

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

DEUTERONOMY 22-26

A New Yorker passed through a South Georgia town on his way to Florida.

He was driving down a country road when his car got stuck in a mud hole. The man dropped his car into low gear, and started spinning his tires trying to get out of the mud. Of course, the harder he tried the more entrenched he became.

After a few minutes he noticed a farmer riding down the road on an ox-drawn cart. The farmer offered to pull the man out of the mud for \$100. The city slicker agreed, and they hitched his car to the oxen. Within minutes his car was free.

Afterwards, the farmer commented, "You're the tenth person I've pulled out of that mud today." The New Yorker responded, "That's so kind and generous of you, but when do you find the time to plough your fields? You must do it at night?"

The farmer answered, "Oh no, that's when I water down the mud hole."

In Deuteronomy 22 God addresses a host of various concerns. The chapter covers a mix of environmental *issues* - *safety procedures* - *ceremonial laws* - *moral principles* - *domestic grievances* – and *criminal offences*... it's a smorgasbord. *And we start with a few verses on oxen...*

Verse 1, "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother."

Sin can be categorized into two types – sins of commission

and omission.

A sin of commission is to do what you shouldn't. A sin of omission is to not do what you should. And here Moses is warning about a sin of omission... When you see your neighbor's lost ox don't turn your head, and refuse to get involved. Don't take the attitude... "Well, it's not my problem." Love refuses to sit on the sidelines. Love takes risks. It dares to get involved. When it sees a need it tries to meet it...

"And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him." Hey, you find a wallet... or an expensive watch... don't stick it in your pocket singing, "Finders keepers, losers weepers..."

You should go out of your way to return the lost item to its rightful owner.

"You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself." If you're the last one to leave on a Sunday night, and you see a nice jacket lying in a seat – *your size* – that doesn't mean God has blessed you with a new jacket... Take it in to the lost and found.

If we find a wallet in the sanctuary... *same thing*... we look out for its owner... We take out all the cash - *and since we're sure the person intended to make an offering* – *why else would you bring a wallet full of cash to church?* We drop the

money in the offering box... then give back the wallet to its rightful owner...

“You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again.”

His donkey, ox, *or automobile*... If your neighbor's car is broken down on the roadside - stop and help... *Or if you see he's been in an accident*... By the way, **“What do you call it when two oxen crash into each other? *It's an oxident.*”**

Verse 5 changes the subject. It addresses a very serious and relevant subject. **“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.”**

In antiquity, the general dress for men and women was similar - long robes and wrapping garments. But there were subtleties that clearly distinguished the sexes.

Moses and his wife both wore a long robe, but you could tell the difference between his and hers. Likewise, my wife and I both wear jeans, but there's no confusion between my jeans and her jeans... or my slacks and her slacks...

When God created humanity He created male and female. Gender was God's idea. He created the sexes equal, but different. They play diverse roles in family life. This is why God doesn't want anything to blur these distinctives.

Here the concern is dress... androgynous or unisex fashion is forbidden.

Obviously, fashion is always changing, but whether you're

living in 1400 BC or 2000 AD men should look like men, and women should look like women.

My family will let you know I feel strongly about this issue. Today's modern culture laughs and jokes about these issues, but that's not God's perspective.

The Bible teaches that cross-dressing and masquerading as the opposite sex is not a fun, harmless, innocent fascination – it's a distortion of sexual identities.

God created us male and female - we should never blur those boundaries.

Even if done jokingly, I still think cross-dressing is an unhealthy practice.

At home and in society, we should do all we can to promote masculinity among men - and femininity among women. I agree with the lady who made the comment, "Oh for the day, when men were men and women were proud of it!"

Verse 6, "If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days." Here's one of the Bible's "be-kind-to-animal verses."

And notice the correlation... *kindness to animals* prolongs *occupation in the land*. If Israel is friendly to its environment God will keep him as its custodian.

The greatest commandment is to love God with all your

heart, mind and soul... But some Jewish commentators considered verses 6-7 as the smallest, or least of the commandments – *be kind to a bird*. And here's their point... Evidently, God is so gracious that even the least of His commands carries a significant blessing.

Speaking of kindness to animals, did you hear about the man who strolls into a ritzy restaurant with his dog? The matrade tells him, "No dogs allowed." The guy says, "But this is a talking dog. Tell you what... I'll ask my dog 3 questions. If he gives right answers why don't you let us both eat free?" The matrade agrees...

The man asks his dog, "Spot, what's the opposite of smooth?" "Rr-r-ruff!"

