

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

Leviticus 27: 16-25

Greetings, brothers and sisters, peace be with you. This is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord. It is time again for our Scripture reading. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus chapter 27, focusing on verses 16 through 25.

We have already discussed the offerings of persons, livestock, and houses made in fulfillment of special vows. Today, we will examine the offering of inherited land. Offering land as a vow is different from the previous types of offerings, which humans do have ultimate ownership and can offer them freely. However, the land is not the same. Humans do not have the ultimate ownership. As it is written in Leviticus 25:23, "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine." This passage clearly establishes that ownership of the land belongs to God.

In Scripture, God repeatedly declares that the entire earth is His. By His grace, He apportioned the land to the Israelites as an inheritance, granting them usage rights but retaining sovereignty. Thus, land sales were limited to the Jubilee Year, at which time all sold property was to return to its original owners. Because land is of such significance, specific regulations were instituted regarding its offering to the Lord. We shall first explore the literal meaning of these statutes as they applied to the Israelites, before reflecting on their spiritual application for New Testament believers.

Verses 16–17: "If someone dedicates to the Lord part of the land that is his by inheritance, then its valuation shall be in proportion to its seed. A homer of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver. If he dedicates his field from the year of Jubilee, the valuation shall stand."

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, it was distributed among tribes and families, with each family receiving the land as an inheritance to be passed down through generations.

If someone separates a portion of the land he has inherited and consecrates it as holy to the Lord. The mention of "a portion" here implies that one cannot dedicate the entire inheritance of land to God. This is because the land is how the Israelites sustain their lives, and it is also an inheritance passed down through generations. Therefore, only a portion of the land could be consecrated to the Lord.

The land's valuation was determined by the quantity of seed required to sow it, and the number of years remaining until the Jubilee. For instance, if a field required one homer of barley seed (at that time, a homer of barley worth a shekel of silver) to sow and was dedicated immediately after the Jubilee, and it has 50 years until the next Jubilee, then its value would be fifty shekels of silver. Homer is a unit of volume. One homer is equivalent to 10 ephahs, and one ephah is 22 liters today, so one homer is 220 liters. Based on the quantity of barley, we can reverse-calculate the approximate area of the land.

Verse 18: "But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall calculate the price according to the years that remain until the Jubilee, and a deduction shall be made from the valuation."

If the landowner dedicated his field after the Jubilee, the priest would adjust the valuation based on the remaining years until the next Jubilee. For example, If we still take the example of the area of land that one homer can cultivate, and if this person made a vow to separate it as a holy offering to God 20 years after the Year of Jubilee, with 30 years remaining until the next Jubilee, and they plant one homer's worth of seed each year, then the total amount of seed is 30 homers, which is worth 30 shekels of silver.

Here is a detail concerning valuation that attentive saints may have already noticed. If a piece of land is vowed as an offering to the Lord, its valuation is based on the

number of seeds sown. But what if the same piece of land is involved in buying and selling? We turn to Leviticus 25:15-16, "You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the Jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the years of crops. If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of crops that he is selling to you."

Here we see the ordinance regarding the buying and selling of land. Though the Year of Jubilee remains the reference point, the price is calculated according to the yield of crops each year. For a vow offering to God, the valuation is based on the quantity of seed sown, but in the marketplace, it is based on the yield of the harvest. The difference between these two approaches is vast.

A single grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, and from it grows a stalk, but how many seeds will it bear? According to Matthew 13:8, Jesus said: "Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Thus, if the barley seed falls on good soil, it may yield thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or even a hundredfold. Therefore, if this land is dedicated to God, its valuation would be at least thirty times lower than the market price, which is based on the harvest yield. In some cases, the difference could be as much as a hundredfold.

Seeing such a vast difference, could it be that God made a mistake in His calculations? In truth, this is a special grace from God. God has ordained it this way for several possible reasons.

First, land is the inheritance of the family, and how generations provide for themselves. By setting the valuation in this manner, God ensures that if the land is dedicated, it will not be too difficult to redeem.

Second, in general, the land is consecrated to God, but the priests and Levites, who are occupied with serving in the Tabernacle, do not have the time to till the land. Therefore, it is typically the offeror who cultivates it, needing only to pay the estimated value each year. This valuation represents only a small portion of the harvest, ensuring that the burden on the offeror remains light.

