

Tuesday Morning Bible Study with Ted

THE HEBREW STUDIES student notes—January 19, 2021

Leviticus 19:1-18

BEFORE YOU PRINT: If you attended the discussions on January 12. You do not need to print these notes, and we will pick up at Verse 11.

If on the other hand, you were not with us on the 12th, Print this set of notes and we'll all study together from Chapter 19, verse 11>

Leviticus 19:1-2. You shall be holy

1. *Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and tell them, 'You shall be holy; for I Yahweh your God am holy.'*"

1-2. "Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and tell them'"

"Yahweh called to Moses," is repeated periodically, emphasizing Moses' role as a spokesperson and mediator between Yahweh and the people of Israel.

2b. "You shall be holy, for I Yahweh your God am holy"

There is an emphasis on holiness in the Hebrew Scriptures that begins with the account of Moses at the burning bush (I know you have heard me talk about this reference over the years we have been together). At the bush, God told Moses, "Don't come close. Take your sandals off of your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5).

What does that instruction say to us?

We have discussed the two reasons for the instruction. First, he was to maintain distance between himself and the holy burning bush. Second, he was to take off his sandals to show reverence for the holy ground on which he was standing. (Admittedly, I don't believe there is any ground that is not holy ground on this earth, or in this universe...just my opinion.)

Leviticus 10:10 says that Aaron and his descendants (the priests) "are to make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean."

Leviticus 19:3-8.

3. *You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without defect, for a burnt offering; 4. and a bull and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before Yahweh; and a meal offering mixed with oil: for today Yahweh appears to you.'*" 5. *They brought what Moses commanded before the Tent of Meeting. All the congregation came near and stood before Yahweh. 6. Moses said, "This is the thing which Yahweh commanded that you should do; and Yahweh's glory shall appear to you."* 7. *Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering, and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself, and for the people; and offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them, as Yahweh commanded."* 8 *So Aaron came near to the altar, and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself.*

I believe we just need to be aware of these verses and did not exegete these for today's study.

- Yahweh requires reverence for parents and observance of sabbaths
- He warns the people not to turn to idols
- He spells out the proper way to make peace offerings
- He warns that people who eat the offerings improperly will be subject to punishment, "because he has profaned the holy thing of Yahweh" (v. 8a). "That soul shall be cut off from his people" (v. 8b).

Leviticus 19:9-10. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner

9. *"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. 10. You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God."*

9-10a. '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. You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard

These verses tell landowners not to harvest all of the produce of the land. Reaping implies grain, so this verse deals with the harvests of grain and grapes. However, it suggests a principle that could also be implemented with other harvests, such as olives or figs.

Landowners are to leave the edges of their fields unharvested and are to leave the gleanings (that which the harvesters accidentally drop) where they fell.

What do you know about this law?

How does it apply in most churches today?

These verses leave much to the discretion of the landowner.

- How close to the edge of the field is the landowner permitted to harvest?
- How much must he leave?

Rabbis debate that sort of thing endlessly in an attempt to spell out with exactness the requirements of the law. Later, they will establish a rule that the landowner must leave 1/60th of the produce for gleaners to harvest.

We have somehow equated that division of left harvest to 10%.

Does the Lord's Acre sound familiar?

10b. "you shall leave them for the poor and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God"

The purpose of leaving produce in the field is to give poor people an opportunity to gather food for themselves and their families. We should note that the landowner is not required to harvest the last part of the crop to give to the poor. The law requires him to leave it, and the poor people must harvest it. That affords them a small measure of dignity that would be missing if they had no requirement to work. It also affords them dignity that they would incur if they had to beg.

I have always loved this idea and with help from the congregations managed to start community gardens in two different churches. Both are still active

Leviticus 19:11-12. You shall not steal or deceive one another

11. *"You shall not steal. You shall not lie. You shall not deceive one another. 12. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh."*

11. "You shall not steal. You shall not lie. You shall not deceive one another.

These are three prohibitions against deception in this verse

- first is against theft—taking property by stealth or deception, the taking of property without violence.
- second is against denying something that is true
- third is against affirming something that is false

12. “You shall not swear by my name falsely, and profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh”

The Third of the Ten Commandments has already addressed this issue. It says, “You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).

We’ll get to that when we study scripture from Exodus next.

Leviticus 19:13-14. You shall not oppress or rob or curse the deaf

13. “You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning. 14. You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; but you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh.”

13a. “You shall not oppress your neighbor

The Hebrew word translated here as “oppress” also means to defraud, deceive, or get deceitfully. The specific prohibition here concerns defrauding a neighbor.

