

## Week 10: Terms of the Covenant - Exodus Ch 21-24

### Pre-Work

- As we read about some of the specific laws in the Bible, let's polish our lenses to see how these laws interact with the purpose of the Bible, and also to see how Jesus interpreted them. Please watch this very helpful video from the Bible Project

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/law/>

- Well, reading all of Exodus 21-24 won't be a walk in the park, but I believe in you! Please read these chapters in the translation of your choice. What stands out to you in these chapters? What questions arise in your mind when you read them?

## Class Notes

Accommodative laws and the “hardness of their hearts”

### Mark 10

**4** They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” **5** “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied.

- The authors do not claim that these laws are given to cause people to live in a “Garden of Eden” state nor do they reflect the “New Heavens and New Earth” state, but are meant to address how to reflect Yahweh’s character in their present state, with socially and individually “hardened hearts”.

**21** “Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them:

**2** “If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall leave as a free man without a payment *to you*. **3** If he comes alone, he shall leave alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall leave with him. **4** If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall leave alone. **5** But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not leave as a free man,’ **6** then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.

- Social hardness of heart: slavery is the ancient equivalent of electricity
- The practice of taking a married person as a slave (for debt) and then keeping the spouse is abolished.
- Freeing a spouse or children financed by the master? They aren’t ready for that.
- A slave must be allowed to choose to remain in the master’s household if he prefers to stay

**7** “Now if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do. **8** If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people, because of his unfairness to her. **9** And if he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. **10** If he takes to himself another

woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. <sup>11</sup> But if he will not do these three *things* for her, then she shall go free for nothing, without *payment of* money.

- Because of the practice of selling daughters as slaves, they must be treated with special considerations
- Women sold by a father are “on their own” without the family social safety net. To dismiss them would be like a death sentence.
- The master must allow her to be redeemed by a relative, but he cannot sell her to a foreign person (where she would not have these protections).
- If the female slave is a wife or concubine, and another woman is taken as a wife or concubine, she cannot be “demoted” but must be treated equally.
- If the master won’t treat her equally, she is free to go and the master gets nothing.

<sup>12</sup> “He who strikes someone so that he dies shall certainly be put to death.<sup>13</sup> Yet if he did not lie in wait *for him*, but God caused *him* to fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee. <sup>14</sup> If, however, someone is enraged against his neighbor, so as to kill him in a cunning way, you are to take him *even* from My altar, to be put to death.

- Note how “certainly be put to death” comes with an asterisk. There is an accommodation of mercy. This is how Covenantal law works - circumstances are always taken into account.

<sup>15</sup> “And one who strikes his father or his mother shall certainly be put to death.

<sup>16</sup> “Now one who kidnaps someone, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall certainly be put to death.

<sup>17</sup> “And one who curses his father or his mother shall certainly be put to death.

- These “certainly” statements should also be viewed with a Covenantal lens as above

<sup>18</sup> “Now if people have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with a fist, and he does not die but is confined to bed, <sup>19</sup> if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall pay for his care until he is completely healed.

- In the ancient world any bodily harm was often retaliated by the injured party with killing the person and his family. This and other laws restrict retribution.

<sup>20</sup> “And if someone strikes his male or female slave with a rod and *the slave* dies at his hand, he shall be punished. <sup>21</sup> If, however, *the slave* survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken; for *the slave* is his property.

- The “hardness of heart” accommodation of slavery still starts to pull in the direction of human rights. There is at least some punishment (beyond payment) for killing a slave, which would have been shockingly counterintuitive.

<sup>22</sup> “Now if people struggle with each other and strike a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, but there is no injury, *the guilty person* shall certainly be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges *decide*. <sup>23</sup> But if there is *any further* injury, then you shall appoint *as a penalty* life for life, <sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup> burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

- “Eye for eye and tooth for tooth” restricts retribution
- Jesus said even this superior level of fairness is not God’s ideal: God says, “love those who harm you”

<sup>26</sup> “And if someone strikes the eye of his male or female slave and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free on account of the eye. <sup>27</sup> And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let the slave go free on account of the tooth.

- Consider the shock of an ancient audience when they hear they have to take a massive financial loss simply for knocking out a tooth. How would this principle affect the treatment of slaves?

<sup>28</sup> “Now if an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall certainly be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished. <sup>29</sup> If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. <sup>30</sup> If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him. <sup>31</sup> Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule.

- The principle helps close a loophole of murdering by proxy (a dangerous animal) without consequence.
- Note there is an out to capital punishment: the victims can ask for a ransom instead.

