

Lev 27

Chapter 26 ends with the promise of great prosperity for God's people. Such promises should excite "feelings" of thanksgiving. The benefits of the Lord to His people should lead to them desiring to give something to or do something for Him. This concluding chapter establishes God's framework for outward expression of the feeling of thanksgiving to the Lord.

Some opening points

Value

First, this chapter follows chapter 26 where were promised some serious results of sin and blessings for right living. Chapter 26 ends on a very high note, promising God's people tremendous blessings. We saw that those promised blessings looked forward to Christ, which gives us a very close tie with the next point.

Second, this chapter assumes that people to whom the blessings are promised in chapter 26 love God enough and are thankful enough for His goodness and benefits that they will give to Him well over and above what is required of them in His Word. And the requirement was quite high in the Old Testament — some reckon the required payment to God was as high as 30% of one's total income. But the promised blessings at the close of chapter 26 look forward to the Gospel Church — pity those professed Christians who do not "love" God enough to even give the 10% required in Malachi three.

Third, this chapter deals with things over and above the covenant responsibilities as presented previously. The laws given in this chapter were outside the laws of the covenant. These things of this chapter were not commanded, but were freely given out of love for and reverence for the God of the covenant.

Fourth, though a person, of his **own free will**, did things over and above what was required by God, he was not permitted to do the things as pleased him. He was still bound by the Law, and the Lord God requires the best, not the leftovers, v. 1. In other words, the "free-will" offering did not have to be given, but if the individual freely gave to God, the gift had to conform to God's law.

Note: MAN IS NEVER FREE FROM GOD'S LAWS. MAN IS NEVER LEFT TO DETERMINE FOR HIS OWN SELF HOW TO SERVE GOD NOR HOW TO LIVE. Moreover, even man's highest and most holy emotions must be brought into conformity to God's Law-Word. (Therefore, how much must all of man's emotions be conformed to God's Law-Word at all times.) God's Word has an instruction for everything, and those who love God are expected to follow those instructions.

Fifth, the law shows us that it is not a sin to refrain from vowing, but once a vow is made, it is sin not to follow it through. (Deut. 23:22-24; Pro. 20:25; Ecc. 5:3-5.) Neglect to keep a vow, though it was a free-will vow, had to be atoned for with a sin-offering. (Lev. 5:4ff.)

This chapter deals with vows; it deals with "giving one's word," primarily to the Lord — promising to do something above and beyond the requirements of one's profession love for God. It also applies to "giving one's word" to another person.

No doubt Solomon had these laws of the **free-will** vows in mind when he said,

1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. 2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter [any] thing before God: for God [is] in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. 3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice [is known] by multitude of words. 4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for [he hath] no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better [is it] that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it [was] an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? 7 For in the

multitude of dreams and many words [there are] also [divers] vanities: but fear thou God. 8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for [he that is] higher than the highest regardeth; and [there be] higher than they. (Ecc. 5:1-8.)

Sixth, in Leviticus 27, we are told that not all people are "created" equal before God, for God Himself places different values on individuals. We are "equal" in the sense that we are all sinners before God who can only come to Him through Christ, but "equality" ends there. Though the "worshiper" had to appear before the priest for the priest to "value" him or her, the individual's "value" was already established by God. It would have clearly been rebellion against the Lord God for the priest, the "worshiper" or for a bystander to question the "value" of any individual.

Keil introduces this chapter:

... The objects of a vow might be persons (vers. 2-8), cattle (vers. 9-13), houses (vers. 14, 15), and land (vers. 16-25), all of which might be redeemed with the exception of sacrificial animals; but not the first-born (ver. 26), nor persons and things dedicated to the Lord by the ban (vers. 28, 29), nor tithes (vers. 30-33), because all of these were to be handed over to the Lord according to the law, and therefore could not be redeemed. This followed from the very idea of the vow. For a vow was a promise made by any one to dedicate and give his own person, or a portion of his property, to the Lord for averting some danger and distress, or for bringing to his possession some desired earthly good.—Besides ordinary vowing or promising to give, there was also vowing away, or the vow of renunciation, as is evident from Num. xxx. The chapter before us treats only of ordinary vowing, and gives directions for redeeming the thing vowed, in which it is presupposed that everything vowed to the Lord would fall to His sanctuary as corban, an offering (Mark vii. 11); and therefore, that when it was redeemed, the money would also be paid to His sanctuary. (On the vow, see my *Archoeologie*, § 96; *Oehler* in *Herzog's Cycl.*) (Keil, *The Third Book of Moses*, 479, 480.)

Keil also points out that this chapter assumes the person or property will be either redeemed or purchased, according to the value fixed by the law. If neither redemption nor purchasing were to take place, what would be the use of making the vow and establishing the value of the person and/or property?

Those to whom this chapter speaks have experienced some great blessing from the Lord, or they would not be making the vow. Evidently, they were prospering financially, although the Lord did not exclude those who were not having financial prosperity, v. 8. Provision was made for the "poor" to express their love for the Lord through the vow.

