

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Deuteronomy: Institutions and Laws Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Deuteronomy: Institutions and Laws, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt covers Deuteronomy, focusing on the Ten Commandments, which he memorably presents using an acronym. He then explores the institutions of Israel established by Moses—prophets, judges, kings, and priests—comparing their roles to modern governmental structures. The lecture further examines the complexities of applying Old Testament law to modern contexts, differentiating between civil, ceremonial, and moral laws and analyzing how culture impacts their interpretation. Finally, it contrasts Jesus' and Paul's perspectives on the law, highlighting the importance of discerning underlying principles and the potential for both legalism and misuse of grace.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament Literature).



**Hildebrandt_OTLit_
Session17.mp3**

3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Deuteronomy: Institution and Laws

Old Testament Law and Institutions Study Guide

Quiz

1. What does the acrostic "BIG LC SPAMS" represent, and what is the general theme of the "BIG" section? *The acrostic "BIG LC SPAMS" is a mnemonic device to remember the Ten Commandments. The "BIG" portion refers to the first three commandments, which focus on the proper worship and acknowledgement of God.*
2. How does the lecture differentiate between killing and murder, and what is essential to the definition of murder? *The lecture differentiates between killing, which is the act of ending a life, and murder, which involves malice and forethought. The key elements that define murder are premeditated malice and intentional planning.*
3. What is the Shema, where is it found in the Old Testament, and what is its significance in Jewish tradition? *The Shema is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and is a central prayer in Jewish tradition, beginning with "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." It's considered a fundamental declaration of faith, emphasizing God's oneness and the call to love him with all one's heart.*
4. According to the lecture, what are the three things that a king of Israel should not multiply, and why? *A king of Israel should not multiply horses (trust in war power), wives (leading the heart astray), or silver and gold (personal wealth over serving others). These actions could lead to the king placing his trust in earthly things rather than God.*
5. What role did prophets play in ancient Israel, and how were true prophets distinguished from false prophets? *Prophets spoke on behalf of God, relaying messages directly from Him, and they were also supposed to be tested to see if they were true. False prophets might perform miracles but contradict God's revealed word, while true prophets' messages were aligned with God's commandments.*
6. What were the responsibilities of judges in Israel, and how were they to administer justice? *Judges were appointed in each town to administer justice*

fairly and locally. They were to judge impartially, avoid bribery, and ensure justice was accessible to all.

7. Why were priests and Levites not given land as an inheritance, and what was their unique role within Israel? *Priests and Levites were not given land because their inheritance was the Lord Himself. They were scattered throughout Israel to serve in the Temple, teach the law, and fulfill priestly duties.*
8. How does the lecture explain the challenges in applying Old Testament law to the 21st century using the example of clothing laws? *The lecture uses the example of the clothing law (Deut. 22:5) to explain how literal interpretation of laws doesn't work well across cultures. The focus should not be on specific clothing styles but on the principle of distinguishing between the sexes, rather than eliminating the difference altogether.*
9. How does the lecture interpret Jesus's statement about the purpose of the law in the Sermon on the Mount, and what does it mean to "fulfill the law?" *Jesus doesn't abolish the law but "fulfills" it by driving it into the heart. This means that he is not negating the law, but he is adding new meaning to it, by applying it to matters of internal intention, not just external action, emphasizing motive as well as behavior.*
10. According to the lecture, what is the primary function of the law, and how does it relate to the need for a savior? *The primary function of the law is to reveal sin rather than showing humans how good they are. It serves as a "schoolmaster" to bring people to the realization of their sins, so they turn to Christ as savior.*

Answer Key

1. *The acrostic "BIG LC SPAMS" is a mnemonic device to remember the Ten Commandments. The "BIG" portion refers to the first three commandments, which focus on the proper worship and acknowledgement of God.*
2. *The lecture differentiates between killing, which is the act of ending a life, and murder, which involves malice and forethought. The key elements that define murder are premeditated malice and intentional planning.*
3. *The Shema is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and is a central prayer in Jewish tradition, beginning with "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." It's considered a fundamental declaration of faith, emphasizing God's oneness and the call to love him with all one's heart.*

