

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26 F. Heeding God's Way Of Overcoming A Scarcity Mindset With Generosity (Deuteronomy 15:1-23)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

How we view valued possessions of all kinds dramatically affects the well-being of our inner man:

(1) If we focus on the "glass half full," on the **scarcity** or the *threat* of **scarcity** of our possessions of time, money, friends, health, etc., our inner man can implode: the editors of The Economist (August 31, 2013, p. 71) gave a report on Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir's book, Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much where the authors, successful academics at Harvard and Princeton respectively, "study people for a living -- often people who lack money." They claimed that as people "feel they lack something," they "succumb to a . . . 'scarcity mindset,'" and concentrate on "pressing needs," greatly valuing the missing "dollar, minute, calorie or smile" as the case may be, but also shortening their "horizons" and narrowing their "perspective, creating a dangerous tunnel vision." This "(a)nxiety also saps brainpower and willpower," so "(b)y making people slower witted and weaker willed, scarcity creates a mindset that perpetuates scarcity" (Ibid.), a state of feeling helplessly cornered that is fuel for depression.

(2) On the other hand, Elizabeth Svoboda's article, "Hard-Wired for Giving" (The Wall Street Journal, August 31, 2013, p. C1) reported scientists are finding it is much healthier on the inner man if one is generous: neuroscientists like Jordan Grafman, director of brain injury research at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, through use of tools like fMRI that "highlights blood flow in different parts of the brain," have found that "scans revealed that when people made the decision to donate to what they felt was a worthy organization, parts of the midbrain lit up -- the same region that controls cravings . . . and the same region that became active when subjects added money to their personal reward accounts." (Ibid.)

In other words, "this new evidence suggests that giving is actually inherently rewarding: The brain churns out a pleasurable response when we engage in it," (Ibid.) indicating we are **naturally** 'hard-wired' to be **generous!**

Need: Accordingly, we ask, "How can I live ABOVE an unhealthy 'scarcity mindset' to be GENEROUS like GOD 'hard-wired' me to be -- what are the SPIRITUAL dynamics involved?!"

I. Deuteronomy 15:1-23 taught Israel to OVERCOME a "SCARCITY MINDSET" by TRUSTING GOD'S REIMBURSEMENT PROVIDING she GENEROUSLY DONATED toward HIS Biblical INTERESTS:

- A. Deuteronomy 15:1-23 is part of the Deuteronomy chapters 12-26 specific treaty stipulations (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 260) that were not an exhaustive list of God's laws, but instructed Israel on specific spiritual challenges she would face upon entering the land of Canaan, Ibid., p. 283; Deuteronomy 4:1.
- B. Well, much like the lure of following false Baals over trusting God for rain (our last lesson from Deuteronomy 14:22-29), Israel faced the lure to **idolize possessions** in a self-destructive "scarcity mindset," so God told her to **trust Him to reimburse her** so she might **for her good give generously to His interests**, Deut. 15:1-23:
 1. God told Israel to trust Him to refund her that she might forgive others debts as He willed, Deut. 15:1-11:
 - a. Every seventh year, God wanted His people to forgive all debts other Hebrews owed them, Deut. 15:1-2. They could still hold foreigners responsible for their debts, but not fellow Hebrews, Deuteronomy 15:3.
 - b. To offset Israel's concern as to how she could **AFFORD** to be so **generous**, Moses said God intended that there be no poor in Israel since the Lord planned (literally) "to bless He will bless you" (*barek yebarekka*) an infinitive absolute with its finite verb for "bless" (*barak*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 287; B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 138-139), a grammatical construction **strengthening** the main verb to make it mean God planned "**richly** to bless" Israel in reimbursing her if she was generous, Deut. 15:4 NIV.
 - c. However, using the same infinitive-absolute-with-its-finite-verb construction for "heed," God said that the **condition** for His rich reimbursement depended on Israel's "to heed you will heed" (*shamoa' tishma'*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 1033-1034), or "**strictly** heeding" His order to forgive debts! (Deut. 15:5)
 - d. God **again** said He would reimburse Israel for heeding Him on the forgiving of such debts, knowing there would be a temptation for a "scarcity mindset" against such obedience, Deut. 15:6a. God planned to bless those who forgave debts by keeping them from such indebtedness in their own lives, Deut. 15:6b.
 - e. The Lord anticipated Israel's temptation not to loan to fellow Hebrews since they thus risked not getting all their money back, so He forbade such restraint, Deut. 15:7: indeed, God used a **double** dose of the

infinitive-absolute-with-its-finite-verb construction to direct **"to open you will open [your hand to him] to cause to lend you will cause to lend"** (*patoha tiptah* ['et-yadka lo] *ha'abet ta'abitenu*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. D., p. 834-835 and 716), i. e., "you will be *openhanded* unto him and *freely* lend," Deut. 15:8 NIV.

