

## **Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 18, Tough Laws, Joshua to Jericho 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 18, Tough Laws, Joshua to Jericho, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This is a lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt on challenging laws in Deuteronomy and the beginning of Joshua. He examines laws concerning war, rape, the death penalty, polygamy, slavery, and animal treatment, questioning their application in modern society. Hildebrandt proposes that these laws should be viewed as statements of values rather than strict legal codes, highlighting the cultural differences between ancient Israel and the 21st century. He further explores the significance of Jericho's conquest, focusing on geographical context and the story of Rahab. Finally, the lecture includes a virtual tour of Jericho using interactive software.

**2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 18 – 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\_  
Session 18.mp3**

### 3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 18, Tough Laws, Joshua to Jericho

#### Old Testament Law and the Conquest of Jericho: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the two ethical principles of the 21st century that Dr. Hildebrandt discusses in relation to the difficult laws of the Old Testament?
2. What does the concept of *herem* mean, and how was it applied in the context of warfare in the Old Testament?
3. How did Old Testament law differentiate between rape in a city and rape in a field?
4. What was Dr. Hildebrandt's son-in-law's perspective on the purpose of some of the harsh laws, such as those concerning rebellious sons, and what do they suggest about God's values?
5. Explain the concept of *lex talionis*. How does it relate to the concept of justice?
6. According to the lecture, how does Old Testament law address polygamy and slavery?
7. What is the significance of the animal law prohibiting plowing with an ox and a donkey together?
8. How does the lecture distinguish between the laws of Israel as a nation and the principles of the church?
9. Why is Jericho's geographical location significant in both military and economic contexts?
10. How does the story of Rahab in Jericho demonstrate the role women played in warfare and the concept of God's mercy?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The two ethical principles of the 21st century discussed are diversity and tolerance. Dr. Hildebrandt questions whether these principles are sufficient to navigate the complexities of morality and whether they can be applied

consistently. He suggests that cultural norms around tolerance have shifted in a way that would be unrecognizable to previous generations.

2. *Herem* means "total destruction" or "devoted to the Lord." It involved the complete annihilation of a city, including its inhabitants and animals, through burning. It was seen as a way of devoting the spoils of war to God.
3. Old Testament law recognized that a rape in a city should be punished if the woman cried out for help, as someone nearby would have heard her. However, if rape occurred in a field, the law did not require the woman to scream because she could not have been heard and would be considered a victim in this circumstance.
4. Dr. Hildebrandt's son-in-law suggests that many seemingly harsh Old Testament laws, such as those concerning rebellious sons, are not meant to be strictly enforced. Rather, they act as value signals or statements of social values. They emphasize how seriously God regards certain behaviors and values, such as honoring one's parents.
5. *Lex talionis*, or "eye for eye, tooth for tooth," was a principle meant to ensure that punishment fits the crime. It limited overreactions by requiring punishment to be equal to the offense. This was intended to prevent the escalation of violence.
6. The lecture states that the Old Testament has laws about polygamy that provide protection for the unloved wife. Similarly, slavery laws do not approve of slave trade but provide for the freedom of slaves after six years of servitude and offer protection to the debtor from exploitation by their creditor.
7. The prohibition against plowing with an ox and a donkey together highlights the need to avoid placing unequal burdens on animals. It is seen as a demonstration of care for animals and emphasizes the idea that they should not be unequally yoked together.
8. Israel is considered a nation with civil laws and courts that handle justice, while the church is viewed as a group of people, an assembly, with different principles and goals. The church does not have courts in a civil sense as the nation of Israel did.
9. Jericho's location is significant because it lies on a major trade route connecting the north-south highways that traveled through the region and acts as a strategic point in both military and economic contexts. It was situated in a hot canyon that had access to fresh water which made it a vital place.

