

Scripture Lesson Text

LEV. 19:9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.

11 Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob *him*: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy

people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

33 And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.

34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.

37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD.

Obedience Among Neighbors

Lesson Text: Leviticus 19:9-18, 33-37

Related Scriptures: *Psalm 15:1-5; Ruth 2:4-17; I Kings 21:1-14; Matthew 5:43-48; James 2:1-9*

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

GOLDEN TEXT—"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18).

Lesson Exposition

COMPASSION IN ACTION— Lev. 19:9-12

Have mercy on the poor (Lev. 19:9-10). Landowners were not to hoard every last fruit of their labors but were to leave portions of their crops unharvested so that those who had neither land nor money could benefit. Nor was the landowner to show bias as to who could reap what was left, whether the person was a Jew or a foreigner. At the close of Leviticus 19:10, the reader will note the phrase "I am the Lord your God." Beginning in the previous chapter and running through to the end of Leviticus, God reminded Israel that He is the Lord dozens of times. Eight of those times are in the fifteen verses of our lesson.

Have honesty toward others (Lev. 19:11-12). Note in these verses further elaboration of several of the Ten Commandments. God is a holy God (cf. vs. 2), and holiness and godly character are what He wants to see in His people, then and now. Compassionate living is to be motivated by the fact that He is holy and wants His people to be the same.

MERCY IN ACTION—Lev. 19:13-14

Pay your debts (Lev. 19:13). God's people owe it to their neighbors to treat them fairly, and it pays dividends in harmonious relationships. In Old Testament times, hired help usually did not have much money laid up for a rainy day. Most needed to be paid at the end of each day. God put that in writing and laid it as a duty on those who employed others.

Pay due respect (Lev. 19:14). God makes it clear elsewhere that those who lack certain abilities that most others have—like the ability to see and hear—are that way by the will of God (cf. John 9:3). To not be kind and considerate to them is to demonstrate that one does not fear or respect either them or God, their Maker.

FAIRNESS IN ACTION— Lev. 19:15-18

Fairness in judgment (Lev. 19:15-16). Neither the poverty of the poor nor the wealth of the rich should sway those who sit in judgment over them. There are times and situations when a person is to take into consideration those very things—that is, the assets

of an individual or the lack thereof. However, when making decisions before the law, justice should prevail according to the law.

Fairness also needs to extend to how one views a neighbor. A person needs to be careful not to slander another. The tongue can be a sharp weapon if used to speak against another in wrongful ways. Obviously, it is likewise wrong to do intentional physical harm to a fellow human being.

Fairness in forgiving (Lev. 19:17-18). The Lord does not want His people to allow something to come between them and others in a way that results in inner hatred. If a neighbor has done wrong, the thing to do is to approach him in a spirit of restoration. Grudges can lead to taking vengeance if one is not careful, and taking vengeance is not on the list of acceptable things to do for a child of God!

LOVE IN ACTION—Lev. 19:33-37

Love the stranger (Lev. 19:33-34). God-honoring attitudes and conduct between people were to extend beyond those of Israel's own ethnic group to those who were foreign to them. Others may have a different culture, a different language, and different skin color, but they are to be treated fairly and with respect as people created in God's image.

Love honesty (Lev. 19:35-37). How often down through time have there been those who have taken advantage of others simply because they could get away with it? Perhaps they noticed another person who did not know the language well and would not realize if he was cheated.

Sadly, man's sinful heart results in all kinds of injustices and unfair practices being foisted upon those who do not know better or who lack the power to do anything about it. Such conduct goes against both the law and the

heart of God, and that is sin.

If sin were not a reality, there would have been no need for God to lay down rules for living harmoniously with others. However, sin is present in the world, even in every heart; so laws are necessary. Not one of us can keep the law of God perfectly. But God knew that and sent one who kept the law perfectly, and in Him we find forgiveness for our inability to do the same.

To all who trust in this Redeemer, Jesus Christ, God gives another Helper, the Holy Spirit, who lives in us and guides us through the intricacies of human relationships with wisdom, power, and grace.

—Darrell W. McKay.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Whether it concerns crops or finances, those who have should learn to share with the poor (Lev. 19:9-10).
2. Honesty is incumbent upon God's people in dealing with others and in using the name of God (vss. 11-13).
3. Living in the fear of God will show itself in our treatment of others, especially those who are defenseless (vs. 14).
4. When judging, it is necessary that one be unbiased toward the one judged (vs. 15).
5. In no way should our treatment of others involve bringing physical harm to them; such conduct is offensive to God (vss. 16-18).
6. In the conduct of our daily lives, we owe all men love and ethical treatment in the sight of God (vss. 33-37).

—Darrell W. McKay.