

Living as God's Just People

Key Verse: *"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."*
Leviticus 19:34

Selected Scripture:
Leviticus 19:9-18,
33-37

CONTINUING OUR STUDY

concerning the giving of God's Law to his people, today's lesson considers his provisions for dealing with those who were not of the children of Israel. It is also important to note that these portions of the Law took into consideration provisions for dealing with the needy, enemies, foreigners, animals, the aged, servants, and, in particular, strangers. They were the subject of special legislation, as we see from the following verses. "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates." (Deut. 24:14) "Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exod. 23:9) Other important laws in these accounts dealt with a person's neighbors. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: . . . but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD." (Lev. 19:13,14) All of these laws, set up under the Heavenly Father's direction to Moses, were designed to be strictly observed, and enforced according to the letter.

These very specific commands were not given to spiritual Israel, but to natural Israel only. However, it would be impossible to think of God as not giving to his spirit-begotten children similar instructions of how to lead a life pleasing to him. If we have been begotten of God's Holy Spirit, and are being looked upon by our Heavenly Father as his children, we are required to follow the teachings of his Word. Each of us can, through these commands given to natural Israel, gain a clearer understanding of the concepts of right and wrong on any subject relating to our fellowman. Indeed, we have this shown to us in the commandment which is a sum total of so many others—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Lev. 19:18) Being begotten of God's Holy Spirit, the spirit of love toward all, we can, through a study of these commandments, learn how to exercise his loving disposition towards others more and more effectively and faithfully.

By the Lord's grace we should seek to apply these beneficial instructions from the Father, that we may be more fully conformed to his perfect standard in our hearts. Additionally, we are to make every effort to apply these things, so far as possible, in our outward conduct toward all with whom we come in contact. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22) We have been called to bear much fruit, to walk the narrow way of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and character development. We should be seeking for the doctrines and principles of the divine Word, and build our faith structure upon that true and firm foundation. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." (Jer. 23:28) This scripture shows the importance of obeying the good tidings of God's Word and then faithfully speaking forth, by our words and actions, its good results to others. The outcome of this kind of obedience is shown to us in the words: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."—Gal. 6:10 ■