

# DEUTERONOMY 15

דברים קצו שש

## WHEN

- Moses' speech, recorded in the opening chapters of Deuteronomy, occurred immediately following the Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.
- The Israelites were in the wilderness from approximately 1490-1450 B.C.
- The Book of Deuteronomy opens on the 1st day of the 11th month in the 40th year (Deu 1:3) following the Israelites departure from Egypt (approximately 1450 B.C.).

## CHARACTERS

- **Israelites (Hebrews)** – The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God granted them freedom after several hundred years in slavery in Egypt. Leading up to the book of Deuteronomy, the Israelites had spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness as they made their way to Canaan.
- **Moses** – Moses was selected by God to lead the Israelites to Canaan. God spoke directly to Moses and Moses communicated God's words and laws to the people.

## WHERE

- Deuteronomy 1:5 tells us Moses spoke the words recorded in Deuteronomy while in Moab, probably on the plains of Moab near Pisgah (Numbers 22:1).



## OUTLINE

- THE YEAR OF RELEASE (15:1-18):
  - + The Israelites were to observe a year of release every 7th year.
  - + In that year, creditors were to forgive the debts of fellow Israelites.
  - + The Israelites were to be charitable to any of their countrymen who fell on hard times. They were to lend them money generously without considering the 7th year release.
  - + God promised to bless those who cared for the poor without being coerced or doing it with a grudging heart.
  - + If a Hebrew became the servant/slave of another Hebrew, the master was to release the servant on the 7th year.
  - + Not only was the servant to be released, but the master was instructed to furnish the servant liberally from their flock, their winepress, and their threshing floor.
  - + When the year of release arrived, the master was to remember how the Israelites had once been slaves in Egypt until God's grace gave them freedom.
  - + If the servant/slave loved his master and didn't want to leave, the master was to pierce the slave's ear at the door of his house and the servant would remain with him for life.
- DEDICATION OF FIRSTBORN ANIMALS (15:19-23):
  - + All firstborn male animals from the Israelites' flocks and herds were to be dedicated to God.
  - + They were to take the animals to God's appointed place of worship, sacrifice it, and eat the animal "before the Lord."
  - + If the animal had a blemish of any kind (lame, blind, etc) it was not to be sacrificed to God, instead it was to be eaten in the individual's hometown.
  - + Eating blood was prohibited.

## APPLICATION

- Some people are instantly repulsed by the Bible when they find out it doesn't outright condemn all forms of slavery.
- We've been conditioned to assume all things which fall under the title "slavery" are always bad all the time.
- This is especially true in the USA where our conception of slavery is formed by stories of Africans being kidnapped, loaded onto ships, and sold into the cotton fields of the deep south.
- But cultural context is important when defining slavery.
- The type of slavery described in this chapter is something we would probably define as indentured servitude.
- Many of these people entered "slavery" voluntarily to pay off a debt.
- We see God establishing a time limit on slavery.
- Masters were expected to treat their servants well and be generous to them, so much so that it was assumed some of the servants would never want to leave.
- We need to be careful before we apply modern definitions and notions of a concept across culture and time.