

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 27: 1-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus 27: 1-8.

We have come to the last chapter of Leviticus, which is about vows and offerings. Some commentaries list this chapter as an epilogue to Leviticus, as an added conclusion. On the surface, this chapter deals with vows that people make to God, including offering persons, livestock, houses, and land. It explains how to value these when fulfilling vows, and how to handle the livestock, houses, and land. This chapter is indeed different from the previous 26 chapters.

There are also some commentaries that suggest this chapter was added later to regulate the operation of the temple, and to collect taxes from the people of Israel. I personally disagree with these views. I believe this is God speaking to Moses in the tabernacle, and recorded in Leviticus, as the most fitting conclusion to God's words. Without this chapter, Leviticus would not be complete. Why do I say this? Because in the previous 26 chapters of Scripture, God gave many commands, statutes, and ordinances to the congregation of Israel, which seem to impose many requirements on the Israelites. However, if we look deeper, we see that these requirements are actually God's grace.

After the fall of man, humanity was driven out of the Garden of Eden and could no longer come before God. Through Leviticus, God opened a way for people to return to Him. In New Testament terms, this way is Jesus Christ. Therefore, the first 26 chapters of Leviticus are full of types and shadows of Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Jesus Christ is the greatest gift that God has given to humanity, and Christ is the totality of God's grace given to us. The detailed experience of this grace is reflected throughout Leviticus chapters 1 to 26.

When people experience such great salvation, having walked such a profound journey, and enjoyed such abundant provisions, their natural response is to wish to make some return to God by making a vow. This vow is not an exchange of benefits or moral coercion, but a genuine response from someone who has truly experienced and enjoyed God's grace and is willing to make a vow to God, seeking God's approval of what is offered. At this point, a person may offer themselves or what they possess, such as livestock, houses, land, and so on. If the entire book of Leviticus were just God's one-sided giving without any response from the people, Leviticus would not be complete. Therefore, this chapter, recording the vows and offerings of the people to God, provides a perfect conclusion to the book of Leviticus.

When Moses led the two million Israelites out of Egypt and came to Mount Sinai, God revealed His will for the Israelites, which is recorded in Exodus 19:6, "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." God's original intention was for every Israelite to be a priest, serving God. However, in the incident of the golden calf, the Israelites failed and lost their priestly qualifications. Only the tribe of Levi remained faithful to God, and this tribe was set apart to serve God. Therefore, the rules for vows and offerings in this chapter were established in this context. People were to dedicate themselves to God, but if they could not serve in the tabernacle, they were to have their value assessed by God and converted into a monetary equivalent to be given to God.

However, New Testament saints, being a royal priesthood, are all qualified to serve God in the church, and therefore, they do not need to convert themselves into a monetary value. Therefore, when we read this chapter on vows, we must first understand that these rules applied in the context of the time, and then focus on the spiritual application for New Testament saints today.

Verses 1-2: "Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the Lord, according to your valuation, the persons shall be valued.'"

People, having experienced God's grace, make special vows to God, which is what is meant here by "consecrating a vow." We must understand that this is different from the vows made when people worship idols. In idol worship, vows are often made for personal gain, such as asking for a spouse, children, or wealth and status. When the requested blessings are received, the person promises to offer a certain amount in return. These vows are transactions for personal benefit. However, in the Bible, vows are not a trade with God. God has already given rich grace, and through experiencing, enjoying, and receiving it, we feel that God is so good and has provided so much that we willingly respond to Him. At this point, we may make a vow to God.

In making a vow, one can offer themselves. In this chapter, from verses 2-8, it mentions offering persons; in verses 9-13, offering livestock; in verses 14-15, offering houses; and in verses 16-25, offering land. Therefore, four things may be offered: persons, livestock, houses, and land.

Today, we will look at the first item, offering persons. One can offer themselves or their children. In 1 Samuel 1:27-28, Hannah, Samuel's mother, says, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore, I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he shall be lent to the Lord." Samuel was not a Levite; he was from the tribe of Ephraim and was not originally qualified to serve God. However, in Numbers 6:1-8, God made a provision through the Nazarite vow, allowing anyone who desired to serve God to take the Nazarite vow and be dedicated to God's service.

Because of Hannah's vow and Samuel's obedience, Samuel became a lifelong Nazarite and served the Lord. Later, he not only succeeded Eli as Israel's high priest, but he was also the last judge and played a key role in introducing the office of kingship in Israel. Those who were dedicated through vows, if not becoming Nazarites, were to be offered to God according to their estimated value.

The following verses, Leviticus 27:3-7, list the valuation of persons by age and gender. We will briefly go over these eight categories and later discuss the spiritual application for New Testament believers.

Verses 3-4: "If your valuation is of a male from twenty years old to sixty years old, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. If it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels."

These two verses provide the valuation for the first and second categories. First, people are classified by age, from 20 to 60 years, which is the period of adulthood, the prime age for responsibility and productivity, and therefore the most valuable. Among this age group, men are stronger than women, so the male valuation is fifty shekels, the highest among the eight categories. The female valuation is thirty shekels, the second highest in the eight categories. In Israel, the men of the tribe of Levi began serving God at the age of thirty, so the valuation of thirty shekels indicates that a person is considered capable of independent service. The shekel is a unit of weight and was valued according to the sanctuary's standard.

