

October 2019

Frank W. Nelte

BLUEPRINT FOR A GODLY SOCIETY

In Egypt the Israelites had grown into a nation. And then the Egyptians had put the Israelites into slavery. In the days of Moses, God then brought Israel out of Egypt and out of slavery. God then made what we today call "the old covenant" with Israel, whereby the Israelites became God's people.

You've heard about the old covenant. But do you understand **the purpose** for which God made this covenant? **What** was that covenant supposed to achieve? If things had gone as God intended when He made this covenant with Israel, what would have been the end result? Do you know?

God referred to this old covenant with Israel as **a marriage contract**. A marriage is supposed to produce children. So when God said about Israel "I am married to you" (see Jeremiah 3:14), God meant that God's dealings with Israel should have resulted in **producing 144,000 children for God**. And when God centuries later "divorced Israel" (see Isaiah 50:1), that was because **Israel was not producing the children God expected** Israel to produce. Instead of producing children for God, Israel had gone out and committed adultery with the pagan gods of the nations around them. This adulterous behavior destroyed their potential for being the exclusive providers for people needed by God for the first resurrection.

[**Comment:** I use 144,000 as a round number. The exact number is 144,000 less the people from before the time of making the covenant in the days of Moses, and who will be in the first resurrection. The only names before Moses that are revealed as servants of God are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Job (and quite likely also Joseph?). There may perhaps have been a few more individuals here or there who before the time of Abraham served God, but they are not clearly identified for us. Moses himself was a part of making that old covenant. So when making the old covenant, God was still looking for 144,000 - (perhaps 10 or even 20?) = approximately 143,990 more individuals for the first resurrection. I refer to this still needed group in round numbers as 144,000. But technically it is a handful less.]

When God made the old covenant with Israel, it was God's intention that Israel would become God's model nation, an example to the rest of the world. Israelite society should have been structured according to the laws of God. But exactly what would an Old Testament society living according to God's laws, as spelled out in the old covenant, have looked like?

This raises the question:

Where in the Bible would you look to find a description of the kind of society that God intended to raise up with the Israelites, the kind of society that should have produced 144,000 people for the first resurrection?

The answer is: in the Book of Leviticus. So let's start with a general overview of the whole Book of Leviticus. Then we'll take a closer look at the specific chapter that reveals the kind of society God had in mind for Israel.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Here is a general overview, chapter by chapter.

CHAPTERS 1-7 = The sacrifices are presented as a way for sinful human beings to re-establish contact with God.

CHAPTER 8 = The consecration of the priesthood.

CHAPTER 9 = The inauguration of the priesthood.

CHAPTER 10 = The disciplining of the priesthood.

Chapters 11-15 = Holiness is required of God's people, with a focus on:

CHAPTER 11 = Food laws.

CHAPTER 12 = Childbirth laws.

CHAPTERS 13-14 = Dealing with contagious diseases.

CHAPTER 15 = Dealing with personal defilement, including venereal diseases.

CHAPTER 16 = The Day of Atonement.

CHAPTER 17 = Conclusion of the discussion about sacrifices.

CHAPTER 18 = Specific sexual restrictions and transgressions.

CHAPTER 19 = The laws for establishing a godly society.

CHAPTER 20 = Penalties for transgressions spelled out.

CHAPTERS 21-22 = Laws that applied to the priests.

CHAPTER 23 = All the weekly and annual occasions (weekly Sabbath & Feasts & Holy Days & Passover) that are to be observed by all of God's people.

CHAPTER 24 = Priestly duties.

CHAPTER 25 = The Jubilee year, to start on the Day of Atonement.

CHAPTER 26 = Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

CHAPTER 27 = The matter of redeeming (firstborn, voluntary vows, etc.).

That's the overall context for the whole Book of Leviticus. It is helpful to have a grasp of this overall context, because that places the laws for establishing a godly society into a greater overall context. So now let's take a close look at chapter 19.

This is the chapter that presents **the blueprint for a society** that lives by the laws of God, not from a millennial perspective when Jesus Christ will be ruling, but from the perspective of living **in this present age**, the age before the second coming of Jesus Christ, the age that must produce 144,000 men and women for the first resurrection.

The society God had in mind was not going to be the same as will be the society during the millennium, though it was intended to be based on the same principles. But one major difference between the society intended by the old covenant and the millennial society was this: in the model society God had in mind for Israel, **people would retain the ability to reject God's laws**, and to live contrary to the intent of God's laws, if they chose to do so. And that is in fact exactly what Israel did ... they rejected God's laws.

In the society God proposed for Israel submission to God's laws would not be enforced "with a rod of iron" (see Revelation 2:27; Revelation 12:5; etc.), as will be the case during the millennium, if and when that may become necessary. **That millennial degree of control over people's actions was not built into the old covenant.**

Let's now look at the laws and the instructions God gave Israel for the purpose of establishing a model nation, one that should have been an example to all other nations on earth.

LEVITICUS 19

Verses 1-2 = You, Israel, are to be a model society, an example to the rest of humanity. You are to show the rest of the world what living by the laws of God looks like in practical living terms. To be "holy" refers to being set apart from the rest of humanity. It refers to becoming an example nation.

It was **God's intention** that the people of Israel were going to be the only people from amongst whom God would call all the people still needed to provide 144,000 for the first resurrection. **This was the main purpose for God "marrying" Israel**, the main purpose for which God had set the people of Israel apart from all other nations ... to provide those who will become "the bride" that Jesus Christ will "marry" at His second coming. These first two verses are an expression of intent.

So what was going to be **the foundation** for such a godly society?

HONOR YOUR PARENTS! This must always be the very foundation for any and every godly society. Verse 3 says:

You shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my Sabbaths: I *am* the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:3)

While there may well be occasional exceptions to this (e.g. perhaps Jonathan showing or not showing respect for his father King Saul, who had by then become demon possessed, etc.), as a general rule **it is hard to have the right respect for God if we do not have the right kind of respect for our parents.** After all, the 5th commandment is devoted to this subject.

In this context "fear" means "be afraid of disobeying", afraid of challenging parental authority. In the next chapter, but still in this same context, the penalty for disregarding this command is spelled out.

For every one that curses his father or his mother **shall be surely put to death**: he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood *shall be* upon him. (Leviticus 20:9)

This is a severe penalty, death, for transgressing this commandment, because without this foundation of respect for parents the whole society will break down, **as it has in our world today.** Without this foundation of respect for parents it will be difficult, if not impossible, to implement all of God's laws and God's whole way of life across an entire society.

In verse 3 we see honoring our parents and keeping God's Sabbaths tied together in the same sentence, because they should go together.

