

EXODUS CHAPTER 21-22

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The basic Ten Commandments have been given to Moses and now the Lord is expanding the basic ten with added regulations for maintaining a society.

REGULATIONS REGARDING SLAVERY

(21:1.) "These are the regulations you must present to Israel.

(2.) "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he may serve for no more than six years. Set him free in the seventh year, and he will owe you nothing for his freedom.

- There is special remedial treatment for a **Hebrew** slave that might not apply to foreign **slaves**. Notice the personhood of slaves. They were more than mere possessions. This was radically different than the pagan world. There was no destitution in Israel. If a man could not afford the basics of life or they were a thief and couldn't repay (22:3), they became a **slave** and others cared for them and taught them for a *maximum of seven years*. This slavery was not harsh, but mild.
- Israel did not have its citizens living under bridges and in caves begging for food as we have in America. The needy were cared for and rehabilitated through their short-term **slavery** system. A **Hebrew** man might become a **slave** because he could not pay his debts, but he was freed during the seventh year of his **slavery**.

(3.) If he was single when he became your slave, he shall leave single. But if he was married before he became a slave, then his wife must be freed with him.

- His **wife** is free to go as well if they were **married** before he became a **slave**. But there is another possible case:

(4.) "If his master gave him a wife while he was a slave and they had sons or daughters, then only the man will be free in the

seventh year, but his wife and children will still belong to his master.

- If the **master** provided the **wife**, she and **her children** must remain behind. In this case, the slave may not want to go free.

(5.) But the slave may declare, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I don't want to go free.' (6.) If he does this, his master must present him before God. Then his master must take him to the door or doorpost and publicly pierce his ear with an awl. After that, the slave will serve his master for life.

- If the **slave loved his master, his wife and children, he** could stay **for life**. We interpret the **must present him before God** as **presenting** him to God's representatives: one of the judges. The **slave** was then earmarked and would remain as a **slave** the rest of his **life**.

(7.) "When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she will not be freed at the end of six years as the men are. (8.) If she does not satisfy her owner, he must allow her to be bought back again. But he is not allowed to sell her to foreigners, since he is the one who broke the contract with her.

- The **daughter** who was sold **as a slave** was not released following the seven-year rule. Rather, she was eligible to become a concubine (secondary wife) for the **master**. [The second clause of verse 8 is not clear among the translators.] If the **master** decided that he did not want this, then she could be purchased back to freedom. She had rights. He is not **to sell her to** someone outside of Israel.

(9.) But if the slave's owner arranges for her to marry his son, he may no longer treat her as a slave but as a daughter.

- If the lady was purchased for the master's **son**, the master must **deal with her** as he would **with a daughter** instead of a **slave**.

(10.) "If a man who has married a slave wife takes another wife for himself, he must not neglect the rights of the first wife to food, clothing, and sexual intimacy.

- If the master **takes another wife**, the **slave wife** must receive normal **food, clothing** and **sexual rights**. Again, take note of the woman's **rights**.

(11.) If he fails in any of these three obligations, she may leave as a free woman without making any payment.

- If the master does not provide all **three** items listed for the slave lady, she is **free** to leave him. She did not even have to be redeemed by someone else. She was a **free woman**.

REGULATIONS REGARDING THE DEATH SENTENCE

(12.) "Anyone who assaults and kills another person must be put to death.

- This violates the Commandment to *not murder*, in fact the principle shows up back in Genesis 9:6. The following sentence shows that the **death** was premeditated. There is sanctity of life.

(13.) But if it was simply an accident permitted by God, I will appoint a place of refuge where the slayer can run for safety.

- The death could have been **accidental**, so a system of cities of **refuge** would be set up where the man could flee until court was held. These cities are identified in Deuteronomy as they entered the Land of Promise. God did not place crimes of neglect on the same plane as crimes of premeditation.

(14.) However, if someone deliberately kills another person, then the slayer must be dragged even from My altar and be put to death.

- Assuming **the slayer** had run to the **altar** for refuge, he was to face **death**.

(15.) "Anyone who strikes father or mother must be put to death.

- Even if parents were difficult people, they were to be respected. The penalty was **death** for **striking** a parent. This is an expansion on the Commandment of Exodus 20:12.

(16.) "Kidnappers must be put to death, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves.

- **Kidnapping** required **death**. **Possessing** a kidnapped person also required **death**. Enslaving another human was treated just like premeditated murder.