Though at one time in America, one's word was his bond, we no longer realize the importance and seriousness of vows. Vows and oaths in Bible times and in Eastern cultures were extremely serious.

Vv. 2-8.

In the Home

The vowing of *persons*.

V. 2, *Children of Israel...*, *When a man...* Unlike the preceding laws that applied to all who dwelt in the land, the following laws concerning vows could only apply to those who worshiped the God of Israel. The pagans could not worship the Lord God as the Israelites were commanded to do; however, a pagan could convert to Israel's God, e.g., Rahab and Ruth. Nevertheless, though the following laws concern fulfilling one's vow to the Lord God, the general application of keeping one's word applies to everyone regardless of his or her relationship to the Lord God. In dealing with the unsaved, we should be aware that they are not bound (they will be accountable to the Lord God) by the indwelling Spirit to keep their word as are His people.

Gill, on the other hand, says that *every male* includes even Gentiles. Thus those who did not serve Israel's God could be grateful enough for Israel's God's blessings that, in their zeal, they could make a vow to give something special to the Lord God. (See 2 Ki. 5.)

singular (v. 2) means wondrous, marvelous, extraordinary, valuable or something above and beyond one's responsibilities, above one's abilities, beyond one's power to do. It can refer to something hard or difficult to do.

The *singular vow* was something set apart for the Lord. The vow was an uncommon vow — the man, through uncommon zeal for God and His service, devotes himself, his children, his cattle, his house or his property, to the Lord, *i.e.*, to the Lord's service in the Lord's house, *e.g.* chopping wood, cleaning, and other menial tasks. But it was not God's plan that His house be taken care of by people other than Levi, so rather than the thing vowed being actually given to the Lord, the like equivalent in money was given, and the funds used for the maintenance of the house, 2 Kings 12: 4, 5. (By the way, King Jehoshaphat became upset and took corrective measures when the priests misused the funds, vv. 6ff.)

If a person is really dedicated to the Lord, let them externally and visibly declare it with a vow.

Vv. 3-8, the Lord establishes the value of the individual who gave him or her self to the Lord. The valuing was not left up to individual, so one could not say, "What is the matter? Don't you think I am as valuable, or as good, as that other person?"

Obviously, under the law, all are guilty of sin, and, as such, are condemned to eternal death unless they have been converted through faith in the Redeemer. But in this chapter, we are plainly told that all persons are not equal in value before the Lord here on this earth. The Lord values the person who made the vow. Neither the priest before whom the person appeared nor the individual could establish the value of the one who vowed — God Himself established the value.

First, "The rate is the same for persons of all ranks. 'To the poor the gospel is preached.' The great and wealthy have no place here above the poor; all stand as sinners to be redeemed by the same blood, and bound by the same cords of love." (Bonar, *Leviticus*, 496.)

The opinion that the rich are to be "taxed" more than the poor and the "graduated income tax" are results of sin, *i.e.*, "income redistribution" is clearly socialism at work. Such ideas are totally ungodly.

Second, *of the male from 20-60* — he was valued the highest, for he was the fittest for labor.

[S]hekel of the sanctuary... Exodus 30:12, the Lord established the value of the money, and the priests — the religious leaders — were responsible to keep it at its proper value. (Lost value of money is fraud or theft.) The value of money, hence, is a Godly, religious function, which would explain why the wicked are so determined to keep the value under their control. It was not and is not a function of the civil government, nor of individuals, nor of banks; rather, it is a function of God, and, basically, it should probably be established by a free market — the law of supply and demand where God controls the supply. Not that the actual value was established in the sanctuary, but it was the duty of the priests to see that the money was not debased, and that it retained its full value. God requires a perfect balance and a just weight. (See Lev. 27:25.)

Strongly implied is that a major responsibility of religious leaders is to see that the monetary system stays honest. Some good messages today from every pulpit against theft would solve a lot of our debased currency problems. But the pulpits cannot preach such things because covetousness controls the people and the pulpit.

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. (1 Sam. 2:3.)

Notice that the Lord judges by real weight, not by what is apparent. (Rev. 20:12; 22:12. Bonar.)

A major role of the civil authority is to enforce honesty in society, resulting in honest money. (Cf. Rom. 13.)

Twenty years old and upward was also the age a man could go to war, Numbers 1:3.

Third, *a female*—the value given here was 60% of the male's, and was equal to the value of a servant, Exodus 21:31, and was the value of the Lord Jesus, Matthew 26:15. Remember, the Lord God, not man, is here establishing the values; therefore, no man can be accused of undervaluing the woman. Her value was not as

high, for she could not be as productive with her labor as a man. (She is only 60% as physically strong as a man, and made so by the Lord God. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:7.)

Fourth, ages 5-20 years—the female's value is only 50% of the male's.

The one under 20 is not making the vow, but his/her authority is saying, "Let the value of such a one be upon me. I will pay it." That person, accordingly, pays as determined by the Lord.

The younger persons were not capable of as much work as those over 20, so their values are less. Moreover, the value of females under 20 was a smaller percentage of the male's than it was over 20 because the younger female was capable of less work in proportion to the male.