On the foundation of respecting our parents we can then build a right relationship with God. Yes, respect for God comes first in priority, ahead of respect for our parents. But **in time sequence** the relationship with our parents comes first. We develop a relationship with our parents long before we are even capable of developing a relationship with God. And then a right response to our parents developed at a very young age lays the foundation for later establishing a right relationship with God.

The vital importance God places on this relationship with our parents is also seen from God making this relationship with our parents **one condition for granting us long lives** ("... that your days may be long upon the land which the Eternal your God gives you", Exodus 20:12).

A genuine respect for, and willing submission to our parents goes a long way towards avoiding and then eliminating a whole range of problems that are so prevalent in our world today ... like teenage delinquency, teenage drug abuse and teenage pregnancies, extreme selfishness in young people and a lack of self-control, etc. Instead of a genuine respect for parents, our age is characterized by Isaiah 3:12. In our world today children and young people call the shots, and they decide trends and fashions. And the older generation is expected to take a back seat.

On the other hand, a real respect for parents is a powerful antidote to the negative impact of peer pressure, the desperate craving for the approval of one's peers, especially so in our age of social media on the internet.

Parents exert a powerful influence on us from the day we are born. And when we set our minds to always respond positively to the teaching, guidance, direction and instructions our parents provide, then we are well prepared to live our lives in agreement with all of God's laws ("... and keep My Sabbaths"). In the statement "keep My Sabbaths", the Sabbath commandment really represents obedience to all of God's laws.

And the Sabbath in turn stands for **peace!** Sabbath-keeping represents a peaceful society. Without Sabbath-keeping there is no real peace. Sabbath-keeping requires us to cease from all our human pursuits (see Isaiah 58:13-14), so that we can have real peace. **It is our human pursuits that take peace away from us.**

With Leviticus 19:3 having laid out the foundation for a godly society (i.e. respect for parents and submission to the laws of God), the following verses then spell out some of the finer details. Let's look at them.

Turn you not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods: I *am* the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:4)

No other religions are accepted. In a godly society nothing can be placed ahead of submission to the true God. There can never be any form of a competing deity. For example, in our age today many people have made the acquisition of money their idol ... they are willing to do whatever it takes to get more money. The "I'm just doing my job" attitude, in order to earn money, becomes the guiding factor in many people's lives.

This specific command also eliminates all items to which people may attach some religious significance: religious paintings and sculptures, religious jewelry, crosses, charms, totem poles, religious figurines, temples, shrines, fat buddhas, etc.

None of these things were to be found in Israel. Where they did exist in Israel, such religious objects needed to be destroyed. All such religious objects in some way imply contact with a "god". But those things are not accepted by God. Instead of such religious objects, God then laid out how the people should seek contact with God.

And if you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, **you shall offer it at your own will.** It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the morrow: and if ought remain until the third day, it shall be burnt in the fire. And if it be eaten at all on the third day, it *is* abominable; it shall not be accepted. Therefore *every one* that eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed thing of the LORD: and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (Leviticus 19:5-8)

Here God laid out a way for people to bring voluntary offerings, **to establish and maintain contact with God.** With these offerings the key was to always do it God's way, to always follow God's instructions exactly. This was a part of the sacrificial system which God had just laid out in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. The whole sacrificial system was to be a training program, like a schoolmaster, to teach and to lead Israel into an obedient and responsive relationship with God (see Galatians 3:24).

So a godly society starts with a respectful attitude towards parents. On that attitude is built obedience to God's laws (represented by keeping God's Sabbaths), with the opportunity to then establish contact with God (represented by the sacrificial system).

With that foundation we get into the specifics for daily life, and for interactions with other people.

OUR DAILY NEEDS

When Jesus Christ taught us to ask God for "our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11), Christ used "bread" to represent **all our daily needs.** The implication in Jesus Christ's statement is that when we are in a right relationship with God, then **God will provide** all our daily needs. And this matter of God providing is the first specific point that is then addressed in Leviticus 19.

And when you reap the harvest of your land, **you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field,** neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them **for the poor** and stranger: I *am* the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

God provides the harvest. And it is God's intention that there be enough food for everybody, not just for the owners of the fields. The principle involved here is: **beware of greed!** God's instruction is the opposite to forcing a higher yield per acre, in order to make more money.

In a spiritual application **it is up to us** to work hard in order to produce "a hundredfold" increase from the seed which God has sown in our minds (see Matthew 13:23). But with literal physical crops in the fields **it is up to God** to give the hundredfold increase. God is in control over the quantities of produce our fields will produce.

And so God's instruction is:

I have blessed you with more food supplies than you will need. Therefore I want you to make some provision for others who don't have enough to eat. That is My way of providing for the poor.

With God's system **the poor are not given a handout!** They are not given money! Rather, the poor are

given the opportunity to obtain enough food, if they are willing to work for it. The poor themselves had to go out into the fields and then reap or gather the produce that had been left for them ... it was not delivered to their doorstep.

When Ruth went into the fields of Boaz, she worked hard from morning till evening to first glean and then to beat out what she had gleaned (see Ruth 2:17). That was not a handout! It was hard work. Paul's principle "if any would not work, neither should he eat" (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10) also applies to the poor. They must be willing to work, even for the necessities that others may provide for them.

God's way of providing for the poor eliminates all of today's "charities"! **In God's society there is no place for "charities"**, apart from the third tithe provision for those who were needy, which provision was introduced later, in the Book of Deuteronomy (although that is hardly comparable to our modern system of "charities"). In our present world, ever since Adam's and Eve's rejection of God's rule, God's sentence has been "**in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread ...**" (Genesis 3:19).

Now in our modern world in the great majority of cases we can't really go out into someone's field and start gleaning the corners of those fields. Most people in our western world live in urban areas. So in our circumstances the principle is: when needy people are given food and housing, then those needy people need to be willing to work in return for what has been given to them.

For example: if we lose our jobs or sources of income, and end up in dire straits, and some generous person offers us free food and free accommodation at their home, to tide us over until we find new employment and new housing, then **at the very least** we should be expected to contribute by in some way working for our generous hosts. Examples would include: mowing their yard, weeding their gardens, fixing leaking water faucets, doing minor painting around their homes, running errands for them, taking care of their dogs and cats, using our specific expertise to save them money, etc.

That is the principle of letting the poor glean in the fields of other people, in order to have some food to eat. The point is that the poor still have to do something in order to have food. And they are **not given any money** to spend as they may want to spend it.

So provided **the poor** are willing to contribute by being willing to work, their essential needs **are provided for**, not by some centralized government programs, but on the individual level within their own communities. And if they are not willing to work, assuming they are physically able to do so, then the Apostle Paul's instruction "if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10, Young's Literal Translation) applies.