Third, the valuation is based on the number of seeds sown, which is to be offered to God, but the rest—the fruit of the labor—belongs to the one who tills the soil. Here we see that God simply wants His people to remember that the source of all blessings is from Him. The seed is from God. In this, we witness God's generosity and mercy. Even in the matter of vow offerings, God still allows the offeror to experience abundant blessings.

Verse 19: "And if the person who dedicates the field to the Lord wishes to redeem it, he shall add a fifth to its valuation, and it shall remain his."

If a person vows to consecrate a piece of land to the Lord, they have the option to redeem it. However, they must pay the estimated value and then add 20% on top of it. The method of valuation is based on the cost of the seeds needed to sow the land each year, multiplied by the number of years remaining until the next Year of Jubilee. This valuation, with the added 20% for redemption, is still significantly lower than the market price. God does this so that those who truly need it may find it easier to redeem the land.

Verse 20-21: "But if he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another, it shall not be redeemed anymore. But when it is released in the Jubilee, the field shall be holy to the Lord, as a devoted field; it shall be the possession of the priests."

If a person consecrates a piece of land but does not redeem it by the next Year of Jubilee, the land becomes permanently dedicated to the Lord. It is to remain holy and is given to the priests as their inheritance. However, if the person redeems the land before the Jubilee and later sells it again—perhaps due to unforeseen circumstances or urgent financial need—he can still redeem the land at its estimated value, adding 20% to the price. Since the redemption price is far lower than the market value, if he were to take the land to the marketplace to sell, he could still obtain a considerable sum of money to meet the needs of his household.

In such a case, if the land is sold and by the next Jubilee, the land will be released from the buyer's hands. However, it will not return to the original owner; instead, it will be consecrated to the Lord and become the possession of the priests.

Here, we see that God remembers the vows and offerings of His people. Even though the individual may have faced unexpected circumstances and redeemed the land, when the Jubilee arrives, God still remembers the vow and ensures the land is returned to Him and remaining in His hands.

Verse 22-24: "If he consecrates to the Lord a field that he has bought, which is not a part of his inherited property, then the priest shall calculate the value for him up to the year of Jubilee, and the man shall pay the value on that day as a holy offering to the Lord. In the year of Jubilee, the field shall return to the one from whom it was bought, to him who owned the land as a possession."

If someone buys a piece of land that is not part of his inherited possession but is purchased at market value, it must be redeemed by the original owner in the Jubilee year, because land in Israel cannot be permanently bought. However, if the purchaser consecrates the land to the Lord, it becomes holy. The priest will calculate its value, based on the cost of the seed needed for sowing, and apply this value to the time remaining until the Jubilee. On the day of the vow, the purchaser must set aside this value as holy and dedicate it to the Lord. But when the Jubilee arrives, the land will return to the original owner, the one who inherited it.

Here we see that God places great importance on the land allocation for each person. Even if someone, due to poor stewardship, must sell their land, and that land is later consecrated to God, it will still be returned to the original owner in the Jubilee year. However, if the original owner consecrates the land to the Lord as holy and does not redeem it, the land will remain holy and belong to God forever.

In this, we also see God's deep respect for human free will. Even those who, due to poverty, are forced to sell their land, God still watches over them and honors their decisions. The land they receive is theirs alone to consecrate, and only they have

the right to offer it as a permanent offering to God. Otherwise, in the Jubilee year, the land must return to its original owner.

Verse 25: "Every valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs shall make a shekel."

Everything involving the valuation of property or offerings is to be done according to the standard of the sanctuary, which ensures fairness and justice. A shekel is made up of 20 gerahs; both the shekel and the gerah were units of weight. One gerah is approximately 0.57 grams, so one shekel would be about 11.4 grams.

In today's passage, we see that the land belongs to God, as it is His sovereign gift to the people of Israel. The Israelites were entrusted with the right to use it. Every family relied on the land for sustenance and could also offer the produce of the land as a gift to God.

How should the New Testament believers apply these principles today regarding these scriptures concerning the land being consecrated to God? What is "our land"? The closest modern comparison might be our vocation. Land was the place where the Israelites worked and earned their livelihood, just as our occupations today are how we sustain ourselves. We can also dedicate a portion of the income from our work as an offering to God. But is our occupation a portion that God has given us in the same way He gave the land to Israel? Perhaps, but not necessarily. Can we consecrate our occupation to God? In some cases, yes—but for most, no.

