimed holidays, they chose days important to those who served false gods. They completely ignored those days given in God's Law, even when the "church" was claiming to celebrate something specifically prophesied in the Law. For this, there is no greater example than Easter. Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits all have historic meaning for God's nation, but their true purpose was to prophesy of The Messiah's work at His first appearing! Jesus died as The Passover Lamb on Passover. He was in the grave over the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is a Sabbath regardless of if it falls on the seventh day of the week (as it did the year Jesus died) or not. He showed Himself to be risen from the dead the next day, which is the Feast of Firstfruits! Instead of placing the celebration of these events on those days laid out on the calendar God gave His chosen nation, the "church" chose to set the celebration to coincide with the pagan celebration of the spring equinox, which is part of celebrating the creature rather than The Creator. (Rom. 1:24-25)

Now, the struggles we face in this world may leave scars, but God has made a way to wipe them completely clean through the blood of Jesus. Thus, the right way to handle the changes the sands of time bring to our lives here is shown again in these returning Jewish captives. They demonstrate they were not just following a set of religious rights they had derived in pagan Babylon. The events of Israel living in this world have molded things, like the fact the Feast of Trumpets is the modern Jewish new year, but they are still following a pattern set out in God's Law. All arguments to observing the new year this way being purely right or wrong aside, the point is, the Jews see their new year as the feast that is next to be fulfilled; and what calls itself the church, which should be awaiting the return of Christ this feast prophesies of, doesn't recognize it and celebrates the fulfillment of the first three feasts on days derived from pagan practices!

We are not told of the observance of the Day of Atonement, but the book of Ezra records the returning Jews also kept the Feast of Tabernacles during this seventh month of their first year back in the promised land. In considering this, we should keep in mind the precepts of the Day of Atonement are about going into the temple and atoning for it, as well as the nation, and at this point the temple had not been rebuilt. However, the Feast of Tabernacles is the last of the seven God-given feasts, and this seven day feast is actually eight days as it ends with the day after the seventh with a solemn assembly for all the people. This last day of the feast cycle does not represent an ending but looks forward to an eternal condition all true believers long for. It is not a way of saying we are all done, but the representation that all has been completed. It prophesies of that time when we've finally made it to the eternal blessings that cannot be lost or disrupted ever again!

Everything about this was very appropriate for the returning captives. To come and restart the altar, to call upon the name of The Lord in their land once again, and recall their ancient journey to the land from Egypt, as well as recognize the fact God wants to give us eternal blessings not able to be harmed by this world, were all very fitting. It was an understanding that the Jews may not have been at the beginning of their journey as they were in coming out of Egypt, but nearer the end than when they first began. This is true not just for God's chosen nation but for all the world! This is true in our time more than it was then. Jesus has fulfilled the feast of Passover, and showed us what the Feast of Unleavened Bread truly represents. It was on Firstfruits the world came to know after crucifying The Messiah, He was no longer in the grave but had left it behind to live again! Pentecost was fulfilled that same year Jesus died as Jesus' followers waited for the promise He had told them to go to Jerusalem and wait for. This promise was the pouring out of The Holy Ghost. This was the true fulfillment that one day the Law would be written upon our hearts! (Acts 2)

Now we wait for that new beginning the Feast of Trumpets prophesies of, which is the day Jesus returns to take the reins of this world, establishing God's kingdom on this earth, and gathering all those who have served God unto Himself. The representative Law will once again be illustrated to affirm and demonstrate all these truths, and we will then

await that true Day of Atonement where God shall judge all who have lived. (Rev. 20:11-15) In this time of Jesus' physical reign as King over all this earth, both Jews and all nations of the earth will be commanded to come up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be done to emphasize it is not God's will any perish, but that men might someday truly tabernacle with God in that eternal place Jesus said He left this earth to prepare for those who desire God and His righteousness. (Zech. 14, John 14:1-3, Rev. 21:1-8)

There is simply no way for any man or group of men to come up with the set of Laws the Jews recognize and make them hold so much historic as well as prophetic value. It is no coincidence that the Feast of Trumpets was the first appropriate day for the altar to be set up as the captive Jews returned, continuing and adding to the historic meaning of these precepts God gave to His nation! Again, this is why the world does not accept the Jews with open arms and sees them as an adversary to what man wants in this world. They are still the chosen nation of God, clinging to His Laws while the rest of the world desires to dispose of them. This fact shows up at this time of the returning captives probably more than it does anywhere else in the Bible.

