

SESSION #34 (2 November 2010); Deut 14:22-29; Israel’s Distinctive Theocentric Faith in God’s Economic Order—Part 1

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God’s spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6 - 4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation to obey</u> from (1) <u>past gracious actions of Yahweh</u> and (2) <u>sovereign destiny of the nation</u> (<u>future gracious actions of Yahweh</u>)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1 - 26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = <u>proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul</u>
5:1 - 11:32	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>
12:1 - 26:19	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)
12:1-31	Theological unity of Israel’s tribes (1 st , 2 nd , 10 th commandments)
12:32 - 13:18	Enforcement of Theological Orthodoxy (1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , 9 th , 10 th commandments)
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (all 10 commandments)
14:22-29 A Distinct Culture of Financial Faith-Rest (all 10 commandments)	

Chap 14: “Culture” [commandments #4,5,6,7,8—labor & family]

DISTINCT CULTURAL SUSTENANCE FROM LIFE TO DEATH (14:1-21)

14:1-2, 21c A culture’s values show up in how death is dealt with – the terminus of life itself for both man and animal

Paganism (unbelief) lacks the tools to cope with suffering → despair, drugs, licentiousness, stoicism, or cutting

Paganism also has a callousness toward the value of animal life that God has created; no thought that the we substitute their lives for ours.

14:3-21b A central cultural feature is diet – a life-dominating pattern that controls the economy

Israel’s diet changed from Egypt to manna to land produce

In the exile, diet became an issue with Diaspora Jews: **Tobit 1:10-11** “*When I was carried away to Nineveh, all my brethren and relatives ate the food of the Gentiles; but I kept myself from eating it, because I remembered God with all my heart.*”

Economic wisdom

Discriminatory diet mandates triggered economic reinforcement of cultural distinctive.

- (a) Clean meat supply in abundance = lower prices
- (b) Unclean meat could only be produced by “naturalized citizens” (resident alien Gentiles) on pasturage that would revert back into Israelite ownership at the Year of Jubilee.
- (c) Unclean meat couldn’t be eaten when an Israelite approached Yahweh’s “sacred space” which acted to reduce its demand.
- (d) Defiled meat could be sold to *nokree* (traveling businessman), which established an outside market.

II. TITHING OVERVIEW

Besides its view of death and its diet, a culture's view of money and wealth sets it off from other cultures.

A. Israel had 3 tithes:

All were based upon production (“income tax”); no sales tax or property tax.

Production of wealth is exercise of [dominion].

- Government cannot produce wealth—only laborers (in the large sense, not in the Marxist sense) do that—government can only consume wealth and/or re-distribute it (fallacy of the “slices of the pie” or zero-sum view of economy).
- To tax property, per se, whether productive or not, punishes ownership by those disabled—those such as the elderly or infirm who cannot make it productive; it is a tax on capital, not on production.

B. The tithe-structure expresses the creature-dependency principle of Deut 8: “Surviving success by maintaining the mental attitude of creature-hood”

(8:3) → Must remember the [Creator/creature distinction] and its expression in “providence” as in **James 4:13-16**

Tithing was what *creature-hood dependency looked like in the financial part of life*.

III. FIRST TITHE (Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:21-24)

For the Levites' function:

- Levites “waited on the King” (worship rituals and facilities).
- Levites did not receive land-inheritance (no capital assets for production of wealth—public health and education) so could not be financially independent.
- Supported by a national “income tax.”

Num 18:21,24 as an inheritance. . .no inheritance. . .

God-given inheritance in Israel = starting capital asset for their financial life

Principle: *it takes capital to produce goods or services*

This is why “tax cuts” from confiscatory levels of taxation always result in economic prosperity.

Therefore this 1st tithe is a [civil law], a title protection law; it is not a “socialist re-distribution of wealth”.

Lev 27:31 add 1/5 to it. . .20% premium to redeem a “favorite” commodity item → economic pressure to not withhold items

IV. SECOND TITHE (Deut, 14:22-47)

14:22 grain. . .field

Rural “income tax” on agriculture; 1st tithe apparently included ALL income.