A SOCIETY WITHOUT STEALING AND WITHOUT LYING

Let's look at the next instruction.

You shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. (Leviticus 19:11)

In a godly society there is no need for locks, because nobody will ever steal anything from anyone else. **People will ask** for the things they would like to have, the principle being "ask, and it shall be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). People will also be very willing to work for the things they want, and other people will be happy to help them with such tasks (e.g. building a house).

When nobody ever without permission takes anything that belongs to someone else, then you have a secure and confident society. That would be an example to all other nations on earth for how to live.

Dealing falsely is always an expression of selfishness, a desire to get something for self in an unacceptable way. Dealing falsely always involves putting self ahead of others; it is always an expression of self-love first.

In the society that God wanted Israel to establish, Israel would never have needed any banks or safes or security guards. Almost all crimes can in some way be led back to stealing, wanting to have something that belongs to someone else. It is the desire to have something that belongs to other people, that leads to dealing falsely and dishonestly with other people, and then also to lying to cover up any wrong actions or wrong behavior.

This instruction to not steal, to not deal falsely and not to lie must be a major component of any blueprint for a godly society. Abiding by this instruction on a national level eradicates the vast majority of all human crimes.

Coming to the instruction to not lie to anyone: that solves most disputes that arise between people. If nobody is going to lie, then most court cases are solved before they even get before a judge.

FICTIONAL STORIES

To not lie also eliminates the vast majority of all **fiction** stories. "Fiction" refers to lies, to "invented stories", things that are not true, things that were invented by someone's imagination to manipulate our feelings and our emotions, to entertain us.

When we think about it, most fictional stories revolve around **someone breaking some of God's laws**, and then the stories develop from there. And even if "the bad guys are eventually punished in some way", it is still better to not have been exposed to those thoughts in the first place. The only stories about some people breaking some of God's laws that we might need are stories that are real, like the ones recorded in the Bible. No other theoretical stories about some people breaking some of God's laws should ever be presented to our minds.

In a godly society there is no place for "invented stories" about the selfish pursuits and immoral actions and greed and lying and violence and deception and fantasy that make up the overwhelming part of our modern monumental body of "Fictional Literature". The godly society of Leviticus 19 would not have had a category of writings called "Fictional Literature".

One small exception might perhaps have been a category of godly parables that are aimed at conveying godly lessons. But that is not what over 99% of our modern fictional stories deal with. Our modern fictional stories deal overwhelmingly with cheating and lying and intrigues and immoral sexual conduct and violence and selfish conniving and greed and covetousness and no respect at all for the Creator God.

Fiction is fiction because it is not true. And in a godly society there is no place for things that are not true. Most people don't discern the real problems with fictional stories.

The real problem is that most fictional stories take control of our feelings and emotions. We identify with certain characters in those stories and **we take sides**, and our expectations are manipulated by the writers of such fictional stories. And today every hero is allowed some sexually immoral conduct, right? But these stories are all artificial, because nothing is real. The only thing that is real is that **our minds are being manipulated by "the author" of those fictional stories**.

God is not the author of fictional stories. **The author of our fiction stories is always Satan**, the god of this present age (2 Corinthians 4:4). And Satan wants to manipulate our desires, feelings and emotions. In this present world not uncommonly what is today's fiction is tomorrow's reality. Someone, somewhere acts out what was earlier presented as fictional entertainment.

Let's clearly understand the following:

Fiction is the most powerful way Satan has for manipulating our minds and our feelings, because **fiction gives Satan direct access to our minds**. With fiction Satan presents his thoughts directly to our minds, forcing our minds to deal with those satanic thoughts, whether we like it or not. Fiction enables Satan to present his view of life in the most persuasive way.

Fiction is quite similar to the rather notorious "Time Share presentations" that many of us have been suckered into attending. Fiction makes Satan's ways look extremely attractive and appealing, just like a Time Share Presentation. And fiction will assuredly influence the way we are going to use our minds.

In a godly society there is no room for fiction. **Fiction is not compatible with God's instruction** "neither lie one to another". The matter of a godly society being grounded on truth is also further amplified by the next instruction in this chapter.

NO SWEARING FALSELY

And you shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:12)

The purpose for swearing was to solemnly establish that something was true, or to confirm a commitment that had been made. Using God's name in such an oath was a way of saying "God knows that I am telling the truth". To not "swear by my name falsely" means: don't say something you know is not true, and then appeal to God's name to lend more credibility to your untrue statement.

To appeal to God's name in any matter that is not true is a way of profaning God's name, of misusing God's name.

To back up a little:

In dealing with us human beings, God has always **started out** with the highest expectations. God has initially always anticipated cooperation and submission and willing responsiveness from us human beings. God anticipates the best. When we human beings have then disappointed God, because "every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5), then God has adapted His way of dealing with us, by trying to use first one approach and then another, all in an effort to get **a very tiny fraction of 1% of all human beings** throughout this present age to the point of unconditional submission to the will and wishes of God.

When God had created Adam and Eve, God implemented a certain way of dealing with human beings. God tried that approach till the time of the flood. By then it had become painfully obvious that that particular approach was **never** going to produce the results that God wanted to achieve (and which God still wants to achieve today). So God modified His way of dealing with us human beings at the time of the flood. And after the flood a revised plan for leading human beings to salvation went into effect. The flood marked the transition from God using one way to deal with us human beings, to using a different way to deal with us.

Then, at the time of the exodus, God was getting ready to implement the next component of the plan that had started right after the flood, and which plan would be in force until the Kingdom of God would be established at the start of the millennium. That next component **for this present phase of God's plan** was the selection of **one whole nation** that would serve as a model nation for the rest of humanity, until the millennium would start.

Here in Leviticus 19 we see the details for what life in that model nation should have looked like.

Now one component of such a model society was that **God permitted vows to be made**. Why? I suspect that **God expected the best**, that people would be even more committed to telling the truth and to upholding their commitments if they appealed to God's name in the process. Swearing was a practice that had already been established long before the time of Moses.

For example, Abraham was willing to swear.

And Abraham said, **I will swear**. (Genesis 21:24)

And Abraham himself forced his own servant to swear by God in heaven.

And **I will make you swear by the LORD**, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that you shall not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: (Genesis 24:3)

Later Jacob required his son Joseph to swear to do something.

And he said, **Swear unto me**. And he swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head. (Genesis 47:31)

Swearing was supposed to ensure an irrevocable commitment to do certain things. That is what Abraham and Jacob hoped to achieve when they demanded that someone would "swear" to them.

God had not instituted this practice of swearing, whether or not God's name is used in the process. But **God had accepted it**, on the premise that people would always faithfully uphold all their oaths. After all, swearing an oath had worked just as intended with people like Abraham and Jacob and Joseph.