Going back to the time of the Assyrian empire, when the northern kingdom of Israel fell, the Assyrians brought people from other places to the cities in the North after carrying away the people of God's nation that lived there. When these new people came to the land, they, of course, worshiped false gods, and because God wanted to maintain the fact this land was still His and did not belong to just whoever moved into it, these people were plagued by lion attacks. The land was no land of promise for them! The things happening to them took place in a way these people's pagan minds understood. They knew they were not just in a bad place, but that a supernatural power was working against them being there! At that time these new inhabitants asked Assyria what they should do since it was apparent they were not going to be able to live in the land if they did not understand how to acknowledge The God who was over it.

God is truly The God over all the earth, but God allows man his free will. This was an opportunity to show that while God had allowed Assyria to take a piece of the promised land, it was not truly theirs as the rest of the world might be. They were not just fighting other men. Here they were facing The One True God! Thus, a priest of God's chosen nation had to be sent to these people living in the North in order to instruct them of The One True God. (II Kin. 17:24-33) This would bring calm to the situation, and prove to these people, as well as the empire of Assyria, that in dealing with this land they were not dealing with a god derived in the minds of men who could be appeased with their made up rituals. To be clear, it is not that these people in the North turned to God with their whole heart after receiving instructions from the priest, but God had sent a clear sign to them this was not their home. They were the strangers living in a strange land!

As we've talked about before, the Assyrians moved people around for the purpose of destroying unique cultures among men in an attempt to reestablish what man wanted at the

Tower of Babel. This strategy did mix up much of the world's population, in particular those of the Middle East and edge of what we call the Far East, depending on where you want to draw the lines. God was making it clear that even among this mixture of people, He still intended to maintain His chosen nation and show there was still a geographical location on the earth that belonged to them. However, the fact these new people had to acknowledge the land was not theirs but God's did not cause them to fear God in the end. Leave it to man to turn from fearing God as they had when seeing they needed to, to being arrogant, even thinking themselves to be special, the minute things got better!

Now, it would be in the second month of the year after the Jews' return that the Jews would finally be ready to begin to build the temple itself. They would lay the foundation, and while they had been offering the prescribed sacrifices on the altar ever since the seventh month of the first year, they would now also set in place the kind of daily worship at the temple location that King David had prescribed even before his son Solomon built the first permanent structure known as the temple. All this activity would raise the suspicion of those in the North, which, of course, were the descendants of those originally brought to the land. This was likely because they recognized the true nation of God had begun to come again into the land. They would go to the Jews and claim they too were people who served The True God of heaven. This should have been true, but one way or another what was not true is that they still were not of the nation God appointed to do this work.

This takes us directly back to our question about the Jews still being the nation that God chose. These people in the North should have learned to love God and respect His ways, just as all people over all the earth should. However, because God wanted to strip people of their ritualistic practices in order to find a true personal relationship with Him, God established a specific people to be the ones who would do the representative work of the Law. These rituals were/are something pagan-minded people can relate to but are not intended to perform. From this, both Jew and non-Jew could learn the ways of righteousness. The simplest way I know to put it is to say, by looking at the fact God limited the ritual to one nation, the Jew should have realized the Law was only a teacher and not the true path of salvation. God loves all the children of the world, not just the Jews. Thus, God's true plan of salvation is obviously not limited to just Jews or even those who come to live as one of them.

By seeing that the rituals of the Law were limited to the Jews, the non-Jew should realize these practices were/are not the path of true salvation as well. If we all sit back and consider the facts, we see the Law is clearly telling us to each seek, not to appease an angry God through rituals, but a personal relationship with a loving God who wants to raise us in the ways of righteousness just as a loving parent raises their child. (Matt. 7:7-12) The misunderstanding of this basic truth is why a question such as the one we're discussing here even comes up. There's no reason to doubt or debate who God's chosen nation is on this earth. Knowing exactly who is of the nation is only a matter for individuals from the aspect the Jew

has a ministry work to do which the non-Jew is not called to do.