10. Rahab demonstrates how women could play an active role in warfare by outsmarting the enemy and providing strategic information. Her story also highlights God's mercy by sparing her and her family, even though she was a Canaanite prostitute, and placing her in the lineage of the Messiah.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the challenges of interpreting Old Testament laws in a contemporary context, considering both their legal and value-based significance.
2. Analyze the concept of *herem* in the context of the Israelite conquest of Jericho, examining the ethical implications and possible theological justifications.
3. Compare and contrast the leadership styles and challenges faced by Moses and Joshua, as presented in the lecture, with reference to the ever-present role of God.
4. Evaluate the role of geographical factors in shaping the military and economic significance of Jericho in the ancient world, with particular attention to its location on trade routes and the landscape around the Jordan River.
5. Explore the intersection of divine intervention and natural phenomena in the crossing of the Jordan River, reflecting on how this narrative demonstrates both God's power and the way God works with natural processes.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Herem:** A Hebrew term meaning "total destruction" or "devoted to the Lord," typically referring to the complete annihilation of a city and its inhabitants as an act of devotion.
- **Lex Talionis:** The principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," which emphasizes that punishment should be equivalent to the crime committed.
- **Shalom:** A Hebrew word meaning "peace," often used to signify wholeness, well-being, and harmonious relationships.
- **Rift Valley:** A geological formation created by the separation of tectonic plates, often resulting in a valley or canyon-like feature.
- **Tell:** An artificial mound formed by layers of successive human settlements, often studied by archaeologists to understand the history of a particular site.
- **Via Maris:** Latin for "Way of the Sea," referring to a major ancient trade route that ran along the Mediterranean coast.
- **Geneva Convention:** A series of international treaties that establish standards of international law for humanitarian treatment in war, including the protection of prisoners of war.
- **Idolater:** A person who worships idols or false gods, often a term used in the Old Testament to describe the people of the Canaanite region.
- **Kosher:** Food that is in accordance with Jewish dietary laws, which restrict the consumption of certain animals and the mixing of some foods.
- **Immanuel:** A Hebrew name meaning "God with us," used in the Old Testament to signify the presence and protection of God among his people.

## 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:

### **Briefing Document: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt - Old Testament History, Literature and Theology, Lecture 18**

**Overview:** This lecture focuses on the "tough laws" found in Deuteronomy, particularly concerning war, rape, the death penalty, and other challenging topics, and transitions into an introduction to the book of Joshua. Dr. Hildebrandt acknowledges the difficulties in reconciling these ancient laws with modern sensibilities and encourages students to grapple with the complexities rather than seeking simplistic answers. He also emphasizes the importance of considering the cultural and historical contexts in which these laws were given, and how that changes our interpretation.

#### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. The Challenge of Biblical Laws:**

- **Clash with Modern Values:** Hildebrandt highlights the dissonance between some Old Testament laws and contemporary values, particularly around diversity and tolerance. He notes how "in our culture if you say the wrong things and use the wrong words you get crucified," contrasting with the past when certain actions were considered "really immoral" but are now accepted.
- **Personal Struggle:** He admits his own struggles with understanding these laws, emphasizing that he doesn't have all the answers and encourages students to engage in critical thinking.
- **Invitation to Deep Thinking:** "I put these laws up here partially because I want to break your heads open. To give you stuff where you can't put God in your nice little 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life box.'"

##### **1. Tough Laws of War (Herem):**

- **Deuteronomy 20 and War:** He discusses laws of war in Deuteronomy 20, including exemptions from military service (newly built homes, marriage engagements) and offering peace before attacking a city.

- **The Herem Principle:** The "herem" (total destruction, devoted to the Lord) is highlighted as a particularly difficult concept. It involves the complete destruction of a city, including men, women, children, and animals. Jericho is given as an example where the Herem principle was put in place, except for Rahab.
- **Divine Judgment:** Hildebrandt suggests that the herem was a form of divine judgment against Canaanite culture, citing God's statement that "I waited 400 years; the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." He asks students, "Does God judge cultures?"
- **Limitations of Human Understanding:** Hildebrandt emphasizes the limits of human comprehension of God's actions, asking, "am I a finite human being, do I understand how God works? Can I sit in judgment of God?" He acknowledges the difficult question about what happens to the innocent casualties and says he must rely on faith rather than human understanding. "I can't justify God because I don't understand all this."

#### 1. Rape Laws:

- **Distinction Between City and Field:** The lecture explains the distinction in biblical law between rape in a city and rape in a field, the key difference being that the city has witnesses while the field does not. The woman was required to scream in the field to show lack of consent.
- **Lack of Forensic Evidence:** Dr. Hildebrandt notes that the legal system of the time did not have access to the forensic tools that could confirm assault.

#### 1. Death Penalty Laws:

- **Various Offenses:** The lecture presents a list of offenses that were punishable by death, including idolatry, and rebellion against parents.
- **Law as a Statement of Values:** He shares insight from his son-in-law, a lawyer, who suggests that many of these laws may not have been intended to be literally implemented, but rather to act as "value signals" to demonstrate the values of a culture and "how strongly he objects to something." For example, the law of the rebellious son is an expression of the value of "Honor your father and your mother."
- **Shifting Perspective:** "the law itself is meant to be a statement of social values."

#### 1. Lex Talionis ("Eye for an Eye"):

- **Equal Punishment:** Hildebrandt explains that the "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" principle (Lex Talionis) was meant to ensure that punishment matched the crime, preventing overreactions and escalation of violence.
- **Lack of Prisons:** The lecture points out that in ancient times, there were very few prisons, and thus punishment was often immediate. He suggests that "immediate justice" may be more beneficial to victims than the legal system found in modern cultures, even though our prisons are meant to be better, they are often costly and ineffective.