Fifth, ages one month to 5 years—her value was again 60% of the male's.

If a man devotes his child to the Lord within this age group, the value is established by the Lord for the age. Samuel was a good example, but rather than being redeemed with money, he was actually given into the Lord's temple-service.

We will mention here that though neither the male nor female of this age group was capable of any service of value, the female was still valued at only 60% of the male's. The Lord clearly, by fixing the value of each, tells us that the male was/is worth more than the female, both before men and before Him. God created man first, then the woman; God primarily revealed/reveals Himself to and through men; God chose men to be the priest to Himself. In the family, community, society and in the church, God chose and chooses men to work and speak through.

Sixth, ages 60 and above—she is worth 66.6% of the male's value, the highest point of any age of her life. Though both the male's and female's value drops at age 60, she retains a greater proportion of her value.

Observe

1) "Women are equal to men in the work-place; therefore, they should receive equal pay." Such an idea is a lie of the devil, which is why it is being promoted so heavily in our modern, post-Christian era. The Lord places the value of a woman at 60% of a man's at the height of the "work career." Though fallen man hates the idea, the fact remains that the Lord establishes the values, not man. Thus clearly the Lord establishes the woman's value in the work force as 60% of a man's. Of course, this law assumes the man is working and just showing up on the job to collect his pay. (The union "pusher" used to tell us when I worked out of the Steam Fitters local, "Don't work yourselves out of a job." 60% of normal working capacity was more than enough for the union that was concerned that the job last as long as possible for its members. That was 30 years ago when wages were high and cost of living much lower than today, e.g., union scale over \$14.00 per hr., and a new, loaded out, top of the line Ford, Chevy or Dodge was only \$5-6,000, and a very good house below \$20,000.) Obviously, there are women who do the same evil thing — not much more than showing up to collect their pay.

The Woman's Value

Did not Paul say that the proper place for the woman is, *To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed*, Titus 2:5? The Wise Man said that in the home, the woman's value is *far above rubies*. In the home, the woman's value is so great it cannot be measured, but in the work place, she is only 60% of the man's value, e.g., the man gets \$10.00 per hour while the woman gets \$6.00 for the same job. If a woman wants to be paid what she is worth, let the Lord value her worth, and then let her go to the place where her worth cannot be measured because it is so great — in the home. Of course, such an idea of a woman in our modern, anti-Christian society is blasphemy, worthy of stoning.

2) The woman who remained where she was of the most value, in the home instead of the work-place, "retains" her value — 66.6% — more than does the man above the age of 60. She is more capable of managing the affairs of the family, and is of great use and service. She is not "wore out" by the work-place as is the man, nor did the Lord intend for her to be. According to John Gill,

... so Jarchi observes, when persons come to old age, a woman is nearly to be reckoned as a man, and quotes a proverb of theirs, an old man in a house is a broken potsherd in the house (some interpret the word, a snare or stumbling block, that is in the way); an old woman in a house is a treasure in a house, a good sign in a house {p}, of great use in the management of the affairs of the family. [{p} T. Bab. Eracin, fol. 19. 1. vid. Yalkut, par. 1. fol. 198. 1.] (*Online Bible*.)

We might note that when she stays home, she not only retains her value, but, many times, she also retains her family. We should point out that the home school movement is proving the validity of the above statements concerning the woman's value in the home vs her value in the work-place. Who can measure her value in the home?

My, how much we must retrain our thinking according to the Word of God. We either accept the precepts established by God's Law-Word, or we are pagan, anti-Christ, humanists.

3) **Jephthah's vow**, Judges 11:30. We cannot look at this chapter concerning the free-will vows without considering Jephthah. Let me offer two views:

First, Jephthah's vow should have been redeemed according to the value given here by the Lord, Judges 11:30ff. By Jephthah not keeping the vow as required by Leviticus 27, we are shown the level to which Israel had fallen away from God. He, like so many since him, knew the law concerning vows, but he forgot, overlooked, ignored, was ignorant of the fact, &c., that the spirit of the law that was/is to preserve life, not take it.

There are those who become more concerned that every point is upheld that they forget that the Lord give law for man's benefit. They kill, as Jephthah did, rather than make alive

Second, at the risk of being accused of trying to explain away difficult passages, I present Bonar's comments concerning Jephthah's vow:

Bush remarks, "The rules of mortality are the principles on which these rates are graduated." Hence, those in the prime of life are first noticed; and of these the males, being capable of most service, are rated highest. It appears to me clear that Jephthah's daughter (Jud . xi. 30) may come under this rule. Her father vowed to *dedicate to the Lord* (ver. 31) when he should return victorious—thinking, probably, of some of his domestic comforts and luxuries— "whatsoever cometh from the doors of my house." *Jephthah's* daughter, like young Samuel, was simply set apart personally to the Lord; and the clause, "*I will offer it as a burnt-offering*," should be understood, as many have rendered it, "I will offer also *to Him** a burnt-offering," as if to say, I will load His altar with many gifts of thanksgiving. Hengstenberg (*Egypt, and Books of Moses*) supports the opinion that there was an institution of holy women in the tabernacle, who, like Anna the prophetess, spent their time in prayer and fasting. At all events, Exod. xxxviii. 8, and 1 Sam. ii. 22, ought to be rendered, "The women who *ministered* at the gate of the tabernacle," the word being נָפְצָ; just as in Num. iv. 23, 35, 43, when speaking of the Levites. The Midianites, Num. xxi. 40, were women (ver. 35), and were set apart for the *Lord*.

