

The Book of Exodus

Supplementary Laws

Part III – Various Moral Laws

Text: Exodus 22:16 – 23:33

Introduction:

1. While foundational, the Ten Commandments were not the only laws God gave to His people.
2. Chapters 21 – 23 record numerous other commandments given to the nation of Israel.
3. They are divided into three sections; the first dealing with relationships between people.
4. The second section deals with events relating to property.
5. The third deals with various moral laws and regulations.
6. These laws are classified as “judgments” because they were to govern the legal and judicial system of Israel.
7. Judges and magistrates were to be guided by these rules in rendering legal decisions.

I. Concerning Fornication

(Exodus 22:16-17)

- A. The word for ‘entice’ means to seduce.
- B. If a man seduced a woman who was not betrothed and convinced her to commit fornication, he was obligated to pay the money of a dowry to her father.
 1. This sum was an amount of 50 shekels of silver (Deut. 22:29).
 2. This was to compensate for the loss of his daughter to marriage or the loss of her purity, complicating her future.
- C. He then was to willingly take her as his wife and remain with her for life (Deut. 22:29).
- D. If her father was not willing to allow the marriage, the dowry must still be paid in an even larger sum (cf. Gen. 34:1-12; 1 Sam. 18:25).
- E. Fornication with a woman who was betrothed was considered adultery and carried the death penalty (Deut. 22:23-27).

II. Concerning Witchcraft

(Exodus 22:18)

- A. The Hebrew word for ‘witch’ means, “One who whispers a spell, uses incantations, or practices sorcery.”
- B. The punishment for witchcraft was death (Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10-11; Acts 8:9ff; Gal. 5:20; Rev. 22:15).

III. Concerning Bestiality

(Exodus 22:19)

- A. God’s law is clear in this matter (Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16; Deut. 27:21).
- B. It is a shame that this sin has been and continues to be committed.

IV. Concerning Idolatry

(Exodus 22:20)

V. Concerning Oppression

(Exodus 22:21-27)

- A. A stranger or sojourner was not to be wronged, oppressed, or treated with violence.
- B. The Israelites were to treat foreigners kindly because they had been strangers in Egypt.
- C. They were not to oppress, abase, or look down upon widows or orphans.

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- D. If they loaned money to one of their Jewish brethren, they were not to charge any interest (cf. Deut. 23:20).
- E. Anything of prime necessity taken as collateral for a loan was to be returned almost immediately (cf. Deut. 24:6; Neh. 5:1-19).

VI. Concerning Authority (Exodus 22:28)

- A. The word ‘gods’ in this verse is *Elohim* and can be translated three ways.
 - 1. “Judges” or “mighty” (Exo. 21:6; Gen. 23:6) – It always has the article [“the judges”], but it is not present here.
 - 2. “Gods” (Exo. 12:12) – Used of idols or false gods, but does not fit the context here.
 - 3. “God” (Exo. 20:19-21) – Used of the one, true God, Jehovah.
- B. They were not to revile or curse God nor the rulers who served under His authority.

VII. Concerning First-Fruits (Exodus 22:29-30)

- A. There were three first-fruit offerings that were to be made.
 - 1. Firstborn children – Not sacrificed, but redeemed (Exo. 13:13; Num. 3:46ff).
 - 2. Firstborn cattle – Sacrificed, on the eighth day of its life.
 - 3. First of harvest – Grain, fruit, oil, etc. whether wet or dry.
- B. They were not to delay or show reluctance in making these offerings.

VII. Concerning Food (Exodus 22:31)

- A. An animal that was killed by another was considered unclean and not to be eaten – it was to be given to the dogs (or sold to a foreigner [Deut. 14:21]).
- B. The purpose of this law was to separate them from other nations as holy to the Lord.

VIII. Concerning False Witnesses (Exodus 23:1-9)

- A. Justice was not to be determined by a majority alone, but by truth.
- B. Justice was not to be determined by compassion alone, but by truth.
- C. Justice was not to be determined by relationship, but by truth.
 - 1. One should be just and seek justice, even for his enemy.
 - 2. In fact, one should go so far as to help his enemy in a time of need.
- D. Justice was not to be determined by wealth, but by truth.
- E. Justice was not to be determined by nationality, but by truth.

IX. Concerning Sabbaths (Exodus 23:10-12)

- A. Every seventh year was to be a Sabbath year – the land was to lie in rest.
- B. Every seventh day was to be a day of rest – for man and animal.

X. Concerning Faithfulness (Exodus 23:13)

- A. They were to be careful in obeying all that God had commanded them.
- B. They were not to even mention the names of false gods.

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- XI. Concerning Feast Days (Exodus 23:14-19)
- A. There were three feasts to be kept each year.
 - B. The Feast of Passover – Unleavened Bread
 - 1. Seven days of unleavened bread (cf. Lev. 23:5-8)
 - 2. Commemorated the exodus from Egypt
 - C. The Feast of First-Fruits – Harvest, Weeks, Pentecost (Deut. 16:9-11)
 - D. The Feast of Ingathering – Tabernacles, Booths (Lev. 23:34; Deut. 16:13)
- XII. Promises of Blessings (Exodus 23:20-33)
- A. When God gives commands, He also details the dangers of rebellion and the rewards of obedience.
 - B. First, God promised to send an Angel to lead and guide them.
 - 1. Note that this promise, unlike the others, was unconditional.
 - 2. The word “angel” simply means, “Messenger.”
 - a. Thus, some conclude that it must refer to Moses.
 - b. However, this messenger was not a man nor an angel.
 - c. He had the power to forgive sins.
 - d. God said, “My name is in him” – indicating that He is deity.
 - e. This was God; likely, the second person of the Godhead (cf. 14:19; 32:34; 33:14; 1 Cor. 10:4, 9).
 - 3. This Angel would guard, protect, and guide them on their journey.
 - 4. Thus, a part of this promise was that they would come to the Land of Canaan.
 - 5. They were to be on guard to make sure they heard and obeyed His commands.
 - 6. If they embittered Him by their disobedience, it would be sin.
 - C. Next, if they obeyed Him, God would be an enemy to their enemies, who would be “cut off”.
 - D. Also, if they would reject and destroy idolatry in the land, God would bless them with food, health, and long life.
 - E. Then, God promised to drive their enemies out of the land.
 - 1. He would not do this immediately or all at once – for their own good and the good of the land.
 - 2. The “hornet” may have been a symbolic term, but it also may be taken literally (cf. Deut. 7:20; Josh. 24:12).
 - F. Finally, He would extend their borders from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River (cf. Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4; 1 Kings 4:21, 24).
- XIII. Warnings against Disobedience (Exodus 23:32-33)
- A. God’s instructions end with a solemn warning.
 - B. They must not enter into covenants with the inhabitants of the land lest they join in fellowship with their false gods.
 - C. To allow idolatry to remain in the land would result in a terrible temptation to sin.
 - D. If they began to practice idolatry, it would become a trap that would ensnare their souls and affect their future (cf. 34:12ff; Deut. 12:30; Josh. 9:14ff; 23:13; Jud. 2:3).