

ON WEALTH, MONEY, and TAXES

Many a willfully ignorant man sneers at the numerous commandments given in the Books of Moses, the Torah or the Teaching. But Moses himself asked in Deuteronomy “what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?” and Jesus once lamented in Luke 16 ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’ Let us ponder what is meant by wise laws as they pertain to wealth, money and taxes. The brackets [n] refer to an appendix section with indicative (not exhaustive) verses supporting this summary.

What is Wealth? - From the days of Avraham, flocks and herds, gold and silver, timber and spices, all with intrinsic value have honorable mention. [1] A heart at peace with God is the ultimate wealth, and the only form we take with us when, as Moses put it, *we fly away*.

Payments in Gold? - Gold was used widely in God’s Tabernacle and Temple. Gold was also used among kings and queens on a friendly basis. [2] It was, further, part of war-time plunder and exactions of tribute when wars were over. But it was not given by God to be our money.

Payments in Silver? - Silver by standard weight is given in Torah for many payments, both to the Priests of God, and to other persons. [3] This shows up for important payments such as redeeming a first born son (5 shekel); paying the poll tax (1/2 shekel) to prevent a plague from breaking out; the price paid to a bride’s family (50 shekels); the price for injury to a slave (30 shekels); redeeming firstborn males of unclean animals (5 shekels). Some fines are fixed in silver. God did not set rates for day labor wages or other small matters agreed between people, but He does insist on a man’s wages being paid out at the end of the working day as they are more for his maintenance than for his increase. Tax with-holdings would violate Torah (*see Deut 4:2*).

Sound money & Regular Re-sets - No interest on loans to fellow Israelites meant values remained stable. [4] Remission of debt every seventh year meant no lingering debts accrued. The ability to rent out -or- redeem land up to next Jubilee allowed some who fell on hard times to still get by, but returned ancestral land every Jubilee (50th years), a broader “re-set” allowing families to get back to their agricultural roots, building family wealth from the fat of the land. Landlessness was not allowed to linger, and could be remedied by redeeming years of crops to Jubilee at a fixed rate as no escalation was allowed. Bonus: no standing army to support.

And all this at what tax burden? - For Israel, by Torah, 10% of all increase [5] in intrinsic value products of the lands and herds in the year. The Levites then took the best 10% of that to give to His Priests, who also received what people gave in many prescribed and free-will offerings to God. Local administration was for self-sustaining elders of villages and towns to look after.

Conclusion - If you are not of Israel, you may keep happily to four commandments (*see Acts 15*). When Jesus, now Judge of Heaven and Earth, returns down here again, it will not be to give a sermon but to rule with a rod of iron. If your first focus remains the only form of wealth you can take into eternity, you are on the right path today. God blesses His servants with earthly wealth but seek first God’s Kingdom and His Righteousness (*Matt 6:33*). Good things do follow...

from Robert in Texas
*a friend of **SGT Report***

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APPENDIX :: VERSE LISTINGS / EXTRACTS BY TOPIC

1. WHAT IS WEALTH?

1.1 Genesis 13:2 - Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

1.2 Numbers 22:18 - But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of YHVH my God. [*and same again in Num 24:13*]

1.3 Joshua 22:7-8 ... (To the half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given land in Bashan, and to the other half of the tribe Joshua gave land on the west side of the Jordan along with their fellow Israelites.) When Joshua sent them home, he blessed them, saying, "Return to your homes with your great wealth—with large herds of livestock, with silver, gold, bronze and iron, and a great quantity of clothing [...]

1.4 Deuteronomy 8:11-14 ... Be careful that you do not forget YHVH your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

1.5 Deuteronomy 17:17 ... [The king of Israel] must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this Torah, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere YHVH his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. [...] ... [[N.B: *Torah amendments are rare, but this was modified by YHVH in 1Samuel 8:1-18 and then again in Ezekiel 45. Kings Saul, David and Solomon made mistakes along the way which can be seen in light of this. See also comments on "poll tax" under silver prices.*]]

1.6 Another perspective on wealth from an existing writing on the internet ...

An old saying runs *But once be contented, and truly you'll always be so*; another says *it is wealth to be content.*^[12] A third trustworthy saying is simply *be satisfied with your wages*^[13] - but it should be understood that wages are now paid in *fantasy money* ... you should quickly exchange those for something of real value. There is persistent pressure to become more dependent upon the paycheck factory rather than less so. To escape it fully means to no longer require it, with degrees toward greater escape being natural steps along the way.

^[12] the DaoDeJing has many admirers; these translated by Blakney in 1955 from poems 44 and 33

^[13] part of the sound advice that John the Baptist gave to the soldiers at the end of Luke 3:10-14

source: http://www.primeconcord.info/uploads/escape_from_the_paycheck_factory.pdf

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2. **GOLD AS PAYMENT?** Sometimes friendly, in plunder or tribute, or even to no avail ...

