

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

DEUTERONOMY 22-26

A city slicker was driving *down an old country road*, when his car got stuck in a mud hole. He was spinning his tires, trying to get out of the mud, but he was stuck.

In minutes a farmer came by in an ox-drawn cart. He offered to pull his car out of the mud for \$500. He had no choice. They hitched the car to the ox, *and presto...*

Afterwards, the farmer commented, *"You're the tenth person I've pulled from that mud today."* The city slicker replied, *"That's so kind and generous, but when do you plow your fields? You must do it at night?"* The farmer said, *"Oh no, that's when I water down the mud hole."*

In today's chapters Moses enacts laws to govern Israeli life in the new land. He deals with a host of various issues, *but 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 *sins of omission*. A sin of commission is to do what you shouldn't. A sin of omission is to not do what you should. Here Moses warns about **a sin of omission**.

You see your neighbor's ox climbing through the fence, about to wander off, don't ignore it, and refuse to get involved. Don't take the attitude, *"Well, it's not my problem."* Love doesn't sit on the sidelines. Love your brother by helping him fetch his animals...

"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." Find a stray ox... or a forgotten wallet, or a lost iPhone - don't stick it in your bag, singing, *"Finders keepers, losers weepers."* No, *hold on to it until you can return it 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 leaving on Sunday, and a nice jacket is lying in the seat, *it's even your size!* Don't think God has blessed you with a new jacket! You should turn it into to the *lost and found* in the church foyer so it can be retrieved.

This is what your pastors do. We find a wallet on the grounds, we take the cash, and put it in the offering box. *Why else would you bring a wallet full of cash to church?* We help the brother out; then return his wallet.

"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." See your neighbor's donkey... or *automobile*... broken down on the side of the road... or if his ox is in an *accident*, stop and help him... By the way, "What do you call it when two oxen crash into each other? *It's called an oxident.*"

Verse 5 changes the subject to a very contemporary issue. "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, dress was similar - men and women wore long robes and wraps. But there were subtleties that distinguished them male and female. Likewise, my wife and I both wear bluejeans, but trust me, there is no confusion between my jeans and Kathy's jeans.

When God created humanity He made us male and female. Gender is God's idea. He created the sexes as equal, but different. Both sexes play diverse roles in family and church life. This is why God doesn't want anything to blur those distinctions. Here the concern is dress. Obviously, fashion always changes, but whether you're living in 1400 BC or 2000 AD **men should look like men**, and **women should look like women**.

And I feel strongly about this issue. Modern culture laughs about about this issue, but God isn't laughing. The Bible teaches cross-dressing and masquerading as the opposite sex is not a fun, harmless fascination. It's a distortion of sexual identities. Lines we shouldn't blur. Christians should do all we can to promote *masculinity among men*, and *femininity among women*. A lady in our church, once told me, "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*." A human can eat a mama bird's eggs, but be nice to mama. Kindness to animals prolonged occupation in the land. If Israel was friendly to its environment, God would keep it as its custodian.

The **greatest commandment** was to love God with all your heart, mind, and soul... But the rabbis called verses 6-7 the **smallest, or least of the commands**, *be kind to a bird....* Yet God is so gracious even the smallest commandment still came with a blessing!

Speaking of kindness to animals, did you hear about the man who strolls into a ritzy restaurant with his dog? The maitre-d says, “*No dogs allowed.*” The guy replies, “*But this is a talking dog. Tell you what, I’ll ask him three questions. If he gives you the right answers why not let both of us eat for free?*” The maitre-d agrees.

The man asks his dog, “*Spot, what’s the opposite of smooth?*” “*Rr-r-ruff!*” “*Spot, what’s the top of a house?*” “*Rr-r-ruff!*” He looks at the maitre-d, “*Wow, two out of two. Now for the grand finale’... Spot, the greatest home run hitter of all-time was Babe...*” “*Rr-r-ruff!*”

Well, the maitre-d had enough. He grabbed the man and his dog, and tossed them both out on the street. They’re lying there on the asphalt 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 roof wall) for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.*” I was once taught in Haiti when dozens of people came forward to give their life to Jesus. We had a second story room where we wanted to follow up, so I directed the crowd up a flight of stairs. *That’s when the building owner panicked!*

There was no handrail. He feared someone might fall and die, and the locals would assume his building was cursed, and never return. He needed a *parapet*.