There seems to me a mistake generally fallen into here by commentators. They suppose that these *shekels of money* were paid in order to free the offerers from the obligation of devoting *the person*. Now, surely, the whole chapter is speaking of things truly devoted to God, and cases of exchange and substitution are referred to in ver. 10, 13, 15. As for *persons devoted*, there was no substitution allowed. The mistake has arisen from supposing that this amount of money was ransom-money; whereas it was *an addition* to the offering of the person, not a *substitution*. If a person is really to be dedicated to the Lord, then let him give this external, visible declaration of it. Let him bring these shekels of money, according to his age, in token of his having given up the world and devoted himself to God. Hence, *Jephthah's* daughter could not be redeemed; she is *the Lord's*, and there is no alienation of His property.

* Several critics have pointed out similar instances of the suffix so used. Thus, Judg. I. 15, נתתני, "Thou hast given *to me*." Isa. xlii. 16. Jer. xx. 7; Ezek. xxix. 3; Micah v. 4. The principle laid down in ver; 11, would of itself be sufficient to prevent the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. In Romaine's works, there is a view given of the matter. substantially [sic] the same as above. Charles Wesley, in a hymn on Judg. xi, 31, sings:

"His hands he washed not in her blood;
But gave his child, his hope, to God—

Hope of a long-continued line,
Hope of the Promised Seed divine."

In other words, "*Jephthah's* daughter, like young Samuel, was simply set apart personally to the Lord." She was not killed. The above development by Hengstenberg tells us that fathers in the Old Testament had tremendous authority over their children, for they could "give" them permanently into the service of the Lord. We do see that confirmed in the situation with Samuel. Notwithstanding, the Lord later called Samuel to Himself and His service. One wonders what would have been the situation with Samuel if the Lord had not called him? But we cannot develop nor dwell on "What ifs."

Counting the Cost

Bonar's closing summery for this section is far too good to overlook:

What do we learn from this ? Let us remember how it is written that the price of a slave, gored to death, is, in Exod. xxi. 32, reckoned at thirty shekels; and that, in Zech. x. 12, the same price is weighed for the prophet in his typical character; and then in Matt. xxvi. 15, paid for Jesus. If such was the manner of *making over* a slave to another, have we not here the manner of making over persons to *the Lord* ? But the Lord gives no price for them. True; because the Lord is not the gainer. **It is a privilege to be taken into the Lord's service; and the man is therefore represented here as buying his admission into the Lord's service. It is all to shew how precious is the Lord's service !** Men often sacrifice a large sum in order to get a servant to do their work; but lo ! it is reversed here. **We might well sacrifice all we have in order to be permitted to serve the Lord.**

Oh, it is no common blessedness to be allowed to stand in Thy presence and worship Thee, Lord God Almighty! (Emp. added. Bonar, *Leviticus*, 497, 498.)

"Pay and sacrifice to serve the Lord?" "Lower my standard of living to serve God?" How unheard of in our day of covetousness and materialism! How contrary to the fallen nature to actually pay the Lord God for the privilege of serving Him. Is it any wonder that the Old Testament laws that apply to every day life are hated by the world, the flesh and the Devil? These laws mean sacrifice to serve God. The flesh tells us that the Lord should pay us to serve Him: "After all, am I not doing Him a service?" (Cf. 2 Sam. 24:24; 1 Chron. 21:24; Lk. 14:28.)

Thus those who enter into the "ministry" because of what might be in it for themselves or because it pays as much or better than something else they could do are in rebellion against the Lord God: "Full time" service to the Lord God is to cost the server. Here we see that God does not pay an individual to work for Him; the individual pays, sacrifices, for the privilege of serving for the Lord. Remember, this was a free-will offering — the individual was not under any command to serve the Lord in this manner. He new the cost before he made the vow.

We should keep in mind that the Levites were born into the service of the Lord, and the other tribes were commanded to tithe to the Levites, which, if Israel obeyed the command, made Levi a very wealthy tribe. How much did Israel remain faithful to that command, and where did it leave Levi when Israel disobeyed? The vows mentioned in this chapter were over and above what was required of the individuals by the Command-Word of God.

The Christian religion of Scripture costs the "worshiper" to serve his God. It is evident that Christ refereed to this law in Luke 14:

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a

great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Vv. 25-33. See also, Hag. chp. 1.)

According to our Lord's words, a costless religion is not the Christian religion.

We must not overlook the grace of God at work in the heart of the "worshiper:" That grace is plainly evident in both the Old and New Testaments, *e.g.*, Exodus 36/Philippians 2:13. When the Lord places the desire to serve Him in the heart of an individual, the cost involved to the individual is one of the least of his considerations.