<sup>32</sup> If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his *or her* master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

- Thirty pieces of silver is the ransom for a slave. This is what God made Himself, to rescue the families of the earth.

<sup>33</sup> “Now if someone opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, <sup>34</sup> the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead *animal* shall become his.

<sup>35</sup> “And if someone’s ox injures another’s ox so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide its proceeds equally; and they shall also divide the dead *ox*. <sup>36</sup> Or *if* it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he must make restitution of ox for ox, and the dead *animal* shall become his.

- The principle is fair treatment. In the ANE, conflicts were normally resolved in favor of the one with higher social status. Torah requires equity - there is no mention of who has higher status in the conflicts between neighbors.

**22** “If someone steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep— <sup>2</sup> If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no guilt for bloodshed on his account. <sup>3</sup> If the sun has risen on him, *there will be* guilt for bloodshed on his account—*A thief* shall certainly make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. <sup>4</sup> If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

- Intentional theft has consequences five times (or double) the cost of the item stolen, and if the thief is killed while committing the crime, the family of the thief cannot demand the death of the property owner. The principle is that since fallen humans are sometimes untrustworthy, deterrent laws are necessary as an accommodation.
- The following laws are variations on this principle

<sup>5</sup> “If someone lets a field or vineyard be grazed *bare* and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another person’s field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

<sup>6</sup> “If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, and stacked grain or the standing grain or the field *itself* is consumed, the one who started the fire must make restitution.

<sup>7</sup> “If someone gives his neighbor money or goods to keep *for him* and it is stolen from the neighbor’s house, if the thief is caught, *then the thief* shall pay double. <sup>8</sup> If the thief is

not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, *to determine* whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property. <sup>9</sup> For every breach of trust, *whether it is* for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, *or* for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.

<sup>10</sup> "If someone gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep *for him*, and it dies or is injured or is driven away while no one is looking, <sup>11</sup> an oath before the LORD shall be taken by the two of them that he has not laid a hand on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept *it*, and he shall not *be compelled to make* restitution. <sup>12</sup> But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. <sup>13</sup> If it is all torn to pieces, have him bring it as evidence; he shall not *be compelled to* make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.

<sup>14</sup> "And if someone borrows *an animal* from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. <sup>15</sup> If its owner is with it, *the borrower* shall not *be compelled to* make restitution. If it is hired, it came by its hire.

<sup>16</sup> "If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and sleeps with her, he must pay a dowry for her *to be* his wife. <sup>17</sup> If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.

- This is a shocking social advance:
  - If a man steals a woman's virginity, he must offer to marry her.
  - If the father doesn't want the seducer to marry her, he still has to pay the dowry.
  - This is a profound protection for young women, and a profound disincentive for men to seduce young women.

<sup>18</sup> "You shall not allow a sorceress to live.

- Where did sorcery appear in this book already? The idea is imitation of Yahweh's powers by means of other spiritual beings.

<sup>19</sup> "Whoever has sexual intercourse with an animal must be put to death.

<sup>20</sup> "He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed.

- These previous 3 laws: sorcery, bestiality, and idolatry are next to one another because they overlap. Crossing the barrier of the spirit realm and physical realm aside from Yahweh is set in comparison to having sex with an animal.

<sup>21</sup> “You shall not oppress a stranger nor torment him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. <sup>22</sup> You shall not oppress any widow or orphan. <sup>23</sup> If you oppress him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will assuredly hear his cry; <sup>24</sup> and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

- If you treat the immigrant, orphan, or widow poorly, then the Lord will treat you as He did Pharaoh. Principle: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

<sup>25</sup> “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. <sup>26</sup> If you ever seize your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, <sup>27</sup> for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else is he to sleep in? And it will come about that when he cries out to Me, I will listen *to him*, for I am gracious.

- Principle: the poor must be treated the same as the orphan, the widow, and the immigrant. You cannot charge them interest or demand repayment if that makes them vulnerable. God will hold you to account for mistreating the quartet of the vulnerable.

<sup>28</sup> “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

- Principle: guard your heart against bitterness for how you feel governed.

<sup>29</sup> “You shall not hold back *the offering from* your entire harvest and your wine. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. <sup>30</sup> You shall do the same with your oxen *and* with your sheep. It shall be with its mother for seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

- 1/7th of your week and the firstfruits of your life (including children redeemed by silver) cannot be withheld from the God who gives them everything.

