

# Civil Laws

*Exodus 21-23*

**Study series as posted at the website  
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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

# Civil Laws

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# ***Introduction***

"Thus He declared to you His COVENANT which He commanded you to do, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. And Jehovah commanded me at that time to teach you STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS, for you to do them in the land which you are crossing over to possess." (De4:13-14)

When OT people spoke of the Scriptures they were called the "Law and Prophets" (Mt5:17, 7:12, Lk16:16, Ac13:15) Also included were the Psalms (Lk24:44) If words were being kept to a minimum, it was, just, the "Law". For them to say "Law" might have been the same as us saying "Bible" or the "Word".

So, what is "law"? According to the dictionary, picking through the definitions at random:

Rule of conduct; procedure established by custom, agreement or authority; body of rules/principles governing the affairs of a community; condition of social order and justice created by adherence to such a system; civilized behavior. These are laws man establishes.

There are laws of nature: certain principles by which things function. Gravity pulls objects towards the earth, such that when a person stumbles they fall 'down', not up. Fire is hot and can hurt a person. If a person stays in the sun too long, they will get a sunburn. If a person were submerged under water and didn't come up for air, they would die. If a person drives too fast around the curve of an icy road, the laws of slipperiness (of ice), and of inertia (the tendency of an object to continue moving in a straight line) will work to see the vehicle sliding off the road, and depending on the surrounding terrain, the vehicle might follow the laws of gravity and roll down the side of the mountain, and if it starts spinning the laws of centrifugal force will splay the doors wide open and the passengers will be thrown out, and they will be injured or killed. Did the winter weather "cause" the people to be killed? (Some news reporters blame fatalities on all sorts of things: slippery roads, rain/sleet coming down, the wind blowing) All those things are behaving according to their nature. They are not misbehaving. They are doing exactly as would be expected of them. The "cause" of the fatality was the careless driver. Even though the conditions for -everybody- driving down that road were 'identical', not everybody was killed going around the curve. Thus, the 'conditions' did not kill those passengers.

Thus...are laws "bad"? Are laws "good"? Laws, just, -are-. They exist. As long as people comport themselves within the limits of those laws, they can live happy, peaceful, safe lives. Just think what would be the case if the law of gravity did not exist. A person would take the slightest step, and the inertia of 'pushing' with the foot would send them floating off into

space, never to return. Thus, the 'confinement' of gravity is a "good" thing. Without it we could not live on this earth.

Now, when it comes to the Law of the Scriptures, the Law of God, there are three basic categories of Law. There is

- ?? Covenant
- ?? Levitical
- ?? Civil Law

In the series "Covenants & Dispensations" [link] we learned that at various times throughout history God established various (different) covenants with man. A "covenant" is an Agreement, Bargain, Contract, Promise. The dictionary also includes: "in the Bible: God's promise to the human race" In that series we learned how God promised man -freedom- to live, with certain limited conditions which man must adhere to. If man obeyed, he could live in peace and blessing. If he disobeyed, there were promised consequences. Covenants regarding not eating of the certain tree, not eating blood, not murdering, circumcision, to be fruitful and multiply. To Abraham God promised a certain land, and through his seed a Redeemer from sin for all mankind.

And when we get to Moses, the most detailed of all history, the Ten Commandments. The Covenant upon which all other laws are based. That upon which is based the "work of the Law written in [the] hearts" of mankind, through the "conscience". (Rom2:15) When God commanded about murder and vengeance (Gen9:5-6), the conscience was already evident when Cain killed his brother Abel. (Gen4) Before the Ten Commandments said "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex20:14) the conscience already knew that certain things "ought not to be done" (Ge34:7)

We've already looked at Covenant: the "Ten Commandments" [link] and expanded on some topics through Q/As and commentaries.

The Levitical Law the dictionary also calls "ecclesiastical". The world and

Paul wrote that the physical rituals of the Law were not what mattered, but the -heart-...

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:28-29)

The Covenant is the standard. When the heart of man was shown to be sinful through evil deeds, the Covenant was added to show how far we were from God's holy standard. The Levitical laws of animal sacrifices were instituted for a physical/visually oriented humanity, of what Jesus would be coming to accomplish...

"...till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." (Ga3:19)

But as we have studied in Hebrews [link] Jesus gave Himself "once for all" (Heb7:27, 9:12,26, 10:10) and "fulfilled" all those Levitical sacrificial types. (Mt5:17) So this study series is not about the Levitical laws.

But how is man adjudged? Conduct...

"You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am Jehovah." (Le18:5)

And typically people do not live like hermits and monks... isolated and alone from any other human contact. People live together as "societies". Thus, how do people know proper conduct? Civil Law. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they did not sin against each other, they disobeyed God; lusting after the serpent's enticement of "you shall be as God" (Gen3:5); and breaking the very first of the Covenant Laws, "You shall have no other gods before Me". But then, when Cain killed Abel, that was a crime perpetrated by one person against another.

Civil Law: relating to citizens and their interrelations with one another or with the state, ordinary community life, in accordance with civilized society, befitting accepted social useages, not rude, etc.

That's what this series is about. When Jesus was asked, "what is the greatest commandment" He replied...

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Mt22:37-40)

Notice Jesus said nothing about killing animals, lighting candles, burning incense, putting hands together with fingers pointing upwards, and such things. It is about God and Man. That's all it's ever been about. God made

this earth and "put man on it" (Is45:12) God made man for fellowship, and for man to get along with each other.

Under the definitions for "law" (at the very top) it stated "rule of conduct...established by...authority". Successful 'civil' authority; by whose ultimate authority? God.

As this series is in the beginning stages of preparation, the world today is seemingly on the precipice of 'blowing up'. Why? "As it was in the days of Noah" (Mt24:37, Lk17:26) the earth was "filled with violence" (Ge6:11) and "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all day long" (vs5) They did not have this Covenant Law on the stone tablets. But their behavior showed that their hearts were separated from God. That's what it is today. Those who worship gods worship something besides the Most High, and for the most part all of humanity has cast aside the Almighty. Even those nations that claim to have been founded on "Judeo/Christian principles" have long ago tossed out and rejected the Ten Commandments, God's Covenant. When a people reject God and His Covenant, they also cease to be civil towards each other. And so, by definition, today's societies are no longer "civil". They think they are - merely- rejecting God; but in doing so, by definition, they have also ceased to be civil. They try to conjure up a mushy-sweet civility in hushed tones, and yoga and spirituality-induced syrupy-sweet smiles; but when push comes to shove, their true hearts come out in riots, murder, mayhem. They do not adhere to God's Civil Law.

How does God's Covenant expand out from the Moral and Theoretical to the Practical; where the rubber meets the road? What does "you shall not commit adultery" mean? What does it mean to "not bear false witness"? That's what this series is about. The "statutes and judgments"

# ***No other gods***

"You shall not make for yourselves, along with Me, gods of silver or gods of gold" (20:23)

"He who sacrifices to any god, except to Jehovah only, he shall be utterly destroyed." (22:20)

"And in all that I have said to you, beware and make no mention of any other gods by name, nor let it be heard from your mouth" (23:13)

"You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall tear them down to overthrow them, and break and shatter their pillars" (23:24)

If God's Covenant is the only source for true civility, and a people is forming a nation following God, calling themselves after God, these statements might seem like no-brainers. If the definition of civility is God's Covenant, then OF COURSE there is no other god.