Perhaps a better comparison is not to view it as our earthly occupation, but from a spiritual perspective: the role that God has assigned to each believer. In other words, each believer uses their gifts to serve God and minister to the church, developing a particular field or area of service. This is their place of ministry, the 'factory' of their service, and it is the stewardship entrusted to each believer by God.

Spiritual gifts are related to a person's abilities, but they are not the same as a person's natural talents. In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, verses

14-15 say: “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.”

Here we see that God gives silver according to each person’s abilities—some receive five talents, some two, and some one—according to the original Greek text, five talents, two talents, and one talent.

Talent is a unit of weight, and today the word 'talent' refers to a person’s abilities. God gives silver according to each person’s talents. So, what are talents? Talents are a person’s natural abilities plus the training and development they receive—through learning and practice. Talents thus become the tools a person uses to make a living on earth, and they are a manifestation of one's self-worth and the standard by which a person is measured. However, a person’s natural talents cannot be directly used to serve God; they must first be redeemed. Therefore, God gives silver according to a person’s talents, using silver to redeem a person’s abilities, so that those talents can then be used for God’s service. In the parable, the one who was given 5 talents and earned another 5 had his natural talents fully redeemed. On the other hand, the one who was given 1 talent and buried it in the ground used his talents solely for the world, without developing them into gifts for serving God.

Each believer’s role requires them to use their gifts repeatedly to fulfill their responsibility, so redeeming their talents is just the first step. When a believer begins to fulfill their duty, what kind of role can they develop? How can they accomplish the mission God has entrusted to them? To answer this, we should look at another parable of Jesus, found in Luke 19:11-27, where God called ten servants and gave each of them a mina, instructing them to go and do business. In this passage, there is no mention of talents; thus, this mina is not the gift of service, but the gift of life. From the perspective of life, everyone is the same: each person receives one mina, and each person receives eternal life. But some, with their one mina, made ten minas, which means their life grew and fully reached the measure God had set for them."

We know that the growth of a person's life comes through service. As their life reaches the measure God has set for them, through their service, they fulfill the mission God has entrusted to them. The servant who turned one mina into five minas has completed 50% of his entrusted mission. On the other hand, the one who wrapped his mina in a cloth and hid it represents someone whose life, after receiving salvation, stagnated—there was no growth at all.

Now, following this line of thought, let us look back at the matter of dedicating land to God. The valuation occurs between two jubilees. The first jubilee is when a person believes in the gospel of Jesus Christ, receiving salvation—this is the first jubilee for them. The second jubilee is when Christ returns to establish His millennial kingdom on earth and set up the judgment seat in heaven to judge the saints of the New Covenant.

Some, after being saved, completely dedicate themselves to the Lord until Christ's return. In God's eyes, their valuation is the highest, corresponding to the one who earned ten minas. When Christ returns, they will reign with Him and be given authority over ten cities. Some, after being saved, make a vow of dedication after some time, and their valuation is calculated based on the ratio to the second jubilee. When the second jubilee comes, at the judgment seat of Christ, they will receive rewards according to what they have accomplished. Others, after making a vow of dedication, redeem it and eventually sell it again. When the second jubilee comes, at Christ's return, their previous dedication will still be remembered by God. Still, others never made a vow of dedication but instead sold their land. When the second jubilee comes, at Christ's return, they will receive the portion originally assigned to them. The salvation a person receives will never be lost, but such a person will not receive a reward.

Here, we are just making a rough comparison between the land of Israel and the duties of New Testament saints, in principle. We hope that each of us will value the calling God has given us and develop our gifts, serving Him wholeheartedly. Perhaps we have been saved for some time but have not yet dedicated our "land"—our calling—to the Lord. If so, we should now redeem the time and ask the Lord for His mercy.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. When we were saved by Your grace, not only did we receive eternal life, but You also allotted to each of us our portion—our calling in the New Covenant. Grant me wisdom and the Spirit of revelation, so that I may understand what You have entrusted to me. Help me redeem my talents, develop them into my spiritual gifts, and use these gifts to serve in the church, fulfilling my responsibilities. Throughout this process of service, help us to make vows and offer them to You. For all these things come from You, and ultimately, the glory belongs to You. Bless my service, I pray, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.