The Poor

V. 8, the poor man who did not have the money to give as valued upon him by the preceding law... He was not prohibited from expressing his gratitude to the Lord in the *free-will* vow: The poor man appears before the priest with his desire to offer himself, and he makes his financial inability known. The priest then values the man, keeping in mind the general rules just given in vv. 3-7. Gill's comments:

according to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him; he was to examine into his circumstances, and as they appeared to him he was to put a value on him, which was to be paid, but not less than, a shekel; for if he could not pay that, it was to remain as a debt until he could {q}; and it was the ability of him that made the vow that was to be inquired into, and according to which the estimation was to be made, and not of him that was vowed: so it is said in the Misnah,

"ability is regarded in the vower, and years in the vowed, and estimations in the estimated, and according to the tith of the estimation: ability in the vower, how? a poor man that estimates a rich man, pays the value of a poor man; and a rich man that estimates a poor man, pays the value of a rich man: if he is poor and afterwards becomes rich, or rich and afterwards poor, he pays the price of a rich man {r};"

but the sense which Jarchi gives is, that a priest in such a case was to judge according to what a man has, and so order him to pay, but was to leave him so as he might live, a bed and bolster, and working tools, and if he had an ass he might leave him that.

According to his ability... The Lord does not expect anything from His people above their ability. Now, the Lord may provide ***ability*** over and above what one normally has, and if so, then the Lord expects that ***ability*** to be properly used for His glory.

Paul's statement is built upon "*According to his ability*":

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. (2 Cor. 8:11, 12.)

And thus every person will be held accountable for what he has, not for what he has not.

Vv. 9-34

The rest of the chapter is tailored for a farming community where wealth was measured in the amount of livestock one possessed. Though the law here deals with animals, a timeless principle concerning vows made when the emotions are high is set in motion. I remember a man gave his used car to an associate pastor of the church in Md. That would be quite similar to an Israelite giving an animal or a field to the Lord.

The theme of the rest of the chapter could be summed up thusly:

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth

not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved. (Ps. 15.)

The person "swore" to *his own hurt*. He freely made a vow, and later realizes he probably should not have done so. He can change his vow, but it will cost him. We are told very clearly here that one must consider well what he promises, especially to the Lord, before he makes any commitment, for he cannot change his mind without it costing him.

Vv. 9-13

Beasts are given values. These animals were devoted to the Lord by their owners out of gratitude to the Lord. Notice that this was the only time an unclean, bad, animal could be given to the Lord. At all other times, the animal had to be perfect. Thus, a free-will offering does not necessarily have to be the very best. However, one would think that if the person is "in love with the Lord" enough to make this offering, the person would desire that the offering be the best that he could do in whatever circumstances he found himself.

The vow could set apart for the Lord both clean and unclean animals. However, if the animal was a clean animal, it could not be sold by the priest: it had to be sacrificed to the Lord. If the owner, upon second thoughts, tried to substitute another clean animal for the one he vowed, then both became holy, and both had to be sacrificed. In other words, if the owner had a change of heart concerning the clean animal he vowed and sought to trade it out with another, then the Lord required both be given to Him, v. 10.

If the animal was not fit for sacrifice, it was sold, and the funds used for the Lord's house. Once the animal was given, it could not be exchanged good for bad, nor bad for good. And only the unclean animal could be bought back by the giver, and then he had to add a *fifth part* to its value as established by the priest, v. 13.

The priest could sell the *unclean beast* for market value to anyone interested, but not to the giver without the fifth part added — maybe the former owner realized the value of what he gave, and he gave to impress people. The 20% would keep him from giving it wrongly in the first place. Notice that animals are specifically mentioned, so birds, wood, frankincense, vessels, &c., had no redemption as was permitted for animals.

These offerings were *free-will* offerings, and made under great emotional "pressure" of love and gratefulness to the Lord. The offerer gave the best he had when his emotions were high, and when the emotion wore off, the giver could not change his mind. Maybe he awakens out of his emotional height and realizes he gave something he did not intend to give.

The Lord would have us increase in gratitude, never decline; He would teach us to regret nothing that we give to God, but count it all joy. Nay, He teaches us that the more than ordinary excited feelings of our hearts at particular seasons are, after all, the most just and fit for the benefits rendered. Our highest feelings are never wrong in their intensity, when God is the object; it is our cooler and lower moods, our more calculating and grudging frames. (Bonar, *Leviticus*, 499.)

Thus the Lord teaches us not to make rash promises to Him, and never regret what we have given to Him. However, the man sleeps on it, and his excited feelings turn to grief — a grudging feeling that seeks to keep the item. He can indeed retain what he "gave," but there must be a *fifth part* added to its value, and the value is set by the priest.

Fifth Part

Fifth part is an interesting value: the *fifth part* was the value added to something when restitution had to be made. In Leviticus 6:1-7, the person swore falsely, seeking to steal that value from his neighbour, concerning an item. When the truth was found out, the person had to make restitution of the value of the "stolen" item that he sought to keep with his false oath, plus a *fifth part*.