#### 1. Other "Tough" Laws:

- **Polygamy:** The Bible, though not approving of polygamy, contains laws to protect the unloved wife.
- **Slavery:** The slavery laws in the Bible are discussed as laws that provided protection to the Hebrew slave, unlike the harsh slavery practiced later in history. These were for those in debt.
- **Animal Treatment:** The lecture highlights animal welfare laws, with the example of the law prohibiting yoking an ox and a donkey together to work, and a law requiring an ox to be allowed to eat of the grain it is threshing.

#### 1. Israel and the Church

- **Distinction between Israel and the Church:** The Church is not a nation, so laws meant for the nation of Israel do not directly apply to the Church. The lecture encourages listeners to look for underlying principles in the laws rather than to take them in a strict, literal sense.

#### 1. Old Testament and Change:

- **Transitions in Scripture:** Hildebrandt highlights how some Old Testament practices (e.g., kosher laws) are superseded in the New Testament, showing that change and development are present within the Bible.
- **Developmental Questions:** He encourages a careful approach when studying the Old Testament, taking into consideration how social norms and laws change over time.

## 1. Introduction to Joshua:

- **Transition of Leadership:** The lecture transitions to the book of Joshua, emphasizing the shift in leadership from Moses to Joshua. God's presence is noted as the true constant, "as I was with Moses so I will be with you."
- **Joshua's Need for Encouragement:** God repeatedly tells Joshua to be "strong and courageous" which Dr. Hildebrandt suggests indicates that Joshua was nervous about the task he was assigned.
- **Parallels Between Moses and Joshua:** The lecture notes that just as Moses parted the Red Sea, Joshua parted the Jordan River, which was a symbolic action to show God's presence in leadership. Both men also meet the Angel of the Lord and are told to take off their shoes because they are standing on holy ground.
- **United Israel:** When Joshua and the Israelites cross the Jordan River, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh join the other tribes in unity.

## 1. Jericho's Strategic Importance:

- **Location on Trade Routes:** The lecture emphasizes Jericho's location in the Jordan River Valley as a strategic point at the intersection of trade routes. It was in the "rift valley" or "canyon" between tectonic plates, on an East/West trade route that linked to North/South highways.
- **Rich Spring:** Jericho had a natural spring and abundant water, an essential resource in the hot desert.
- **First Battle:** Jericho was the first city the Israelites had to conquer in the promised land, so it set the tenor for the rest of the battles.

## 1. Archaeological Insights:

- **Jericho as a "Tell":** Hildebrandt describes the "tell" of Jericho as a mound formed by layers of civilization built up over thousands of years. He takes the students on a virtual tour of the ruins.
- **Evidence of Destruction:** The lecture points to the "burn layer" of the archaeological dig site that provides evidence that Jericho was destroyed in fire at some point in history. He also points out that some archaeologists argue that Jericho was destroyed before the time of Joshua, and that this presents problems in biblical archeology.

## 1. Rahab the Harlot:

- **Deception and Faith:** Rahab's deception of the king of Jericho and her profession of faith in Yahweh are noted. She is presented as an unlikely hero. She ends up in the lineage of Jesus, which Dr. Hildebrandt finds especially fascinating.
- **Wise Counsel:** Rahab not only hid the spies, but she told them to travel west into the mountains, which was exactly the opposite direction that anyone would normally go when escaping a city. By sending the King's men back East, towards the river, she ensured the Israelite spies would be safe.
- **Women in War:** In war, women can be effective through their cunning and cleverness, rather than brute force.
- **Crossing the Jordan River:** The Jordan is noted as being a very small river. The spies had no difficulty crossing it.
- **The Miracle:** The waters of the Jordan stopped at the town of Adam, and this seems to have happened via a dam that was caused when a canyon wall collapsed and blocked the river. This has happened twice in recorded history. This may have been a miracle of God done through natural means.

## Concluding Thoughts:

Dr. Hildebrandt uses this lecture to challenge his students to think critically about the Bible, and not be afraid of the difficult or problematic aspects. He encourages an approach that considers the historical, cultural, and literary contexts when dealing with these often jarring passages. He highlights the tension between the Old and New Testaments, and he provides tools that allow for deeper and more nuanced understanding of these challenging texts, as well as the God who provided them.

This briefing document is intended to provide a concise summary of the key points raised in Dr. Hildebrandt's lecture. It includes direct quotes to accurately reflect his points.