- f. God also knew that one might be hesitant to lend in the sixth year since he would have to forgive the entire debt the next year at a considerable loss (Deut. 15:9), so He used the infinitive-absolute-with-its-finite-verb construction once *again* to assert "to give you will give" to him (*naton titen*, Ibid., Kittel, p. 288; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 678-681), i. e., "you will *generously* give " to him even in the sixth year, and God would fully bless the loaning party in all the works of his hand, Deuteronomy 15:10.
- g. The Lord knew there would always be poor in Israel due to human weakness and sin, so He told her always to be generous to the needy since He would always abundantly reimburse her, Deuteronomy 15:11.
2. God told Israel to trust Him to refund her that she might free her slaves as He willed, Deut. 15:12-18:
 - a. Some people incurred such great debts that they had to sell themselves or members of their family into slavery to pay for these debts, so God directed the release of such slaves every seventh year, Deut. 15:12.
 - b. However, the slave owner was not to send his slave off with no goods, for that would force him back into slavery, so God called Israel to release a Hebrew slave using the now familiar infinitive-absolute-with-its-finite-verb construction in an *idiomatic* saying, "to make a rich necklace you shall make a rich necklace" (*ha'aneq ta'aniq*, Ibid., Kittel; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 778), i. e., "you will richly load him" out of your flock, threshing floor and winepress, Deut. 15:13-14. They were to do this, recalling how God had long ago freed Israel from Egyptian bondage with the spoils of Egypt, Deut. 15:15 with Ex. 12:35-36 NIV.
 - c. If the slave, man or woman, desired to stay with the master's family for financial security, the master had to make him a bondservant and support him for life with God's implied reimbursements, Deut. 15:16-17.
 - d. God did not want Israel to grieve over having to release a Hebrew slave, for it would have cost him twice as much to hire a regular worker to do his service, and God would reimburse him anyway in all of his endeavors, Deuteronomy 15:18. (Ibid., *Bible Know. Com.*, O. T., p. 291)
3. God told Israel to trust Him to refund her that she might give up the firstborn as He willed, Deut. 15:19-23:
 - a. The call of God to forgive debts and release slaves was followed by His command for Israel to give up her firstborn animals in sacrifice to God, Deut. 15:19. Such an animal was to be eaten before the Lord in a communal meal at the tabernacle (Deut. 15:20) providing it was without blemish (Deut. 15:21), but if it had a blemish, it was to be eaten at home with its blood being poured out upon the ground, Deut. 15:22-23.
 - b. By implication, again, Israel was to trust God for a bountiful reimbursement of many more animals!

Lesson: *God directed Israel so to TRUST His reimbursements that she would NOT HOARD her possessions in a sinful, self-destructive "scarcity mindset," but GENEROUSLY RELEASE them to God's interests for blessing!*

Application: *May we (1) trust in Christ as Savior to become a child of God under His Much More Care, John 1:11-12; Romans 8:32. (2) Then, TRUSTING Him to REIMBURSE us as we heed His will, may we GENEROUSLY DONATE to God's interests as directed by Scripture in our dispensation (cf. 2 Corinthians 9:6-10) to escape a harmful "scarcity mindset" and obtain rich divine blessings due to deeds of generosity in a life of faith!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

A neat illustration of a life of faith in generosity with God's reimbursement recently occurred for a young couple my wife and I know who live in another state. Some months back, the husband called us, expressing concern about not earning enough money in his job, and he asked if God wanted him to seek work elsewhere with higher pay.

The job market today is especially tough for young adults who seek to make a living in a marketplace that requires "experience" that they as a group in particular often understandably lack!

We advised him that if he busied himself serving the Lord in his local Biblical Church, to protect God's interests in that believers Christian service in that body, God would lead him relative to his job to meet his material needs, whether or not it meant looking for another job. He understood this, and replied, "Gotcha!"

Upon heeding this advice, in a short time, the husband got a raise at work, and his wife landed a nice, entry-level, part time, private sector job complete with paid on-the-job training just minutes from their home! As they gave of themselves to God's will to serve Him in their local Biblical Church, the Lord reimbursed them to meet their needs!

May we trust in Christ as our Savior to come under His blessed care! Then, may we AVOID a self-destructive "scarcity mindset" by TRUSTING God to reimburse us abundantly for GENEROUSLY GIVING of ourselves and/or our resources to HIS interests. We will then enjoy His great blessing in a life of faith!