

SESSION #54 (10 May 2011) Deut. 24:14 – 25:4 A Variety of True Representations throughout the Theocracy

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God’s spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses	
1:6-4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation</u> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) <u>sovereign destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)	
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah	
5:1-26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul	
5:1-11:32	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>	
12:1-26:19	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)	
12:1-13:18	Theological unity of Israel’s tribes and its Enforcement (esp 1 st , 2 nd , and by implication the corresponding 9 th , 10 th commandments)	
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (a witness consistent with Yahweh’s name, see 3 rd commandment)	
14:22-16:17	A Distinct Culture of Theocentric Faith in God’s Economic Order (with emphasis upon the 4 th and by implication the corresponding 8 th commandment)	
16:18-18:22	A Distinct Culture of Human Authority Under God’s Justice (emphasis upon human authority starting in the home—the 5 th commandment and by implication the 7 th commandment)	
19:1-21:23	Protocols for Implementing True “Social Justice” (emphasis upon dealing with deployment of civil authority’s lethal force—6 th commandment)	
22:1-23:18	A Distinct Culture of Life-Protecting Boundaries (emphasis upon purity of national life—the context of the 7 th commandment)	
23:19-24:7	A Distinct Culture of Respect for “Human Rights” (emphasis upon the implications of the 8 th commandment)	
24:8-25:4	A Distinct Culture of True Representation (emphasis upon the implications of the 9 th commandment)	
24:8-9	True Representation of Priestly Authority	
24:10-13	True Representation of a Debtor’s Ability to Repay	
	24:14-15	True Representation of the Payday of a Poor Laborer
	24:16	True Representation of Individual Responsibility
	24:17-22	True Representation of Justice & Grace toward the Disadvantaged
	25:1-3	True Representation of Justice toward the Condemned
	25:4	True Representation of the Value of Work Animals

The integrity of language = thoughts and words correspond to the real situation
Denial of Sophism which emphasizes the manipulative use of language (rhetoric) that Paul decries in **1 Cor 2**.

Fragments of statutes and judgments (case law) occur here which also occurred in earlier sections.

24:8-9 Address the integrity of the priestly leadership when following the Word of God; to disregard biblically-informed leadership violates the 9th commandment because it falsely depicts their authority

24:10-13 Address the problem of charity toward poor people in a mess financially; to invade the debtor's home to obtain collateral is to misrepresent the lender-debtor relationship—the lender has claim only upon collateral, not upon the debtor's other property. He doesn't "own" the debtor!!

II. TRUE REPRESENTATION OF THE PAYDAY OF A POOR LABORER (24:14-15)

24:14 not oppress a hired hand . . . whether . . . brethren or . . . alien [Heb: *ger*] Clearly this case could have been discussed under the 8th commandment, but the emphasis here appears to be on misrepresentation of the payday.

Note the main verb:

See **Lev. 6:4** "*He shall restore what he took by robbery, or what he got by **extortion**, or the deposit which was entrusted to him, or the lost thing which he found.*"

. . . in your gates

Emphasizes that the *ger* voluntarily chose to live inside the land and submit to Israel's social order.

24:15 each day. . . set his *nephesh* on it (NET: "his life depends upon it")

Clearly very poor and needing the money to buy the necessities of life; it was a "payday everyday" policy.

lest he cry out against you to Yahweh

Same action Israel did against Egyptian slave masters.

Dr. North's analysis of the economic implications:

1. Wealthier laborers could afford to forego "payday everyday," say, "payday once a week" because they had cash reserves for the necessities of life; [destitute] laborers did not and thus would be [excluded] from competing for the job—principle of equality of opportunity [to enter the work force]

"It is the vulnerability of the weakest seller of labor that makes this law necessary. God imposes this law because of what I call the priestly factor in free market pricing. This factor is seldom if ever discussed by free market economists. When human life is at stake – beyond the modern economic principle of marginalism– unrestricted free market competition is in some instances not morally valid. All real-world societies recognize this fact, but free market economists rarely do, since they are committed to a supposedly value-free (ethically neutral) analysis."

(This "priestly pricing" is also seen in the tithe which is based upon one's [ability to pay].)

2. Other forms of competition were allowed so that the theocracy wasn't [socialist]; it was basically free-market capitalism disciplined by God's interventions.

"This law does not prohibit other forms of competition among workers. It prohibits only this one, which reflects the character of God in his gracious dealings with men in history. There is no law in the Bible against one worker's willingness and ability to offer to work for less per day or less per hour than another worker presently does. . . . The legal right to make a better offer is inherent in the biblical requirement that we become more profitable servants."