4. *A king of Israel should not multiply horses (trust in war power), wives (leading the heart astray), or silver and gold (personal wealth over serving others). These actions could lead to the king placing his trust in earthly things rather than God.*
5. *Prophets spoke on behalf of God, relaying messages directly from Him, and they were also supposed to be tested to see if they were true. False prophets might perform miracles but contradict God's revealed word, while true prophets' messages were aligned with God's commandments.*
6. *Judges were appointed in each town to administer justice fairly and locally. They were to judge impartially, avoid bribery, and ensure justice was accessible to all.*
7. *Priests and Levites were not given land because their inheritance was the Lord Himself. They were scattered throughout Israel to serve in the Temple, teach the law, and fulfill priestly duties.*
8. *The lecture uses the example of the clothing law (Deut. 22:5) to explain how literal interpretation of laws doesn't work well across cultures. The focus should not be on specific clothing styles but on the principle of distinguishing between the sexes, rather than eliminating the difference altogether.*
9. *Jesus doesn't abolish the law but "fulfills" it by driving it into the heart. This means that he is not negating the law, but he is adding new meaning to it, by applying it to matters of internal intention, not just external action, emphasizing motive as well as behavior.*
10. *The primary function of the law is to reveal sin rather than showing humans how good they are. It serves as a "schoolmaster" to bring people to the realization of their sins, so they turn to Christ as savior.*

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the various institutions established by Moses in Deuteronomy, and discuss their significance for the structure and function of Israelite society.
2. Discuss the challenges and considerations involved in interpreting and applying Old Testament law to contemporary contexts. Use specific examples to support your arguments.
3. Compare and contrast the different perspectives of Jesus and Paul on the law, and explain how their teachings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the law's role in Christian theology.
4. Evaluate the lecture's critique of the traditional division of the law into civil, ceremonial, and moral categories. What alternative approach does the lecture suggest, and why?
5. Explore the concept of God's accommodation to culture in the giving of the law, and discuss the implications of this concept for understanding the nature and purpose of Old Testament law.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ten Commandments:** The foundational laws given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai, summarized by the mnemonic "BIG LC SPAMS," encompassing moral and religious principles.
- **Blasphemy:** Speaking irreverently or disrespectfully about God or sacred things, a violation of the first of the Ten Commandments.
- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or anything other than the true God, condemned in the second of the Ten Commandments.
- **Shema:** The Jewish declaration of faith, beginning with "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Found in Deuteronomy 6:4, it serves as a core tenet of Jewish theology.
- **Prophet:** A person chosen by God to speak on His behalf, delivering messages, warnings, or prophecies. Their role was to guide the people and communicate God's will.

- **Judge:** An official appointed to administer justice, resolving disputes and ensuring the fair application of the law in local communities.
- **Priest/Levite:** A member of the tribe of Levi, dedicated to serving God through temple duties, teaching the law, and conducting religious rites.
- **Sabbath:** A weekly day of rest and worship commanded by God in the Ten Commandments.
- **Killing:** The act of causing the death of another, not necessarily involving malice or intent.
- **Murder:** The intentional taking of a life with malice and forethought, a violation of the sixth of the Ten Commandments.
- **Civil Law:** Laws pertaining to governance, social order, and property rights within a society.
- **Ceremonial Law:** Laws related to religious rituals, worship practices, and the temple cult in ancient Israel.
- **Moral Law:** Laws based on ethical principles and right conduct, reflecting God's character and His standards of goodness.
- **Legalism:** Strict adherence to the letter of the law, often without regard for the spirit or underlying principles, leading to self-righteousness and a neglect of grace.
- **Grace:** Unmerited favor and love from God, freely given to those who turn to Him in faith, as opposed to earning salvation through adherence to law.
- **License:** The misuse of grace, often resulting in the belief that one can sin without consequences or repentance, a misunderstanding of God's loving acceptance of sinners.
- **Canonical Continuity:** The consistency and harmonious connection of themes, teachings, and messages throughout the biblical canon, both Old and New Testaments.
- **Canonical Clashing:** Instances in scripture where there appear to be contradictions or shifts in the way that God's word is interpreted.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture transcript by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt on the Old Testament Law, specifically focusing on the Ten Commandments and their relevance, the institutions of Israel, and the relationship between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament:

Briefing Document: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt on Old Testament Law

Overview: This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt explores the nature and purpose of the Old Testament Law, particularly focusing on the Ten Commandments (Decalogue), the Shema, and the various institutions that were established in ancient Israel. He also discusses the application of the law, its relevance to modern times, and how it relates to the teachings of Jesus and Paul. He does not propose that the law should be taken as is literally, but to understand the principles behind it and how they apply to a modern context.