Verse 5: "And if it is from five years old to twenty years old, then your valuation for a male shall be twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels."

This includes the third and fourth categories of valuation, for those between five and twenty years old. The male valuation is twenty shekels, while the female valuation is ten shekels. This period is the stage of childhood and adolescence, where they are still growing and learning. They can assist the young adults in serving but are not yet able to independently carry out responsibilities, so their valuation is lower than thirty shekels.

Verse 6: "And if it is from one month to five years old, then your valuation for a male shall be five shekels, and for a female three shekels."

This is the fifth and sixth categories of valuation, for those from one month to five years old, still in infancy. They require care from others, so their valuation is the lowest. The male valuation is five shekels, while the female valuation is three shekels.

Verse 7: "And if it is from sixty years old and above, then your valuation for a male shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels."

This is the seventh and eighth categories of valuation, for those over sixty years old. In this stage of life, people have gained experience, but their physical strength is less, and they are not able to work independently. The male valuation is fifteen shekels, which is less than the valuation for males in childhood and adolescence, while the female valuation is ten shekels, the same as for children and adolescents. This might also reflect the reality that men often age faster than women.

The eight categories of valuation in these verses represent the value of individuals who have been vowed to God, either themselves or their children. This is a voluntary offering, different from the temple tax (or "half-shekel tax") required for every male adult in Israel as described in Exodus 30:12-13. The temple tax was a fixed amount, half a shekel for each individual, to redeem their lives before God, symbolizing the price of redemption for all, which is the same for everyone, regardless of age or status.

From a spiritual perspective, the half-shekel tax points to our salvation, as everyone is redeemed by Jesus Christ, and there is no distinction. However, when someone dedicates themselves to God's service, their value is influenced by their spiritual maturity and experiences, and this is reflected in different valuations.

In the New Testament, every believer is a priest, and there is no longer a need for a price valuations to replace offerings. Instead, these different valuations reflect the value of believers in God's eyes, based on their spiritual maturity and service.

Spiritual Application from the New Testament Perspective: The shekel is based on the sanctuary's standard, which can be seen in New Testament terms as the "spiritual measure" of the church. Service to God is no longer based on a physical or temporal measure, but on one's spiritual life and service in the church. In this context, age no longer refers to physical age, but to spiritual maturity. Male and female are no longer distinctions based on natural gender, but on spiritual strength or weakness. Here are seven categories of spiritual valuation:

Fifty shekels: This is the highest spiritual measure, representing someone who can carry responsibility in the church, whether in teaching, serving children, or other ministries. This person is capable of bearing a significant role in the church and its ministries.

Thirty shekels: This represents someone who, while not yet fully capable of leading a ministry, can independently carry out tasks and fulfill the duties assigned to them.

Twenty shekels: This represents someone still learning, who cannot yet operate independently but is starting to serve under the guidance of more experienced believers.

Fifteen shekels: This person's spiritual life has declined, but they still have value in God's eyes. Spiritual decline is not necessarily a result of aging but may occur due to personal struggles or a lack of victory over difficulties.

Ten shekels: This category is for new believers or those who have faced struggles but continue to serve, showing a willingness to contribute despite challenges.

Five shekels: This category represents those who are newly converted and are filled with joy and enthusiasm, even if they lack deep biblical knowledge or experience. Their zeal is still valuable in God's eyes.

Three shekels: This represents young or weak believers, who might be the least experienced but still valuable in the church. Their presence and willingness to participate in fellowship are a beautiful testimony, and they have great potential for growth.

In God's kingdom, every believer has value and plays a necessary role. The worth of each individual is not measured by worldly standards but by spiritual growth, service, and commitment to God's work. Every believer, regardless of their stage of maturity, is essential in God's family.

Verse 8: "If he is poor and cannot pay the valuation, then he shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall value him according to the ability of him who vowed."

When a person makes a vow and knows their valuation but is unable to pay the specified amount due to poverty, they are to be brought before the priest. The priest will reassess the value according to the person's ability, ensuring they can pay. God cares for every willing heart. Even when a person becomes poor due to their foolishness and cannot afford the prescribed amount, God still shows grace by allowing the priest to adjust the valuation to something they can afford, so the person can fulfill their vow.

Here we see God's grace. For New Testament believers, God's grace is even greater. How many times have we experienced God's grace, made vows to Him, but later grew weak, failed, and fell, wasting many years as the locusts consumed our days? Later, restored by God, we shyly return to the church and find that Christ opens His arms to welcome us, revaluing us according to what we can afford. He does not let us become covenant-breakers but allows us to begin again in His house. What a grace this is!

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for valuing everyone in Your house, whether they are mature and have fifty shekels or newly saved with three shekels, or even those who are poor and cannot afford the valuation. Lord, You open a way of grace for every person who is willing to make a vow, so that they can ultimately fulfill it. Lord, today help me reflect on the deep grace I have received. Give me a thankful heart, willing to carefully measure myself and joyfully dedicate myself to You. May You be glorified through my offering. Help me to serve regularly in the church

through my commitment. Bless the church I belong to. I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."