3. This exception to competition is granted to the destitute laborer on the boundary of employment—it is an early form of [employment insurance] since it costs the employer to forego use of funds he otherwise could have held back for a time interval. It lessens the likelihood of the destitute laborer falling into debt-bondage.

NOTICE: While the Bible is anti-Marxist and anti-socialist, it isn't libertarian either (there is a difference between a "conservative" who wants to keep biblical wisdom in government structure and policies and a "libertarian" who views all government action as an unnecessary evil.)

The emphasis of the text, however, is the "bait-and-switch" tactic of the employer against the employee. To understand the "temptation" of the employer to forego the "payday everyday" policy, see North's point:

"The employer's economic problem is his lack of knowledge about the competence of the new worker. *The employer uses a delayed payment scheme in order to minimize his search costs in estimating the competence of new workers.* Accurate knowledge is not a zero-price resource. Employers try to obtain such knowledge as cheaply as possible. They use the new worker's willingness to accept delayed payments as a cost-effective substitute for more detailed information regarding the worker's abilities and his willingness to work."

The problem with delayed payment is that the employer thereby allows wealthier employees to defraud the destitute employee of employment.

III. TRUE REPRESENTATION OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY (24:16)

Central to the 9th commandment is the threat of phony rhetoric upon human responsibility. Manipulative rhetoric—like that on the social scene today—attempts to deceive the conscience by misrepresenting the true state of affairs, e.g. socialist theft of the possessions earned by productive people misrepresented as "making the wealthy pay their 'fair share;'" destruction of God's man-woman institution of marriage misrepresented by "equal rights for gays," etc.

24:16 a person shall be put to death for his own sin

Who is to blame? DI #4 executes local and limited divine judgment upon sin to restrain it so failing to hold people responsible for their sin not only causes violation of the [6th] commandment, but also the [9th] because it misrepresents the rationale for judgment. Precedent in the 1st and 2nd generation of Israel (cf. **Deut. 1:34-46**).

Doesn't deny that fathers can persuade their children to do evil, in which case God visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation" (**Deut. 5:9**).

IV. TRUE REPRESENTATION OF JUSTICE AND GRACE TOWARD THE DISADVANTAGED (24:17-22)

Repeats cases previously covered under the 5th and 6th commandments here emphasizing violation of the 9th commandment, viz., misrepresenting God's [justice] and [grace] that should be revealed through DI#4 and His redeeming act of the exodus.

9th commandment testifies to the [capability] God has given to man so he can [properly] "name" the created environment around him, i.e. his *intra-mental* capacity is sufficient to understand enough of *extra-mental* existence to render him accountable to accept God's interpretation of His creation (**Job, Ps 19; Rom 1**).

24:17 You shall not pervert justice due the *ger* or the orphan.

There would be no "repercussions" apparently from taking advantage of these unrepresented individuals in falsely representing justice in their cases.

nor take a widow's garment as pledge

3rd class of vulnerable individuals but involving a slightly different matter—take collateral that she needed for daily living and could not assure repayment for (unlike the man in **24:10-13**).

24:18 Remember you were a slave. . . .Yahweh your God redeemed you from there.

Treating these vulnerable individuals like the pagans, falsely minimizing their [worth] and the divinely-accomplished [redemption] from Egypt that should have made a difference in their daily lives.

24:19-22 fields. . .orchards. . .vineyards. . .

The gamut of agricultural production = 1st stage in "life" from the divinely-provided land.

These resources produced bread, oil, and wine—the core of the vegetarian portion of their diet.

stranger (*ger*). . .orphan. . .widow. . .

The same 3 classes of vulnerable people.

slave in the land of Egypt. . .

Repeats **24:18** → misrepresenting the lifestyle expected of a redeemed people. Ruining the testimony of the grace God had shown them. Application today: failing to be a testimony to God's grace in Christ today is a violation of the 9th commandment.

Again, Dr. North's analysis of the economic implications:

1. Gleaning was by owner invitation (e.g. Boaz & Ruth) so that the landowners qualified the deserving poor.

/////// SLIDE #8 ////////// [quote]

"This means that the gleaning law was a form of *conditional* charity in each individual recipient's case, although the loss was compulsory from the point of view of the land owner. *Biblical charity is always conditional*. Charity is not to subsidize evil, for it is an act of grace. *Unconditional charity is antinomian*. In a fallen world, unconditional charity will eventually subsidize evil. This is even more true of legal entitlements to other people's wealth. Such wealth transfers are not a form of charity. They are legislated theft. They represent a perverse modification of the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not steal, except by majority vote."