So in the ideal society that God had in mind for Israel, God was going to allow people to swear. Thus Leviticus 19:12 did not institute swearing in Israel; it only regulated the established practice of swearing, by forbidding the misuse of this practice.

Approximately 1500 years after the exodus we come to the time of the ministry of Jesus Christ. By then "the marriage" between God and Israel had been dissolved centuries earlier, and the nations of Israel had gone into national captivities. By New Testament times it had become abundantly clear, beyond any doubt whatsoever, that for the vast majority of people **swearing did not have the desired effect**.

In plain language: most people would not keep their oaths. All the commitments the Israelites had made to God, with oaths or without oaths, they had broken. As Paul pointed out, the Israelites had not kept their commitments to God (see Hebrews 8:8).

If people were going to lie, then they would lie even if they would swear to tell the truth. And if people were going to speak the truth, then they would do so even without making an oath. The fact is: **swearing an oath has no effect whatsoever on whether or not people will speak the truth**.

By the time of Christ's ministry our human minds, the ones that are only evil continually, had

conclusively proved to God for over 2000 years that swearing oaths could not possibly alter the tendencies of human minds.

You don't have someone who would say:

Actually **I had intended to lie to you** because I really want to deceive you; but because I have sworn to tell the truth, therefore now I will not do what I had intended to do. So because of the oath, **I will now tell you the truth**. But I certainly would not have told you the truth without taking this oath.

That's not how it works, and we all know that. In court cases people swear to tell the truth ... and then they promptly lie, if it is in their own interest to do so, and they think they can get away with it. And mostly they don't face any penalties for such lies (i.e. excluding the perverse American practice of setting perjury traps for innocent people, in which cases heavy penalties are frequently imposed on those unfortunate enough to be trapped in that process).

The only thing that oaths actually achieve is that they take God's name in vain!

So in recognition of the futility of swearing, in addition to the danger of taking God's name in vain, Jesus Christ made another modification to His Old Testament instructions for a model society. **Jesus Christ totally abolished the practice of swearing an oath**. Here are the details.

Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, you shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: (Matthew 5:33)

Here Jesus Christ refers to what had been established in the old covenant. Because this instruction had never worked (I don't mean with an occasional individual here or there; I mean on the national level, for the vast majority of people), therefore Jesus Christ was now going to modify it. This "modification" in effect takes this instruction back to its original intentions in the days of Adam ... that all human beings would always speak the truth and live in total integrity, and that therefore in such a society oaths would serve no purpose whatsoever.

But I say unto you, **Swear not at all**; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: (Matthew 5:34)

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for **whatsoever is more than these comes of evil**. (Matthew 5:37)

The key here is **the origin** of human beings swearing an oath. This desire to convince people that we are telling the truth, by being willing to swear an oath to that effect, comes from "the evil one", i.e. it comes from Satan. That is the same "evil one" from whom we are to ask God to protect us (Matthew 6:13).

The Greek text translated as "of evil" is "ek tou ponerou". The preposition "ek" is a preposition of motion, coming out from somewhere or from someone. It implies motion.

When Jesus Christ said that "whatsoever is more than these comes **of evil**", He was saying that **the practice of swearing comes out from "the father of all lies"** (see John 8:44) ... as did also customs like polygamy and slavery, etc. Swearing is something that was **invented by Satan** ... that is what Jesus Christ is telling us in Matthew 5:37.

In a godly society there is no place for ever "profaning" God's name. There is never a place for expressing anything but the utmost respect for God and for God's name. The name of God represents God. And it is once again Satan who seeks to influence us to use God's name in ways that are

disrespectful and disparaging. In our world today people regularly use God's name (e.g. expressions like "o my God", etc.) when their minds are not thinking about God at all. All such expressions are extremely offensive to God.

Let's continue with the laws for a godly society.

NO DEFERRED PAYMENTS

You shall not defraud your neighbor, neither rob *him*: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with you all night until the morning. (Leviticus 19:13)

The Hebrew text here reads "you shall not **oppress** your neighbor ...". This was not speaking about a millennial society under the rule of Jesus Christ, where there will not be any trading or buying or selling. Rather, this is aimed at a present world society in which money is used as a medium of exchange. And since the very existence of money is a manifestation of selfishness, therefore God gave instructions to regulate the payment of employees.

Let's face it: in a free society **money is the only incentive we can offer someone**, in order to get that someone to work for us, i.e. to get that someone to do for us what we want them to do. And money is only an incentive for those people who have a need or a desire for money. In the above instruction God's premise is that people work for us because they need the money in order to buy food and other necessities in order to live.

With God there was never to be such a thing as "deferred payment". People are to be paid as soon as they have completed the work we had hired them to do, or as soon as we have received the goods we contracted to buy from them. We, on the other hand, want to buy now and pay later. And the wealthier that people are, the later they want to pay. And so wealthy individuals and wealthy companies demand 30 and 60 and 90 and even 120 days to pay their bills. It is all about greed!

Deferred payment for goods received or for services rendered is a way of oppressing people. Also, in anticipation of deferred payment, people increase their prices up front, to deal with expected deferred payments. And this then compounds an inflationary cycle.

And it was the poor laborer at the bottom of the economic ladder who would be most adversely affected by having his wages deferred. So God gave instructions to prohibit deferred payment to the poorest of the people. There was never to be any deferred payment in Israel.

Let's continue.

NEVER TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PEOPLE'S WEAKNESSES

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:14)

This verse presents a principle with a far wider application than the literal application for this instruction. It is for a society in which there would be some people who are deaf, and some who are blind. This is not about the time when Jesus Christ will rule. The point is: the deaf cannot hear if we curse them, and the blind cannot see when we place obstacles before them. So how would they ever know what we have

done to them?

Our true human nature will frequently only reveal itself when we believe we can do something without negative consequences somehow affecting us ourselves, i.e. **when we believe that we can get away with it.**

Whenever he has the opportunity to do so, Satan will always exploit and take advantage of people's weaknesses. Thus he would seek to inspire us to do likewise. And we need to be on guard that we never disparage other people behind their backs. We need to treat "the deaf" and "the blind" with respect.

The instruction "you shall fear your God" means that we need to realize that we are being tested by God, as to how we deal with all other people. And when we see people with physical or mental handicaps, we need to realize that God could impose on us those same handicaps. A good attitude for us to have in such a situation is to say to ourselves: "there, but for the grace of God, stand I", and then to treat such people with genuine respect. We are never to try to exploit the weaknesses of other people, let alone mock such people. As Solomon put it:

Whoso mocks the poor reproaches his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished. (Proverbs 17:5)

[Comment: "Glad at calamities" is the precise meaning of the German word "Schadenfreude".]