The truth of this fact is seen in this story about the Jews who were to begin again those direct rituals of the Law, which are accomplished by having the temple. The people of the North may not have tried to say the Jews were not God's chosen nation, but they came to the Jews who were rebuilding the temple and said they should build along with them. Of course, there truly is the aspect they were saying the Jews were not God's chosen nation or could be replaced in that their real intent was not to help rebuild the temple but inhibit it. One might argue if the Jews had allowed them to take part, these people would have felt differently, but their intent in helping build the temple would still not have been to see the Jews have the temple again. They would have desired to practice the rituals along with, if not instead of, the Jews; and no doubt they would have also desired to incorporate their own pagan thoughts into the rituals. This kind of activity is something the Jews had gotten in trouble for doing in the first place. In any case, the northern people would have been just as angry, or more so, if they had helped rebuild the temple only to be told they were not allowed to administer its rituals or dictate them. This is all seen in their statement of, "...Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither." Ezra 4:2

The Jews understood these people, no matter how much they thought they knew how to worship God, were not to be involved or that, at the very least, their offer of help was not genuine. The Jews even sighted the fact they had specifically been sent back to do this work because they were the ones King Cyrus recognized as needing to do it. This brought out the true feelings of the northern people, which was that they really did not want to give up any part of the land to the people God had already proven were the true owners of it. If people do not want to destroy the Jews altogether, they are, at the very least, desirous to take their position in this world. This is why men who claim to be Christians today love to form organizations with their own made up rituals which are said to be of God, and make the argument the Jews are not who they claim to be and/or if they are, they no longer matter!

By the time of Christ it is easy for us to look at the people living in the north of the promised land and judge the Jews for their contempt of these people. However, I'm reminded of the words of Martin Luther King Jr. who said, "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." Sinful man's desire to continue hate instead of doing what they can to bring it to an end is why we do not often study the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah which show us, while not an excuse for the Jews' contempt at the time of Christ, there was a foundation for the Jews to, at least, be very leery of these people and their intentions. That being said, despising Jews for their piousness is being no better, nor acting differently than what we're judging as wrong. It is not understanding and showing the love Jesus came to demonstrate all the way to the giving of His life, even for those who hated

Him. The cycle has to stop somewhere, and in this world, it only ends when individuals choose to put a stop to it in their lives!

Now, in telling those of the North it was not their place to do this work, the Jews were correct. If it had been their place they could have done it without the Jews returning to the land, and/or before the Jews returned. The simple fact is, it was not their place. This is something non-Jewish Christians have found distasteful for a very long time, and much of this has to do with our utter infatuation with all things physical! If many people who call themselves Christians today were in the same shoes as those in the North at this time, they would have felt the same way, and likely have done just what these people did. The northern people knew they could not write to the very king who had sent the Jews back in order to get the work stopped, so they inhibited it in all the ways they could. They probably did things like close off their roadways to the Jews' delivery of materials, and/or commandeered the materials in an attempt to bankrupt the Jews' efforts. They also used political tactics to convince others not to do business with the Jews. All these things are very much like what happened at the time Hitler was accomplishing the Holocaust, and very much in our news again today. Many so called churches and church organizations have considered and even adopted measures to boycott Israeli products, Israeli financial institutions, etc.

At the time of the return, these tactics did keep the Jews from accomplishing the work of rebuilding the temple for a time. The Bible tells us the northern people weakened the hands of the Jews while they waited out the change of kings sitting on the throne of the empire. They did this until they believed a king who did not know the more recent records of his predecessors might be directed to even older records about how much trouble it had been for the Babylonians to gain control of Judah. This plan eventually worked out and they received a letter back from the king ordering them to do what they wanted all along, which was go up and completely stop the work of rebuilding the temple and Jerusalem even if they had to use force. The Jews became frightened at this and did, in fact, completely stop the work for around seven years. This condition continued until God rose up prophets to direct the Jews away from the thoughts of their minds and into the truth of what was truly important! (Ezra 5:1-2)

