

# Scripture Lesson Text

**LEV. 19:9** And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

**10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God.**

11 Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

**12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.**

13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob *him*: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

**14 Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.**

15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: *but* in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

**16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy**

**people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.**

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.

**18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.**

33 And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him.

**34 But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.**

35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

**36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.**

37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD.

## NOTES

# Obedience Among Neighbors

Lesson Text: Leviticus 19:9-18, 33-37

Related Scriptures: *Psalm 15:1-5; Ruth 2:4-17; I Kings 21:1-14; Matthew 5:43-48; James 2:1-9*

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **COMPASSION FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE—Lev. 19:9-14**

Help for the needy (Lev. 19:9-10). Israel's law recognized the presence of needy persons, and it provided means for their survival. The owners of grain fields, vineyards, and olive trees were obligated to allow remnants of their crops to remain for the poor.

**Honest deeds and words (Lev. 19:11-13).** These verses forbid fraud against one's neighbor, whether by deed or word: "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely."

Added to this prohibition is a second: "neither lie one to another" (vs. 11). Stealing and lying go hand in hand; both are forms of deceit. Here the lying occurs as a means of defrauding a neighbor of property or reputation.

This leads into the next prohibition: "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God" (vs. 12).

We need to beware of those who constantly claim that God "led" them to do certain deeds. To be God's will, those deeds must be consistent with His Word. To attach God's name to sin and falsehood is the most callous form of profanity.

After repeating the command not to defraud or rob a neighbor (vs. 13), this law is applied to the treatment of a hired worker.

The commandment here condemns the practice of withholding wages, even till the next morning. It is made specific in Deuteronomy 24:14-15, which emphasizes the worker's poverty and need. It also emphasizes that it makes no difference whether the worker is an Israelite or a foreigner.

**Respect for the disabled (Lev. 19:14).** Israel's law also condemned those who dishonored the infirm. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf" focuses on an act that is cowardly, since the deaf cannot hear the curse and give any response. Equally callous is putting a stumbling block before the blind.

To dishonor the disabled is to take lightly the God who created them. The alternative to these sins is to "fear thy God."

### **COMPASSION IN ATTITUDES—Lev. 19:15-18**

**Equity in judgment (Lev. 19:15).** "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment" applies especially to judges and other officials, but it is also related

to anyone who could bring a lawsuit.

This “unrighteousness” could take the form of either showing partiality to the poor or giving unmerited deference to the powerful.

**Restraint in speaking (Lev. 19:16).** Israelites were forbidden to “go up and down as a talebearer among thy people.” “Talebearer” here should be understood as “slanderer.” There is nothing more harmful to a peaceful society than the circulation of unfounded rumors and charges. It destroys trust and raises suspicions about all that is said (Jer. 9:3-4).

**Love for neighbor (Lev. 19:17-18).** Israel is next commanded, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart.”

This does not mean overlooking a brother’s faults: “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour.” Rebuking someone for sin is actually doing him a favor, for it may rescue him from God’s judgment.

Finally, a compassionate attitude means “thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people” (vs. 18).

### **COMPASSION IN PERSONAL DEALINGS—Lev. 19:33-37**

**Fairness to strangers (Lev. 19:33-34).** This final section of our lesson singles out specific areas in which compassion is to be practiced. The first is fair treatment of resident aliens in Israel.

In fact, “the stranger . . . shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself” (vs. 34).

The Israelites were to love foreigners because they themselves had been strangers in Egypt. They therefore should always sympathize with sojourners.

**Fairness in business (Lev. 19:35-36).** Unjust dealings are nowhere more common than in business transac-

tions. The law thus commands integrity in using measurements while conducting business.

Merchants therefore were to have “just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin” (Lev. 19:36). Deuteronomy 25:13-15 forbids the deceitful practice of using two different sets of weights and measures.

**Rationale for compassion (Lev. 19:37).** At the conclusion of these commands, the Lord directed the Israelites’ minds back to the reason for them. He was “the Lord (Yahweh),” who had a special relationship with them. Therefore, their behavior was to exalt His name (Exod. 19:5-6).

—Robert E. Wenger.

## **QUESTIONS**

1. How were farmers in Israel to provide for the poor?
2. How are stealing and lying similar?
3. How might someone today invoke God’s name for an evil cause?
4. How were Israelites to be fair in their treatment of hired workers?
5. Why is mistreatment of the disabled such a serious sin?
6. What two wrongs must be avoided in legal cases?
7. What serious consequences can result from slandering a person?
8. How can we rebuke a neighbor and still love him?
9. What status were resident aliens to have in Israel? Why should the Israelites have appreciated this?
10. How are God’s people to conduct themselves in business transactions?

—Robert E. Wenger.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Laying claim to everything we rightfully own is not pleasing to the Lord (Lev. 19:9-10).
2. No dishonesty of any kind should ever be found among God's people (vss. 11-13).
3. How we treat other people shows our true attitude toward God (vss. 14-16).
4. Hatred, anger, and grudges must be replaced by a commitment to love others (vss. 17-18).
5. Outsiders are to be welcomed, for we were once outsiders too (vss. 33-34).
6. Honesty and integrity in all relationships are paramount in the Lord's eyes (vss. 35-37).

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Although we no longer observe the statutes on gleaning crops (Lev. 19:9-10), what modern practices might maintain the spirit of the law?
2. What is entailed in swearing "by [the Lord's] name falsely" (vs. 12)?
3. Although we might not be blatant about it, how might we "curse the deaf" or "put a stumblingblock before the blind" (vs. 14)?
4. How do the negative commands in verse 18 shed light on what is involved in loving our neighbor?
5. How does the threefold repetition of "I am the Lord" (vss. 34, 36, 37) underscore the imperative of personal integrity?

—Kenneth A. Sponsler.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18).**

Tucked away in the frequently difficult book of Leviticus is one of the most consequential verses of the Old Testament. We know it merits such importance because the Lord Jesus Himself confirmed it. When He was asked what the greatest commandment in the law was, He responded that loving God with all one's heart and mind was paramount. He then added that a second command was of like status, and He proceeded to cite the last portion of our golden text: "Love thy neighbour as thyself" (cf. Matt. 22:36-39; Deut. 6:5).

Our golden text comes at the end of a series of verses covering the way people should treat their fellow Israelites. Because the closing of the text is so well known, it is easy to overlook the first part of the verse. The prohibition against vengeance is not easy to follow. This is really a good example of how obedience is wrapped up in having faith. We can resist avenging personal wrongs if we can leave vengeance, or justice, to God.

The text goes one step further, though. Not only are we not to act in vengeance, but we are not even to bear a grudge. Again, this goes beyond outward actions to deal with the attitude of the heart.

The verse closes with the refrain "I am the Lord." All of life is to revolve around obeying Him.

—Stephen H. Barnhart.