"Spot, what's on top of the house?" "Rr-r-ruff!" He looks to the matrade, "Wow, two out of two. I hope you're impressed. Now for the grand finale'..."

"Spot, the greatest home run hitter of all-time was Babe..." "Rr-r-ruff"

The matrade had enough. He grabs the man and dog, and tosses them out onto the street. They're laying there when the dog turns to his owner and says, "I guess I should've said, *"Hank Aaron"*. The moral of the story... *be kind to animals*.

Verse 8, "When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet (or a railing) for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it." Once in Haiti, we held an evangelistic service and dozens of folks gave their lives to Jesus. We were going to talk further with those who responded in a second floor room, so I had

them walk up the steps.

The owner of the building though panicked. Since the steps had no railing he feared someone would fall and get hurt. The locals would conclude his building was cursed and would never come back. A railing had spiritual importance.

I think this verse highlights the responsibility of a man who sets out to marry and build a family. Dad, it's your responsibility to set standards and boundaries that will safeguard your wife and kids. It's up to you to provide spiritual railings.

"You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.

"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." An ox and donkey are different species – with distinct natures. Put them in the same harness, and they will fight against each other. And the same applies to a believer and unbeliever.

When harnessed in a marriage - or yoked in a business partnership - diverse priorities will arise, and they'll end up in constant conflict. It's misery. This is why 1 Corinthians 6:14 forbids us from being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

I think verses 9-11 were all given to sensitize God's people to the dangers of mixing competing characteristics – whether it be ox and donkey, or wool and linen.

Verse 11, **"You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together."** Partner with an unbeliever, and at first it's cool - it's no sweat. But turn up the heat and you start to sweat. Wool and linen don't mix.

"You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself." Numbers 15:38 said the tassels were a reminder of God's Law.

Verse 13, "If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin..." Often people will want you to show them where the Bible forbids premarital sex...

Here's a great example. Among God's people – *within His divinely designed society* – when two people married there was an expectation of virginity. Virginity was highly valued, and without it a woman's chances for marriage were reduced.

The next few verses deal with a situation where a man accuses his wife of false advertising – of saying she was a virgin when she was not... "then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate."

On their wedding night it was customary for the newlyweds to lay a cloth under them. It collected the few drops of blood that were created by the woman's initial intercourse. This was given to her parents and kept as proof of her virginity.

Today, gynecological exams, and the fact women marry at later ages, make this an impractical test. But in ancient times the new brides could be 13 or 14.

There are places in the Middle East where this custom is still observed.

If she's accused the bride's parents bring out the evidence, "And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her; now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter was not a virgin," and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him;" The man lied in attempt to divorce his wife. "...they shall fine him 100 shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.

Verse 20, "But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house; so you shall put away the evil from among you."

Don't say premarital sex is no big deal to God.

"If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die - the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel."

Two people caught in the act of adultery both received the death penalty.

This is why the episode in John 8 was so suspicious. If the woman they threw at Jesus' feet was taken in the act of

adultery where was her partner? It takes two to commit adultery. According to the Law both the man and woman were stoned.

It's likely the woman was the victim of a Pharisaical set-up.

Verse 23, "If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you." The fact the woman didn't cry out implied that the sex was consensual. It was not a rape.

"But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter. For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her." In the case of rape it's not the woman's fault. She should be comforted not condemned.

"If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father 50 shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days." Here's the case of two

people who have premarital sex. They're to marry, *but when does the woman become the man's wife?* When they have sex? No!

They become husband and wife when the man pays her father the bridal price. This was the procedure by which people in ancient times entered into marriage.

Don't tell me that you and the person you're living with are married in God's eyes just because you have sex. The Bible is clear. God doesn't recognize two people as being married until the bridal price is paid – or the legalities are completed. *Whatever those legalities happen to be - given your culture.*

In our day, this means standing before an official and exchanging vows.

Verse 30 forbids incest. **"A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed."** You shall not have sex with your step-mother... which was the sin going on in the Church at Corinth. Paul addressed it in 1 Corinthians 5:1-2. Not only did Israel need these laws. They also provide a moral compass for the Church.

Chapter 23, **"He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the congregation of the LORD."** The covenant God made with Israel was with Abraham *and his seed*. It was a covenant inherited by birth - thus a eunuch could never be a full participant in the life of the nation. He was limited.

"One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the congregation of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his

descendants shall enter the congregation of the LORD.” Ten generations of blood had to flow to make him a legitimate heir.