But in seeing Israel's history... well... right after giving these very Civil Laws (that we are about to study), and Israel's elders have feasted in God's presence (ch24), and then Moses goes up into the mountain to receive the Levitical laws, what did Israel do? They immediately made a "god of gold" (Ex32); there was "Idolatry in the Sanctuary" [link] and judgment. I say "immediately"... it was within a 40-day period. But considering an entire national history of hundreds of years, 40 days is like a "few seconds".

And so, throughout the OT God is continually chiding Israel about "other gods", and about being faithful to Him, only. That's why, in these three short chapters, God makes mention of idolatry four times. And in 22:20 He says an idolater "shall be utterly destroyed".

The rest of the Pentateuch expands on some of the things in these three chapters, so let's begin that process now. What does "utterly destroy" mean?

De13:1-5 If a false prophet gives a sign or wonder that comes to pass, and uses that supernatural work to support his call to "go after other gods", "that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death"

De13:6-11 If a relative, whether brother, son, daughter or wife, should "secretly entice" and say, "Let us go and serve other gods" there is to be no consenting and no pity. That relative is to be put to death. As the congregation is stoning him to death, the relative who reported it is to be 'first' in throwing stones, followed by the congregation.

De13:12-18 Supposing a rumor is heard, that any given community has whole-sale gone into idolatry, the rest of the nation is to investigate to see if the rumor is true. If it is, the community is to be destroyed with the edge of the sword; all the people and cattle. All the belongings and possessions piled up in the middle and set on fire. And the rubble heap to remain as a monument and warning to the rest.

De17:2-7 Supposing generically, somebody witnesses anybody going astray into idolatry, investigation is to be made to ascertain the validity of the witness. If there are two or three witnesses, the idolators are to be brought out to the gates ("gates" were where leaders sat, and where judgment was meted out) and stoned to death.

But notice that judgment is not carried out on the word of one person. Not merely on rumor, but a THOROUGH INVESTIGATION and a CERTITUDE of KNOWLEDGE that the matter is true. Many legalists look at the Law and like to conduct "witch hunts", and will condemn people on the slightest provocation. Supposing a person simply 'disliked' another, their mind could be clouded to the truth of what they thought they saw, by their feelings. But when two or three are witnessing something, there is greater perspective from "different angles". Perhaps what the individual person saw was lacking contextual perspective?

Like we observed some time ago about the church woman who is seen by others in her church, hanging onto the arm of a man, all dolled up in party attire, going into a nightclub. Oh, that terribly 'carnal' woman! Going to the world's entertainment...and with a MAAAAAN!!! Like we observed: [link] Perhaps that "man" she was seen with is her (unsaved) -husband-, for whose salvation she has been praying; and perhaps she is all dolled up because she is being pleasing to her husband; letting him enjoy her company by enjoying his company? And in so-doing, she is following the exhortations of 1Pt3:1-6. She is being a good wife.

Why is God "not seen"? What happens when people see things which they venerate? They make statues, images, pictures. When there are things like fairs, carnivals, state parks, or sports team mascots; don't they usually also produce little trinkets to wear as jewelry, bumper stickers to put on their cars, and plaques to adorn their homes. If they win a prize trophy they place it in a place of prominence to be adored by themselves and their guests. God says to Israel...

"Take diligent heed to your souls, for you saw no form on the day Jehovah spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, that you not act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any statue: male or female figures, the figure of any beast on the earth or the figure of any bird that flies in the heavens, the figure of anything that creeps on the ground or the figure of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth. And take heed, when you lift up your eyes to the heavens, and you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of the heavens, that you not be driven to



bow down to them and serve them, which Jehovah your God has allotted to all the peoples under the heavens." (De4:15-19)

The church of Babylon has their eucharist to the sun. Islam has the crescent moon. They venerate images of a woman and her male baby, make the "sign of the" symbol of female fertility, adorn buildings and have jewelry to that same symbol of fertility, dove, fish. They make little images of some alleged 'saint' to put on the car dashes to 'protect' them while driving.

Does God look like -any- of these things? Does -God- deal with His children through any of these things?

If God said to be sexually pure, does He honor and bless fruitfulness, and exhort His children to worship Him through prostitution?

"There shall be no female temple prostitute of the daughters of Israel, nor a male temple prostitute of the sons of Israel. You shall not bring the wages of prostitution or the price of a dog into the house of Jehovah your God for any vow, for both of these are an abomination unto Jehovah your God." (De23:17-18)

And if God is the -only- God, and there are no others...

"You shall not allow a sorceress to live" (22:18)

What is a sorceress? A witch, warlock, fortuneteller, witchdoctor, etc? And for that matter: yoga, meditation, pilates or "spirit-filling" worship? All of these things tap into the occult world. In some cases it is out-n-out demon-worship. When people "pray to angels" they are praying to demons. When a person empties himself and 'taps into the universe' and the 'energies' out there, it is moving away from God into the spirit realm of God's enemies. Worshiping the "created things more than the Creator" (Rom1:25) A sorceress deliberately communicates with the spirits. In some of the other things, they do so in ignorance; nevertheless they are in the occult world. In so-doing they have invited the demons to guide their lives, not God.

Why did Israel immerse itself in idolatry? After all, a full reading of the OT indicates that it was Israel's idolatry, for which reason God allowed them to be conquered and carried into captivity. Why don't we read very much about people being stoned to death for idolatry? Some were killed after Aaron's golden calf. But as Joshua is ready to die, he chides Israel to

"put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Jehovah the God of Israel" and they respond "Jehovah our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" (Josh24:23-24)

And yet not long after, there is the case where Micah has an idol, and the tribe of Dan take up with Micah's idol. [link] And when it comes to the time of Elijah, and he has killed the prophets of Baal; Israel's proclamation "Jehovah, He is God" (1Ki18:39) rings a bit hollow, since their idolatrous queen Jezebel was allowed to live, as she seeks, then, to kill Elijah. Elijah feels as though he is totally alone, but God informs him that there are "seven thousand, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1Ki19:18) But out of all Israel's millions - only- "7000"? As we observed, Moses continually chides Israel about how obstinate they are, and will continue to be [link] and by the time we come to Ezekiel, God commissions him...

"Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and hardhearted children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah. As for them, whether they hear or whether they forbear; for they are a rebellious house; yet they will know that a prophet has been among them." (Ezk2:3-5)

How is idolatry to be punished when 'everybody' is doing it? Minus an Elijah presiding, who is going to throw the stones? Israel was called God's 'chosen' people, and yet Paul summarizes,

"For not all those of Israel are Israel" (Rom9:6b)

"With most of them God was not well pleased" (1Co10:5)

This, also, is why idolators are not summarily executed today. First of all, Israel was a 'theocracy'. God was supposed to be their king. Monotheism was the "law of the land". Idolatry would be like treason against one's king; historically punishable by death. But like God says to Samuel (who had been leading them for years) when they ask for a king...

"...for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, for Me to not reign over them" (1Sa8:7)

The punishing of idolatry is only 'appropriate' where an entire nation is God-fearing. But when the "few" (Mt7:14) fear God, how do the few punish the many? At the national level God had used Israel to displace the pagans of that region -because- of their idolatry.

Today there are no Godly nations. The world of "Caesar" (Mt22:21) does not revere the Most High. America is NOT a "christian nation". If it had been at its inception, there would not have been something called "freedom of religion". If it was truly -God- who was ruling, He would not allow the pantheistic religions that exist. Today Islam is more 'Godlike' than Israel was. A Muslim nation today adheres to many of the edicts we will be studying in this series. If somebody turns away from Islam, they are killed.