This principle also applies to how we treat the deaf and the blind, as much as it applies to how we treat the poor.

RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: you shall not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty: **but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.** (Leviticus 19:15)

These are guidelines for human judges who might still be swayed by subjective personal feelings and opinions. In making judgments, judges are never to consider a person's status within society (e.g. when someone is a former president or cabinet member or prominent entertainment personality, etc.). We are not to feel sorry for the poor simply because they are poor, nor are we to be impressed by the social status of the mighty and the rich.

For example, in that kind of society we don't need "character witnesses" to impress a judge or jury, since no amount of "character witnesses" can establish whether someone did or didn't do something. The facts, and the facts alone, must be used to reach a righteous judgment for every dispute. And the social standing of the people involved, or their past record, must never enter the picture one way or the other.

In such a system there is **no need for higher courts** and for appeal courts. If a court feels competent to reach a judgment, then that judgment should be final, without appeal to any other court. The only time there might theoretically be a need for a higher court is when the court in question feels unqualified to reach a judgment that is right in the eyes of God. But that should never be the case. As the Apostle Paul told the Church:

Don't you know that we shall judge angels? how much more **things that pertain to this life?** (1 Corinthians 6:3)

The judging that Leviticus 19:15 is speaking about is about "things that pertain to this life". And there should never be a case of a judge in Israel being unqualified to judge "things pertaining to this life". So no higher courts are needed. The very existence of higher courts is testimony to **unrighteous judgments** being a common occurrence with lower courts, and then needing to be overturned by a higher court.

By all courts consistently making righteous judgments, Israel would have set the example to all other nations for always making right judgments, with all courts being on the same one level. When you need higher courts to overturn the unrighteous judgments of lower courts, **then you have chaos**.

And obviously, the system of employing juries to reach judgments is totally unacceptable in a godly society! Righteous judgments are never established by "majority opinion". God, and not majority opinion, establishes what is right and what is wrong. Majority opinion may well frequently reach the right decision, but it is not the majority that determines what is right and what is wrong.

The concept of a Supreme Court consisting of 9, or however many judges, is totally perverse! In any 5:4 decision either 5 judges are right and 4 judges are wrong; or 4 judges are right and 5 judges are wrong. Now the ones that reach the wrong judgment (i.e. either 4 or 5 judges) have shown themselves to be **totally unfit** for the office of a judge! How? By reaching a wrong judgment! **Any judge who ever at any time reaches an unrighteous judgment is unfit to hold the office of a judge!** This principle also applies to 6:3 and 7:2 and 8:1 decisions. In any split decision those judges who are not on the side of righteous judgment have disqualified themselves before God from the office of a judge. Before God a judge cannot make unrighteous judgments and expect to retain his position as a judge.

If they do "unrighteousness in judgment" (verse 15), then they have disqualified themselves. Pure and simple.

Now if nobody ever lies in any matter that is being judged, then it is not all that difficult to reach the judgment that will be right before God. Love God above all else, and love your neighbor as you love yourself are not difficult concepts to understand; and neither are they difficult to apply. Righteous judgments are easy to reach in a society where all people always speak the truth, the kind of society God hoped to set up in Israel.

NO GOSSIP

You shall not go up and down as a talebearer among your people: neither shall you stand against the blood of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:16)

People who gossip are motivated by hatred for the people about whom they gossip. Gossip is a **very virulent form of hatred**, i.e. it is hatred that is filled with malice. And obviously, there is never a place for gossip in a godly society. Solomon had a few things to say about "talebearers". For a start:

The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly. (Proverbs 26:22; also 18:8)

Gossip represents a way of destroying other people, like inflicting a mortal wound. In many cases the damage done by gossip can never be undone. Solomon also put it like this:

A talebearer reveals secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit conceals the matter. (Proverbs 11:13)

Gossip involves spreading things that should be kept confidential. In many cases it amounts to either outright lies, or to exaggerations. And even when the information happens to be true, there is usually still no reason to pass it on to other people, in which case it will then frequently be exaggerated when told to the next person.

"A faithful spirit" doesn't pass on that type of information. There is never a time when we should spread embarrassing information about someone else. By concluding this statement with "I am the Eternal" (Leviticus 19:16), God was saying: I don't want you to spread negative information about other people!

So if none of the Israelites would become "talebearers", then that eliminates a major source of personal conflicts between people.

Where no wood is, *there* the fire goes out: so **where *there is no talebearer, the strife ceases.***
(Proverbs 26:20)

People who gossip are troublemakers, and without any gossip there is far less strife between people. Let's look at God's next instruction for Israelite society.

NO HATRED

You shall not hate your brother **in your heart**: you shall in any wise rebuke your neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. (Leviticus 19:17)

The previous instruction focused on not showing hatred outwardly, in the form of gossip. This instruction here goes one level higher, in telling us to not even harbor hatred in our minds. This required the Israelites to regularly check their own attitudes towards other people. It requires mind control.

Now God created us in such a way that when we hate someone for a long time, then one consequence is that it makes us physically sick. Succumbing to a psycho-somatic illness, because of harboring negative emotions like hatred, is **the penalty** God built into our bodies for filling our minds with such negative emotions.

As far as the last part of this instruction is concerned: when we are aware that someone is sinning, then we should confront the person to motivate them to repent and to change. That should be done privately. This is the equivalent of what will happen in such situations during Jesus Christ's millennial rule. Then it will be a spirit being that will do the correcting:

And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, **This *is the way, walk you in it,*** when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:21)

Yes, during the millennium spirit beings will issue this kind of warning. And for this present age God intended for close friends and relatives, who become aware of us becoming involved in some or other sinful activity, to fulfill this warning function. By prefacing this instruction with the statement "you shall not hate your brother in your heart" it means that all such confrontations would come from a motivation of genuine concern for the sinning individual.

God always desires for sinning people to receive some kind of warning before God imposes a serious penalty. A nation where this instruction is practiced in the right manner would be far less prone to have negative examples get out of hand and find acceptance amongst the general population. It would be a society where everyone is also looking out for all other people.

NO GRUDGES

You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18)

This is one more instruction that focuses on mind control, rather than on outward actions. And that is really the main key for any society that is to function by the laws of God, that the human mind, the one that is spontaneously "enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), is under full control. This specific instruction here is aimed at teaching mind control.

To love our neighbor as ourselves means that **we set our minds** to have a genuine concern for the well-being of other people, which is equal to the automatic concern we have for our own well-being.

