

### DEUTERONOMY

#### Lesson 33 - Chapter 24

We got a little way into Deuteronomy chapter 24 last time and we'll continue with that today. We ended by discussing an inscrutable truth of the Bible that is not always easy to recognize: the progression of patterns from the time of the Creation all the way through the final words of the book of Revelation. This truth is, I think, perhaps the key that unlocks so many Bible mysteries that have escaped us. And the mysteries of course elicit the question, why. "Why" is what makes a mystery a mystery. Why does God do what He does in any given situation? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why is it wrong to have sexual relations without the benefit of marriage? And the answer to every "why" is that it's because God's reaction and decision always follows a pre-established pattern. Those patterns are defined in the Torah. So the question any devout Believers who seriously wants to know what the Lord is up to (and their "why" isn't merely a veiled complaint) ought to be asking is not "why", but rather "which". Which God-pattern either reflects the outcome of a given situation, or also which pattern we ought to apply to any particular issue or challenge that faces us.

This progression of God-patterns has generally only been of interest to Bible scholars (and precious few of those, truth be known), and it not something discussed or widely known within the Christian community because it is rare that the Old Testament is ever taught in modern times. And without knowing the Torah of the Old Testament the basis for these patterns is never established in our minds. I would liken this concept of patterns as the narrow strand upon which a necklace of pearls is strung. Have you ever had the experience of seeing a pearl necklace break, and those precious round balls fall to the floor and begin bouncing unpredictably in every direction? We have scores of pearls of truth presented to us in the Bible; but when the strand of "patterns" is missing or broken then those pearls (which are the many Bible stories, prophecies, proverbs, commands and laws, and Yeshua's own parables) become disconnected and it is nearly impossible to see their orderly sequence and organic relationship to one another. Instead we tend to look at those pearls of wisdom individually, on a stand alone basis, and such a thing can indeed cause us to look upward and plead "why?"

Let me begin by repeating the thing I closed with last time: the God-principles hidden within the story of Creation were carried forward and manifested at a little more obvious level in the narratives about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those God-principles that were deeply embedded in the fascinating narratives of the Patriarchs were then extracted and clearly laid out in the Law of Moses at Mt. Sinai. The detailed God-principles given at Mt. Sinai were next carried forward and brought to fruition at a higher spiritual level in the life, sermons and

parables of Yeshua, Jesus Christ. Those God-principles will next be manifested at near perfection level in the Millennial Kingdom, the 1000-year reign of Messiah. But understand: they are still all the same principles. Nothing has changed; only how they were revealed, manifested and transformed over time.

During our lesson today I'm going to take a couple of the laws of Deuteronomy 24 and go back several hundred years (to the time of the Patriarchs) and show you how those God-principles that were the basis of the Law of Moses played out in those earlier Bible stories, because those same principles (of course) existed even from the time of Creation. The Rabbis would say (and I think the Bible backs it up), that the Word (which is the Law, the Torah) was in heaven long before it made its first appearance on earth at Creation.

First, however, let's refresh our memories by re-reading a Deuteronomy 24 and looking at a couple more commands.

### RE-READ DEUTERONOMY 24 all

This is why I like to read from the CJB: because it will use some of the original Hebrew words in place of English translations that are often well off the mark or obscure the meaning. We covered the first 7 verses in the previous lesson so we'll move right to verse 8. Most bible versions in verse 8 will say that this passage is talking about Leprosy; or perhaps it will say skin disease or something similar. The Hebrew word is **Tzara'at** and it does NOT mean Leprosy. **Tzara'at** actually manifests itself in a variety of conditions that while usually associated with the skin but it is also connected with impurities upon clothing, furniture, or even the walls of a house. Leviticus 13 and 14 more carefully define **Tzara'at** and explain that ONLY the priesthood can deal with it because it is primarily a SPIRITUAL issue, and only to a lesser degree is it a medical problem. In a nutshell **Tzara'at** is seen as the OUTWARD result of an inner state of ritual defilement. **Tzara'at** is an outward illustration of how the Lord sees the inner spiritual condition of humans: diseased and corrupt. Unclean. Therefore when a Hebrew had an outbreak of **Tzara'at** on their skin, they were separated from the rest of Israel; they were forcibly put OUTSIDE THE CAMP if they balked at going out on their own volition. And outside the camp they remained until there was no further sign of **Tzara'at**; for some Israelites that would be for the remainder of their lives.