13b. “nor rob him”

The Hebrew word that is translated “steal” in verse 11 is different from the word translated “rob” in this verse.

- verse 11 was against using deception to gain possession of another person’s property
- in this verse is against using force or violence to take property.

13c. “The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning”

I’m sure you know how some people today live from paycheck to paycheck and many more have joined the ranks during the pandemic. THOUGHTS?

In the primitive agricultural economy of the Old Testament, laborers often lived day to day. They needed to collect their daily wages at the close of each day to enable them to feed their families for the coming day.

So what does this verse say or mean to you?

14. “You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; but you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh

This verse extends God’s concern for vulnerable people to the deaf and blind. While it doesn’t specifically mention disabilities other than deafness or blindness, it establishes a principle that surely extends to people with other sorts of disabilities, such as physical deformities or mental disorders.

I believe that such behavior is a clear violation of the requirement of verse 18 to “love your neighbor as yourself.” People who love their neighbors would never mock them or exploit their vulnerabilities. Hmmm? Sound familiar?

Leviticus 19:15-16. You shall do no injustice in judgment

15. “You shall do no injustice in judgment: you shall not be partial to the poor, nor show favoritism to the great; but you shall judge your neighbor in righteousness. 16. You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people.

You shall not endanger the life of your neighbor. I am Yahweh.”

15. “You shall do no injustice in judgment: you shall not be partial to the poor, nor show favoritism to the great; but you shall judge your neighbor in righteousness

- Elders administer justice at city gates (Deuteronomy 21:19; Joshua 20:4; Ruth 4:1-12). This verse requires them to render justice impartially.
- It seems natural that God, with his concern for the poor and vulnerable, would prohibit elders from deferring to “the great.”

Does this remind you of anything in the book of Acts? (Peter and John maybe?)

16a. “You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people”

Our word “slander” today has to do with making false statements about other people. Our word “gossip” can mean spreading lies about other people, whether the tales are true or false. Both slander and gossip have the potential to damage people’s reputations. The Hebrew word used in this verse would certainly prohibit the making of false statements about other people. It most likely would also prohibit the spreading of gossip (whether true or false) as well.

16b. “You shall not endanger the life of your neighbor

The meaning of verse 16b is somewhat uncertain, but I think it means that God is outlawing violence for personal gain. THOUGHTS?

16c. “I am Yahweh” (YHWH—Yahweh)

As noted above, this phrase (or the longer version, “I am Yahweh your God”) is used a number of times in this chapter to conclude or anchor various passages.

The people are to obey these laws because Yahweh has established a covenant with them and has given them these laws.

Leviticus 19:17-18. You shall not hate your brother in your heart (This should answer my Hmmm? question at verse 14 above.)

17. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh.”

17. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him

The first two parts of this verse are related.

- Hatred often grows out of jealousy or perceived injustice, and has the potential to lead to violence. Cain, angry because God honored his brother's offering but not his own, killed his brother (Genesis 4:3-8).
- Esau hated Jacob for cheating him out of his birthright, and Jacob had to flee for his life to keep his brother from killing him (Genesis 27).

I have both of these in mind to study along with scattered others Genesis stories.

The God-given remedy for hatred is non-violent confrontation.

Ghandi, not a Jew or Christian must have read this somewhere.

You can count on this study relating to the laws from Jesus. Here are some we will reference from other OT studies. For example:

In the New Testament, Jesus expands on this law. He reminds his listeners of the prohibition against murder, and then says, *"But I tell you, that everyone who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council; and whoever shall say, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna"* (Matthew 5:22).

Jesus goes on to say, *"If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"* (Matthew 5:23-24).

18a. "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people

The Hebrew word translated "take vengeance" in this verse has to do with using violence to compensate for a perceived wrong. The Hebrew word translated "bear any grudge" has to do with guarding or cherishing something.

In this case, cherishing a hurt or hanging onto a grievance.

18b. "but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh

When asked which commandment in the law was the greatest, Jesus quoted this verse from Leviticus, saying:

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. A second likewise is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:29b-31; see also Luke 10:27).

The earlier verses in this chapter give the reader an idea what a person would do if he/she loved his/her neighbor. There is nothing namby-pamby about this kind of love. There is no requirement for the lover to become a doormat for the beloved. This kind of love requires the lover to confront the beloved when necessary, lest festering wounds turn septic and love turn to hate.

And with that, the study of Leviticus ends. Well maybe, I refer back to it in other HEBREW STUDIES.

Bear with me please.

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