If somebody from another religion visits an Arab country they are not allowed to 'openly' worship their deities. Missionaries are not allowed to evangelize openly at the peril of persecution or death. Even if somebody, in innocence, does something like provide their school children with teddybears of "Mohammed", such a teacher is condemned to whip lashes. Adultery? Stoning. Islam, to be sure, does not do things the -way- God commanded Israel. Nevertheless they -do- some of them. Many of the things we will study in this series, Islam does, as it relates to -their- god Allah.

But Israel and the Church, the two entities with TRUE TIES to the Almighty, do not obey God. In many cases it's because those claiming to be "christian" are not True [C]hristians. Today's church whines about what they call pharisaical judgmentalism. We're "not under law but under grace" (Ro6:15) Grace, grace, grace, graaaaaaeessss! The world will know we are Christians by our "love" (Jn13:35) Love, love, luuuuuu! But notice that the apostle of love says this...

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1Jn5:2-3)

Last lesson we asked: How is man adjudged? Conduct. How is love for God discerned? Conduct. Obedience. If we behave as if God did not exist, by the fact that we disobey Him at every turn, and find excuses for why His commands don't mean what He said. And John is even stronger...

"He who says, I know Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1Jn2:4)

The reason today's church appears, so much, to be like the world, is because they are LIARS. They are not True Believers. They do NOT love the Lord. Their allegiance is to "other gods". Forget anything about civil laws... they don't even adhere to the #1 Commandment!

Without #1, the rest of this series will be wasted time and effort.

But even if physical 'stoning' is not meted out in this lifetime, God is not without vengeance. He still has the Lake of Fire reserved for those who hate Him.

"Therefore know that Jehovah your God, He is God, the faithful Mighty God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him, to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them." (De7:9-11)

# ***Meat, Fat & Blood***

"But you shall not eat flesh with its soul, that is, its blood." (Ge9:4)

"For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." (Le17:11)

In a past series "Life is in the Blood" [\[link\]](#) and when Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood (1Pt1:19, Re1:5) we are given the glimpse prophetically as to the significance of Jesus' blood...

"He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be fulfilled" (Is53:11)

Even though this topic is not specifically addressed in these chapters, it is a subject that is often observed in "civil" settings. But since it actually also is related to "no other gods", let's talk about it here, as a sort of addendum to the previous lesson, before continuing on.

After the flood, in addition to plants, God gave animal meat for human consumption as food. However, the regular sacrifices also consisted of -eating- the meat of the sacrifice. I have often wondered what the 'atmosphere' of these feasts was: solemn or festive? And also, is this why Daniel and his three friends asked for "vegetables" instead of the king's "daily portion"? (Dan1) Was the king's meat 'cooked' on the pagan altars to the gods?

Jesus, the fulfillment of the OT sacrifices, gave His own body and says,

"This is My body which is given for you" (Lk22:19, 1Co11:24)

And again...

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves" (Jn6:53)

Perhaps this is symbolism for how we are...

"...one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made complete in one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and love them as You love Me." (Jn17:21-23)

In the physical world, we -become- 'what' we eat. The substance and chemicals of the food become digested and work their way into the very cells of our bodies; part of the physical essence of our bodies. Thus, was

the -eating- of the OT sacrifice a physical 'type' of our spiritual union with Christ? I don't know. The typical Lord's Supper as I have observed and participated in them have been 'solemn' occasions; remembering Jesus' "death". (1Co11:26) How did they eat the OT sacrifices?

But just as God continually reminds Israel against idolatry, He also repeats the concept of not offering sacrifices any ol' place; but they were to bring it to the "door of the tent of meeting" (Le17:9) Idolatry would find "high places" and "groves" on every hill and mountain, and at junctions of hiways. They would worship their -many- gods in -many- different places. Israel was not to do that.

However, a person could go hunting or slaughter livestock and eat meat, anywhere, as meals. (Le17:13, De12:15)

But they were not to eat the blood. And when I see the prohibitions against blood mentioned within the same context as offering sacrifices, I have to think it is more than just about the "soul" of the creature, but it is also related to the sacrifices, and the warnings against idolatry.

Notice this wording...

"You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination nor fortunetelling." (Le19:26)

When the Church partakes the Lord's Supper, we partake the "fruit of the vine" (Mt26:29) which -symbolizes- Jesus' shed blood.

But when satanists partake their rituals, they partake in blood communions, with -actual- blood. The TV reality show "Survivor" (which I stopped watching years ago after the first two seasons) features "immunity IDOLS" and other things with a pagan feel. I happened on one episode where they had poked a hole in the artery of a cow, which was profusely pouring out blood, and their 'challenge' was to come along with cups, fill their cups with that blood and drink it. In this country the native people, when they go hunting and have killed their prey, if they are 'practicing' their ancient "great spirit" religions, first thing will cut open the animal, cut out the kidney, and eat a bite out of the raw kidney. (Even -today- they do this, this is NOT 'ancient' practice long-ago forgotten. One of my neighbors does this.) The kidney, of course, being a 'blood' organ. Down through  
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And so, if Israel was straying into idolatry, the pagan sacrifices also included the drinking of blood and necromancy. And as Paul says,

"...the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons."  
(1Co10:20)

Also the injunction was against eating fat. Why? I don't know. But even at the very beginning with Cain and Abel, they knew to offer the "fat". (Ge4:4) And throughout the Law, through Moses, the fat was put on the altar and burned "like incense" (Ex29:13) If we read through the law, anything to do with the specially mixed oils and incense, was not to be replicated and used by people for private use. Under the levitical system worship was to be done -at- the tabernacle/temple; not here and there and anywhere somebody wanted to do it.

Now, when we read through these chapters, there is such an emphasis on bringing the animal to God's altar, that a bit of fear might be in order about just eating meat for a meal. These injunctions were about sacrifices. The holy things were to be eaten at the tabernacle.

"When Jehovah your God enlarges your border as He has promised you, and you say, Let me eat flesh, because your soul longs to eat flesh, you may eat as much flesh as your soul desires. If the place where Jehovah your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you shall slaughter from your herd and from your flock which Jehovah has given you, as I have commanded you, and you shall eat within your gates whatever your soul desires. Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you shall eat them; the unclean and the clean alike shall eat them. Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the soul; you shall not eat the soul with the flesh. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the eyes of Jehovah. Only, the holy things which you have, and your vows, you shall take and go to the place which Jehovah chooses. And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of Jehovah your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of Jehovah your God, and you shall eat the flesh. Take heed and obey all these words which I am commanding you, that it may go well with you and your children after you always, when you do what is good and right in the eyes of Jehovah your God." (De12:20-28)

There were two ways that fat could be used: 1) to be burned "like incense" on the altar, as a "soothing aroma" (Le3:16), and 2) as material for "work" (Le7:24) What was fat used for? Making soap, greasing wheels?

But blood was not to be used for anything. It was to be poured out on the ground, and covered with dirt.