As an example of both WHAT the person with **Tzara'at** can expect and WHY people are inflicted with the condition, verse 9 uses the incident with Miriam. Recall that some years earlier in the Wilderness journey Aaron and Miriam (Moses' own brother and sister) spoke against Moses; Miriam was struck with **Tzara'at** as a consequence for this sin. There are disagreements among Jewish and Christian scholars over the precise nature of Miriam's

offense, but if there is a thread of consensus it is that this probably had to do with the crime of slanderous gossip, in Hebrew **lashon hara**. Essentially the problem was that Miriam had spoken against God's anointed Mediator Moses. The REASON she spoke against Moses was that she had become defiled in her spirit. The RESULT was that God had her wear this defilement on her skin, outwardly for all to see, whereas otherwise it was but a hidden inner condition. But it wasn't only so that others could see that she had broken peace with God; it was so that she could now recognize her status in God's eyes. A sinful condition that she could have ignored and denied was as evident to her as to others.

This is a lesson that could be discussed over and over because it has such a direct and visible (and probably daily) influence in our relationship with God. Moses was God's covenant Mediator on earth for a time. Yeshua was God's GREATER covenant Mediator on earth for a time, and He remains so in heaven. As God's Mediator Yeshua's every word, and His person, and His purpose should be joyfully accepted and never spoken against. As Yehoveh said of Moses (and how much MORE it applies to Jesus), whatever he speaks is as if God spoke it, so much authority do his words carry. The person who speaks against Yeshua is by definition in a state of spiritual defilement (just as was Miriam) because that person is disagreeing with (rebellng against) God. The result is that the defiled person is taken OUTSIDE THE CAMP, removed from fellowship with the Lord and with fellow worshippers; the undeniable evidence of that inward defilement has become evident and outwardly observable. Since the advent of Messiah (and especially as it applies to Gentiles) we were BORN outside the camp (outside of the Kingdom of God). We were BORN in a state of inner defilement (with **Tzara'at** if you would); this means that the blood of Messiah must cleanse us and remove this awful defilement in order for us to be brought INTO THE CAMP from our natural state of living outside the camp.

The thing to notice as well about Miriam is that being a full-blood sister to Moses changed nothing. That she was an ethnic Hebrew changed nothing. That she is one of only 5 women in the entire Old Testament given the status of "prophetess" changed nothing. She received no special dispensation because of family ties or status. Jesus' brothers and sisters would not be saved because they were related to Him; they would only be saved by TRUSTING in Him as Messiah just like everybody else.

Now a word of caution; I have heard this very example of Lashon Hara used to explain why it is that a member of a congregation can never challenge or disagree with his or her Rabbi, pastor, priest, elder, deacon, or whomever. While the crime of slanderous gossip is indeed generally defiling, the crime of Miriam was directed against God's appointed Mediator of the covenant and THAT is the point. So while unity within the body of Christ for the right reasons is always desirable and best and a worthy goal, to shut down debate or deflect well-earned criticism of a congregational leader has nothing to do with the issue of Miriam and her contracting Tzara'at. This is NOT Lashon Hara. This is not slanderous gossip.

The next law as explained in verses 10 –13 is about taking and holding property that is being used as collateral for a loan. This is of course related to the earlier law in this chapter about not seizing the upper millstone from someone as loan collateral (under any circumstance) because this causes a person to lose their means of sustenance: and therefore to violate this law is to commit a crime against life. What this means is that collateral on a loan is a perfectly acceptable thing but there are conditions and limitations.

The first part of this law prohibits the creditor from entering the debtor's home and forcibly taking the collateral. The Rabbis explain that to enter someone's house without permission to collect collateral is tantamount to home invasion. And not only is that wrong on the surface but it could lead to a fight and life might be endangered as a result. Rather the creditor **MUST** stand outside and the debtor is to bring the collateral out to him. The Hebrew word being translated as collateral is **abote**; and more scholarly works of recent have decided to translate this to "pledge" as opposed to collateral because pledge is a term that can apply to more situations than to simply being a piece of physical property that is used to secure a loan.

Further, in verses 12 and 13 if the debtor is a poor person that pledge is to be returned to him before the sun sets; in other words it must be returned **BEFORE** the end of the day. For a poor person the collateral that they put up is often the only thing of value that they own: their coat. This coat or cloak served as a blanket as well, which is the reason for the words that, "he needs to sleep in it"; it's what they slept in on the colder nights. And by the way, for those of you who have been to Israel in the winter months, you've received a taste of just how cold it can be even in the desert so this law is certainly a practical and necessary one. I've been snowed on in both the north and south of Israel; a person in that environment **MUST** have some warm clothing. The concept is that each morning the debtor **WILL** return the pledged coat to the creditor, and then get it back at night.