14:23 eat . . .in the place. . .the tithe. . .that you may fear Yahweh

A purpose clause.

- (1) “Holy wastefulness” – very expensive party time
- (2) Had to be consumed in food and drink and sharing with the Levites; not saved or invested
- (3) This is the prosperity test: can I trust the Lord who promises agricultural prosperity in response to obedience to Him?

There seems to be a play on words here:

“grain” = *dagan* (Dagan was a pagan god of prosperity in business—think of Samson)

“wine” = *terosh* (another pagan god)

Faith Rest Drill

(1)

(2)

(3)

14:24-25 too far. . .money in your hand. . .

Principle: there are specific places that can further or harm one’s spiritual growth depending upon your spiritual state; today it is the presence of other like-minded believers—no “isolated” Christians.

14:26 whatever your heart desires. . .rejoice

14:27 Levite within your gates

Cultural impact:

Annual orientation to [business] and [finance]: the means of prosperity is ultimately the Lord, not clever human planning by some Marxist-socialist elite, nor by “workaholism”. Like the relaxed, joyful attitude toward giving of one’s possessions as in **2 Cor 9:7** “*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*”

Economic impact just as the food laws did: (North’s economic commentary)

14:25 would make money scarcer and commodity prices cheaper in the areas distant from Jerusalem and the commodities scarcer and their prices higher in Jerusalem.

V. THIRD TITHE (Deut 14:28-29)

1st tithe →

2nd tithe →

14:28 every third year

store it within your gates

Levite, resident alien, orphan, widow. . .eat and be satisfied. . .

These received tithe #3 but not tithe #2 (tithes 2 and 3 are not the same)

Is tithe #3 a model of early social welfare—a model of using coercion against one group to finance a festival for another group, i.e., a welfare state?

Problems:

- (1) Each of these 4 classes did not hold title to land; they were judicially excluded from holding civil offices as Israelite circumcised males.
- (2) They weren't necessarily poor; economic status isn't a criterion here.
- (3) The *nokree* was excluded because he had no commitment to Yahweh.

Class	Relationship to the tithes
Israelite citizens	1,2,3 required (Levites exempted & receive all 3)
Ger	1, 2? required (exempted from 3 & recipient of 3)
Nokree	Exempted from all 3

14:29 that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand. . .

2nd purpose clause (besides 14:23).

Promise of economic blessing contingent upon sharing [profits]_with all covenant-keepers.

Tobit 1:5-8 *“But I alone went often to Jerusalem for the feasts, as it is ordained for all Israel by an everlasting decree. Taking the first fruits and the tithes of my produce and the first shearings, I would give these to the priests, the sons of Aaron, at the altar. Of all my produce I would give a tenth to the sons of Levi who ministered at Jerusalem; the second tenth I would sell, and I would go and spend the proceeds each year at Jerusalem; the third tenth I would give to those to whom it was my duty, as Deborah my father’s mother had commanded me, for I was left an orphan by my father.”*

Economic impact of the 3rd tithe:

- It put godly Israelite land-holders at a disadvantage economically to an alien land-leaser who did not have to tithe this 3rd tithe.
- This economic disadvantage along with a growing population would have led to less and less profit from rural land.
- Economic pressure would force urbanization (typifying God’s providential movement from rural Eden to the urban New Jerusalem).

VI. CONCLUSION

Loving the Lord with all your “soul” is pictured in these statutes and judgments because they show the outworking of the 10 commandments in the ancient Israelite theocracy.

Some suggestions so far:

- How we deal with death of family members and loved ones—our demeanor, funerals, and planning on death personally.
- How we eat—edifying to the temple of our bodies, consciousness and thankfulness for the animals who have died that we may live.
- How we treat our money and property—care of family property & inheritance for the next generation, recognition of the role of God’s providence in our labor and business, and a bias against government intrusion into the free market.

Faith Rest Drill

1	<i>Fragment of Scripture, Event-Picture, Doctrine</i>
2	<i>Develop a dominating rationale (“encircle the amoeba of cosmic unbelief”)</i>
3	<i>Experience the peace of God that goes beyond human comprehension</i>

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