LEVITICUS

Chapter 27

*Redeeming What Is the Lord’s*

**The Lord said to Moses, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the Lord by giving equivalent values, 3 set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel; 4 and if it is a female, set her value at thirty shekels. 5 If it is a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels and of a female at ten shekels. 6 If it is a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver. 7 If it is a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels. 8 If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, he is to present the person to the priest, who will set the value for him according to what the man making the vow can afford. 9 “ ‘If what he vowed is an animal that is acceptable as an offering to the Lord, such an animal given to the Lord becomes holy. 10 He must not exchange it or substitute a good one for a bad one, or a bad one for a good one; if he should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute become holy. 11 If what he vowed is a ceremonially unclean animal—one that is not acceptable as an offering to the Lord—the animal must be presented to the priest, 12 who will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, that is what it will be. 13 If the owner wishes to redeem the animal, he must add a fifth to its value. 14 “ ‘If a man dedicates his house as something holy to the Lord, the priest will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, so it will remain. 15 If the man who dedicates his house redeems it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the house will again become his. 16 “ ‘If a man dedicates to the Lord part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it—fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. 17 If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. 18 But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. 19 If the man who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the field will again become his. 20 If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to someone else, it can never be redeemed. 21 When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the Lord; it will become the property of the priests.22 “ ‘If a man dedicates to the Lord a field he has bought, which is not part of his family land, 23 the priest will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man must pay its value on that day as something holy to the Lord. 24 In the Year of Jubilee the field will revert to the person from whom he bought it, the one whose land it was. 25 Every value is to be set according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel. 26 “ ‘No one, however, may dedicate the firstborn of an animal, since the firstborn already belongs to the Lord; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the Lord’s. 27 If it is one of the unclean animals, he may buy it back at its set value, adding a fifth of the value to it. If he does not redeem it, it is to be sold at its set value. 28 “ ‘But nothing that a man owns and devotes to the Lord—whether man or animal or family land—may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the Lord. 29 “ ‘No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death. 30 “ ‘A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. 31 If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the Lord. 33 He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.’ ” 34 These are the commands the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.**

**Ch 27** There are four possible reasons for the placement of the laws about vows at the end of Lv. (1) Vows made by the Israelites may be linked to God’s promises in ch 26. (2) These laws provide the necessary funding for sanctuary maintenance, allowing the Israelites to keep God’s command to revere the sanctuary (26:2). (3) It allows Lv to end on a positive note, emphasizing Israel’s voluntary response to God’s grace. (4) Voluntary contributions to the sanctuary provide a counterbalance to the divinely ordained offerings of chs 1–7. (TLSB)

**27:1–34** This final chapter concerns things vowed to the Lord in kind—servants, animals, houses or lands. But provisions were made to give money instead of the item, in which case usually the adding of a fifth of its value was required. Such vows were expressions of special thanksgiving (cf. Hannah, 1Sa 1:28) and were given over and above the expected sacrifices. (CSB)

**27:2** *to dedicate persons.* Possibly to give slaves to the service of the temple, but more likely to offer oneself or a member of one’s family. Since only Levites were acceptable for most work of this kind, other people gave the monetary equivalent—but see 1Sa 1:11. (CSB)

**27:3–8** Shows common social distinctions among the Israelites. The values may be associated with the person’s productivity. Men of fighting age (cf Nu 1:3) would pay the most. (TLSB)

**27:9–10** God knows men’s hearts. The temptation exists to substitute an animal of one species for another, so God prevents such actions by declaring, through His priests, that both animals were holy and not redeemable. Both animals then could be sold and the money used to support the sanctuary. (TLSB)

**27:9** *becomes holy.* An animal given for a sacrifice could not be exchanged for another (v. 10). The people of Malachi’s day chose the poorest animals after having vowed to offer good ones (Mal 1:13–14). If an unclean animal was given, it could be redeemed with the 20 percent penalty (vv. 11–13). (CSB)

**27:11–12** Unclean animals (cf 5:2) could be offered in a vow, but not sacrificed. After they were ascribed a value by the priests, they were sold, and the money was used to support the sanctuary. (TLSB)

**27:14–25** Dedicating, or devoting, items in the manner addressed here was often done in answer to prayer. Dedication offerings were different from vo tive (freewill) offerings offerings. Dedication offerings belonged to God immediately (the offering was consecrated or holy), while votive offerings were made only when God answered a prayer. The most dramatic example of a votive offering is that of Hannah, who volunteered her young son Samuel to God (1Sm 1:21–28). Family land offered to God was redeemable by paying one shekel per year for each area covered by a homer (c 8 bushels) of barley, less the number of years to the next Jubilee, and then adding one-fifth to the total. If an individual had already sold the land pledged to God, the land was forever forfeited to Him. (TLSB)

**27:26–27** Firstborn animals already belonged to God and were presented to the priests. Therefore, these animals could not be dedicated to God (Ex 13:12). The dedication of unclean animals was permitted, but these were redeemed at their value plus one-fifth. (TLSB)

**27:28** *devotes to the Lord*. See NIV text note. Devoting something was far more serious than dedicating it to sacred use. The devoted thing became totally the Lord’s. Achan’s sin was the greater because he stole what had been devoted to the Lord (Jos 7:11). Persons devoted to destruction were usually the captives in the wars of Canaan (cf. 1Sa 15:3, 18). (CSB)

**27:29** Saul sinned in this regard when he did not totally destroy the Amalekites (1Sa 15). (CSB)

**27:30** *tithe.* A tenth (see Nu 18:21–29; Dt 12:6–18; 14:22–29; 26:12). From these passages it appears that Israel actually had three tithes: (1) the general tithe (here), paid to the Levites (Nu 18:21), who in turn had to give a tenth of that to the priests (Nu 18:26); (2) the tithe associated with the sacred meal involving offerer and Levite (Dt 14:22–27); (3) the tithe paid every three years to the poor (Dt 14:28–29). (CSB)

**27:31** People or unclean livestock were redeemed at the value set by the priest, plus one-fifth. Payment was made in precious metals (e.g., silver) for the amount of the assessed value. (TLSB)

**27:34** *the Lord gave Moses.* See 1:1; 7:37–38; 25:1; 26:46. This is strong testimony for the Mosaic authorship and divine origin of the book. (CSB)

**Ch 27** Lv concludes by showing how all God’s people are involved in the stewardship of God’s house. Based on how God has blessed them, each Israelite provides materials and finances for the maintenance of God’s sanctuary for the ongoing operation of the Divine Service. The collection of our offerings during the liturgy serves a parallel purpose (cf Ac 4:34–5:11). Our offerings are part of the holy work of God’s people for the benefit of the world (Rm 15:27; 2Co 9:12). Through our offerings, we bear witness to what God has done through Calvary’s cross. • “What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me? I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call on the name of the Lord. I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.” Amen. (*LSB*, p 176) (TLSB)