<sup>31</sup> “You shall be holy people to Me, therefore you shall not eat *any* flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

- What is killed by beasts belong to the beasts
- “Torn flesh” (eaten while alive), even if torn by a third party, cannot be consumed by humans.

**23** “You shall not give a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked person to be a malicious witness. <sup>2</sup> You shall not follow the crowd in doing evil, nor shall you testify in

a dispute so as to join together with a crowd in order to pervert *justice*; <sup>3</sup> nor shall you show favor to a poor person in his dispute.

- Social pressure is no excuse to oppress the poor or do wrong by someone.

<sup>4</sup> “If you encounter your enemy’s ox or his donkey wandering away, you must return it to him. <sup>5</sup> If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying *helpless* under its load, you shall not leave it *helpless* for its owner; you must arrange *the load* with him.

- No finder’s keepers. Instead, finder’s helpers.

<sup>6</sup> “You shall not pervert the justice *due* to your needy *brother* in his dispute. <sup>7</sup> Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.

<sup>8</sup> “You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.

<sup>9</sup> “You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you *also* were strangers in the land of Egypt.

- Principle: the interests of others, even non-chosen ones, must come before your own. This is how people will know you belong to Yahweh.

<sup>10</sup> “Now you shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield, <sup>11</sup> but *in* the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie uncultivated, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the animal of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.

<sup>12</sup> “For six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease *from labor* so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as the stranger *residing with you, may* refresh themselves. <sup>13</sup> Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be careful; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let *them* be heard from your mouth.

<sup>14</sup> “Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. <sup>15</sup> You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. And no one is to appear before Me empty-handed. <sup>16</sup> Also *you shall keep* the Feast of the Harvest *of* the first fruits of your labors *from* what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in *the fruit of* your labors from the field. <sup>17</sup> Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

<sup>18</sup> “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning.

<sup>19</sup> “You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God.

- Principle: your time and belongings aren’t yours until you recognize that they have come from Yahweh, and you prove your recognition by giving Him the best of both.

“You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

- Similar to eating “torn” flesh, doing this is cruel. Principle: rule the animals respectfully.

<sup>20</sup> “Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. <sup>21</sup> Be attentive to him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your rebellion, since My name is in him. <sup>22</sup> But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. <sup>23</sup> For My angel will go before you and bring you into *the land of* the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. <sup>24</sup> You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their memorial stones in pieces. <sup>25</sup> And you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. <sup>26</sup> There will be no one miscarrying or unable to have children in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. <sup>27</sup> I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you. <sup>28</sup> And I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from you. <sup>29</sup> I will not drive them out from you in a single year, so that the land will not become desolate and the animals of the field become too numerous for you. <sup>30</sup> I will drive them out from you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land. <sup>31</sup> I will set your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the *Euphrates* River; for I will hand over the inhabitants of the land to you, and you will drive them out from you. <sup>32</sup> You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. <sup>33</sup> They shall not live in your land, otherwise they will make you sin against Me; for *if* you serve their gods, it is certain to be a snare to you.

- The “two powers” debate in Jesus’ time.

**24** Then He said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. <sup>2</sup> Moses alone,

however, shall approach the LORD, but they shall not approach, nor shall the people come up with him.”

- This is because of the people’s failure to trust mentioned in Deut 5

**3** Then Moses came and reported to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!” **4** And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he got up early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve memorial stones for the twelve tribes of Israel. **5** And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. **6** Moses took half of the blood and put *it* in basins, and the *other* half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. **7** Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read *it* as the people listened; and they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” **8** So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

- The chosen “nation of priests” agreed to the terms of the covenant and the principles of the laws.

**9** Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, **10** and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. **11** Yet He did not reach out with His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

- The meal with Jethro, denoting a reunion of the dispossessed families of the Earth, now has its amped-up counterpart. There is a meal on the Holy Mountain as Heaven and Earth touch. God and humans sit at table together.
- The Last Supper extended echo effect.

**12** Now the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and stay there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the Law and the commandments which I have written for their instruction.” **13** So Moses got up along with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. **14** But to the elders he said, “Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, have him approach them.” **15** Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **16** The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. **17** And to the eyes of the sons of Israel, the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. **18** Then Moses entered the midst of

the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

- Yahweh will ratify the Covenant with the chosen intercessor, who is called up on the seventh day (Temple dedication and new creation language)
- The people must wait 40 days and 40 nights (a time of testing)

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

**37** Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ **38** This is the first and greatest commandment. **39** And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ **40** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

*~Matthew 22:36-40*

## Reflections