You see, the boycotts against the Jews and work to generally hinder them had succeeded in the Jews being unable to obtain what they wanted to have in order to rebuild the temple. However, then came the words of the prophets about not fearing the people around them more than they feared not accomplishing God's work, and the obvious answer to their seeming dilemma in obtaining supplies. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD." Haggai 1:7-8 It didn't matter that the new temple was not everything they wanted it to be in comparison to the one Solomon had built. What was important was that the temple exist! God was telling them to go into the local hills which they had control over and bring the wood to

build with, instead of worrying about getting revered woods from places such as Lebanon. God would respect their effort to build Him a house more than He would their doing nothing but tending to their own houses, waiting to be prospered enough to build the temple they wanted!

This jump-started the building of the temple, and it would be completed even in the lifetime of those leaders who had started it. In emphasizing how much the temple's practices were only important in demonstrating the truth and not the actual truth itself, the prophecies of this period are just full of metaphors about how much the priest, the secular leader, and the temple foreshadowed things God would bring to pass in the future! When the prophets spoke of how the priest and the throne of David would be lifted up, they were not talking about that time, but the fact one day The Messiah would come and accomplish all and much more than they desired. The people are reminded that just as their fathers before them, who were dead and gone, had served in the time and capacity their circumstances made possible, so should the people of that time. Truly we are to do the work of The Lord not judging our progress or success on how glorified or prosperous our work may be or become, but we are all to live and work in our own time and circumstances. God will take care of the fact this world is on a downhill slide. Just as Noah walked onto the ark and when the time came God sealed him and his family safely inside, without which all Noah's efforts in building the ark would have been in vain, so too there is coming a day when God will walk this earth once again and take care of the fact there is only so much we can do on our own.

The Jews would finally complete the new temple in spite of the fact there were continued attempts to get the king of Persia to bring it to an end, as well as those even of the Jews who did not look at it favorably due to its lack of grandeur in their eyes. However, in direct relation to our question, it should be noted that during the ceremony to dedicate the temple there were twelve sin offering rams sacrificed that day to represent all twelve of the tribes of Israel. (Ezra 6:16-18) This was not done to just symbolize the fact there had been twelve tribes but the truth there still was, and this was the temple of all Israel. Certain tribes may have lost their individual distinction for the most part, but God's nation was still intact. God's promise and work for them was still intact. The temple they were dedicating may not have had the grandeur the temple before it had or that those returning from Babylon desired it to have, but it was complete, operational, and so was the nation of Israel in spite of the fact they too were smaller in number, possessed less of the land than they once had, and known only as the Jews!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

some differences to represent the conversation God was having with Abram about future events and Abram's place in them. In the Law, the sacrifice for sin committed out of ignorance called for different animals, depending on who or for whom it was being offered. The first animal Abram was to bring was a heifer. In the Law, a sacrifice out of the cattle was of the highest order in terms that they were required for a priest or for when the congregation as a whole had sinned. The Law called for the animal to be young, often specifying they be of the first year, but God tells Abram to bring a three year old. The Law also calls for a bull, which is male; and Abram was to bring a heifer, which is a female. Now, all this has meaning in comparison to each other.

The fact an offering from the cattle was first in line is that Abram was offering for all the beginnings of the chosen nation, which included himself. From him would come the entire congregation. This definitely called for the highest offering. In the Law, God didn't want people getting rid of undesirable animals that were old, or to put it another way, used. Thus, a young valuable animal without blemish was required. God tells Abram to bring an heifer, which is a female that has not calved yet. In this, is the aspect of not being used, but being three years old represented the fact there would be three generations before any type of nation would begin to take shape. These three would be Abraham, from whom only Isaac would be of the chosen line. The second would, of course, be Isaac, who would have only the twins of Jacob and Esau. Esau would not desire or respect the birthright of God's promises and end up outside the chosen line. (Heb. 12:14-17) This would leave Jacob as the third generation before the nation truly began. Jacob would give birth to a larger number of sons who, while not being a nation, would be the foundation for building one. Jacob would beget twelve sons who would become the twelve tribes of Israel. They would also be of a wider genetic structure as these twelve would be born through four different women. In offering a three year old heifer, Abram was representing the fact there would be three generations of specific individuals before the promise of a chosen nation would begin to branch out.