2. Gleaning allowed the “deserving poor” to [do work] to support themselves and improve their condition. God expected the more successful Israelites to provide economic opportunities for such willing laborers. These opportunities respected the [dominion impulse in man] (sense of accomplishment) rather than the disrespectful “entitlement.” They had to work harder to harvest the food products than the owner and his paid harvesters, but they were also free to sell the produce and thereby start a small business.
3. Gleaning challenged the modern economic goal of [maximization of return] by commanding the owner to harvest inefficiently and being wasteful with his crop (another challenge to libertarian economics) and trusting in Yahweh’s compensating blessing. This disciplined the land-owner not to become obsessed with every last piece of his production.

4. This was true charity, not a [government welfare scheme]. The poor had no legal claim, but the owner had a moral responsibility to be gracious just as Yahweh had been in giving Israel daily manna for 40 years (entire nation were gleaners!).

“The obedient owner did not pay salaried harvesters to collect marginal pickings. This lowered his labor cost per harvested unit of crop. But the net income loss as a result of gleaning did lower his total return from his land and planting expenses. There is no doubt that this economic loss of net revenue constituted a form of compulsory charity.”

“How did piece-rate harvesters suffer a reduction of total income? Because they could not lawfully gather the total crop of the field or the vineyard. Each worker had to leave some produce behind, which means that his income suffered. This also means that the poor of the community were in part funded by the *slightly less poor*: the piece-rate harvesters. The harvesters were reminded of the burdens of poverty.”

“This in effect became an *unemployment insurance* program for the harvesters. They knew that if they later fell into poverty, they would probably be allowed to participate as gleaners. They forfeited some income in the present, but they did so in the knowledge that in a future crisis, they would be able to gain income from gleaning. Both the landowner and the piece-rate worker financed a portion of this morally compulsory insurance program.”

5. Gleaning brought potential employees with a good work ethic to the attention of employers. (In modern times “minimum wage laws” do exactly the opposite: these laws exclude untrained potential laborers from entering the labor market and coming to the notice of employers.)
6. Gleaning in this rural setting kept the poor from flocking to the cities and causing development of an urban underclass. It operated in the local tribal areas without an inefficient [bureaucracy].
7. Gleaning increased the loyalty of the *ger* to the community.

V. TRUE REPRESENTATION OF JUSTICE TOWARD THE CONDEMNED (25:1-3)

Another repeated section about the function of the judges, but here the emphasis is upon caring for the [dignity] of the punished one. The condemned one is [made in God’s image] and

must receive punishment fitted to his status under God. Distortion of that image is misrepresentation and violates the 9th commandment.

25:1 if. . .come to court

They can't resolve the dispute without involving the State (DI #4) (the State has a negative function, not a saving one).

justify the righteous and condemn the wicked

Here is a clear example of the forensic nature of "justification" = declaration of obedience to God's laws.

25:3 forty blows. . .no more. . .lest. . .be humiliated [Heb: *kalah* = dishonored]

Misrepresentation of who he is.

Compare with the so-called "correctional" systems today. Neither liberals nor conservatives are proposing anything that works. Liberals want "treatment" programs for the non-violent and everlasting cages for those guilty of capital crimes. Conservatives want more strict sentences and bigger jails (animal farms). Both approaches misrepresent both crime and the criminal.

VI. TRUE REPRESENTATION OF THE VALUE OF WORK ANIMALS (25:4)

25:4 not muzzle. . .treading

Care of working animals illustrates their value as created helpers to man. Muzzling an ox is contrary to his nature to snack.

The Bible has things to say to us about our animals.

- Air-breathing vertebrates have *nephesh* → like us but not in God's image.
- Not killed for food until after the flood (post-fall abnormality).
- Killing animals for food is a picture of blood substitutionary sacrifice for us and ought to be done humanely and with honor (which is not being done so in most cases today).
- How people treat animals is usually related to how they treat people.

Paul uses this case law to illustrate the warranted salary of a Christian pastor-teacher in **1 Cor. 9:1-10** and **1 Tim. 5:17-18**. This shows that the theocratic society was a historical drama that enacted customs, practices, and procedures to reveal spiritual truths.

VII. CONCLUSION

The 9th commandment means more than perjury. It reveals the ethical responsibility to uphold truth in word and deed. Actions often expose what we believe about people and other creations of God.