## 5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 18, Tough Laws, Joshua to Jericho, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Difficult Laws, War, and the Conquest of Jericho

- **Why are some of the laws in Deuteronomy considered "tough" or difficult to understand for modern readers?**
- Many laws in Deuteronomy, especially those regarding war, the *herem* (total destruction), rape, and the death penalty, clash with contemporary ethical principles and cultural norms. For example, the *herem*, which calls for the complete destruction of cities and their inhabitants, is hard for modern readers to reconcile with a compassionate view of God. These laws often seem harsh, even cruel, when viewed through a 21st-century lens of diversity and tolerance. Additionally, some laws, such as those dealing with a rebellious son or a non-virgin bride, seem extreme and may not align with modern legal systems. The professor suggests these laws might function more as value signals than as straightforward mandates for immediate implementation, emphasizing the importance of God's values within a culture.
- **What is the concept of "herem," and why is it so controversial?**
- The *herem* refers to the practice of total destruction, where entire cities and their populations, including men, women, children, and animals, are completely annihilated, often by fire. This was considered an act of devotion to God. The destruction of Jericho is a key example of *herem*. This practice is controversial because it appears to conflict with modern moral standards, particularly the idea of targeting non-combatants and children. Some interpret *herem* as a judgment on the culture and sins of the Canaanites, while others struggle with the idea of divine endorsement of such extreme violence. The professor acknowledges the difficulty in understanding this concept and emphasizes a need to trust in God's wisdom beyond human understanding.

- **How did ancient Israelite war practices differ from modern ideas of warfare?**
- Ancient Israelite war practices, as depicted in Deuteronomy, included exemptions for those who had recently built a house or become engaged. Furthermore, before attacking a city, they were supposed to offer peace (Shalom) and if accepted, they would subjugate the city and force them to work as laborers. However, in Joshua, it is not recorded that this offer of peace was always extended. Unlike contemporary warfare, the Old Testament describes an act known as *herem* (total destruction) which involved annihilating everyone in the city as an act of religious devotion. Unlike modern warfare, there were no prisons so justice had to be immediate with crimes often incurring the same punishment. Also, in the Old Testament, deception in war (such as Rahab hiding the spies) was accepted.
- **What is the significance of the laws regarding rape in the Old Testament, and how do they differ based on location?**
- Old Testament rape laws differentiate between a rape in the city and a rape in the field. In the city, if the woman did not scream, it was assumed to be consensual, reflecting the idea that help was available within city walls. However, in the field, where there was no one to hear a woman scream, lack of screaming did not indicate consent. This distinction acknowledges the different contexts in which these events could occur. Modern forensic tools such as DNA testing are not part of these laws and the need for this forensic information highlights one of the differences between ancient and modern justice.
- **How are death penalty laws in the Old Testament to be understood, and were they meant to be universally enforced?**
- The death penalty was prescribed for a variety of offenses in the Old Testament, such as idolatry, rebellious sons, and non-virgin brides. It is proposed that these laws were not always meant to be implemented literally but rather, they were meant to highlight societal values. These laws may serve as value signals or markers of the extreme importance of the principle that the law was highlighting rather than universally enforced laws. The death penalty laws therefore may indicate the depth of God's objections to certain behaviors and how crucial certain values such as honoring your parents was to the society.

- **What is the concept of "lex talionis" (eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth), and how does it relate to the idea of justice?**
- "Lex talionis," or the principle of "an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth," was meant to ensure that the punishment fits the crime. It was a mechanism to prevent overreactions and escalate conflicts, especially in a time where there were limited options for incarceration. Instead of an extreme and unfair punishment from a ruler, the punishment was meant to fit the crime. This concept aimed to achieve a fair balance between crime and punishment, ensuring that the penalty was proportional to the offense rather than an overreaction from the victim or someone in authority.
- **How do the Old Testament laws regarding polygamy and slavery reflect the cultural context of ancient Israel?**
- The Old Testament laws on polygamy and slavery do not necessarily endorse these practices but instead address them within their cultural context. Polygamy laws aimed to protect the unloved wife by ensuring she received proper treatment and inheritance rights. Similarly, slavery laws provided for the freedom of indebted servants after six years of service. These rules do not endorse the practice but provide protections for those who have become enslaved due to circumstances like debt or famine, or who are in polygamous marriages. These laws suggest that God is at work within a flawed culture by offering protections that could be helpful to the most vulnerable people, such as the unloved wife and indebted servant.
- **How does the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua emphasize the importance of God's presence in the conquest of the Promised Land?**
- The transition from Moses to Joshua highlights that the success of the conquest was dependent on God's presence, not just human leadership. Even though Moses was an extraordinary leader, God emphasizes to Joshua that he will be with him just as He was with Moses. The text notes that God, not Moses, was the one who split the Red Sea and provided the law at Sinai. God assures Joshua he will never leave nor forsake him, which serves as a reminder that it is God who leads them in their conquests. This emphasizes the importance of putting the focus on God's leadership rather than the human leader. It is an assurance that God is the constant factor for Israel, not just a particular leader like Moses.