The instructions in this verse describe a state of peace and contentment within the whole nation. Sensing that everyone else has the same concern for our well-being that we have for their well-being, that nobody is out to take advantage of us, that nobody is plotting evil against us, creates a relaxed, stress-free society. That is what God intended for Israel to establish, by adhering to all these laws that God gave them.

Neither Israel nor any other nation has ever lived up to these instructions. These laws will have to wait for implementation until the millennium, at which time they will be put into practice during Jesus Christ's 1000-year rule. But these instructions are a part of what God wanted Israel to be like, when God "married" Israel and established the old covenant with them.

When we read these instructions, we seldom consider that they describe to us how God expected Israel to develop under the old covenant. These instructions describe **the high hopes Jesus Christ**, the God of the Old Testament, **had for "His wife"**! These laws were not simply "God's wish list"! They describe how God wanted to see these former slaves grow and develop into the ideal society on the human level, a society which could then make a seamless transition into the millennium, when Jesus Christ will assume full control over all human societies, by then literally ruling over all nations.

When God made the old covenant with Israel, God had very high hopes for Israel. These laws here in Leviticus 19 describe how God hoped life would develop amongst the Israelites.

Now for some more practical living instructions.

NO MIXING OF DIVERSE KINDS

You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle gender with a diverse kind: you shall not sow your field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon you. (Leviticus 19:19)

God very deliberately created all the different "kinds" of animals. God created variety, and God wanted the variety He had created maintained. Mixing animals would produce inferior specimens when compared to the kinds God had created.

To not sow our fields with "mingled seed" refers to grain crops. We are not to mingle crops like wheat and barley. That would create confusion, and make it very difficult to harvest. As far as vegetable crops

are concerned, we should not mingle any two species that might produce hybrids from those two species.

Linen clothing is good, and woollen clothing is good. But trying to mix those two fabrics would produce an inferior product, because these two are not really compatible. Wool and linen respond differently to washing, bleaching, shrinkage, fading in sunlight, etc., and mixing those two fibers would create a poor quality item.

The principle of this whole verse here is that Israel was to avoid producing things that were of **inferior quality**. Israel was to uphold a high standard for everything they did. That high standard was to be an example to all other nations, to always strive to produce the best possible product. Israel was not to look for cheap ways to cut corners, as far as quality is concerned. With God quality is always more important than quantity.

The next section contains a major mistranslation, which we need to clear up.

A MISTRANSLATION

And whosoever lies carnally with a woman, that *is* a bondmaid, **betrothed** (Hebrew charaph) to an husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; **she shall be scourged** (Hebrew biqqoret); they shall not be put to death, because she was not free. (Leviticus 19:20)

Obviously, God did not command that **a woman who had been raped** should be scourged as a punishment. That is a perverse mistranslation. This is thoroughly explained in my short 6-page article entitled "**The Mistranslation in Leviticus 19:20**". A correct translation for this verse, while retaining the other parts of the KJV translation, should read:

And whosoever lies carnally with a woman, that *is* a bondmaid (i.e. a slave), and **who has been reproached by this man**, and she is not at all **helped**, nor is her freedom given her; **an enquiry shall be made; he** shall not be put to death, because **she** was not free. (Leviticus 19:20 corrected)

The point of this instruction is: where raping a free woman would automatically require the death penalty for the rapist, raping a slave woman demanded a lesser penalty than the death penalty. The implication is that the raped woman really should be given her freedom, for having had to endure being raped. And if she isn't given her freedom, then "an enquiry" needs to be made into what had happened. The starting premise for this verse is that **some man really has raped a slave woman**. And an enquiry will establish that fact. Under no circumstances is the man in this scenario innocent!

The next few verses deal with the consequences of that "enquiry".

And he shall bring **his trespass offering** unto the LORD, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, *even* a ram for a trespass offering. (Leviticus 19:21)

As a result of that enquiry the man then brings a trespass offering. Bringing trespass offerings was a **public acknowledgment of guilt**. He is the one who clearly sinned in this matter.

And the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for **his sin** which he has done: and the sin which he has done shall be forgiven him. (Leviticus 19:22)

Forgiveness is available upon real repentance. But other consequences are not mentioned. For

example, another conclusion to such an enquiry could very typically have been that this raped slave woman now should be given her freedom ... with the rapist becoming responsible for any financial loss incurred by the owner of the slave.

Now obviously, no woman, whether a slave or whether a free woman, should ever have to endure being raped. And no rapes should ever have occurred in the model nation God intended to raise up. But if a servant woman was ever raped, then this law established a procedure for how to deal with such a situation.

FRUIT TREES AND FRUIT ORCHARDS

And when you shall come into the land, and shall have **planted** all manner of trees for food, then you shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: **three years** shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. But in **the fourth year** all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD *withal*. And in **the fifth year** shall you eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I *am* the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:23-25)

This is an instruction for **when trees are planted**. These instructions do not apply to when we move into a new home that already has established fruit-bearing trees.

Now the Israelites did not go down to their local tree nurseries and buy 3-year old or 5-year old fruit trees growing in 10-gallon garden pots. No, the Israelites in Old Testament times would have planted their fruit trees from seeds. And there is hardly anything to such trees three years after the seeds were planted in the ground. They may produce one or two pieces of fruit in those first three years; but typically that would be a negligible quantity.

So here are God's instructions, given at a time when the Israelites were in the desert and didn't have access to any fruit trees:

From the time you plant your trees, for three years you are not to eat any of the very few fruits that might be produced. Nobody is to eat those fruits. In the fourth year whatever fruits are produced are to be "holy to praise the LORD". "Holy" here means separate, set apart. So in the fourth year the fruits are to be "set apart for God". I take that to mean that in the fourth year the fruits were to be given to the priests.

And from the fifth year onwards the fruits were for the owners of those trees. Starting from planting an apple seed or a peach seed or a cherry seed, etc. you only start to get anything resembling a crop after at least five years. God's instructions prevent people from focusing on getting fruits as early as possible. Instead, they establish a more relaxed and generous approach to harvesting fruits. And the fruits produced in the first three years are not to be consumed by anyone.

Growing fruits commercially is a huge business in our modern world, with fruits picked early and then shipped all around the globe. And getting as much fruit as possible and as early as possible is a major focus in our fruit-growing industries. It is all about money. God's instructions oppose that particular focus.

Moving on.

AVOID ALL PAGAN RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

You shall **not eat any thing** with the **blood**: neither shall you use **enchantment**, nor **observe times**. (Leviticus 19:26)

These things all have to do with pagan customs.

Eating blood shows a contempt for life, and it is a custom that comes straight out of paganism. Eating blood will also lead to sicknesses and diseases. Eating blood had also already been very emphatically forbidden by God in Leviticus 17:10-14, with the warning that God will very specifically "set His face against" anyone who eats blood. Under no circumstances are God's people ever to eat blood. Here this instruction is reiterated with a focus on avoiding pagan customs.