I. The Ten Commandments (Decalogue): Foundation of the Law

- **General Stipulations:** Hildebrandt emphasizes that the Ten Commandments serve as "general stipulations," which are foundational to all the other laws in the Old Testament. He uses the acronym "BIG LC SPAMS" to remember them:
- **B - Blasphemy:** This commandment is not simply about avoiding vulgar language but about not using God's name in a light or trivial manner. Hildebrandt questions the casual use of "Oh my God" in contemporary society. He states that God does not want His name used in a "light and trivial way."
- **I - Idols and Other Gods:** This prohibition extends beyond physical idols and includes any way we conceptualize God that is less than who He truly is. He also states that, "we do our own kind of 21st century idols."
- **G - Gods (No other Gods):** This is simply no other gods before God.
- **L - Lying:** It is not just about not lying, but instead speaking the truth.
- **C - Coveting:** Don't covet, instead, be generous.
- **S - Stealing:** Don't steal, instead be generous with others. This also means that people have a right to personal property.

- **P - Parents:** This is the only positive command - "Honor your father and your mother." He recognizes that this can be challenging when parents are not honorable.
- **A - Adultery:** Jesus expands on this commandment, saying that lustful thoughts are also adultery. Hildebrandt remarks on the modern culture where adultery is sometimes applauded.
- **M - Murder:** There is a difference between "killing" and "murder." Murder involves "malice and forethought." He states, "Instead we should affirm life."
- **S - Sabbath:** Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
- **Positive vs. Negative:** Hildebrandt notes that most of the commandments are negative (prohibitions) except for the commandment to honor parents, which is positive. He also notes that many of the negative commandments can be "spun around and put in a positive way."

II. The Shema: Central Jewish Declaration

- **Deuteronomy 6:4ff:** The Shema, beginning with "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one," is a fundamental declaration of Jewish faith. Hildebrandt calls this "the John 3:16 if you're Jewish." It includes the command to "love the LORD your God with all your heart and mind."
- **Practical Reminder:** The practice of touching the *mezuzah* (the "W" letter on a doorpost) upon entering a Jewish home is a physical way to remember the Shema, he explains.

III. Institutions of Israel: Set up by Moses

- **Prophets: False vs. True Prophets:** A true prophet's message aligns with previous divine revelation, while a false prophet's message contradicts scripture. God tests people through false prophets, but ultimately a false prophet must be put to death, because his word is not in line with God's law.
- **The Prophet:** There was an expectation that the Jews had for a prophet who would be like Moses and speak for God. Hildebrandt notes how the Jews asked Jesus if he was "the prophet."
- **Judges: Local Justice:** Judges were to be appointed in every town to ensure justice was accessible and local.

- **Fairness and Integrity:** Judges were to judge fairly, without bias, and were not to accept bribes. Hildebrandt discusses at length how in modern society, the justice system is influenced by money. He asks the class directly, "Are money and justice connected in America?"
- **Cities of Refuge:** These were to be established to protect those who had accidentally killed someone from the "avenger of blood." This is an example of justice being implemented.
- **Kingship: God's Choice:** The king was to be chosen by God and be an Israelite. Moses said to the people, "it's okay to have a king".
- **Limitations on Kings:** The king was not to accumulate too many horses (military power), too many wives (leading to idolatry), or too much personal wealth (using power for personal gain).
- **The King's Duty:** The king was to write a personal copy of the law to rule justly. Hildebrandt notes, "Before the king himself, God was their king."
- **Jesus as the Ultimate King:** Jesus is the ultimate king of Israel, and he is the son of David.
- **Priests and Levites: No Land Inheritance:** The Levites were not given land, but instead they were given Levitical cities scattered throughout Israel. Their inheritance was the Lord Himself.
- **Teach the Law:** Priests and Levites were scattered throughout Israel and one of their main jobs was to teach the law.

