

Deuteronomy 15:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.

Analysis

And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release. Creditors must release debts owed by fellow Israelites every seventh year. This radical provision prevented debt from becoming perpetual slavery and maintained economic mobility.

The phrase shall not exact it makes debt forgiveness mandatory, not optional. This was not encouraged charity but commanded justice. God's economic law required periodic cancellation of debts among covenant brothers, preventing creditor classes from exploiting the poor indefinitely.

The designation the LORD'S release reveals that debt forgiveness flows from God's character and authority. Just as God forgives His people's spiritual debts, they must forgive one another's financial debts. The principle anticipates the Lord's Prayer - forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

This creates economic system fundamentally different from surrounding cultures where debt slavery was permanent and exploitative. Israel's economy operated on grace and periodic renewal, reflecting God's redemptive character.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern economies commonly featured debt slavery where families lost land and freedom due to inability to repay loans. These debts could span generations, creating permanent underclasses.

Israel's sabbatical release prevented such exploitation among covenant members. While debts to foreigners were not forgiven, fellow Israelites received periodic financial fresh starts.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does mandatory debt forgiveness reveal about God's economic justice?
2. How does the sabbatical release anticipate the prayer to forgive our debts?
3. Why did God distinguish between debts owed by Israelites versus foreigners?
4. What would contemporary society look like if periodic debt forgiveness were implemented?
5. How does God's character as forgiving creditor shape His economic legislation?

Interlinear Text

וְזֶה	דָּבָר	שְׁמֹטָה	שָׁמ וְט	כָּל	בְּעַל
H2088	And this is the manner	of the release	shall release	H3605	Every creditor
	H1697	H8059	H8058		H1167
הַמֵּשֶׁה	אֲשֶׁר יָדוּ	יֵשׁ הַ	רֵעֵהוּ	לֹא	יִגְשׁ
H4874	H3027	H834	that lendeth	it of his neighbour	H3808
		H5383	H7453		it he shall not exact
					H5065
אֶת	רֵעֵהוּ	וְאֶת	אָחִיו	כִּי	קָרָא
H853	it of his neighbour	H853	or of his brother	H3588	because it is called
	H7453		H251		H7121
שְׁמֹטָה	לַיהוָה:				
of the release	the LORD'S				
H8059	H3068				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:42 (Parallel theme): And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

James 2:13 (Parallel theme): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.