"An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the congregation of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.” The tenth generation rule apparently applied to mixed marriages with Gentiles – except for Ammonites and Moabites. Because they hired Balaam to curse Israel, they were cursed forever.

“Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you.” Remember Numbers 23-24 four times Balaam opened his mouth to utter a curse on Israel, and each time God changed it into a blessing.

God is still good at turning the tables on His enemies. Recall what Joseph said to his brothers, “As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”

God says of Ammonites and Moabites, “You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.” Evidently, the permanent restrictions on Moabites applied only to the men. Moabite women were allowed to marry Israeli men and become citizens. Ruth was a Moabitess, and the great-grandma of King David.

Verse 7, "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother." The Edomites were descendants of Esau – Isaac's son and Jacob's brother.

"You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD."

The next few laws address cleanliness and sanitation. "When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing.

If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp." He was subject to a temporary quarantine.

"Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse." This is for a man in battle. If he needs to relieve himself, go outside the camp, and turn it over with a shovel.

And I love the reason why you're to leave no chips unturned...

Verse 14, "For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you." The Lord doesn't want to step His foot in it! If you want God to walk

among you use your shovel!

Verse 15 "You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you." You don't return a runaway. He might've been abused.

"He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him."

"There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel." Ritual harlots were temple prostitutes. In idolatrous lands there were women who sold sex to raise funds for the priests and the temple of the idol.

"A perverted one" was a homosexual prostitute. "You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog ("the price of a dog" was another way of referring to the proceeds of male prostitution) to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God."

Verse 19 "You shall not charge interest to your brother - interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest." Don't make a profit off a brother.

"To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess." As the old saying goes, "Why did God create Gentiles?" "Somebody has to pay retail." The Hebrews can make a dollar off the Gentiles, but they're not to

charge a brother interest.

"When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you.

But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you." As Ecclesiastes 5:5 put it, "Better not to vow than to vow and not pay." "That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth." Be a man or woman of your word.

"When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put any in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain." This was a kindness to the traveler – not to a bum who refuses to work and wants to eat all day out of your vineyard.

In Deuteronomy 24 God regulates divorce.

But understand just because God regulated divorce, doesn't mean He ever approved of it. Malachi 2:16 makes it clear, "The Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence..." Notice, Malachi considers divorce a violent act. The Hebrew word for "divorce" implies an amputation. The root word means "a hewing off, a cutting apart".

CS Lewis had this to say about divorce, "Christians all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a

kind of surgical operation. Some think that the operation is so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit that it is a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership...”

God hated divorce. Thus this law was an attempt to curb divorce and promote marriage. It formalized a procedure that made a divorce more difficult to obtain.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house...”

Prior to this law all a man had to do to divorce his wife was tell her good-bye.

Now he has to obtain a certificate – which would force him to visit the elders of the city. This created a cooling off period. It also required public exposure.

Now the person seeking the divorce has to think. Can the problems be worked out? Does he want the public humiliation of admitting to a failed marriage?

Because of the time delay, rash judgments will not be avoided.

Verse 2, “when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his

wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.”

Here’s a second way this law discouraged divorce... All divorces in Israel were permanent. Divorce your spouse, and you can’t change your mind next month, next year – not even after 20 years.

Again, this caused you to seriously consider initiating a divorce.

Several months ago Glynn Wolfe died in a Los Angeles nursing home. He was 88. Though he left behind several children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren no one came to claim his body. The city paid for his burial in an unmarked grave.

But what made Glynn’s case unusual was that he held a world record.

The Guinness Book recognized him as *the most married man*. Glynn Wolfe had been married and divorced 29 times. He spent his whole life looking for love – yet in the end no one loved him enough to give him a descent burial.

I hope you’ll consider that maybe divorce is not the answer after all. The best way to find love is not swapping spouses, but sticking with the spouse you’ve got, and making it work. Hang in there, resolve problems... *learn to love each other*.

Verse 5, "When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken." A newlywed was allowed a year off from military

duty – or any other kind of civil service - to focus on his marriage and build a good foundation. “The best way to protect against divorce is to strengthen marriage.”

"No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge." Without two millstones you couldn't grind your grain... And with no bread you can't eat. Don't take a man's livelihood as collateral.

"If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you." In ancient times people were seldom abducted, and then held for ransom. Usually the captives were sold into slavery.

Verse 8, "Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt." In Numbers 12, Moses' sister, Miriam, rebelled against her brother's authority and God struck her with leprosy.

We studied the laws concerning the treatment of leprosy in Leviticus 13-14.