(17.) "Anyone who dishonors father or mother must be put to death.

- Even **dishonoring** a parent calls for **death**. Deuteronomy 21:18-21 shows that the final decision was made by the elders of the city.

RULES ABOUT INJURING ANOTHER PERSON IN A FIGHT

(18.) "Now suppose two men quarrel, and one hits the other with a stone or fist, and the injured person does not die but is confined to bed. (19.) If he is later able to walk outside again, even with a crutch, the assailant will not be punished but must compensate his victim for lost wages and provide for his full recovery.

- When one **man injures** another but the **injured** man is able to walk outside of the house, the assailant is not to be punished, **but must compensate** the injured man for **loss** of working **time** and provide funds for his **full recover**.

(20.) "If a man beats his male or female slave with a club and the slave dies as a result, the owner must be punished. (21.) But if the slave recovers within a day or two, then the owner shall not be punished, since the slave is his property.

- If a master killed **his slave**, he faced a penalty. If **the slave** lived a day or two and then **died**, the master still suffered a severe financial loss. Some commentators believe that a foreign **slave** was under consideration because Hebrew **slaves** were to be carefully treated.

(22.) "Now suppose two men are fighting, and in the process they accidentally strike a pregnant woman so she gives birth prematurely. If no further injury results, the man who struck

the woman must pay the amount of compensation the woman's husband demands and the judges approve.

- If men are fighting and one hits **a pregnant women** so she gives birth prematurely but no harm is done, he must **compensate** her **husband** as he demands —with the approval of the **judges**.

(23.) But if there is further injury, the punishment must match the injury: a life for a life, (24.) an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, (25.) a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, a bruise for a bruise.

- But if harm is done, **the punishment must match the injury**. If the mother or the baby is killed, the one causing the death must die. If the injury did not lead to death, the penalty is to match the injury.
- **An alternate view** is that the statement is saying that *compensation* must be made matching the harm. The penalty did not need to be "in kind."

(26.) "If a man hits his male or female slave in the eye and the eye is blinded, he must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. (27.) And if a man knocks out the tooth of his male or female slave, he must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.

- If a man hits a **slave** and **blinds** him or her in one **eye** or knocks out a **tooth**, **the slave** is to be **freed**. He is person with rights.

REGULATIONS ABOUT ANIMALS OUT OF CONTROL

(28.) "If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox must be stoned, and its flesh may not be eaten. In such a case, however, the owner will not be held liable.

- The owner of an **ox** that **gores** a person **to death** is not held **liable** for the event supposing that it had not happened before.
- The **ox** is to be killed, but **not eaten**. It was not properly killed and the blood drained.

(29.) But suppose the ox had a reputation for goring, and the owner had been informed but failed to keep it under control. If the ox then kills someone, it must be stoned, and the owner must also be put to death.

- But if this **ox** has gored someone before, the scene changes. Not only does the **ox die**, but the **owner** is also to **be put to death**. But maybe not, as the next verse shows.

(30.) However, the dead person's relatives may accept payment to compensate for the loss of life. The owner of the ox may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded. (31.) "The same regulation applies if the ox gores a boy or a girl.

- There is a way out for the owner. He can be **redeemed**. A price can be set for his life by **the dead person's relatives**.

(32.) But if the ox gores a slave, either male or female, the animal's owner must pay the slave's owner thirty silver coins, and the ox must be stoned.

- If a **slave** is **gored**, the **owner** of the **ox** shall pay the **master** of the **slave thirty shekels of silver**. This was the price paid to Judas for the whereabouts of Jesus in the New Testament.

REGULATIONS ABOUT ANIMALS THAT ARE INJURED

(33.) "Suppose someone digs or uncovers a pit and fails to cover it, and then an ox or a donkey falls into it. (34.) The owner of the pit must pay full compensation to the owner of the animal, but then he gets to keep the dead animal.

- A property owner is responsible for the safety of even animals. If an animal is killed because of the land owner's carelessness, then he must pay the owner of the beast.

(35.) "If someone's ox injures a neighbor's ox and the injured ox dies, then the two owners must sell the live ox and divide the price equally between them. They must also divide the dead animal.

- If one **animal** kills another, both the live **animal** and the **dead animal** are to be **sold** and the proceeds divided.