The next big difference was, the Law called for a male and Abram was to bring a female. There is in many languages of the world a concept of masculine and feminine. This is because every premise upon which God created the universe is repeated throughout many things. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27 In English this concept has been lost, and it's part of what makes English a weak non-expressive language. Even many of the languages which do still carry the masculine feminine aspect do not do so in a way that truly allows it to be used in the expressive form earlier languages allowed. This is all part of the way human corruption is taking us down - not leading us into a higher evolution! The point is that just as we have positive and negative expressions, there can be understanding in using masculine and feminine expression. Unfortunately, we only grasp this idea on the most basic levels today, if even that.

However, I would hope we are still at a point where we at least understand the creation of male and female is what allows people to give birth to other humans. This is why God created male and female, and acts of physical relationships only properly belong between a male and female who have committed to stay together for life. Abram was giving birth to a great nation of chosen people according to God's promise. God, being the head of all is only properly understood in the masculine reference. This is why true believers who comprise the real church Christ is returning to claim is referred to in the feminine, as a bride. If it is true in the reality, it is only appropriate it be true in the representative. Thus, Israel is properly referred to in the feminine aspect as a nation. This is shown in Revelation when John sees a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon (which in ancient time clearly had and still has a feminine aspect in comparison to the sun) is under her feet. Of course, the twelve stars upon her head clearly show us she represents Israel! (Rev. 12:1)

Getting back to the offerings, we should continue to apply this masculine feminine understanding. A priest in Israel represented responsibility given by God just as the father is given responsibility as the head of a family. Responsibility of leadership comes with the masculine aspect. The congregation sinning out of ignorance had to do with a failure to their responsibility in representing God's Law unto the world, and thus, falls on the masculine side as well. However, with this heifer, Abram was not offering it in the aspect of responsibility. He was not called to be a priest, and while the forefather of the congregation, he was not the congregation. Abram was offering in total servitude to the plan of God, promised, yet not revealed. This would be true for Isaac and even Jacob, in spite of the fact Jacob would see a bit more of the promise unfolding; but because of this, Abram's offering truly had the feminine aspect.

The next animal Abram was to bring was a female goat. In the Law, a leader of the people was to bring the next step down from an offering out of the cattle, and that was a male goat. The Law was again dealing with a position of leadership responsibility; and thus, a male was required. Here again, Abram was representing a service to the plan of God not yet in place. In the Law, an individual of the congregation was to bring a female not a male, because of that feminine aspect the nation as a whole has. Abram's she goat was not an offering of leadership but as an individual part of God's chosen nation. Thus, a female goat, and as with representing himself, Isaac, and Jacob, in the three year old heifer, this goat would also be three years old. Now the next animal is to represent they truly were the forefathers of the nation, and as such leaders or lead examples. Representing all three men, this animal would, again, be three years of age. It would be a ram, and this may have been, as offerings in the Law often allowed, out of the sheep or the goats. In either case, a ram is of the same level as the she goat, but a male. While there was much of the nation's later activities the three forefathers were only the ones to give birth to, they were in truth responsible for their part of bringing about the circumstances that allowed the nation to be born. A good example of a failure of this responsibility is shown in Esau, who chose to reject or at least

not care about being a part of what would bring about the nation. In these two animals are both the feminine and masculine aspects of the position Abram, Isaac, and Jacob had in forming the chosen nation.

The last two animals to be included in the ceremony would be a turtledove and a young pigeon. These two birds would directly align with what the Law said was to be brought by common people for a trespass offering if they could not afford the sheep or goat. Trespass offerings in the Law are sin offerings. (Lev. 7:7) However, while offerings for sin are a way of admitting we are not perfect and need God to count our faith in place of the righteousness we lack, trespass offerings have more to do with knowingly trespassing God Himself by choosing to take unrighteous actions. They can also be about not loving our neighbor as ourselves. These offerings recognized, regardless of whether the person you trespassed against accepted your apology for the wrong or not, you were admitting to God you were sorry and desirous to make things right. Now all the other animals the Law allows for sin, and even specifically trespass offerings, are already in the heifer, she goat, and ram, so this last set of birds would be a way of including the lowest and most affordable animal offerings specified as being allowed for a sin offering. This would be the sign that just because Abram had been blessed with great riches, not everyone who was to be or is a part of the chosen nation would be, specifically those held in bondage for a time in Egypt. Again, we all have our place. Abram was representing there would be priests, leaders, and what we would call the common man, all the way from rich to poor. All these would do the work of the representative Law. Just as Paul describes about the church overall, we may be one body but not all the same part. (Rom. 12:3-18)