IV. Applying the Law in the 21st Century

- **Contextualization:** Hildebrandt acknowledges the challenge of applying the Mosaic Law across 3000 years. He uses the example of Deuteronomy 22:5 concerning women wearing men's clothing to show how literal interpretations can lead to absurdities.
- **Underlying Principles:** The focus should be on understanding the principles behind the laws rather than the literal applications. For instance, the command about not wearing the clothing of the opposite sex is ultimately about differentiation between the sexes, not whether women can wear pants.

- **Culture and Law:** He questions whether God gave his perfect law at Mount Sinai, or if God took culture into account. There seems to be an "interactivity between culture and law."
- **Accommodation:** He presents the idea that God, in some instances, accommodated His laws to the hardness of people's hearts to prevent greater evils. He uses the example of divorce and notes that God hates divorce, yet He allowed it because of the hardness of people's hearts.

V. The Law, Jesus, and Paul

- **Jesus and the Law:Fulfillment, not Abolition:** Jesus states in Matthew 5:17, "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill them." Jesus affirms the permanence of the law, saying "not a jot or tittle will pass from the law until all is fulfilled."
- **Jesus and the Temptation:** Jesus used Deuteronomy to defend himself against the temptations of Satan (Matthew 4).
- **Focus on the Heart:** Jesus takes the law and drives it into the heart. He objects to the Pharisaic misinterpretations of the law and emphasizes that even motives count.
- **Greatest Commandments:** The two greatest commandments from the law are to love God and to love one's neighbor, coming from Deuteronomy and Leviticus.
- **Paul and the Law:Justification by Faith:** Paul argues in Galatians that the law cannot justify; it can actually alienate a person from Christ. He says, "You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ." He also says, "the law is holy, righteous and good."
- **The Law as a Mentor:** The law reveals sin. Paul describes the law as a "schoolmaster" that brings us to Christ by showing our sin. The law shows us our sins so that we turn to Christ, as savior. He also quotes from the book of Habakkuk and says, "the righteous will live by faith."

VI. Categories of the Law

- **Civil, Ceremonial, Moral:** Some divide the law into civil, ceremonial, and moral categories, suggesting that only the moral law is still applicable.
- **Civil Law:** Laws for the government of Israel
- **Ceremonial Law:** Laws for priests of Israel

- **Moral Law:** "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not lie."
- **Critique of Categorization:** Hildebrandt critiques this categorization because it can violate the "organic connection" of the Law. He does not feel we should "dissect" the law. He argues that all the laws are interconnected and are both civil and moral.

VII. Canonical Continuity and Discontinuity

- **Continuity and Expansion:** Hildebrandt argues that the law is not "passing away," but is being expanded. He says that the law is being fulfilled in a more comprehensive and expansive way.
- **Discontinuity in Some Areas:** There is also discontinuity in some areas, such as dietary laws, which are explicitly changed in the New Testament (Acts 10). He says there are both "continuity and discontinuity" between the Old and New Testaments.

VIII. Misuse of the Law and Grace

- **Law and Legalism:** The law can lead to legalism and pride. If a person takes the law and it leads them to pride and earning salvation, this is a misuse of the law.
- **Grace and License:** Grace can also be misused to justify sin. It can become an "enticement to sin". He says the mentality that "I can do anything and I'll be forgiven" is a problem.

Key Takeaways:

- The Old Testament Law is not just a set of rules, but a comprehensive framework for life.
- The Ten Commandments are the foundational principles of the law.
- The Law was interpreted by the Prophets, Judges, and the Kings. The priests and Levites were to teach the Law.
- It is crucial to understand the principles behind the specific laws and apply them in modern contexts.
- The Law serves to reveal our sin, leading us to Christ.
- Both law and grace can be misused, but both are still important in the lives of a Christian.

- The Old Testament Law has continuity with the New Testament, but there are also elements of discontinuity which are brought about by the fulfillment of Jesus Christ.

This briefing document is based on the provided transcript and offers a structured overview of Dr. Hildebrandt's thoughts on the Old Testament Law.