It is interesting that while most laws that are about the prohibition against doing something (the don'ts of the Law) speak about a punishment for violation, this law about **NOT** holding on to a poor man's warm clothing gives a positive motivation to the lender to obey; it is that the lender will be blessed because to be merciful in this way will be seen as righteousness in the eye's of God. In the CJB it says "upright deed" and in other Bibles it might say "merit". The word being translated is **tzedekah**, and it generally means righteousness or an act of righteousness. However this law about collateral must also be understood to mean that to take as a pledge anything that is basic to sustenance and life is questionable at best and generally speaking ought not to be done.

This might be a good point to go on a bit of a detour to demonstrate this principle of "the pledge" in action centuries before it became a discernable and written law at the time of Moses. To get the most out of this detour, though, remember that the Hebrew word **abote** is better rendered pledge than collateral, because the God-principle of the pledge becomes much too narrowly applied when it is attached only to the idea of lending and borrowing. The

principle of the pledge overlaps more areas of Bible instruction than one might think.

Turn your Bibles to Genesis chapter 24; we're going to read the story of Rebecca (Rivkah) being chosen as a wife for Abraham's son Isaac. As it's a lengthy chapter in the interest of time we'll omit parts of it because it's not particularly needed to make the point I'm going to demonstrate.

### **READ GENESIS CHAPTER 24:1-14, 28 – 32, and 54 to end**

Please follow me closely and watch the parallels and connections between what happened with this story in Genesis and with the law of Deuteronomy (established some 5 centuries later) concerning the rule to not forcibly take the pledge of a man by going into his house to seize it.

In this story of Rebecca and Isaac in Genesis 24, Rebecca is the pledge (remember, don't think in terms of loans and collateral) and she is to be obtained by Abraham's representative (who goes only by the name of the "oldest servant" in the house). This nameless old servant of Abraham travels from the Land of Canaan north to Mesopotamia because he is to get a wife for Isaac (Isaac, as Abraham's firstborn, is also the old servant's master); and he is to choose this wife from among Abraham's relatives.

We see in the story that the servant arrives in Mesopotamia, spots a good candidate at a water well, and observes her carefully for a time. He decides that Rebecca is the one and so makes his move. He talks to the girl and gets invited to stay with Rebecca's family.

In Genesis 24:31 the question is asked by Laban (Rebecca's brother) of Abraham's servant: "why are you standing outside?" This corresponds to the instruction of Deuteronomy 24:11 that the one who intends to collect a pledge must "stand outside" and not go into the house of the pledge's owner to obtain it. Rather the pledge must be brought outside of the home willingly, and given to the master (if it's to be given at all).

In this story it is the old servant who is standing outside of the house waiting for the pledge (Rivka) to willingly be brought out to him, because it would be an offense against the household and against God to go in and take the pledge from her domain. And in an even deeper sense, it is Isaac, the future bridegroom, who is standing outside and waiting rather than going in and taking. He is standing outside of Mesopotamia, where his wife-to-be is living, because his father Abraham has ordered that Isaac may not go inside Mesopotamia to retrieve his pledge (Rebecca) even though he doesn't know precisely who that pledge will be. Rather

the pledge must agree to come outside of her country to Canaan. Laban, the master of the house where the pledge resides, offers the pledge (Rebecca) to the old servant and she is willingly escorted outside (of Mesopotamia) to where Isaac is (in Canaan).

Near the end of this story starting in verse 62 we find Isaac waiting back in Canaan for the pledge (Rivka) to arrive. Isaac was walking in a field. The original Hebrew most literally says it was “before the going down of the sun” when Isaac spotted the returning caravan led by his trusted servant, and Rebecca in tow. In the last verse, Isaac took Rebecca and made her his wife.

As many connections as I’ve already shown to you notice something else that goes right by us if we don’t understand the Hebrew mindset of the Biblical era regarding marriage: in Hebrew thinking and culture a wife was as a man’s garment. A man literally wears his wife as a covering. As when I explained this to you recently in some detail, I remind you that this idiomatic symbolism that a wife was her husband’s garment was so commonly understood in Hebrew society that there certainly was no need to thoroughly explain it in the Bible anymore than in our society would it be necessary to explain that when a couple gets married there is a wedding ring; it’s just the way things are and everybody knows it. So with that understanding look again at Deut. 24:13. The law concerning pledges in Deuteronomy 24 says that clothing, the garment, given as the pledge must be remanded to the owner **BEFORE SUNSET**. Rebecca, the pledge, is a garment to be worn by Isaac as a covering. Hence here we find the explanation that it was **BEFORE SUNSET** that Isaac was out walking when Rebecca (his garment-to-be so to speak) arrived. He marries her, meaning he now wears his garment.