"Any man of the sons of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among you, who hunts and catches any animal or flying creature that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the soul of all flesh. Its blood is its soul. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the soul of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off." (Le17:13-14)

Perhaps we have the Scriptural basis, here, to adjudge what is being done these days in the medical/scientific fields. Jesus said,

"And do not fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who has power to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." (Mt10:28)

The body is the "temple" (1Co6:19) or "tent" (2Co5:1,4, 2Pt1:13); the physical dwelling place for the spirit and soul while we live on this earth. The body is made up of 'stuff', which at death decays back to dust. (Ge3:19) Our spirit comes from God, and is that which, breathed into these bodies through the lungs into the blood, becomes the "living soul". (Ge2:7, 1Co15:45) While the blood is visible and contains 'stuff', it is also more. 'What' more? Does science even know the full extent? That is the domain of Jesus' authority. (Heb4:12-13) It has been witnessed often enough to know that 'something' more is involved, that when somebody receives significant blood in transfusions, or something like a transplanted heart or kidney (blood organs), that such people report having dreams of people and memories that were not part of their original life. They have 'memories' of things they did not experience. In receiving the blood, they received of another person's soul...their essence.

And in a related topic, this is also why stem cell research and manipulation is so wrong. First of all, where embryos are involved, they are killing fully conceived -people-. The essence of that new person has been assembled and is alive. But even if they manipulate non-embryos, but inject one person's DNA data into another person, it is like with the blood. They are taking from one person's essence and inserting that into another's essence. Whereas it is -God- who forms us in the womb. (Ps139:13-16)

What should it matter if somebody were to use animal blood as mere 'substance'? Just 'stuff'? As the animal sacrifices were a 'type' of Jesus' crucifixion, in the same way animal blood is a 'type' of the essence of life. As Paul says,

"For it is written in the Law of Moses, You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope." (1Co9:9-10)

To RESPECT LIFE.

So, in review:

- 1) Meat can be eaten as (mere) 'food' anywhere. But if it was in sacrifice to God, it was to be offered in the prescribed manner, on the altar, at God's house (tabernacle/temple). Sacrifices were not to be done any ol' way an individual person wished to do so, in any place, hill, grove or hiway intersection.
- 2) Fat was not to be eaten. It could be used as 'stuff' to do work with. But if it was part of the slaughter for sacrifice, it was to be burned on the altar as a "soothing aroma".
- 3) Blood was not to be eaten. Nor could it be used as 'stuff'. It was to be poured out and covered with dust. And other than levitical sprinkling, it was not offered as sacrifice. Even during the sacrifice, it was poured on the ground next to the altar. And covered with dust.

When life is extinguished, the soul goes back to the ground from whence it was taken: as preachers intone at funerals, "Earth to earth, Ashes to ashes, Dust to dust." (Ge3:19, Job10:9, Ec3:20)

And for the Believers, the spirit is taken into God's presence, at "home with the Lord" (2Co5:8), waiting to be "[brought] with Him" (1Th4:14) at the Resurrection to be joined up with their resurrected bodies.



# ***Male Servants***

"If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free without payment" (21:2)

First of all, as we begin these next sections, let's start out by saying that I don't have all the answers to all questions that will be coming up. There are some things in these verses in Exodus that seem to be a bit different from things found in Leviticus. Also, we need to keep in mind that what we read here is -to- "Israel", not necessarily the world at large; in some things there are differences given between the treatment of fellow-Israelis vs their treatment of gentiles whom they might purchase as permanent slaves. As we proceed to other topics there will seem to be punishments for certain things, but then other seemingly similar situations will not have the same punishments, and there will be no explanation for the differences.

So now... what about this whole subject? Isn't slavery "sin" and terribly "evil"? In our typically "western", English-speaking cultures, we believe in our "God-given" inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". Inalienable... cannot be given to another, cannot be taken away. I can do whatever I want, and nobody is going to tell -me- WHAT TO DO! No sirree! Generically, what does Paul say?

"Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you are able to be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God however he was called."  
(1Co7:20-24)

For the most part in that chapter Paul is talking about marriage. And in the next lesson, indeed, we will see -female- servitude in a related subject as marriage. But notice that Paul says, if you can find your way to freedom, take it. And through Moses also:

"You shall not deliver up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. He shall dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it is agreeable to him; you shall not oppress him." (De23:15-16)

But if a Believer finds themself in servitude, Paul says, essentially: Don't worry about it. "Remain" in that situation to which you have been called. Whatever life may dish out, in reality, we are -all- 'slaves' one way or another. Even if free, Paul continually called himself a "bondservant" of Christ. And for that matter, some of the wealthiest people on earth, are not most of them really 'slaves' to whatever it is that makes them wealthy?

The servitude to which Moses speaks is INDEBTEDNESS. Later there will be discussion of -kidnapping- and the punishment for doing so. (De24:7) Grabbing people, stealing them, and holding them against their will, nor with any legal authority to do so. Such a scenario makes one think of those who were, wholesale, abducted from Africa, brought over to foreign lands, and sold FOR PROFIT of the slave merchants. Merchandising in human souls. This country had -that- scourge of slavery. While the slaves have since been emancipated, old habits die hard in some minds; and modern political agendas also like to take advantage of whatever they can continually stir up, to keep old wounds festering, rather than allowing new generations to pursue new lives, not blaming each other for the faults of past generations. However, to be sure we know the difference: American slavery was based on the greed of the traffickers who kidnapped them, not the indebtedness of the slaves, themselves.

"And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and has sold himself to you..." (Le25:39a)

This is the case, like happens all the time: a person comes on hard times, and isn't quite able to make ends meet. Perhaps there had been drought, and not being like a rich person with a "cushion" to tide through the hard times, he comes to the end of his resources. What to do? He 'sells' himself to the creditor. He works for the person to pay off the debt. Indentured (binding contract) servitude.

But also notice the injunction to the creditor:

"And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and has sold himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee." (Le25:39-40)

"You shall not rule over him with harshness, but you shall fear your God...regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with harshness." (Le25:43,46b)

Just because he's your slave, don't treat him harshly. In many cases where people would care for the stranger, widow and orphans, God continually exhorted to treat them hospitably, remembering their own servitude they had served in Egypt, where they served "with harshness" (Ex1:13-14)

This servitude was not 'forever'; but for six years...

"and in the seventh he shall go out free without payment" (21:2)

Now, here (vs3-5) we come to something where there seems to be disagreement. Perhaps not all the details are written, which the people in

those cultures naturally understood? They didn't -need- to be written? But let's look at all aspects.

Here, in whatever state the man entered servitude, was the state in which he was set free. If he entered single, he left single. If he entered married, his wife left with him. But if he entered single, and his master gave him a wife, she could not leave with him. (This somewhat bleeds over into the next lesson on Female Servants) In those cultures wives were 'purchased' (Remember how Jacob worked for seven years each for Rachel and Leah); which might possibly be where the wedding "ring" originated. (?) In those cultures one's signet ring was one's legal signature; as it might still be today in certain oriental cultures? Years ago in Japan it was the "han" (hahn), the -stamp-. When you see oriental art, that red (round/square) stamp in the corners is the artist's 'signature'. So, perhaps the wedding ring tradition began back in the days when rings -sealed- a 'business deal'?

But the man loves his wife and kids, gotten during his time in servitude. Perhaps he doesn't -have- a family heritage to return to? He had been unattached, and in debt, and here life has been good. He has a home, a place to live. He decides to stay on as a permanent servant. They go to the temple and his seal of servitude is an awl hole in the ear. (vs6)

Service is not like a -slave-, but a "hired man".

The man would have to work anyway. Here, instead of wages, he gets a roof over his head, food to eat, and a family; all the things that wages would normally support. And within Israel, God's standards were to -treat- one another fairly. God was continually reminding them, in comparison to how other nations did things, to remember the service they had endured in Egypt...to -NOT- be to each other as the Egyptians had been to them.