(36.) But if the ox had a reputation for goring, yet its owner failed to keep it under control, he must pay full compensation--a live ox for the dead one--but he may keep the dead ox.

- The rule changes if the **ox** had gored in the past. The owner is liable for the costs.

REGULATIONS ABOUT THEFT

(22:1.) "If someone steals an ox or sheep and then kills or sells it, the thief must pay back five oxen for each ox stolen, and four sheep for each sheep stolen.

- If a thief **steals** and **kills or sells** an **ox**, he had to **repay five** times the value of the **ox**. It took years to train an **ox**. If it was a **sheep**, he had to repay **four** times the value of the **sheep**. The word may have included goats.
- God did not allow the life of the thief to be taken for stealing property whereas the Code of Hammurabi did.

(2.) "If a thief is caught in the act of breaking into a house and is struck and killed in the process, the person who killed the thief is not guilty of murder. (3.) But if it happens in daylight, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murder. "A thief who is caught must pay in full for everything he stole. If he cannot pay, he must be sold as a slave to pay for his theft.

- If a **thief** was **found breaking in** at night and killed, there was no penalty to the property owner. But if the break-in was during the **day** and the **thief** is **killed**, the property **owner is guilty of murder**.
- The **thief** must repay totally or be **sold** into slavery. Notice that there was no cutting off hands as in other social systems.

(4.) If someone steals an ox or a donkey or a sheep and it is found in the thief's possession, then the thief must pay double the value of the stolen animal.

- **Wilbur Fields** makes an interesting observation:
Possibly the reason for the lesser penalty (double instead of fourfold) was that if the stolen item was still with the thief, he yet might repent of his crime, acknowledge his guilt, and

restore what he had stolen. He could not do this after the animal was disposed of.

(5.) "If an animal is grazing in a field or vineyard and the owner lets it stray into someone else's field to graze, then the animal's owner must pay compensation from the best of his own grain or grapes.

- This is stealing food from his neighbor for his animal and **restitution** must be made from **his own grain or grapes**.

(6.) "If you are burning thornbushes and the fire gets out of control and spreads into another person's field, destroying the sheaves or the uncut grain or the whole crop, the one who started the fire must pay for the lost crop.

- If a man starts a **fire** and it get out of control, then he is responsible and must pay for the damage done to others.

(7.) "Suppose someone leaves money or goods with a neighbor for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house. If the thief is caught, the compensation is double the value of what was stolen.

- As in verse 4 above, the **thief** must pay double for his thievery.

(8.) But if the thief is not caught, the neighbor must appear before God, who will determine if he stole the property.

- **If the thief** was **not caught**, perhaps the man who was keeping the item **stole** it himself. **The owner of the house** needs to make a statement before **God**—maybe it was before **God's** representative, a judge—that he did not have his **neighbor's property**.

(9.) "Suppose there is a dispute between two people who both claim to own a particular ox, donkey, sheep, article of clothing, or any lost property. Both parties must come before God, and the person whom God declares guilty must pay double compensation to the other.

- It is not clear how the man in question came **before God**. Perhaps he came before a judge as the representative for **God**. The penalty was to **pay double**.

(10.) "Now suppose someone leaves a donkey, ox, sheep, or any other animal with a neighbor for safekeeping, but it dies or is injured or gets away, and no one sees what happened. (11.) The neighbor must then take an oath in the presence of the LORD. If the LORD confirms that the neighbor did not steal the property, the owner must accept the verdict, and no payment will be required. (12.) But if the animal was indeed stolen, the guilty person must pay compensation to the owner. (13.) If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, the remains of the carcass must be shown as evidence, and no compensation will be required.

- **Wilbur Fields** unpacks this passage:
 If livestock in the care of someone besides its owner died or was hurt or driven away (by enemy raiders or attacked by animals), and no one saw it happen, an oath in Jehovah's name was sworn out as to whether the keeper had stolen or slaughtered the animal for himself. In some way Jehovah would make known the truth of the matter.
 If the keeper was innocent, no restitution was made. Natural losses (from beasts or sickness, etc.) were not the responsibility of the keeper.
 If wild beasts had killed a sheep or other animal, the keeper could bring the remaining pieces of the animal as evidence of what had happened. The keeper might rescue "two legs or a piece of an ear." (Amos 3:12).
 If the animal(s) had been stolen from the one keeping them, the keeper had to make restitution to the owner. The keeper was responsible to protect against thievery.