"Using enchantment" and "observing times" both refer to **dabbling with demonism**, seeking demon contact. An example of seeking demon contact was when King Saul went to "the witch at Endor" to ask advice of a demon who impersonated the prophet Samuel (see 1 Samuel 28).

So Israel was not to seek any contact with demons, and they were not to eat any foods associated with pagan religions. The Apostle Paul likewise instructed us to avoid any foods dedicated to false gods, because those foods are "sacrificed to demons" (see 1 Corinthians 10:20). Paul went on to explain: "I don't want you to have fellowship with demons" (same verse). Paul's instruction goes beyond the pagan custom of eating or drinking blood, and extends to all the foods dedicated to certain pagan religious activities.

You shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shall you mar the corners of your beard. (Leviticus 19:27)

This instruction is still a part of **avoiding all pagan customs**. Pagan religions have also used hair to convey religious symbolism. This is not an instruction against cutting our hair or trimming our beards. Rather, we are not to have "a religious hairstyle" or facial hair with a religious symbolism; e.g. a religious disc shaved into the hair, religious braids, a religious beard, etc. God's instruction is that **we are not to attach any significance or symbolism to hair**. And we are not to copy styles to which other people have attached a religious significance.

You shall not make **any cuttings** in your flesh for the dead, nor print **any marks** upon you: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:28)

Again, this instruction is aimed at avoiding all pagan customs. We are not to cut our bodies "for the dead" or for any other religious reasons. Our bodies belong to the God who has said "all souls are Mine" (Ezekiel 18:4). And God does not want us to mutilate our bodies.

Further, God does not want His people to print anything on our bodies. We refer to such printed marks as tattoos. In our world today tattoos have become extremely popular, an indication of the influence "the god of this age" has over whole societies. **All tattoos are an expression of rebellion against God.**

The point of these three verses is that **we are not to use our bodies in any way that would make a religious statement**: not by the things we eat and drink, not by the way we groom ourselves, our hair styles, etc., not by the clothes or uniforms we wear, and not by making any kind of marks on our bodies. Our bodies are simply not to be used to make any religious statements, or any statements of defiance against God.

God's intention was for Israel to be the one nation in this present age where Satan's influence would be, if not totally eliminated, at least severely restricted, when compared to every other nation on earth. Satan being "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) was not to be true for Israel. There was to be a stark

contrast between Israel and all other nations, with Israel presenting an example to all other people. As we know, it didn't work out as God had hoped. And the nations of Israel are as much a part of the domain of "the god of this world" as are all other nations.

NO PROSTITUTION

Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness. (Leviticus 19:29)

Prostitution was not to exist in Israel. All forms of sexual exploitation are totally forbidden. There was never to be any sexually suggestive advertising; no provocative dressing and no pornography. Israel was to be a nation with high moral standards, an example for other nations to look up to. There is no place for any kind of immoral conduct in a God-centered society.

GOD'S SABBATHS

You shall keep My Sabbaths, and reverence My sanctuary: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:30)

This Sabbath instruction is repeated, because it forms a part of the foundation for a godly society. By using the plural "Sabbaths" God is including the annual Sabbath Days in this instruction. A few chapters further God specifically refers to both the Day of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement as "a Sabbath" (see Leviticus 23:24, 32). A godly society will observe both the weekly and the annual Sabbath Days.

There is no peace without keeping God's Sabbath Days.

And we are always to show respect for everything that represents God's presence. "The sanctuary" had been set up at the start of the second year after the exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 40:17). And it represented God dwelling in the midst of Israel. Israel was to respect that privilege of having God dwell in their midst.

The Sabbath was the specific sign God had given Israel, which sign Israel subsequently polluted repeatedly (Ezekiel 20:12-16, 21, 24; Ezekiel 22:8; Ezekiel 23:38; etc.). When the Sabbath is broken, then society breaks down. When the foundation is broken or cracked, then the things that are built on that foundation will also start to break. **That is the world we have today**, a broken society which cannot achieve peace.

AVOID ALL CONTACTS WITH DEMONS

Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I *am* the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:31)

This is the concluding instruction for avoiding all forms of demon contacts. The enticing temptations of demons are: we can tell you what the future will be, what you can look forward to. That is of course nothing but lies (John 8:44). All demons are lying spirits. But such lies can be appealing to certain people. Israel was to avoid any and all such contacts with demons. Demons were not to gain a foothold in Israelite society.

SHOW RESPECT FOR THE ELDERLY

You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear your God: I *am* the LORD. (Leviticus 19:32)

Older men and women were to be accorded a status of honor and respect within Israelite society. They were to be looked up to for advice and understanding. That establishes a society based on respect for those who are older. But today we have the opposite situation. Today we have the fulfillment of Isaiah 3:5.

And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: **the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient**, and the base against the honorable. (Isaiah 3:5)

This verse describes our modern world today. Respect for elders is largely a thing of the past. This is evidence that people in general lack any fear of God, since God is the One who requires us to have respect for our senior citizens. Rather than being treated with respect, in our societies senior citizens are very common targets for a whole range of criminals.

TREAT FOREIGNERS FAIRLY

And **if a stranger sojourn with you** in your land, you shall not vex him. *But* the stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

We express love by the way we treat people. And this instruction to "love the stranger" refers to how we are to treat strangers. God's instruction is that we are to accept foreigners who choose to dwell amongst us as our equals. The statement "as one born among you" implies that we are not to ostracize foreigners in any way, or to exclude them in any way from society in general.

This instruction assumes that those foreigners who choose to live amongst us desire to be assimilated into our society. It assumes that they want to accept our customs and that they want to adopt our ways of living (here in this chapter God is describing the way of life for the ideal society in this present age). And it further assumes that they desire to reject their own religion and instead they desire to seek after the God of Israel. If they don't reject their own religion, then they were not to be accepted into Israelite society. God has never endorsed "religious freedom".

A perfect example for this type of God-intended form of assimilation for foreigners was **Ruth**, the Moabitess. As Ruth said: "where you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge: **your people shall be my people, and your God my God**" (Ruth 1:16). Ruth rejected every aspect of her Moabite past, including her past religion, and she wanted to be assimilated 100% into Israelite society. And that is precisely what then happened. As we all know, she became an ancestor of King David ... and that represents a pretty good level of assimilation.

God's instructions in Leviticus 19:33-34 assume that the strangers who want to dwell amongst us have a Ruth-like attitude. Such people are always to be welcomed. But today the strangers who want to dwell amongst us want to establish their own religions in our midst.

