

Deuteronomy 15:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;

Analysis

Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release. The distinction between foreigners and brothers reveals the covenant basis of sabbatical release. Special obligations exist within the covenant community that do not extend to outside commercial relationships.

Debts owed by foreigners (non-Israelites) could still be collected, as they were not part of the covenant community subject to Israel's internal social legislation. This maintained normal commercial relationships with surrounding nations while creating special economic mercy among God's people.

The phrase that which is thine with thy brother emphasizes covenant family relationship. Fellow Israelites were not merely business associates but brothers in covenant, sharing special bonds requiring mutual care and periodic economic restoration.

This parallels New Testament teaching about special obligations to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10). While Christians should do good to all, they bear particular responsibility for fellow believers' welfare.

Historical Context

Israel engaged in regular trade and commerce with surrounding nations. The sabbatical release did not require forgiving all international debts, which would have been economically unsustainable and likely prompted foreign avoidance of loans to Israelites.

The distinction allowed Israel to maintain normal commercial relationships externally while implementing radical grace-based economics internally among the covenant community.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why did God distinguish between covenant brothers and foreigners in debt forgiveness?
2. What does this teach about special obligations within the covenant community?
3. How does this principle apply to Christian responsibility toward fellow believers?
4. What would have happened if debt release had applied to all international commerce?
5. How should balance between care for all people and special care for believers be maintained?

Interlinear Text

אֶת	הַנִּזְכָּר י	תִּגְזֹשׁ	וְאִשָּׁר	יְהוָה ה	לְךָ	אֶת
H853	Of a foreigner	thou mayest exact	H834	H1961	H0	H854
	H5237	H5065				
	אֵת יְ	תִשְׁמֹט	יָדְךָ:			
	it again but that which is thine with thy brother	shall release	thine hand			
	H251	H8058	H3027			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:20 (Parallel theme): Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.