(14.) "If someone borrows an animal from a neighbor and it is injured or dies when the owner is absent, the person who borrowed it must pay full compensation. (15.) But if the owner was present, no compensation is required. And no

compensation is required if the animal was rented, for this loss is covered by the rental fee.

- If the **owner** was not present when the animals were hurt, the one who borrowed the animals had to make **restitution**. But if the owner was present the borrowers was not responsible for the loss.

WHEN A VIRGIN IS SEDUCED

(16.) "If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged to anyone and has sex with her, he must pay the customary bride price and marry her.

- If a Hebrew man was so amorous that he convinced **a virgin** to have **sex** with him, the penalty was that he had to pay her dowry or **bride price** to her father and **marry her**. (*Adultery* involves an engaged or married person and the penalty is death.)

(17.) But if her father refuses to let him marry her, the man must still pay him an amount equal to the bride price of a virgin.

- If dad **refuses** the arrangement, the seducer must still **pay** the **bride price**. More details are spelled out in Deuteronomy 22:22-29.

(18.) "You must not allow a sorceress to live.

- Witchcraft was a capital offense in Israel. It is not so today.

(19.) "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must certainly be put to death.

- Having sexual intercourse with animals was practiced some among the Hittites and other pagans. Among the worshipers of God, it merited the **death** penalty. The practice of *bestiality* is increasing in the world of today. An online search will reveal that it is legal to marry an animal in many states of the U.S.

RULES ABOUT SACRIFICING, SOJOURNER AND THE POOR

(20.) "Anyone who sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed.

- The death penalty was also for those who **sacrificed** to other **gods**.
- (21.) "You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.**
- Those passing through their midst were to be treated carefully. Israel could identify with being **foreigners** because of their **Egypt** experience.

(22.) "You must not exploit a widow or an orphan. (23.) If you exploit them in any way and they cry out to Me, then I will certainly hear their cry. (24.) My anger will blaze against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Then your wives will be widows and your children fatherless.

- The **widow** and **fatherless child** were the weakest and most vulnerable members of society. Those who mistreated them would die and their **wives** would become **widows** and their **children fatherless**. God commanded a special care and concern for the **widow** and **fatherless**, and has promised to protect them.

REGULATIONS ABOUT LENDING MONEY

(25.) "If you lend money to any of My people who are in need, do not charge interest as a money lender would.

- Hebrews could **lend money** to one another, but were not to treat the debtor harshly as a **moneylender** would and they were not allowed to **charge interest**. Note the poor person was called **my people**. God has special concern for the **poor** just as He has for widows and orphans. Lending for commercial purposes or to foreigners is quite a different matter.
- Jesus was born into a poor family. Poverty is not a sin.

(26.) If you take your neighbor's cloak as security for a loan, you must return it before sunset. (27.) This coat may be the only blanket your neighbor has. How can a person sleep without it? If you do not return it and your neighbor cries out to Me for help, then I will hear, for I am merciful.

- Hebrews could not require a loan security of a poor man's garment. It had to be returned by sundown because that was his covering for sleeping. God hears the **cries** of the poor and will take action.

REGULATIONS ON HOW TO RELATE TO GOD

(28.) "You must not dishonor God or curse any of your rulers.

- The most basic arena for holiness is always the tongue. God cares how we talk about Him and those He has put us into submission to. The people of **God** were not to **dishonor** Him or their **rulers**. Speaking against **rulers** is common practice in America today.

(29.) "You must not hold anything back when you give Me offerings from your crops and your wine. "You must give Me your firstborn sons.

- An additional way of relating to God is in the distribution of our money. When Israel began harvesting in the Land of Promise, they were to give God His portion promptly. The same was true of giving the **firstborn sons**, who were then redeemed. Borrowing from the Lord may have seemed harmless, but was against the Lord's command.

(30.) "You must also give Me the firstborn of your cattle, sheep, and goats. But leave the newborn animal with its mother for seven days; then give it to Me on the eighth day.

- They were to give it to the Lord **on the eighth day**, not just "sometime." They were not to withhold their sacrifices.

(31.) "You must be My holy people. Therefore, do not eat any animal that has been torn up and killed by wild animals. Throw it to the dogs.

- The people of Israel were to be separate from their pagan neighbors. This example is in their food. The animal was unclean because it was not properly bled and so was not suitable to eat.