A *fifth part* was always added to that value of anything stolen when the thief had to make restitution. (See also, Lev. 22:14; Num. 5:7.)

Thus the *fifth part* mentioned here in Leviticus 27 implies that once the vow is made, the item belongs to God. Any attempt to keep that item is theft, and the only way that item can be kept is by making restitution and adding the *fifth part*.

Vv. 14-21

This section covers personal property, house, land, &. This law was, no doubt, was the one used to avoid one's responsibility, as condemned by the Lord, Mark 7:11.

Though we might consider giving real property to the church while one is living as a little beyond our imagination, it was, obviously, a very real possibility, or the law would not have been needed. This law was given before the people came into the land. Thus the laws that pertain to real property apply to every possession as given to the Lord, except men and animals which were covered previously.

The Lord accomplished something very special for the individual, and his heart overflows with gratitude. Under this impulse of gratitude, he devotes his house or land to the Lord, to be used for the Lord's service. The real property could then be sold, and the funds used for the Lord's house and for the cause of the Lord.

V. 16, a piece of real property, a field, given to the Lord was valued according to the amount of seed required to sow it: If the field required *an homer of barley seed* to sow it, the field was valued at *fifty shekels of silver*. (An omar was about 225 lbs, so 50 *shekels* was probably the value of the field over 50 year jubilee period. See Keil.) Thus the worshiper could easily see what his vow would cost. (We should keep in mind that there was no property tax on the land; therefore, there was no set expense against the land that had to be met. It is not uncommon even today with the terrible property taxes for people to dedicate a piece of land for use to raise money: A small, local town, Wingate, has a "sweet corn festival" every year. The corn is raised by a local farmer who dedicated a parcel of ground for that purpose. So it would not have been at all uncommon for a person to dedicated a field for use to help meet the expenses of the Lord's work in Canaan.)

Notice that in the case of people, vv. 2-9, and in the cases of land, vv. 16-25, the Lord God Himself established the value, and that value was simply enforced by the priest. However, for *beasts*, the market established the value.

V. 17, in order to keep the reality of the field's value, so one could not make it seem greater than it really was, the priest confirmed the value in terms of the jubilee. If the emotions of the former owner cooled, he could repurchase the field if he added *the fifth part* to the value of the field, according to the jubilee, v. 19. Bonar observes:

But, as in a former case, gratitude might cool, after the moment (ver. 19); and hence permission is given to redeem the field under the penalty of paying one-fifth, as in the trespass-offering, to shew that the person has sinned in thus retracting. His highest feelings were right; this abatement is sinful. Just as running the race at full speed is the proper state of one seeking the prize; anything that sinks below full speed is a fault (1 Cor. ix. 24.) (Bonar, *Leviticus*, 502.)

It is proper for the runner to run the race at full speed (high feelings of gratitude for the Lord's goodness, causing one to *vow*); anything less than full speed (less than the high feelings of gratitude that serves the Lord with everything one has) is a fault — *sin*.

V. 18, the fifty shekels was the value from one jubilee to the next. If the field was given between the jubilees, then the value was half of the 50 shekels. The field was valued at one shekel per year. The gift could not be undervalued, v. 18. The gift could be large, given just after the jubilee, or small, given just before the jubilee. To the Lord, the widow's mite is just as important as Solomon's gifts. He always values on the individual level, according to the talents He has given each person.

V. 19, the price as established by the priest remained firm. The man who "sanctified" the field for holy use — repair and/or maintenance of the tabernacle, support of the Lord's work — could purchase, redeem, the field back for the assessed value plus a *fifth part*. Upon redemption, the field was again his as though he had never sanctified it.

Lev 27, 10

Vv. 20, 21:

In case he did not redeem it, however, namely, before the commencement of the next year of jubilee, or sold it to another man, *i.e.* to a man not belonging to his family, he could no longer redeem it; but on its going out, *i.e.* becoming free in the year of jubilee (see chap. xxv. 28), it was to be holy to the Lord, like a field under the ban (see ver. 28), and to fall to the priests as their property. (Keil.)

The field could be bought by another person or redeemed by the giver for the *fifth part* increase. But if it was not redeemed by the next jubilee, it went to the priest and not back to the original owner, Leviticus 27:28, Numbers 18:14.

Do Not Turn Back

If left unredeemed, according to his vow, it shall be the Lord's for ever. If the unredeemed field be sold by the priest to another, the original possessor cannot at a future time claim any right to redeem it. He must not have liberty to reverse the acts and feelings of former years. **What we do for the Lord must be done in the foresight of all the consequences;** and it well befits us to give up anything of ours to the Lord for ever. Our dealings with God are dealings for eternity. There should be no temporising on our part in His matters. He gives "*eternal redemption*," "*everlasting consolation*." (Emp added. Bonar, *Leviticus*, 503.)

First, we cannot look back. I realize the following is out of its context, but it certainly applies:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Php. 3:13, 14.)

One of the worse enemies we have in our Christian life is our memory. Until that enemy is conquered, it will try to get us to look back and second guess past decisions; it will try to get us to concentrate on our past failures, or even on our past successes. It must be conquered if we will move ahead for the Lord.