Now there's no real sacrificial precedence for what Abram does with these animals, so we can assume God had instructed Abram to do what he did and then wait upon The Lord for the rest. These actions also had representative value. Abram would divide the heifer in half and lay one half to the left and the other half just to its right. Stepping back, he would do the same to the female goat, placing each of its halves end to end against the heifer to create a path - if you will - made solidly with the bodies of the animals half of each one against the left of its right half. Thus, Abram would place the halves of the ram next in the line in the same manner. At the end, he would place the birds but he would not divide them. Instead, he would place one bird on the left and the other on the right. Both turtledoves and pigeons were used in the Law, and often a pair of one or the other was required. Here Abram would simply be instructed to use one of each to create the left right pairing.

This division of the animals would represent the fact the chosen nation would one day consist of two parts. While still geographically joined, having only a border to cross from one to the other and no other nation in between, the chosen nation divided into North and South after the death of King

Solomon. However, both nations would still be God's chosen nation as a whole regardless of their secular government situations. In considering this, one should remember again the fact, God does not originally give Israel a king. Their true King was and is God Himself. God allowed Israel to have an earthly king and eventually a north and south king, but servitude to God and the representative Laws He gave them to perform was still the responsibility of all the people regardless of under which earthly king or in which territory they ended up living.

After completing the work of setting up the offerings, Abram would wait for what God would do next, but Abram's work was not done yet. These offerings were not placed on an altar, so they were not being burned. As these offerings were in place, Abram would need to spend the rest of the day watching over them. This, of course, mostly involved driving away the birds which would be naturally attracted to the dead animals and begin the process of disposing of the bodies by feeding on them. This part of the day would represent the fact Israel would have many enemies who would desire to consume them, and it would take constant vigilance in order to keep from being devoured. As much as we can talk again about the idea of those who desire to destroy Israel, an important aspect to this is also the fact the temptations of this world would have to be watched out for in order to maintain a distinct nation from being lost into the world's general population. Abram, as well as the two generations following him, would, in their times, be a very delicate thread in this process. Abram had already wondered about not having a biological heir to accomplish the task of becoming a nation. Later, he would also have to deal with not understanding how just any biological heir would not do, but God would bring a son through him and Sarai specifically. (Gen. 17:18-22)

Abram would deal with this issue again in sending his servant to get a wife for Isaac so Isaac wouldn't take a wife out of the land of Canaan, or return to Abram's former home to do it for himself. This would be another problem with Esau's life as he would take wives out of Canaan, and after paying attention to the fact this displeased his parents, Esau attempted in vain to rectify his mistake by taking a wife from Ismael's family. However, Jacob's circumstances would work out correctly, as he ended up going back and marrying two women of the right lineage who each had a handmaiden who also ended up being the biological mother of some of Jacob's twelve sons. These handmaidens also came from the right genetic line to create the base distinction God was building during these three generations of forefathers. All this shows us how much it isn't about our ability to make the choices that seem right in our own eyes that brings things out right, but doing our best to seek, obey, and trust God and His ability to bring His plan to pass is the only way to go!

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

themselves in such practices, no matter under what shroud these horrors were/are chosen to be covered!

Next, God would specifically cover that acts of physical relationships were designed, not just for pleasure, but for a purpose. Outside the union designed for its purpose, these acts are perversions of God's intent for the act. First, is the simple fact these acts belong between male and female, for they are not to be practiced between two people of the same gender. These acts also should never be done with a human and an animal. God says these kinds of activities bring confusion and corrupt the fabric of society in ways that even nature will not tolerate. The fact those currently living in the land Israel was headed to had taken on such practices, was a reason God was allowing Israel to be used as an instrument to destroy those societies. In doing such things, these nations were already destroying themselves!