Now, this passage seems a bit austere. He came in with nothing, he leaves with nothing.

But God's intention for Israel was NOT to have permanent slaves of fellow-Israelis.

"As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. And then he shall depart from you; he and his children with him; and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers. For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him with harshness, but you shall fear your God." (Le25:40-43)

Jews could buy permanent slaves of non-Jews...

"And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have from the nations that are around you, from them you shall buy male and female

slaves. Moreover you shall buy the children of the strangers who sojourn among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall be your property. And you shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them as a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with harshness." (Le25:44-46)

Jews could be redeemed by a rich relative. But even if nobody redeemed them, at the year of Jubilee, Jews were to be released from servitude:

"He shall be with him year by year as a hired servant, and he shall not rule with harshness over him before your eyes. And if he is not redeemed in these years, then he shall go out in the Year of Jubilee; he and his children with him." (Le25:53-54)

And when somebody came to be in need, asking for a loan, stinginess was not to be on the lender's mind...

"If there is among you, of your brethren within any of the gates in your land which Jehovah your God is giving you, a man who is in need, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your needy brother, but you shall open your hand, to open unto him and lend, to lend to him sufficient for his need in whatever he is lacking. Beware that there not be a thought in your wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, approaches; and your eye be evil against your needy brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to Jehovah against you, and it become sin unto you. You shall lend to give to him, and your heart shall not tremble to give to him; because for this thing Jehovah your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand." (De15:7-10)

So... the lender might 'lose' a bit lending to the poor. God says to not worry about it. Give to the poor willingly, and God will more-than reward for the good heart, by prospering the lender.

And God here says something that Jesus re-iterated:

"For the needy will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, You shall open, to open your hand unto your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land." (De15:11, Mt26:11)

And notice how God says to send out the released servant:

"And when you send him away free from you, you shall not send him away empty; you shall richly adorn him from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From out of whatever Jehovah has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today... It shall not be difficult in your eyes to let him go free

from you; for he has served you six years for double the wages of a hired servant. And Jehovah your God will bless you in all that you do." (De15:13-15,18)

Those returning from exile had a problem with this, and Nehemiah had to scold them for mistreating each other and says,

"...now indeed, will you even sell your brothers? Or should they be sold to us? Then they were silenced and found nothing to answer. Then I said, What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?" (Neh5:8-9)

Also, those who are employers, who pay wages to those hired...

"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the sojourners who is in your land within your gates. Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and is sustaining his soul with it; lest he cry out against you unto Jehovah, and it be sin in you." (De24:14-15)

If we look at all these things, is it not like Jesus taught...

"And as you would have men do to you, you also do likewise to them." (Lk6:31)

The "love your neighbor as yourself" principle.

I believe what we see here is both economy and humanity. How to conduct finances, and also how to treat a fellow-human. Today is one of the wealthiest times in human history. Even the poor today, many centuries ago would have been considered wealthy. Look! They've got running water, indoor plumbing, technological gadgets, clothes, shoes. Even the poorest person has at least a couple of coins rattling in their pocket. And how many of them have at their disposal what would make a king's chariot look like nothing... they can jump into a vehicle, turn the key, and off they go in comfort.

But times have not always been this good. Perhaps an illustration from the Great Depression years ago will help illustrate this "servitude" God is exhorting about. My father grew up on the family farm in central N.Dakota. It was wheat, cattle and the feed to raise the cattle. The neighbors were dairy farmers. They worked with horses and man-power. During the Great Depression (where you've seen pictures of the soup lines in the bigger cities), on the farms there wasn't much money, either. My father would tell about, when he was a kid, these couple of men who would show up as the growing season was starting, as farm work needed to be done. No words were exchanged between them and grandpa. They would simply show up, grab some tools, and go to work. They would get fed at meal times. (Grandma would ramble on in her forgetful years, retelling about cooking

for the work crews) They would sleep in the barn in the hay loft. They would work all season. Fall came, they were on their way; until 'next' spring, when they showed up again. There wasn't any money to -pay- them. They came, worked, got fed and housed. That's what they came for. Work in exchange for subsistence. And grandpa got help for the farm.

In ancient times this was the synergism that often existed. And typically, the workers were the 'slaves' of the owners. How these slaves were acquired might have been through trade, purchase or conquest. History has been cruel to humanity... thanks to Adam and Eve and sin. And as in the case of those from Africa who were kidnapped... well... they were not the first in history to be so-treated. That's no excuse. But facts are facts. Nevertheless slavery has always existed.

Notice that God is not abolishing slavery. But He establishes limits and guidelines. Just because Israel was God's elect, He did not abolish slavery in Israel. Nor because a person was a fellow-Israeli did not mean the servant could sluff off.

"And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things." (1Ti6:2)

But God also provided a "debt free" date; but not based on the bottom line of a ledger page or spread sheet. Six years of service, and then the seventh, Freedom. God also provided the same for nature. The land, after six years of farming, the seventh was to be a sabbath. Modern farmers observe the practice known as summer fallow. Plow it, cultivate it, but don't grow any crops on it. Give the land "rest" (sabbath).

This sabbath principle was not just for Jews, but also for the gentile - permanent- slaves.

"and the seventh day is the Sabbath of Jehovah your God. In it you shall not do any work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your sojourner who is within your gates." (Ex20:10)

In the beginning, because of sin, God's edict was...

"In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground...." (Ge3:19)

-How- does one work? What is man's relationship with each other in this endeavor of working? If the economy has money, one works, earns money and -pays- for food and housing. When there wasn't money, other relationships were forged. And God did not negate those arrangements.

But when it came to His own elect, Israel, He established an order of compassion, equity and justice.

# ***Female Slave Wives***

"And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves go out" (21:7)

In ancient times there was no such thing as feminist rights or women's lib. While we certainly know the story of Jacob falling for the 'hottie' Rachel, on the wedding night her older sister Leah was substituted. And rather than making things right, Laban suggests to Jacob that he take -both- as wives; for 14 years labor. We certainly have the Song of Solomon, but Solomon was wealthy, and in those circles marriages were often political arrangements between nations. For the most part, in eastern cultures, marriages were arranged. The parents would "make deals" to match up their sons and daughters with each other. They would "give" and "take" their children in marriage. (1Co7:38, Ezr9:12, Neh10:30, Jer29:6) But also, often, wives were purchased. A man's wife was his 'property'. Even of Sarah to Abraham notice Peter's words...

"as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord..." (1Pt3:6)

And so, when a daughter was sold to a man, she was not only his slave, but likely also his 'wife' by the conjugality of the relationship. As such, being his 'wife', since she was "betrothed" to him (vs8), she was not free to leave on the 7th year. By the physical union the two became "one flesh". According to the culture it might have been a "sale" with servitude and ownership, but in God's eyes it was also "marriage". And as Jesus said...

"So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has yoked together, let not man separate." (Mt19:6)

But God also allowed for the "hardness of...heart" even though it was not His intent from the beginning. (Mt19:8) If the wife was not "agreeable" to the man, he could let her be redeemed. (vs8)

A man might purchase a woman for his son. (vs9) And as such, she would be his 'daughter'. She was part of the family. We see several examples of this: where Samson sees a woman and asks his parents to "get her for me" (Jdg14:2-3) Shechem defiles Dinah and asks his father to "Get this girl for me as wife" (Ge34:4) Or when Abraham's servant goes to "take a wife" for Isaac. (Gen24:4)

In the beginning God made them "male and female" (Ge1:27, Mk10:6) Not male and female[S]. But again, during Israel's time God did not necessarily undo everything that culture had become. Just as last lesson we observed that servitude was often the economic practicality for working people to survive, under the hand of a blessed patron; in a similar way the sustenance of a female was, to be in servitude to a master, which then also often involved a conjugal arrangement. So, a master might have



multiple wives, if he didn't give/appoint a female slave to a male slave as that male slave's wife. (21:4) You see, in those cultures things were not always "romantic" as Hollywood makes everything out to be.