Future Oriented

Second, every decision must be made with the future in mind. Every aspect of the future effects of a decision must be seriously considered. Though the Lord God does not forbid "emotional" decisions, decisions made in the "heat of the moment," He deals with them with such strictness that the worshiper had better consider what he is doing. The Lord God requires that they be fulfilled — they stand forever. Yes, those decisions could be confessed as sin and corrected, but they could not be corrected without penalty, *the fifth part* had to be added to the value, v. 19.

There was no law requiring the vow:

When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth. (Deut. 23:21-23.)

Solomon no doubt had this law in mind when he said,

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? (Ecc. 5:4-6.)

I personally could not count the number of folks who have committed something, even themselves, to the Lord, and when the emotions wore off, they completely ignored their vow as though it never took place.

Third, there was a time limit for correcting the mistake. If it went past the jubilee, there was no turning back —

the results of the decision had to be lived with. (Watch the speakers who bring in the money: they clearly build on the emotions, getting folks to commit themselves in the heat of the moment. **IF** the speaker is of the Lord, the worshiper's decision will stand before God.)

The law of Leviticus 27 sounds a lot like the woman's vow before God. Her father or husband could break her vow, but he only had a certain length of time to so. (Num. 30:3-16.) After that time, it stood.

The decision stands

Vv. 22-24.

This section deals with a field not belonging to the "worshiper." I was a field he purchased from a fellow Israelite which would return to the original owner. The priest established the value, based upon the amount of seed needed to sow the field and the time remaining to the jubilee. The field could be sold and the money then used for the Lord's work, for the "worshiper" only had the use of the field until the next jubilee. At that time, it went back to the original owner.

We must give the Lord what is our own; not what is borrowed. Willing self-denial is taught us by such acts; we give the Lord something that we feel the value of, and the loss of which would grieve us were not the Lord to be the receiver. Whatever goes to the Lord is given to us. (Bonar)

The "worshiper" must feel the cost of the his gift to the Lord. (2 Sam. 24:24.)

V. 25, again the value of the money was a religious function.
Added the short bit above to the Think Again mailing.

Vv. 26-29

The first section dealt with individuals, the second with beasts, the third with houses, the fourth with real property, a field, the fifth, with beasts, and finally, the last, with the tenth, or the tithe.

The beasts of the second section dealt with the *free-will* offering, but this section of *beasts* deals with the command that the first born of all beasts belongs to the Lord. These *beasts* are devoted to the Lord at birth by His command regardless of what the individual wants to do about the matter; therefore, the owners cannot offer the *firstlings* to the Lord as *free-will* offerings: They were already devoted to the Lord—they already belonged to Him, so they were not the "owner's" to dedicate. Nor can the *firstling* of clean beasts be redeemed — they belong to the Lord.

TSK makes a good point here:

[T]he firstling. Heb. first born, etc. As these firstlings were the Lord's before, it would have been a solemn mockery to pretend to make them a matter of a singular vow; for they were already appointed, if clean, to be sacrificed.

Observe:

First, **individual feelings...** The only point at which the feelings of the individual enters into his giving to the Lord is in the *free-will* offering. All the rest of the "offerings" are required regardless of how he feels about it.

Second, one cannot make double use of one thing. (Bonar, p 505.) What already belongs to the Lord cannot be "vowed" to Him. In other words, the tithe belongs to the Lord, so one cannot vow to tithe. It is theft not to tithe.

Vv. 27, 28, the *firstlings* of unclean beasts could be redeemed by the "worshiper," but only with the *fifth part* added to it. If the "worshiper" did not redeem it, the beast was sold, and the income dedicated for the Lord's use. The priest established the value of the unclean beast, preventing the owner from cheating on its value.

of all that he hath, [both] of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed;

but must be put to the use for which it was devoted. This must be understood of such as were his own, and he had a right to dispose of; which were in his own power, as Aben Ezra interprets the phrase, "of all that he hath": if of men, they must be such as were his slaves, which he had a despotic power over; such as he could sell, or give to another, or leave to his children for a perpetual inheritance, #Le 25:46; and could dispose of as he pleased, and so devote to the service of the priests: thus Jarchi interprets it of menservants and maidservants, Canaanitish ones; and if of beasts, such as were his own property, and not another's; and if of fields, such as were his possession by inheritance. Some Jewish writers, as Abendana, from the phrase, "of all that he hath", gather, that a man might devote only a part of what he had, and not the whole; and so it is said in the Misnah,

"a man may devote of his flock and of his herd, of his servants and maidens Canaanites, and of the field of his possession; but if he devote all of them, they are not devoted {k},"

the vow is null and void; and so one of the commentators {l} upon it says, he may devote some movable things, but not all; some of his Canaanitish servants and maidens, but not all; some part of the field of his possession, but not the whole: but a man's children, and Hebrew servants, and purchased fields, according to the Jewish canon, might not be devoted;

"if anyone devotes his son or his daughter, his servant or his handmaid, that are Hebrews, or the field of his purchase, they are not devoted (or to be reckoned so), for no man devotes (or ought to devote) what is not his own {m}."