God goes on to explain that this is why Israel needed to follow the rules He was giving them. God was giving them the land of the people who had done these things, but the fact these are problems which only grow, is a universal fact. If Israel acted in the same way the nations before them acted, or even allowed others living with them to do such things, Israel would suffer the same consequences of being cast out of the land. These were serious issues Israel was to watch out for, and if there were those of the nation or living among them who chose to live in these wrong ways, they were to be separated out from the nation. God allows man the free will to choose what he desires; but as God's chosen nation, those who desired these things were not to be allowed to remain a part of the chosen nation.

Moses was to simply explain to the people that the purpose of God's Law was the fact, God is separated from wrong doing, and as such, Holy. It was Israel's purpose to be separated for the purpose of serving God, and in doing so become holy as well. The people were to respect the way God created the universe to work, because - like it or not - they are truths! Individuals were to respect basic principles, like the family structure God ordained by creating male and female as the way to develop new humans. They were to respect the fact God created a specific cycle of six days for work and the seventh for rest. They were not to become confused about Who God really is, and avoid following false gods by not making physical images that represented God or false gods they or others came up with. Because the issue of killing animals for food and giving thanks to some god or spirit for it was/is so prolific among men, God stresses again the only way Israel was to do such a thing was to offer peace offerings as laid out in the Law in order to worship God alone. These offerings demanded respect from beginning to end, and were only to be done because a person chose to, not as just a general or expected practice.

To respect an offering given to God was not to leave it in storage. They were not to lose track of it, but offered meat was to be eaten on the day of the sacrifice and on the next. By

the third day any remaining meat was to be burned, not eaten or used in any way. If this was not done, the offering would not be accepted and the person will have sinned. A person not respecting these rules was to be separated out of Israel. If the people wanted to thank The Lord for what He had given them, they should trust His continuing provision. In this, they should not go to the effort of harvesting their crops right to the edges and corners. When harvesting fruit, they should not work to glean every last piece. These things should be left for those less fortunate, and those traveling in the land willing to do the work of gleaning these last bits to obtain food for themselves and families. This would demonstrate God's blessings on the land, and give the poor little to no reason to steal for food. There would be enough for all willing to do the work of going out and getting it.

In this same spirit, God tells them again they should not take what is not theirs, or try to lie and cheat others to obtain things tangible or intangible. They were not to treat God as some false god needing appeasement, nor use or call on His power to seal some promise or oath they as individuals made; for only God knows what is in His will. Humans make choices for themselves. God is not to be blamed for all we perceive as going wrong in life. If a person speaks the name of God or refers to God, it should only be in worship and respect for Who He is. If they wanted to respect God, they were not to try making gains through dishonest dealings with each other; and in agreements of work in exchange for pay, the workman was to be given his payment for the work he did in that day, on that day.

Next, God covers a concept that seems obvious but continues to be a problem society greatly struggles with, and that is the fact those who have physical handicaps were not to be taken advantage of or looked at as a burden to society! At the same time, when judging right and wrong, judgments should not be made giving leeway to those who are poor, or special treatment to those who are in leadership, wealthy, etc. All are to be looked at as completely equal when enforcing laws and settling disputes. Along with this, a person should keep stories to themselves. This is not just about telling lies but passing on information that one does not know is true; or even when you do, you should not spread information about others just for the sake of spreading the information. You certainly don't want to spread something that might lead to another being unjustly punished, but this doesn't mean one shouldn't testify if called to do so. Only God knows what's in the heart of each individual. Thus, a person is not to hate another person. If you have cause, be honest with them about what you feel they have done wrong, but don't bring sin into your life by hoping something bad will happen to them, or the like. One was not to attempt to exact vengeance for something they believe another had done wrong, nor were they to hold a grudge. Israel was to be an example among the nations of a people where each individual would treat all others with the same respect they themselves would desire, irrespective of how others might treat them.