"When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you." No illegal search and seizures. There were procedures.

“And if the man is poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God.” Don’t hold a poor man’s coat as collateral when he needs it stay warm at night. *Kindness to the poor is righteousness before God.*

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

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.”

Before I had kids of my own I might’ve had a hard time understanding how anyone could be willing to die for someone else. *But not now!* I’ve got four kids and if any one of them were sentenced to death I’d gladly take their place.

But obviously God forbids that... **(sigh of relief).**

"You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge. But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf

in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.”

This is how welfare was administered in Israel. After the harvest the poor could comb the fields for leftovers... But notice it wasn't a handout. They had to work the fields.

“When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.”

Chapter 25, "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows." The judge not only set the number of blows in proportion to the crime, but he oversaw the punishment to make sure it didn't exceed the sentence.

Verse 3 “Forty blows he may give him and no more (forty was the limit), lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.” Jewish tradition said if the executioner administering the scourging exceeded 40 lashes - then he

himself received 40 blows. This is why to be on the safe side the man with the whip always stopped at 39.

Thus, in 2 Corinthians 5:24 when Paul lists the persecutions he suffered he writes, "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one."

Verse 4 "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Again this was a *be-kind-to-your-animal* verse. Let the ox eat from the results of his labor.

In 1 Corinthians 9:9 Paul interprets verse 4 as a *be-kind-to-your-pastor* verse. It's proper to let the pastors eat from the fruits of their labor. Pay your pastor.

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."

This was a significant law in Israel... *the Law of the Levirate* - the Hebrew word for "*brother-in-law*". If a man died, his brother married his bereaved sister-in-law, and sired a son to bear the name, and carry on the lineage of his dead brother.

Verse 7, "But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.' Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him; and if he stands firm and says, 'I do not

want to take her,' then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face..." This was a public humiliation. "And answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.' This law is the background for the wonderful story we'll study when we get to the book of Ruth...

Verse 11, "If two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity her." *Wow Nelly!* Ladies, if you help your hubby in a fight don't hit below the belt.

I think the offense here is not her defending her husband, but where she aims her attack. Remember in chapter 23:1, an emasculated man was banned from the congregation. Israel's covenant with God was tied to his lineage. Thus, any attack on a Hebrew man's ability to reproduce was considered a major offense.

Today, salvation is by faith not lineage. Thus, if a lady is attacked by a man, then hitting below the belt with your knee or foot is exactly where you should aim! *God would approve.* It's another advantage of being saved by grace not by law.

Verse 13 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light." In ancient times business transactions were conducted with the use of scales. Gold and grain were weighed. *Make sure you use an honest scale.*

“You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

For all who do such things, and all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the LORD your God.”

Verse 17, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.”

As soon as Israel crossed the Red Sea the Amalekites attacked. They wanted to attack a band of slaves - before Israel had time to get organized. Amalek wanted to hurt God's people when they were at their weakest and most vulnerable.

God didn't forget their ruthlessness. “Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.” God didn't forget... and Israel was commanded not to forget. Vengeance would come.

Four centuries later God will command King Saul to annihilate the Amalekites. And his unwillingness to do so will cost Saul his throne.

Chapter 26 records the liturgy – or the prayer, the praise – a worshipper should say over their tithe when they offered it to the Lord. It wasn't just what they gave that was important to God, but it was what was said along with their offering.

And this is why I'm always making a big deal that you take a moment when you drop your tithe into the box to offer God praise, or link your tithe to a prayer.

Your giving is as much an act of worship as your singing, or your service.

Verses 1-4, you bring your tithe to the tabernacle and hand it to the priest.

Verse 5, "And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God: 'My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us.

Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders.

He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey"; and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.' They were praying, "Lord, You've done so much for us – we're giving back to a portion of the abundance that You've given to us." And that's exactly what we need to say when we give our tithe to the Lord.

"Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God. So you shall rejoice in

every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you.”

When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year - the year of tithing - and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled...”

Tithes were given each year, but in the third year they went to support the poor as well as the Levite. Verse 13 is the prayer that accompanied the tithe for the poor.

“I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed any of it for any unclean use, nor given any of it for the dead.” A practice common among the Canaanites and Egyptians was to put food in the grave with the deceased - a snack for the afterlife. Their giving wasn't to be tainted with superstition.

I think this also applies to us... Some folks give to God in almost a superstitious fashion. They think their offering binds God to bless them in a specific way.

Give with no strings attached. Don't let superstition taint your thanksgiving.

Moses closes in verses 16-19, "This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He has promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."