So, a man has a slave/wife; and then gets another wife. (vs10) The attention to the new wife is not to diminish what he is to the first wife. Food, clothing and conjugal rights. And if he reneges on any of these three things, the slave/wife can "go out free". (vs11) The marital squabbles of: If you don't, then I won't...don't hold very much weight. She could then say: If you won't, then I'm outta here!

"If a man has two wives, one loved and the other hated, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the hated, and if the firstborn son is of her who is hated, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, that he shall not make the son of the loved wife the firstborn before the son of the hated, the true firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." (De21:15-17)

Notice that near his death, Jacob acknowledges Leah (the 'hated' wife) as being his wife, along with Abraham and Isaac and their wives. (Ge49:31)

Now, regarding kings God commanded...

"Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, that his heart not be turned aside" (De17:17a)

And we see what happened with Solomon and his thousand wives...

"For so it was, when Solomon was old, that his wives thrust his heart aside after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as was the heart of his father David." (1Ki11:4)

But men could acquire wives from the plunder of battle.

"When you go out to war against your enemies, and Jehovah your God has delivered them into your hand, and you have taken them captive, and you see among the captives a woman with a beautiful figure, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and do her nails. She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a month of days; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her as a slave, because you have humbled her." (De21:10-14)

It might be warfare; it might be plunder; she may now be a 'slave'; but there is to be compassion and dignity. She might be a "slave", but she is not a "sex slave". She is a woman. Warfare involves death. Let her mourn her family. Let her purify herself through her monthly time. Let her "do her nails"...feel 'pretty' again. Let her have -time- to transition into your family.

Now, I do find this interesting, that for all the "separation" God requires of Israel from the pagans and idolatry, and the propensity for spouses to turn a person away from God to the pagan idols, that God was allowing for Jewish men to take pagan captives as wives. What about Paul's exhortation later that marriage should be "only in the Lord"? (1Co7:39) Is it that the spirituality of a household is governed by the man/father/husband? After all, just because a household is (officially) "Godly", doesn't mean that -everyone- in the household is a Believer, in their heart/s. I don't know... just observing and asking. If the husband was also the 'master', his word was law. If he led in times of worship, everyone complied. It was his duty to "teach [the laws] diligently to [their] children" (De6:7); and by the same token, he could outlaw the mention of pagan deities and ways within his own household. Israel in the wilderness was following the rituals, but Joshua also chides them to "put away the foreign gods which are among you" (Josh24:14,23)

If the law was given, that if somebody was worshiping other gods, to take them out and stone them, and Joshua knows there are these gods, why were they not stoning people for their idolatry? I don't know. Perhaps it's as Jesus said, in spite of Law, the practicality is that the tares -will- be growing up among the wheat; and if the campaign to root out the tares is too severe, some of the wheat might get uprooted, too. But the tares are reserved for judgment at the harvest. (Mt13:25-30)

You see...some people castigate God for His harshness. But actually, God is quite merciful. He lets an awful lot "slide", without addressing it in judgment...right away, 'now', suddenly "zap!"

"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." (Ps103:14)

And as they worshipped with the sacrifices, the sacrifices which represented atonement for sin, the singers would sing...

"For He is good, for His mercy is eternal" (2Ch5:13, 7:3,6)

And God -did- make life to procreate, and the drives to accomplish it. So, this is where you are in life. Here are the guidelines on how to conduct yourselves.

# ***Marriage & Sexual Issues***

"If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall give a dowry, the purchase price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins." (22:16-17)

What is marriage? Is it the signatures down at the courthouse? Is it the pronouncement of the priest: I now pronounce you man and wife. (?) Is it the slipping of rings on each other's fingers? Is it -the- 'kiss'? Jesus said, "what God has yoked together" (Mt19:6) How does God -yoke- together a man and woman?

God brought the woman to the man and pronounced, "and having cleaved to his wife, they are one flesh" (Ge2:24) Paul clarifies what "cleave" means when he speaks of prostitution, "he who is joined to a harlot is one body" and they are "one flesh" (1Co6:16) That's the sexual act; that's what harlotry is about. And if this needs any more clarification, it is to "go in to her" and be her husband, she is his wife. (Ge29:21, De21:13, 25:5)

In other words: have sex with an unattached female? Whatever the culture requires, do it. She's now your wife.

However, God also does not go contrary to His established order and hierarchy of chain-of-command. In Numbers ch30 are the rules regarding a woman's authority, whether it be her father, husband or God. Even in the matters of vows/promises to God, a woman's father or husband have the authority to annul the woman's vow, if she made a "rash utterance" (Nu30:6) When Jephthah made a vow of a rash utterance, he ended up killing his own daughter. (Jdg11) The woman has a safeguard; if she submits to her male authority, he can rescue her from herself. God made man in His own image; He then made the woman out of man's rib, in the man's image, and brought her -to- the man. (Ge2:22-23, 1Ti2:13) The hierarchy of authority is, in this order: God, Jesus, Man, Woman. (1Co11:3)

And so, if a man seduces an unattached female, her father can keep her from a potentially bad marriage if he sees that the man is a piece-of-work, and doesn't want his daughter 'stuck' with such a person. But if the father doesn't intervene, they are married.

What about when a man and attached woman (either married or engaged) are together?

"If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die; the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall put away the evil from Israel. If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a man, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then

you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he has humbled his neighbor's wife; thus you shall put away the evil from among you." (De22:22-24)

How does this differ from the matter Jesus was asked to adjudicate?

"they said to Him, Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the Law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say? This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone at her." (Jn8:4-7)

If the woman was caught "in the very act", where was the man? The law said that "both of them shall die". If she was caught IN THE ACT, it would have been easy to determine -who- the man was, so that he might also be brought to trial.

But what about rape?

"But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the field, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter; for he had found her in the field, and the betrothed young woman had cried out, but there was no one to deliver her." (De22:25-27)

This, too, is different from what they do in muslim countries. A woman gets raped and -she- is stoned, and nothing happens to the man. It was not the woman's fault that the man attacked her. The perpetrator is to be punished, and the innocent one goes free.

Also, notice that engagement/betrothal carries the same weight as marriage. They have not yet met in the marriage bed, but they have made their pledges. As Paul speaks of "first faith" of widows' first husbands, but now wish to get married again. (1Ti5:11-14) Marriage is not merely the -physical- "one flesh" union, but also the emotional and spiritual promise and fidelity. Thus, is not "cleave" also, not just physical, but also physical, emotional, spiritual; the same way we are in Christ: spirit, soul and body. (1Th5:23)

Of course, sexual issues also cover other various aspects:

--Not all sexual misdeeds received stoning. In the case of the bitter water of jealousy, the woman is not stoned, but she becomes unable to bear children. (Nu5:13-31) Having children was considered a "blessing"

(Ps127:3-5, De28:4,11); and so being childless was considered a "reproach" and a "curse" (Is4:1, De28:18)

--If a person was with an engaged woman, who was a slave, there was no punishment, because she was not "free". A trespass offering was to be made. (Le19:20-22) This one I don't understand. I understand the woman not being punished, because she is not free; but why is not the man punished, like in the case of rape?