Israel was also to be an example of purity in

respecting the domestic products they were blessed to have. Israel was not to allow their domestic animals to breed randomly, even with other domestic breeds. If the animals were allowed to do so, Israel could end up losing the purity of valuable breeds useful for specific purposes. They also were not to lose track of their plant seeds, and end up planting fields of mixed species where the end harvest and collecting of seeds would make it unclear as to what exactly they had produced, and the collected seeds would produce later on. In a symbol of purity, which also had practical applications, God tells them not to make clothing of cloth produced using both fibers derived from a plant source and an animal source.

Now, it was not uncommon for a female servant to simply be taken as a wife by her master. However, an unmarried female servant is not free to enter into a physical relationship with the man she is serving if she is already promised to become another man's wife. If the two do take up such a relationship, it is sin like that of adultery. The girl is to be reprimanded for her actions, but because she was not yet married, and at the same time not a free person when the act took place, there is no way to sort out just who may have wronged who, or how much consent may have been involved. For this reason, the punishment of death was not to be used for either person. However, the male involved was to bring a ram (no pigeon or turtledove would do) to offer as a trespass offering, because he had certainly trespassed God's commandments as well as the woman's future spouse, at the very least.

When Israel arrived in the land of promise, they were to follow specific rules in planting new trees for fruit. As anyone should, they were to observe the health of the tree and see if it was able to make it to a fruit bearing maturity. If or when it did bear fruit, the fruit it produced was to be disposed of without eating it or using its seeds for the first three bearing seasons. This gave time to be sure the tree bore quality fruit without the pressure of taking just whatever it produced to market or using the seed. If the tree was deemed worth keeping, the fourth season's fruit was to be given to God. This was an act a person respecting God would only want to accomplish with a well cared for and quality crop. The fifth season's crop would then be available for the owner's use. However, because individuals wouldn't want to take the time these rules created for replacing trees that did not turn out to be of good quality, one would be encouraged to plant only high quality trees to begin with, as well as plant more than they intended to keep. The end result should be the keeping of only the best of the best trees, and this would ensure quality fruits in the land.

Speaking again about deposing of pagan ritualistic practices, the issue of not consuming blood is brought up once more, along with the instructions about not using what we might call everything from magical potions to good luck charms. Israel was also not to believe in things such as fortune telling or the power of reading the movements of the stars and

planets. The people of Israel were to live a natural lifestyle, and this was to show in their appearance. They were not to be cutting designs in their hair or developing ways of shaving some hair and leaving other parts long in ways that supposedly represented something, as many pagan cultures did and still do today. Of course, for men this would include facial hair as well. These stipulations should even be interpreted as simply not attempting to keep up with fashion trends. Along with that, the pagan rituals of cutting ones self in mourning or ritualistically sharing in the death of another was not to be done, for Israel was not to specifically scar their bodies or use dyes, inks, or the like to put markings on their bodies for any reason.

It is specified a daughter can not be used as a source of income in selling the use of her body for physical pleasure. These kinds of activities were only accepted by some of the most wicked of people, which were not to be accepted among Israel or it would drag the entire nation down. Israel's observances and rituals were to come only from God's Law, and proceed only from the tabernacle God had instructed them to build. Those who supposedly possessed powers of communicating with the dead or other spirits, those who believed in obtaining supernatural power from sources not of God were not to be given credit for such work, or sought after for advice, leadership, or the like. Only God and His righteousness was to be sought in Israel. If respect was to be given to any human, it was to be the respect of experience those of age have obtained in life. The elderly were not to be cast aside as archaic, or considered of no value just because their physical strength might be failing. Strength is not everything, for in the elderly is contained wisdom and value only living life can bring. This was to be a resource to utilize, not wasted and disrespected. Those not of the bloodline of the chosen nation that might live among the nation were to be treated with the same respect as any actual blood born person. They were not to be considered of a lower class or caste. Israel was to remember how they were treated in Egypt and not follow in that way of thinking.

Israel was not to be unjust in business dealings, but set an example in the world of being known for honest transactions. They were to have fair market values in set measurements for lengths, weight, volume, and the like. God had brought them from the bondage of Egypt not to be as the rest of the world, but to act as representatives of The One True God. God is perfect; thus, Israel should strive to do all things as honestly, fairly, and efficiently as they could, using God's Law as their guide in all things!

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