I also think this verse symbolizes a spiritual responsibility. Leaders, like fathers or pastors, need to set standards and boundaries that safeguard the folks under their care. People also need *spiritual railings*.

Verse 9, “*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 - put two animals with distinct natures in the same harness, and they’ll fight against each other. This is the backdrop for **2 Corinthians 6:14** where Paul says a believer and unbeliever shouldn’t be *unequally yoked* together. Harness a believer and an unbeliever in a marriage or business partnership - any legally binding relationship - and there’s a great likelihood for conflict.

Verses 9-11 were to sensitize God’s people to the dangers of mixing items with these competing natures, 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 up with an unbeliever, and at first it’s cool - *it’s no sweat*. But turn up the heat, and it’ll start to get uncomfortable. It’ll itch and get warm. Wool and linen don’t mix well.

"You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself." Numbers 15:38 said the "*tassels*" were to remind Israel 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 challenge you to show them where the Bible forbids premarital sex... Well, here in Chapter 22 we find several examples...

Among God's people - *the covenant community of Israel* - when people married there was the expectation of virginity. It was a highly valued virtue. Without it, a girl's chances for marriage were greatly reduced.

Verse 13 brings up a situation where a man accuses his wife of false advertising - *of saying she's a virgin when she wasn't...* "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." It was customary that on the wedding night the newlyweds would lay a cloth under them to collect the few drops of blood created by the girl's initial intercourse. This was given to her parents and kept as proof of her virginity... Today, gynecological exams and marrying at later ages make this an impractical test. But in antiquity brides were often 13 or 14 years old.

Thus, if the girl was falsely accused the bride's parents presented the proof, "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 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." He sullied the girl's good name and now owes her a life of care and protection. "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." This was adultery in advance. The girl had been promiscuous in advance of her marriage; yet she'd claimed to be a virgin. *Thus, she was stoned!*

Realize, before Jesus, the Law's priority was to define and punish sin. Today though,

we're under a NC where Jesus forgives and transforms a person guilty of sexual sin. *Jesus's goal is to save, not stone!* Remember, in John 8 the tender mercies He showed the adulterous woman!... **Yet in all times**, don't say premarital sex is no big deal to God, *when clearly it is!*

"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." This was adultery, and it too was a capital crime. Both the man and woman were stoned.

This is why the episode in John 8 was so suspicious. The gal thrown at Jesus' feet was taken in the very act, *but where was he? Adultery takes two!* That's why it's likely this girl 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 she didn't cry for help implied the sex was consensual. It wasn't a rape, but adultery.

"But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her..." *Then it is rape! It's not the woman's fault!* She cried out, but no one came. She should be comforted, not condemned. She now needs help and healing.

Verse 28, **"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 fifty 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."** The previous scenarios involved betrothed (*or engaged*), and married folks. But here are two single people having sex outside of marriage.

They're using each other without making a marital commitment. As we say down South, **"He's getting the milk without buying the cow."** Or in the language of Scripture, **"he's humbled her."** He's not giving her the honor that comes with marriage. He needs to make an honest woman out of her, and value her as his wife...

But notice when does she become his wife? When they have sex? No! They don't become husband and wife until the man pays her father the bridal price. This was how people in that culture entered into marriage.

So don't tell me you and the person you're living with are married in God's eyes just because you're having sex. The Bible is clear. God doesn't recognize two people as

married until the bridal price gets paid - or the legalities are complete - *whatever those legalities happen to be in your culture*. Today, in America, it's standing before a local official and exchanging vows.

The Chapter closes with a prohibition against incest. "A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed." Don't have sex with your step-mother...

Which was the sin Paul dealt with in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 5. Not only did Israel need these laws, they also provided a moral compass for the Church.

Deuteronomy 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 human reproduction - thus a eunuch could never be a full participant in the life of the nation. He was limited.

In addition, men often became eunuchs as part of their dedication to a pagan god. It came with idolatry.

"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." Ever hear the expression, "a lot of water has flowed under the bridge." Here, ten generations of blood had to flow to make an outsider a legitimate heir of the covenant God made with Israel.

