

**July 5**

**Scriptures:** Read Deuteronomy 15 & 16

**Key Verse:** “You shall surely give to him [a poor man of your brethren, v.7], and your heart should not be grieved... because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you...” (Deuteronomy 15:10)

## **Overview**

In chapter 15 Moses continued to exhort Israel to be kind and generous to the underprivileged, for this was God’s desire. Along with the special tithe every third year to care for the poor, the Lord demanded that those who were financially able must lend without any hesitation to those in need, and that in the seventh sabbatical year any outstanding debts among those in the covenant family were to be cancelled.

One may ask, “How could this practice be financially feasible”? For the people of faith, this stipulation was indeed feasible, for God’s blessing was promised if they obeyed (15:5, 10). Putting it into practice was guarantee of God’s blessing and prosperity, for both the individual and the nation (15:6), but failure to do so would mean the opposite (28:43-45). To lend money in the sixth year, then, was to practically give it away (15:9-10); yet, they were encouraged to happily lend, even if it would mean they might not get it back. Centuries later, Jesus expressed this same idea in other words (Luke 6:30, 34).

Moses was being realistic, even prophetic, when he told them the poor would always exist (15:11; Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 26:11), yet their presence gave opportunity for godly people to generously and happily open their hands to help, “for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor.9:7). Sadly, it was not to be expected that all Israel would fully obey these laws of God, yet those laws did show God’s care and concern for the more unfortunate members of His Covenant community, a care which He desires to see put into action by His faithful ones (cf. Gal.6:10; James 2:15-16; Matt.5:22) as evidence that the love of God abides in them (1 John 3:17). Demonstrating God’s love in such a way is actually an act of worship to God.

This same release in the seventh year also applied to Israelite slaves (15:12) who, out of dire poverty, were forced to sell themselves into slavery. When they were sent away, they were to be provided for generously by the one they had served for six years, just as Israel did not leave Egypt empty-handed when released from bondage. If, however, slaves were happy and desired to remain in servitude, they were to have their ear pierced in a public ceremony, showing their willingness.

This divine concept of the sabbatical release was to serve as a constant reminder for Israel of their own deliverance from bondage and as a means whereby the original family inheritance could be maintained. It was designed to help relieve poverty among the covenant community and to ensure that none remained in perpetual bondage. The basis for charity and benevolence was then, as it still is today (Luke 6:36; Matt.5:48), that their God was benevolent and merciful to them. Anything they had was a gift from the Lord, for all things belong to Him. Moses reminded them of this by the command to consecrate the first-born of their flocks and herds to God (15:19).

In chapter 16, Moses discussed matters having to do with the central sanctuary—the place of worship. He had previously instructed Israel about the various feasts, but here in the covenant renewal of Deuteronomy he condensed and modified much of the same information to make it more applicable to the new generation. He reviewed instructions regarding the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost), and the Feast Tabernacles (details in Lev. 23). In mentioning these feasts, Moses emphasized the importance of corporate worship at God’s sanctuary and once again stressed generosity, this time in giving to the work of the Lord (16:16-17).

## **Prayer**

Father God, You own everything and we’re just stewards of Your property. Help us, therefore, to have Your attitudes toward money and other material things. You are truly a Giver. Give us Your grace to be like You.