2.1 2Samuel 8:9-12 ... When Tou king of Hamath heard that David had defeated the entire army of Hadadezer, he sent his son Joram to King David to greet him and congratulate him on his victory in battle over Hadadezer, who had been at war with Tou. Joram brought with him articles of silver, of gold and of bronze. King David dedicated these articles to YHVH, as he had done with the silver and gold from all the nations he had subdued: Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. He also dedicated the plunder taken from Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. (also 1Chron18)

Also note ... 1 Kings 7:51 ... When all the work King Solomon had done for the Temple of YHVH was finished, he brought in the things his father David had dedicated - the silver and gold and the furnishings - and he placed them in the treasuries of YHVH's Temple.

2.2 Not all tribute were results of war. Consider the case of King Solomon's cordial relations with Hiram, King of Tyre and also with the Queen of Sheba

From 1 Kings 9:11, 14 ... King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. [...] Now Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents of gold.

From 1 Kings 10:2,10 ... Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan - with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones - she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. [...] And she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (also 2Chron9)

2.3 Tribute, Treaty and Favor

From 2 Kings 18:14 ... So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

2Kings 23:32,33,35 ... [Jehoahaz King of Judah] did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his predecessors had done. Pharaoh Necho put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. [...] Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Necho the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments. (also 2Chron36)

2 Chronicles 16:2-3 - Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of YHVH's Temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. "Let there be a treaty between me and you," he said, "as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me."

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2.4 But beware, some are not so easily swayed by gold ...

Isaiah 13:17 ... See, I will stir up against them the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold.

Isaiah 31:7 ... For in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your sinful hands have made for you as a sin.

Ezekiel 7:19 ... “They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be treated as a thing unclean. Their silver and gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of YHVH’s wrath. It will not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs, for it has caused them to stumble into sin.

2.5 One very exceptional payment in gold was reported - In 1Chronicles 21, we have the very tense situation that is covered in **[3.1.2]** about the poll tax. In Chronicles, King David is reported to have paid Araunah six hundred shekels of gold (?) for the site where he chose to build an altar to stop the plague. However, please note that this version is less reliable (*in my view anyway*) than 2Samuel 24:24 where the price is given as fifty shekels in silver.

2.6 Gold as a gift ... Matthew 2:11 ... On coming to the house, they saw the Child with his mother Miriam, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

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3. SILVER AS PAYMENT? Yes, of course! With true weights and balances!

3.1 Silver Paid to God's Priests

3.1.1 Redeeming the firstborn son

Numbers 18:15-16 The first offspring of every womb, both human and animal, that is offered to YHVH is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.

3.1.2 Poll tax - An existing writing on this topic from the internet is useful here...

census taking, poll taxes and plagues

There is a story told in the Second Book of Samuel, chapter 24 about a plague that occurred when King David ordered a census of the men. It suggests GOD incited the census. Another account in 1Chronicles 21 says the devil incited King David to do this.^[13] What is clear to me is that King David and his men neglected the ransom required for a census in order to prevent plague from breaking out.^[14] Some points in the Torah had apparently been forgotten already in the days of King David to the extent we find the Books of Moses were even forgotten by the days of Josiah King of Judah.^[15] To see doctrinal conflicts in clear light, always start with *What did our FATHER actually say?* The point here is that there was a method legislated by GOD to prevent a plague breaking out due to a census; this was not remembered before or even, apparently, after the fact when 2Samuel24 and 1Chronicles21 were written down. Sadly, even today mine seems to be a very lonely report.

^[13] in Hebrew 1Chron21 refers to the devil as *HaSatan*. This changes the Hebrew plural noun *satan* (bad spirits in general) to a proper name; it is a degradation of language and the source of a supposed name for the devil that did not come to us from FATHER, but from the scribes, translators and assemblers of the doctrines of men.

^[14] see Exodus 30:11-12 and chapters 1-to-4 of the Book of Numbers

^[15] see 2Kings22 and 2Chronicles23 where the books of the Law were found and read

source: http://www.primeconcord.info/uploads/do_the_66_books_really_measure_up.pdf

3.2 Silver Paid to Others

3.2.1 Personal Debts

Genesis 20:16 ... To Sarah he said, "I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated."

3.2.2 Transactions of Sale

Genesis 23:15-16 ... "Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead." Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the

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Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

Genesis 37:28 ... So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

3.2.3 Fines for damages and defamation

Exodus 21:32 ... If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.

For a man who tries to defame a new wife he is not pleased with ... Deut 22:18-19 ... So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give it to the girl's father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.

Deut 22:28-29 ... "If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father the bride price, fifty shekels of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days." Do note that in Exodus 22, the father of the girl will receive the bride-price in silver and still retains his right to withhold his daughter from marrying such a man as might do this with her.