A major problem arises when foreigners want to come and live in our land, but they have no desire whatsoever to assimilate with us. Instead, they very methodically form their own enclaves within our land. They very meticulously want to retain and practice their own customs and

traditions, and they also want to bring their own religions to our land. And they reject our ways. They may even reject our language and insist on retaining their own language ... but they want to live in our land primarily to acquire wealth, which wealth they could not acquire in their own land. In some cases they may even have a desire to change our land into an image of the society from which they had come. They may demand that their religions and their customs be respected by us, even while they may show contempt for our ways and our customs.

This is something that Israel was not to allow to happen! No other religion was to be permitted anywhere in Israelite territory! With God in heaven there is no such thing as "religious freedom"! God's instructions to Israel in this regard were very clear: "You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but **you shall utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images**" (Exodus 23:24).

There is no ambiguity here! **You don't tolerate any other religion**, and you thoroughly break down all objects (statutes, buildings, shrines, obelisks, etc.) devoted to other religions. Now once you have destroyed all the false religions in your land, then obviously, you are not to allow their re-introduction at some later time.

These were God's intentions!

However, this was never implemented, and **it cannot be implemented today** in our age. The reason is that **Israelites themselves rejected God's ways** and God's laws. The religions that became established amongst the people of Israel, scattered around the world, universally reject the teachings of the true God; they are all expressions of the religious ideas of "the god of this present age" (see 2 Corinthians 4:4). They are all pagan in origin, even when they use the name of "Christianity".

Before Israelite societies could possibly eradicate other pagan religions in their midst, they would first have to eliminate their own pagan teachings and ideas. And that is something that will not happen before Jesus Christ's return to set up the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Once Jesus Christ had "divorced" Israel, and then sent both kingdoms into national captivities, this God-intended process for assimilating foreigners into Israel, which would have emphatically prevented the establishment of other religions and self-contained enclaves of foreigners within the lands of Israel, could no longer be implemented.

But we should understand that when Jesus Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God, then there will be no such thing as "religious freedom".

A JUST ECONOMY

Here are the final instructions in this chapter.

You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measure, in weight, or in dividing. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall you have: I *am* the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 19:35-36)

Every facet of the economy was to express fairness. All these instructions here are aimed at **countering selfishness**, the desire to receive as much as possible, while at the same time giving as little as possible in return. Selfishness always expressed itself in taking advantage of other people in some way or other. **Values** for certain quantities or volumes of produce **should be fixed and permanent** ... unless

the producers themselves, without any compunction, voluntarily lower the prices.

Since "a hin" of olive oil (for our purposes let's say "one gallon") this year will be the exact same volume of olive oil as "a hin" 5 or 50 years from now, therefore the price for "a hin" of olive oil 5 or 50 years from now should also be exactly the same as it is today. 100 pounds of wheat today will be no more and no less than 100 pounds of wheat 100 years from now ... and people 100 years from now will be able to make exactly the same amount of bread from that 100 pounds of wheat, as they are able to make from that 100 pounds today.

100 pounds of wheat today provides the same amount of bread as 100 pounds of wheat provided in the days of George Washington. It's not as if 100 pounds of wheat today provides just as much bread as 200 pounds of wheat provided at Washington's time, is it? So **the real value of 100 pounds of wheat never changes**, because it will always produce the same exact amount of bread, no more and no less.

In a just society the price for 100 pounds of wheat would be the same for century after century. **But greed says otherwise!**

We all want to get **more**. So we charge more, be it for the things we sell or be it for the hours we work. And when we charge more for our time or our products, then other people also charge more for their time and for their products. Greed keeps the wheels of our economies turning.

The result is that in our modern economies we don't really have "**just** balances, **just** weights, a **just** ephah, and a **just** hin". We are always thinking about how to get more. And if this year we only make exactly as much as we did last year, then we are dissatisfied. We really want more this year than we had last year. And so we constantly think up new ways of making more money. Our lives revolve around always trying to get more.

Without greed all our modern economies would come to a screeching halt.

In the ideal world, when Jesus Christ will be ruling, there will not be any "money" or trading or bartering. As the Prophet Isaiah recorded:

Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters, and **he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.** (Isaiah 55:1)

[Comment: The word "buy" is used here for lack of a better word. There isn't really any "buying" in this situation. That is clear from the expressions "**without money**" and "**without price**". This verse speaks about a society in which money simply does not exist. It was Satan who originally invented the concept of trading, and by extension the concept of money, see Ezekiel 28:16. And when Satan is bound, then everything that Satan did during the age of man will also be abolished. That means that money will be abolished at the time when Satan is bound.]

So while money will not exist when Jesus Christ will rule over the whole earth, for this present age and for the nations of Israel God commanded that people would at least deal honestly and fairly with money, without seeking to get the better of other people at every opportunity. Always dealing honestly and fairly would at least restrict selfishness to some degree.

Let's keep in mind that while life under the old covenant was intended to be good, and conducive to producing 144,000 people for the first resurrection, that was still going to be far inferior to what life will be like when Jesus Christ in person will be ruling over this earth during the millennium.

The absence of "the root of all evil" (i.e. money, 1 Timothy 6:10) during the millennium will remove the

greatest cause of stress for human beings. God will guarantee the availability of food for all people and for all animals. And while without the existence of money it is still possible to steal, the total absence of the concept of money will make it much harder and less appealing to steal. Yes, you can still steal someone else's clothing or jewelry, but you cannot convert stolen goods into some common medium of exchange (i.e. money). So thieves will be stuck with the clothes or the jewelry they have stolen. Stolen goods can never be converted into some other item. But typically people don't want the items they have stolen; they really want **the monetary value** that those stolen items represent. So when nothing at all has a monetary value, then much of the temptation to steal has been eliminated.

Now while Israel was supposed to have a just economic system, in practice greed has always prevailed, speaking in general terms.

And that concludes the instructions God presented to Israel for establishing a model society, to show all other nations what life lived according to God's laws looks like. The next verse represents God's concluding statement for this section. And then the next chapter discusses penalties for certain transgressions.

Here is the concluding verse.

Therefore shall you observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:37)

Certainly there is more to applying the laws of God than this one chapter of the Book of Leviticus. But in the preceding 36 verses God has covered major aspects for regulating a society that lives in accordance with the laws of God in this present age. Let's keep in mind that the ultimate aim of all the laws presented in the old covenant was to prepare a tiny fraction of all Israelites, a mere 144,000, to have a part in the first resurrection at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

When Israel rejected God's way of life, as presented in the old covenant, it meant that Israel alone would never be able to produce those 144,000 individuals. And therefore Jesus Christ then sent His apostles to "**teach all nations**" (Matthew 28:19).

Frank W Nelte