A commentator {n} excepts his daughter, and says, he may devote his daughter, because he may sell her while a minor, but not an adult virgin; see #Ex 21:7; (Gill, Online Bible.)

V. 29, *devoted... put to death*. Speaks of those who are under the death penalty of the law: They cannot be redeemed, e.g. the Canaanites, the murderer, adulterer, &c. However, man could not devote his fellow man to the "ban" — only the Lord could do that, e.g., Deuteronomy 13:13ff. Thus the death was a manifestation of God's holy righteousness and judgement.

which shall be devoted. That is, either that every person devoted to the service of God shall not be redeemed, but die in that devoted state, or, that such as were devoted to death by appointment and law of God, as the Canaanites were, shall be put to death. (TSK, Online Bible.)

Vv. 30-33

The previous section pointed that what was already claimed by the Lord could not be "devoted" to the Lord: It was already His, so it could not be regiven to Him. Now, in this sixth and final section, the Lord points out something that already belongs to Him, the tenth of all increase, the tithe.

Though the tithe was given on the seed, it was given on the increase of the seed, not on what was sown. The increase included the increase in the fruit harvest. The tithe was given in tangible form, and if a man wished to get back what had been given to the Lord, he had to add 20%. The eatable tithes were property of the Levites, and a tenth of the Levites' portion went to the priests.

We will not go into the many tithes required of God's people as a rural community, but we will say that the total tithe was quite a bit above 10%; actually, it was close to 20% [18%, some say] of the total increase that was required by the Lord:

Among the Israelites, there were several kinds of tithe, and yet all were cheerfully paid; the tenth for the Lord, paid to the Levites (Num. xviii. 21), and the next tenth, consecrated and feasted on at Jerusalem, or given away to the poor (Deut. xii. 5, and xxviii. 29). (Bonar)

The tithe of the seed or of the fruit could be bought back by the "worshiper" with the added *fifth part*.

The Lord is a jealous God, and marks anything that might be a retraction, on the man's part, of what was due to the Lord. (Bonar.)

However, the right of purchasing back the tithe with the value plus *the fifth part* did not apply to the animals in the flocks and herds.

V. 32, at least once a year, all the new clean cattle from the previous year were passed through a narrow passage and every tenth beast marked, whether male or female, good or bad. That marked one was *holy unto the Lord*, and was to be killed before the Lord, and the blood and fat offered on the altar. The flesh was eaten by the owners.

V. 33, if the owner tried to spare the marked beast by trading one for another, then both became holy. The owner probably went ahead with the change, but he then became doubly guilty before the Lord.

It should be noted that the Lord's portion is not based upon appearance; rather, the Lord's due is based upon His Law-Word. This law teaches us strict and holy disregard of by-ends and selfish interests. (Bonar.)

And thus this book—this Pictorial Gospel of the Old Testament—ends with stating God's claims on us, and His expectation of our service and willing devotedness. As the first believers at Pentecost, rejoicing in pardon and the love of God, counted nothing dear to them, nor said that ought they possessed was their own, so ought we to live. We must sit loose from earth; and true love to our Redeemer will set us loose. This giving up of our possessions, at God's call, teaches us to live a pilgrim life, and that is an Abrahamic life—nay, it is the life of faith, in opposition to sight.

The whole of this concluding chapter has been leading us to the idea of giving to the Lord all we have. It has been making us familiar with the idea, and by example inculcating the practice of unreserved devotedness. God should be all in all to us; He is [Hebrew word], "God all-sufficient." Let us part even with common, lawful comforts, and try if He alone be not better than all. Like the child with the stalk of grapes, who picked one grape after another from the cluster, and held it out to her father, till, as affection waxed warm and self faded, she gaily flung the whole into her father's bosom, and smiled in his face with triumphant delight; so let us do, until, loosened from every comfort, and independent of the help of broken cisterns, we can say, "I am not my own! Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? and there is none upon earth whom I desire besides. Thou art to me, as Thou wert to David at the gates of death— 'all my salvation and all my desire.'" After so much love on God's part to us, displayed in rich variety of type and shadow, shall we count any sacrifice hard ? ...

Ver. 34. *These are the commandments, which the lord commanded Moses, for the children of Israel in mount Sinai.*

At or near Sinai. **The sultry heat of that day when the fiery law was given prepared the people to welcome these showers of grace that soon after fell. Lord, make us enjoy these showers, even if there be need of such a day of heat and fear ere it come.** Let every drop from these blessed clouds wet the soil of our hearts. Thou who art known in Israel as the giver of plenteous showers to refresh Thy weary heritage, cause these that fell around Sinai, as we have seen in all this book—these that showed so much of the variety of Thy love—these that brought such tidings of Thy Son—oh, cause these to water our weary, parched souls, until we see Him who is "Rivers of Water." (Emp added. Bonar, *Leviticus*, 508, 509.)

Bonar makes a good point: **The sultry heat... prepared the people to welcome the showers of grace.**

The statement of Bonar strikes a cord. The dryness of the church over the past many years should make one long for showers of blessings upon the church.