Now I am sure that until we studied this law of pledges in Deuteronomy 24 that it would be nearly impossible for anyone to see these particular God-principles within the story of Isaac, Rebecca, and the old servant. And frankly without understanding some critical elements of ancient Hebrew culture and marriage customs it would also be nearly impossible to extract these timeless God-principles from those narratives about the Patriarchs. The point is that these often told and beloved stories of the Patriarchs in the book of Genesis were more than simply interesting or exciting stories of Bible heroes or the history of how the nation of Israel came to be (although they serve that purpose as well). Embedded in these stories, just under the surface, are some important God-principles. The people of that day probably didn’t realize that so much of what they were doing (as what seemed to them as but custom) indeed reflected the Lord step-by-step bringing His divine principles to light. Yet with the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai suddenly those eternal God-principles no longer had to be extrapolated from historic stories; now their application is laid out plainly and in detail. Which principle to apply to which situation is enumerated in the Law.

Now let me show you something else before we move on because it helps to answer the often-debated question concerning God’s communication to Abraham that his descendants would be led into captivity and remain there for 4 generations. And the usual framing of the question

about this is: “how long is a generation?” I would submit that the question ought to be: “what IS a generation?”

By demonstrating to you that the principles behind the Law were exhibited far earlier within the stories of the Patriarchs, next we find that thus far in Deuteronomy chapter 24 we have laws directly connected to EACH of the 4 generations of Abraham that I just mentioned. We have the law of kidnapping, which is attributable to Joseph (one of the generations after Abraham), we have the law of Miriam’s *tzara’at* (the present generation of the time of the Exodus), we have the law of the pledge for Isaac (the generation immediately following Abraham), and then in the same law regarding the pledge we have the admonition that the return of the pledge (the garment) to the owner shall be counted as righteousness to the one who obeyed this law. Recall in the story of the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant, in Genesis 15:6 God tells Abraham that to trust God will be credited to him as righteousness. Therefore this law of the pledge connects directly to Abraham, the original and 1<sup>st</sup> generation.

Now we see what the 4 generations that was prophesied consisted of: it was Abraham #1, Isaac #2, Jacob (called Israel) #3, and Jacobs 12 sons the 12 tribes of Israel #4. It would not be until the 12 tribes (the 4<sup>th</sup> generation from Abraham) were fully established and brought to some God-designated state of fruitfulness and maturity that Yehoveh would liberate them from captivity and bring them to the land that he had promised Abraham. So the 4 generations in this prophesy was NOT so much about a precisely defined measurement of time as it was about the event (the Exodus) occurring with the 4<sup>th</sup> generation (the generation of the 12 tribes) as the participants.

This detour part of the lesson may have hurt your heads a little; that’s OK it’s a lot to digest all at once. If you were able to just absorb parts of it, it should go some distance in cementing within you the organic inseparableness of the ENTIRE Word of God and why it is such a devastating error that the Church has for 1800 years determined to sever away the Torah and the Old Testament from our understanding, knowledge, and doctrines and say that it has utterly no bearing on our faith. This is a message that every one of you who now know better must, in your own way; endeavor to communicate to your brothers and sisters in the faith of Messiah Yeshua. Little could be of greater importance in our era.

Let’s continue with Deut.24 verse 14. Keeping in mind that all the words of Deuteronomy amount to Moses making a sermon about the Law to the Israelites (expounding upon the Law the way Yeshua would so many centuries later), we witness an appeal to those who would be employers of the poor to pay them their wages daily, at the end of each day. Poor people then simply did not (and even today usually do not) have the wherewithal to wait for their money. And Moses says, they’ve worked for it, earned it, and it is wrong to withhold their earnings until a later time (presumably one that is more convenient for the employer). The word used for withholding these wages is “abuse”; it is the same exact word used in Leviticus 19 for the law characterizing the crime of robbery. And the employer is warned that while the abused

employee may not have the power to force the employer to do what is right and pay him, he can cry out to the Lord and the Lord will consider it sin and extract divine justice for this sin.