5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 17, Deuteronomy: Institution and Laws, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Old Testament Law and its Relevance

1. **What is the significance of the Ten Commandments and what does the acronym "BIG LC SPAMS" represent?** The Ten Commandments are foundational to the Law given to Israel, and are considered general stipulations that provide the basis for all other laws. The acronym "BIG LC SPAMS" is a mnemonic device to help remember the Ten Commandments. "B" stands for No Blasphemy; "I" stands for No Idols; "G" stands for No other gods before God. "L" represents no Lying, "C" represents no Coveting. "S" stands for no Stealing, "P" is for honoring your Parents, "A" stands for No Adultery, "M" is for No Murder, and the final "S" represents remembering the Sabbath.
2. **How does the concept of "murder" differ from "killing" within the context of the Law, and what does this imply about intent?** The Law distinguishes between "murder" and "killing." Murder requires malice and forethought; it is a premeditated act of violence with hatred in the heart. Killing, on the other hand, can occur without malicious intent, such as in war or an accidental death. This distinction highlights the importance of intent behind an action. The law emphasizes the inner disposition and motivation of the actor, not merely the outward act. It teaches that we should affirm life and not maliciously take it from another.
3. **What is the Shema, and why is it significant?** The Shema is a declaration of faith found in Deuteronomy 6:4, which begins with the Hebrew word "Shema," meaning "hear." It states, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." It is a central tenet of Judaism and a reminder of the oneness of God. The Shema is recited daily and serves as a foundational belief of the faith. It also includes the command to love the Lord with all one's heart, mind, and strength.

4. **What institutions did Moses establish before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, and why are they important?** Before Moses died, he established key institutions such as the prophets, the judges, the kingship, and the priests/Levites. The prophets were to deliver God's word and were to be tested; judges were meant to ensure local and accessible justice; the kingship was a provision for when they desired to have a human king like the nations around them but under God's rule; and the Levites and priests were responsible for teaching the law and conducting worship, without a land inheritance so that their focus was on God. These institutions provided the framework for the governing, spiritual life, and societal structure of Israel.
5. **How does one navigate the application of Old Testament laws in a contemporary context, especially given cultural differences?** Applying Old Testament law in the 21st century requires careful consideration of the principles that underlie the cultural particulars. The laws are rooted in a specific cultural context. For example, the command against women wearing men's clothing should be understood not as a ban on specific articles of clothing like pants, but as a principle of maintaining a distinction between the sexes, that is not about fashion. It is necessary to discern the underlying moral principles and apply them appropriately. Also, when Christ says "I did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill them" he is expanding it and making it more comprehensive through inclusion of the Gentiles.
6. **How did Jesus view the Old Testament Law, and how does it differ from the way the Pharisees interpreted it?** Jesus had a high view of the law, affirming its permanence and importance. He emphasized that the law is not meant for outward performance alone but needs to also extend to the heart and motivations. Jesus critiqued the Pharisees for their legalistic and outward-focused interpretation of the law, which emphasized external acts over inner transformation. Jesus used the law to demonstrate the need for a deeper kind of righteousness, by extending the law to the inner person and driving it into the heart, making motivation central.

7. **How do Paul's teachings on law and grace fit into this discussion, and what is the primary function of the law?** Paul's writings reveal that the law is holy, righteous, and good, but he emphasizes that the law alone cannot justify a person. Paul states that one cannot be justified by the law, and that one needs to have grace. He notes that the purpose of the law is not to make one self-righteous but to show people their sin and drive them toward their need for a savior, Jesus Christ. The law serves as a guide to demonstrate our shortcomings and point us to the mercy and grace available through Christ. The law acts as a "schoolmaster" bringing us to Christ.
8. **What are the potential positive and negative uses of both Law and Grace, and what cautions should Christians take?** Both law and grace have the potential to be misused. Law can be used in a legalistic manner to promote pride and self-righteousness, leading people to believe that they earn their salvation through performance, or that they are better than others. Grace, on the other hand, can be twisted into license, enabling people to justify sinful behaviors because they think God will forgive them without true repentance. Therefore, believers should be careful not to fall into these misinterpretations. Both Law and Grace need to be understood correctly as they are both from God, and they both point us to him.