This tenth generation rule applied to mixed marriages with Gentiles except for "An Ammonite or Moabite" They shall never enter the assembly "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 Ammonites and Moabites opposed Israel as they were exiting Egypt, at their most vulnerable moment.

"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." Recall Numbers 23-24 when the king of Moab hired the sorcerer, Balaam, to curse Israel. Four times Balaam, opened his mouth to utter a curse, but instead each time God changed it to 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 Ammon and Moab, "You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever." The ban on Moab must've applied only to men. For their women did marry Israeli men becoming citizens. Ruth, a Moabitess, was King David's great-

grandma.

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." Here's God's amazing grace! A former Israeli captor, *an Egyptian*, could now become a participant in God's covenant!

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." What kind of "occurrence in the night" defiles a man? Maybe it's stepping on a kid's lego, and drawing blood. Leviticus 15 lists rules regarding bodily fluids. It could be that. Both require a temporary quarantine.

And I love verse 12... don't ever say the Bible is not practical. "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." If a soldier in battle has to do a **Number Two**, he goes to the designated place, and when he finishes his business he turns it over with a shovel.

And I love the reason why you're to leave **no chip 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 in your mess when He walks through the camp!

And this teaches us an even bigger lesson... *if we want God to walk among us, we need to bury the crap! And you can quote me on that! We need to be holy!*

Verse 15 "You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you." Don't return a runaway. There may've been a legit reason he ran away. "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. The land of Canaan was a land of idols. And it was full of women who sold sex to raise funds for the temple and priests of their idol. "A perverted one" was a homosexual prostitute.

"You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog (which referred to the proceeds gained from male prostitution, "the price of a dog") to the house of the LORD

your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God."

Prostitution played a huge role in Canaan's fertility cults, *but it had no part in the worship of a holy 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." Here's a joke, "Why did God create Gentiles?" Answer, "Somebody has to pay retail." Hebrews can make a buck off Gentiles, but don't 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." Ecclesiastes 5:5 puts 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." We should all be a man or woman of our 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 a traveler. As he passed through your vineyard or field he could take just enough for a meal. But this didn't allow a crook, who lived nearby, to steal your harvest.

In Deuteronomy 24 God regulates divorce - which doesn't mean He approved of it, rather His goal here is to discourage it. Malachi 2:16 is clear, "The Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence..." Malachi calls divorce a violent act. The Hebrew term "divorce" implies an amputation. It means "a hewing off, or a cutting apart."

CS Lewis once said of 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..." And because of the devastating effects of divorce on spouses and children God 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 say "good-bye." Now he has to obtain a certificate - which forces him to visit city elders - and the hearing now necessitates a cooling off period - as well as, public exposure of his intentions.

Now the man 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 procedure, rash decisions will now 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 another way God's law discouraged divorce... Divorce was permanent. There was no going back or changing your mind. Again, this made you think it through.

Several years ago I read about Glynn Wolfe. He died in a Los Angeles nursing home at 88 years old. 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 he held a world record. Guinness listed him as *the most married man*. He was married and divorced 29 times. Poor guy spent his whole life looking for love, yet in the end no one loved him enough to give him a decent burial.

Maybe divorce isn't the answer after all! The best way to find love is not swapping spouses, but sticking with the one you got, and working out your problems. The Bible teaches us that with a little humility, and Jesus' help, you really can *learn to love one another*.

Ok, we need to pick up the pace... Verse 5 tells us a newlywed husband was exempt from military duty for one year. He was to spend that first year strengthening his marriage and *"bringing happiness to his wife."*

You're not to take a man's millstone as collateral, the upper or the lower millstone. Take either one and he can't grind grain. You crippled his ability to repay you.

Verse 7 prohibits kidnapping and human trafficking.

Verse 8, in a leprosy outbreak be sure to follow the Laws given in Leviticus 13-14. Moses says in verse 9, "Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt." Numbers 12 recounts how Miriam, Moses' sister, bucked her brother's authority, and God struck her with leprosy.

Verse 10, "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 you had to follow.

And if you collect collateral from a poor man, don't take his coat overnight where he'll freeze in the night air. Kindness to the poor is righteousness before God.

Verses 14-15, Pay your workers daily, some people are living day to day... literally, hand to mouth...

Verse 16, 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."