3.2.4 Priests were called upon for fair valuations. A prophetic valuation in silver to consider:

Zechariah 13:10-13 ... I took my staff *Favor* and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of YHVH. I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then YHVH said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the House of YHVH.

Matthew 26:15, 27:3-8 ... "What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?" And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. [...] Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And Judas threw the pieces of silver into the Temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the Temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." And they conferred together and with the money bought the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

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4. SOUND MONEY & REGULAR RE-SETS - Hooray!

4.1 Standard weights and measures, with true weights and balances in the marketplace! The *shekel* was set in Lev27:25 at 20 *gerah* weight, with a standard specimen held even at the Sanctuary of God. It seems there are many opinions today without consensus on how to express this standard weight, various opinions placing the *shekel* as anywhere from about 8 grams to about 16 grams, with most near to 12 grams. (How on earth did we lose that standard?) The half-shekel, a handy size for the poll tax and smaller purchases, is also referred to as the *beka*. A *quarter-shekel* of silver was also once mentioned by King Saul. The *talent* of silver for Israel is 3,000 *shekels* based upon Exodus 38:25-26.

4.2 Return of Ancestral Land at Jubilee every fiftieth year, Curtailing of Usury, and Remission of Debts every seven years ... I have borrowed most everything in the list below from material published on www.primeconcord.info ...

All land belongs to YHVH and cannot be sold in perpetuity. (It is allotted by tribe and clan for onpass to generations of their children.)	Exodus 19:5-6 Lev 25:23
Do not move boundary markers. There is a curse agreed by the entire nation upon those who do so.	Deut 19:14 Deut 27:17
Not to wrong one another in buying and selling crop rights up to Jubilee year	Lev 25:14
Shmita years for the land and vineyards (every seventh)	Lev 25:1-7
Jubilees for the land and vineyards (every 50 th)	Lev 25:8-12
Use honest scales and honest weights in your dealings. In Micah 6:11 God asked "Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?"	Lev 19:35-36 Deut 25:13-16 Ezekiel 45:10
Lending money or goods to the people of Israel without interest. (permitted to loan to Gentiles with interest)	Lev. 25:35-38 Deut 23:19-20
Lending money to the poor without interest	Exodus 22:25 Deut 15:7-11
Do not hold a worker's pay until the following morning but pay him before he goes home for he has set his heart on it.	Lev 19:13 Deut 24:15
Give generously to the poor. Remission of debts in 7 th year. Don't be stingy as 7 th year approaches. There should be no poor among you.	Deut 15:1-11
Remission of debts every seventh year among Israel. (Only from a non-Israelite can you continue to exact a return.)	Deut 15:1-3,9 ...see also Matt 6:11-12
Do not become stingy toward the poor as the Schmita year approaches	Deut 15:7-11
At time of remission of debts, read the full Torah to all the people	Deut 31:10-13

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- 5. TAXATION?** 10% of a family's annual increase -and- Supporting your local elders
- 5.1** The annual increase - Leviticus 27:30-33 “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to YHVH; it is holy to YHVH. Whoever would redeem any of their tithe must add a fifth of the value to it. Every tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to YHVH. No one may pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If anyone does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.” See summary page about Levites who received this.
- 5.2** Other Contributions - There were also daily and special offerings to God that came from the nation, and each month a tribe was supporting the work of the Levites, so it would seem right the many villages and households would contribute of their very best for these. There were also fellowship (with God) and other freewill offerings one could make along with those prescribed where a person or a court had erred.
- 5.3** The Elders at the gate of villages and towns - Beyond honoring one's own parents, the local Elders had duties to perform in ridding their own society of evil (not merely sending it elsewhere!) and providing just judgment in matters brought before them in disputes. See Deut 1:15-18 and Deut 16:18-20. Anything too difficult for them would be sent to the priest for binding judgment. Understand that agricultural societies had cities that grew to be as large as 100,000 in population, but rarely larger. The “inorganic” size of modern cities was likely part of the problems before the Flood of Noah, and why we see the lesson of the Tower of Babel as early as Genesis 11. Former ‘elites’ milking unnatural concentrations of people? We got the lesson for good reason. What did we learn?
- 5.4** No standing army to support. Every male twenty and older was called up, most likely with their own weapons and arrows readily to hand. So far, so good. The priests were required to speak to the camp of the army (*see Deut 20*) and officers were to send home:
- the man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it
 - the man who has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use its fruit
 - man who is engaged to a woman and has not married her
 - the man who is afraid and fainthearted - Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers' hearts melt like his heart.
- And further, from Deteronomy 24 ...
- Do not take a bridegroom from home to any service of the army during first year – he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

... shall we end here with the opening question? ...

**... what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments
as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?**

Moses, in Deuteronomy 4:8 poses an excellent question. He then exhorts “choose life!”
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