--Incest of all sorts is forbidden. (De27:20-23)

--Bestiality is forbidden (De27:21, Le18:23) and the guilty is to be executed (Ex22:19)

--No cross-dressing; it is an abomination (De22:5)

--No "dirty fighting". Involving the opponent's genitals while fighting is forbidden. If a man's wife grabbed his opponent's genitals to help out her husband in the fight, her hand was to be cut off. (De25:11-12) In today's society, in some circles, this seems to be a primary attack target; part of today's perversity. The knee to the groin.

--No unequal yokes in marriage. Paul says, "Only in the Lord" (1Co7:39) When Israel was sent to destroy Midian, the men brought back, alive, all the women and children, and Moses chides them,

"And Moses said to them: Have you kept alive all the women and let them live? Behold, these women caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against Jehovah in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of Jehovah. Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man by lying with a male. But keep alive for yourselves all the female children who have not known a male by lying with him." (Num31:15-18)

The adult women were pagans, and when Israel and Midian intermarried, they seduced Israel away into idolatry. In keeping alive the female - children-, presumably it was thought that they could be "trained up" (Pr22:6) just as any Israeli child could, in the fear of God? Regarding the pagans whom Israel was going into the land to dispossess...

"Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; and the anger of Jehovah will burn against you and quickly destroy you. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall break down their altars, and shatter their pillars, and chop down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." (De7:3-5)

And then, a couple of other things which modern society doesn't think about...

#### --Marriage-Divorce-Re-marriage

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, if she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband who took her as his wife dies, then her former husband who sent her away cannot take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before Jehovah, and you shall not bring sin upon the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you as an inheritance." (De24:1-4)

And yet, to Israel God says...

"They say, If a man puts away his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's, shall he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have committed adultery with many lovers; yet turn back to Me, says Jehovah." (Jer3:1)

If there has been infidelity in a marriage, a person who sticks strictly to the -letter- of the Law would say that the original couple cannot be reconciled. And yet I have heard of cases where, after the sin, one or both parties came to the Lord in Saving Faith, and became reconciled. Were they in error to do so? The legalist would say Yes. But in God's own dealings with Israel we see His 'grace' and mercy. Let's remember that not every trespass received a stoning. God's Mercy is Eternal.

--There was another tradition that I don't suppose is done in today's western cultures. If a man married a woman, and then died without children, if the man had a brother, the brother was to take the widow and provide seed for his dead brother, to raise up children through his widowed sister-in-law. And it was such a serious issue that, if the brother didn't wish to perform this service, the widow could take him before the elders and humiliate him publicly. (De25:5-10)

This was the situation under which Boaz took Ruth as wife. But obligation dictated that he needed to offer the option to a 'closer' relative, and when that closer relative declined, Boaz was free to take Ruth. (Ruth ch4)

On the other hand, when Onan refused to give his sister-in-law his seed, God killed him. He was just going to 'have sex' (fool around), but not complete the act. (Ge38:6-10) Which, then, became the beginning in the series of events which led to Judah fathering Perez through his own

daughter-in-law Tamar; who was also in the lineage to the birth of Jesus. (Mt1:3)

However, in God's economy, "fruitfulness" is His blessing and design. Which is why...

"If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall be executed to death. Their blood shall be upon them." (Le20:13)(Le18:22)

There is no possible way that males together can procreate. And for their perversity God completely destroyed and annihilated the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Nor is it a case that God doesn't want men to 'love' each other. David and Jonathan loved each other in such a way that David wrote a song upon the occasion of Jonathan's death, "your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women" (2Sa1:26) John was the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (Jn13:23, 21:20) But it should be clearly understood that 'love' is not 'sex'. Sex is an act of procreation, which is simply impossible between men. True love far-surpasses what sodomy practices!

As we see in our world today, things related to sex are likely THE #1 AREA OF PERVERSITY. People and animals aren't meant to procreate. People of the same gender are not equipped to procreate; the body parts don't even 'fit' that way. Procreation is intended the way God designed it, "male and female". I'm sure there are many passages we have not addressed on this subject. But Scripture addresses it much, in similar proportion to how much humanity has corrupted it. And God gave this exhortation in summarizing it...

"Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have been defiled; for the land is defiled. Therefore I am visiting its depravity upon it, and the land is vomiting out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native nor any stranger who sojourns among you (for all these abominations the men who were in the land before you have done, and the land is defiled), that the land not also vomit you out when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you. For whoever does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore you shall keep My charge, so that you do not do any of these abominable customs which were done before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I am Jehovah your God." (Le18:24-30)

## ***Personal Assault*** (21:12-27)

"You shall not murder" (20:13)

"He who strikes a man so that he dies shall be executed to death. However, if he did not lie in wait, but God allowed the meeting into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee." (21:12-13)

First of all, we need to understand words, and be sure we are using the correct words. For the 6th Commandment the KJV says, "Thou shalt not kill"; and so then various activists, when arguing against Capital Punishment and the Bible crowd, will retort that "the Bible says you shall not kill"; and since capital punishment is an act of -killing-, they are against capital punishment. But these same people will argue tooth-n-nail for a woman's "right to choose" to kill her unborn baby within her own womb; but they re-word it to say "aborting fetal tissue", as though the baby was merely a harmful 'lump' that needs cutting out.

The Hebrew word includes killing in 1) premeditation, 2) accidental, 3) as avenger. In other words, a person who was alive, is now dead; whatever the motive or cause. But this passage specifies the guilty person is to be killed. Does God's Word contradict itself? As Israel was taking possession of God's inheritance to them they were told to go in and kill the pagans and obliterate evidences of their pagan idolatry. Was God contradicting Himself? Do not kill; but kill...??

In English the word "kill" indicates that a living person is now dead. To "put to death" or "deprive of life". As I browse through the dictionary definition, there doesn't seem to be any moral, emotional or purpose for the killing. Simply: that which was alive has been made dead.

To accomodate the Hebrew aspect of "premeditation" we have the English word "murder": "The unlawful killing of one human being by another, especially with premeditated malice"

And for the Hebrew aspect of "avenger" we find "execute": "To put to death, especially by carrying out a lawful sentence".

And so, this passage, along with some others, describe and explain what are capital offenses, and which are not.

First of all, PLOTTING to kill. This is premeditation and planning in the first degree. There's no 'accident' involved. From the depths of the heart the person has murder on their mind, and they carry it out. They are to be EXECUTED. Supposing the ruling powers have sent the officers to arrest him, and he flees and hides in the temple or grabs the "horns of the altar", thinking: Surely they won't -defile- God's temple to shed my blood?



"...you shall take him even from My altar, that he may die" (vs14)

As we see later as Solomon has risen to the throne, Joab has been guilty of shedding innocent blood during David's rule, deserving execution, and runs to the altar. Solomon sends the executioners and tells them to "Go, fall on him". Joab has run to the tabernacle and the executioners are reticent to go in (only the priests were to enter), so they send back to Solomon, and he confirms the order to go in and execute him (1Ki2:29-31)

The shedding of blood is one of the highest priority laws. After the Flood, God gives very -few- laws, but the one He does give is regarding murder.

"Surely the blood of your souls will I require; at the hand of every living thing will I require it, and at the hand of man. At the hand of every man's brother I will require the soul of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Ge9:5-6)

So, the temple or altar might become defiled? The un-punished murder of innocent blood is a far greater defilement.