If you're not a father this is hard to understand, but a dad's love for his kids is so strong there are scenarios where he'd be inclined to die in their place. Yet this was forbidden. Folks were to be judged on their own merit.

Of course, the only person exempt from this is THE Lawgiver Himself. The One who gives the Law is above the Law. Thus, Jesus was willing to die for us.

Verse 17, don't "pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge." In America today, often the outcome in court has nothing to do with justice, but with who can afford the best lawyer. In Israel justice was due to everyone.

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 was welfare in ancient Israel. After the harvest the poor combed the fields for leftovers.

And notice, it wasn't a handout. They had to go into the field for the neglected bundles. The poor were emboldened by the dignity inherent in meaningful work.

The rest of the chapter tells us the poor had access not just to the field, but to the olive grove and vineyard.

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 set the number of blows in proportion to the crime, and then 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 man administering the scourging exceeded forty lashes - then he himself received forty blows. This is why to be on the safe side the man with the whip always stopped at thirty-nine. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 11:24 when Paul lists his sufferings, 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 its own labor.

It’s interesting, 1 Corinthians 9:9 Paul interprets verse 4 as a *be-kind-to-your-pastor* verse. Let the pastors eat from the fruits of his labor. Pay your pastor.

Verses 5-10 lay out **The Law of the Levirate**, it’s the Hebrew term for *brother-in-law*. If a man died without an heir, his brother was to marry his bereaved sister-in-law, and sire a son to carry on the deceased brother’s lineage. The goal was that **his name may not be blotted out of Israel.**” It carried on the family heritage.

But if the brother doesn’t want to marry his sister-in-law, he can’t be forced. In that case the bereaved sister takes his sandal and spits in his face, it subjects him to a public humiliation for the slight this was to her and a dereliction of his duty... *This Law is the backdrop for the beautiful story we’ll study in 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.

The offense here is not her defending her husband, *but where she aims*. In Chapter 23 an emasculated man was banned because Israel’s covenant with God was tied to a man’s seed. Thus, an attack on a man’s ability to reproduce was considered a major offense.

Today though, salvation is by faith, not by human reproduction. Thus, if a lady is attacked by a man, then hitting below the belt with your knee or foot is exactly where you need to aim! *Ladies, God will approve!* It’s another advantage of being saved by grace, not law.

Verse 13 *"You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light."* In antiquity, business was conducted by using scales. Gold and grain were always weighed. *Make sure you use an honest scale.*

And make sure you have standard measurements. A cup or bushel should be the same in every household.

Recall, as soon as Israel crossed the Red Sea, a nomadic tribe, the Amalekites, pounced on the newly freed slaves. Israel had yet to organize, yet Amalek attacked them at their weakest and most vulnerable.

Verse 19, *"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 Amalek's ruthlessness, and neither should Israel!* Four centuries years later, God will command King Saul to wipe out the Amalekites. And it will be his unwillingness to do so that will cost Saul his throne.

Deuteronomy 26 records the prayer an Israelite prayed when he offered a tithe to God. It wasn't just *what he gave* that was important, but *what he said* with his offering. This is why I don't just drop my tithe in the box. I take a moment to praise or thank God when I do.

Well in verses 1-4 you're told to bring your offering in a basket to the Tabernacle and hand it to the priest.

Then repeat this liturgy, verse 5, *'My father was a Syrian (he's talking about Abraham), 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.'*" This is what our offering should say to God... *You've done so much for us, the least we can do is return to You this portion.*

Tithes were given to God each year, but in the third year the tithe went to support the poor and Levites. Verse 13 is the prayer that accompanied this offering.

Notice verse 14, *"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."* Among Egyptians and

Canaanites it was common to put food in a relative's grave - *a snack for the afterlife*. It's not unlike what ancient Aztecs did, or what Catholics in Mexico do today when they celebrate "[The Day Of The Dead](#)."

God didn't want His people's giving to be tainted with superstition. And I believe this applies to some of us...

Folks give to God superstitiously. They think their offering binds God to bless them in specific ways. They give with strings attached, rather than from the heart.

Finally, verse 16, Moses exhorts Israel to obey all the LORD's commands, With all their heart and soul they should walk in His ways. For, verse 19, "**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.**"

Thus ends Moses second speech. His third and final, a forecast of Israel's future - starts in Chapter 27...