From this law on wages the sermon moves on to banning transgenerational punishment. That is the parents may not be put to death for something their children did, and vice versa. Notice that no particular crime is mentioned; this is a universal law that cuts across all the laws. There is a substantial difference between this law and a principle that I introduced to you some time ago; the principle of Vertical Retribution. Vertical Retribution in fact can put the punishment for trespassing against the Lord upon descendants several generations removed from when the trespass occurred. This is something that might sound strange to us, but it was real and practiced by the Hebrews. We occasionally talk about generational curses that are the result NOT of what the affected person might have done, but of something that person's father, or grandfather, or an even earlier ancestor might have done. And there are those who pray fervently on the behalf of others that these generational curses might be lifted. Many verses in the OT and the New confirm the existence of the spiritual law of Vertical Retribution.

The difference between the law AGAINST transgenerational punishment and Vertical Retribution is that Vertical Retribution is NOT part of the civil or criminal law code. Vertical Retribution is decided on and carried out exclusively by God. It is His prerogative to decide in what situations to invoke the principle of Vertical Retribution, or not. The law banning transgenerational punishment, on the other hand, has to do with humans carrying out the justice system the Lord has established. If (for example) a son committed a murder the father does not owe his own life and so a court may not order a father to be executed; only the perpetrator is liable for his capital offense.

The final laws of Deuteronomy 24 again deal with humanitarianism; and these rules that end the chapter deal with protecting foreigners living in Israel, orphans, and widows. Especially the concept of it being a duty of every Israelite to look after the welfare of orphans and widows is a theme that we find repeated throughout the entire Bible. It's important to understand that not only is there a divinely commanded duty to care for the disadvantaged class of people, but there is a prohibition against exploiting or mistreating them.

Verse 17 begins by saying that the rights of a stranger (a **ger**) are not to be subverted. This is talking about legal matters; a foreigner and an orphan are to be judged fairly in a court of law.

The next admonition is very much like the law of verse 10, the law of the pledge that we connected to the ancient story of Isaac and Rebecca. The difference between what we read here and verse 10 is that while a creditor may use a poor person's garment as collateral, and must return it each night to the debtor, a WIDOW'S garment can not ever be used as collateral and thus held away from her at any time. It is interesting that we find even more concern for the widow than for the orphan and the foreigner in this matter.



Jewish Tradition has taken this a step further and declared that no possessions of a widow may be used as loan collateral. Moses then reminds Israel that they were slaves in Egypt and it is for remembrance of the mercy that was withheld from them that they should always SHOW mercy to the least able in society as a way of expressing gratitude for God's act of redemption from such harsh conditions. This of course exactly plays into Jesus' reasoning that by Believers aiding those who are the least in society it is as if we are aiding Him. It is a case of our showing gratitude for our salvation by showing mercy to those who Yeshua wants looked-after and helped.

Verse 19 expounds upon the laws given in Leviticus concerning leaving a portion of the fields, vineyards, and tree crops for the foreigner, widow and orphan to eat from. The earlier and similar law in Leviticus said that the "corners of the fields" were to be left for the poor. These rules in Deuteronomy further define what is to be left so that the disadvantaged can have food.

The Rabbis have concluded that the various laws about gleaning can be categorized into four groups based on what is to be left for the poor. And it is these: 1<sup>st</sup>, the edges of the fields, vineyards, and groves are to be left unharvested. 2<sup>nd</sup> is that which is forgotten in fields, vineyards and groves is not to be reclaimed by the owner. 3<sup>rd</sup> are those grains and grapes that fall to the ground during reaping are to be left by the owner where they fall and not gathered. 4<sup>th</sup> is that the smaller, immature (and therefore less desirable) clusters of grapes are to be left on the vines and not later harvested by the owner.

And Moses says that there is a reward for obedience to these laws for the farmer and the field owner: the Lord will bless all his undertakings. The reason is that the farmer is being urged to give up that which is legitimately his for the sake of mercy towards another person. This admonition, of course, seems to parallel the exhortation we get in the NT that we always give our tithes and offerings in the name of the Lord as we should; that the result of following this God-principle is that the Lord will bless our lives and efforts. But remember: here in Deuteronomy this is not a case of people giving to the Temple or to the Lord. This is a case of people directly helping the poor.

Our giving to the Lord for the work of the Church is separate from helping the less fortunate among us. Both are expected of God's people, without hesitation.

Next week we'll begin chapter 25.