"The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants" (Is24:5)

When Cain killed Abel, God said...

"The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground" (Ge4:10)

Being made "in the image of God", when somebody commits murder they have transgressed against God's character and essence. God "gives to all life, breath and all things" (Ac17:25) God -breathed- into man of His spirit, and man became a "living soul" (Ge2:7) Murder is not only against the -person- who is now dead, but against God's very spirit, who gave that life. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life" (Jn11:25) For a murderer to kill another person is to execrate Jesus Christ; because "in Him we exist" (Ac17:28, Col1:17)

Now, if the death was accidental, Israel had Cities of Refuge where the killer could flee, and then face what we call trial "by jury". (Nu35:24) That whole chapter goes into detail. Supposing the two bumped into each other, and the one fell and died, that is accidental. Supposing people were chopping wood, and the ax head flies off the handle and hits another person such that they die, that is accidental. (De19:1-13)

But a person grabs a stone, a club, some other object by which to make his -beating- of the other person more effective, and the person dies... that is murder. The murderer is to be executed. Perhaps, as people are wont to do when fighting, they don't have any intention to -kill- the other person; they just want to 'beat the snot' out of them; but their fighting becomes so intense that one of them dies. It doesn't matter the intention of the killer:

They were fighting, and one of them died. The one remaining alive is a murderer. He did not -have- to fight. He could have "given place to wrath" (Ro12:19), and if he had done so, they both would still be alive. But he chose to fight, and it resulted in death. The murderer is to be executed. If the -other- person had been more successful, and the one being discussed was killed, instead, then the -other- person would be the murderer, and -he- would be executed.

And there are some other categories:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which Jehovah your God is giving you" (20:12)

The striking of a parent; and the passage does not even say that they are killed; such an assault is to be met with execution. Even one who (merely) "curses" a parent, with words, was to be executed. (Le20:9) In those days, even a rebellious son who refused to be disciplined and corrected, was to be brought before the rulers and executed. (De21:18-21)

When I was a child there were some things that were JUST NOT DONE. A child did not sass back, or hit, or any such thing a parent (or adult). It was not just my family, but some of the families of my peers. Such infractions would receive a swift slap across the face, a grabbing of the ear and hussled ushering into the other room where the paddle or belt was quickly soundly applied to the seat of understanding, or some other similar punishment. Today, kids do all sorts of things to their parents, and instead of punishment, they get video-taped and sent to "Funniest Videos" where everybody laughs, and if they were rebellious enough and people laughed hard enough, perhaps they win money. We have a generation where teens mistreat their parents, and the parents whine and wring their hands in despair...Whatever can we dooo?? We just can't do ANYTHING to make them behave. We've done everything we can think of! Some years ago I remember the case where a teen was beating his father in the head with a ball-peen hammer, and instead of taking control and ushering the teen to punishment, the father pleads with the son, "I love you, I love you". Well, this passage explains what could happen in Biblical Israel. But in today's mixed up world it is called "child abuse".

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Pr22:6)

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.... Do not withhold correction from a lad, for if you beat him with the rod, he will not die." (Pr22:15, 23:13)

But it must begin when children are young...

"To whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand the message? Those weaned from the milk and removed from

the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little" (Is28:9-10)

If this training has not been done before the teens years, minus a "boot camp" experience, it's likely too late.

'Done 'everything' you can think of? NO YOU DIDN'T!

God is a God of LIFE: He gives life and sustains life. When a murderer kills another human being, they are mocking God's life. And when an offspring curses or any other way assaults their parents, they are mocking those who gave God's life to them by procreation and nurture.

What about (merely) kidnapping, but not killing the person?

"He who steals a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall be executed to death" (vs16)

"If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and has treated him as a slave or sold him, then that kidnapper shall die; thus you shall put away the evil from among you." (De24:7)

A few lessons ago we discussed the sort of slavery that existed in America years ago. Those guilty of slave trade were deserving of death. To steal a person away from freedom is the same as taking away his life; destroying his soul. When a criminal is holed up and holds hostages to gain advantage against the SWAT team gathered outside, when he eventually stands before a judge, the verdict is the death penalty. Perhaps nobody got hurt? Nevertheless he put them at risk, with total disregard for their lives... their souls.

On the other hand, if a thief is caught in the act and in the struggle is killed, "there shall be no blood shed for him" (22:2) He shouldn't have been stealing. This subject will be covered in more detailed in a couple more lessons.

Now, if there is a fight with injuries, but no death, there is no execution. (vs18-19) However, the one who caused the injuries is to make compensation for lost time while disabled, and make provision to help the person be healed.

If a person beats their servant such that they die immediately, they are to be executed. (vs20) They might be their "property", but nevertheless, the servant is a -person-. However, if the servant dies after a day or more, then there is no retribution because the servant was part of the person's "assets". (vs21) Now this, I don't understand. Is not a human life a human life? If the master was not to treat a servant harshly, why is the servant's -life- not worth more beyond a day? Or perhaps the servant was being

rebellious and was receiving punishment; and so, how harsh was the punishment? I'm not going to try to figure this out here.

If a person strikes a pregnant woman in such a way that it induces labor, and the baby is born; if the baby remains healthy, the guilty party is punished, but not executed. (vs22) However, if the baby is killed...

"then you shall requite soul for soul" (vs23)

Besides the Psalms 139:13-17 passage, this right here is likely the clearest Scripture addressing the facts and reality of the abortion issue. A pregnant woman is acted upon by another, -causing- the baby to emerge from the womb before its natural time. If the baby is OK, it's like a premature birth. But if the baby dies...is that not the gist of what abortion does! God does not consider the pre-born baby mere "fetal tissue". The baby is a LIVING SOUL. If the baby's SOUL is taken, then so is the SOUL of the guilty party. "soul for soul" This language could not possibly be any clearer.

And it closes this little passage with a principle: Whatever a person perpetrates upon another person, either in death or injury, is to be done to the guilty person. But this is not permission for the execution of personal vendettas. Jesus spoke to this...

"You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, Do not resist evil. But whoever hits you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also." (Mt5:38-39)

Jesus was teaching the "give place to wrath" concept. But what about when a person has injured another, on what basis is punishment to be meted out to satisfy -justice-? Remember the (so-called) Golden Rule

"And as you would have men do to you, you also do likewise to them." (Lk6:31)

God had given the principle...

"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Jehovah." (Le19:18)

So, did God contradict Himself? Don't take vengeance; but "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" ?? Remember the name of this series? "Civil Laws" When disputing parties are standing before a judge, on what basis does the judge adjudicate and pass sentence? Whatever the guilty party is guilty of, return to them IN KIND, at the JUDGMENT OF THE COURT. Remember the definition of "execute". The carrying out of a "LAWFUL SENTENCE"... ordered BY THE COURT. Not just somebody taking revenge (getting even; gonna make you pay!) into their own hands.

However, again, regarding servants: If a master hurt a servant, giving them a permanent injury or disability, the servant was to be released; given their freedom, in exchange for the hurt done to them. (vs26-27)

AND...!

These laws were not -just- for Israel. A stranger could not waltz into Israel and commit crimes, and when confronted to retort: Well, in -my- country we can do these things. YaRight! No!

Sometimes people use the expression "Judeo-Christian" when speaking of morality and legal codes. These laws that God gave to Israel are God's Laws. It doesn't really matter if a person is a Jew or not. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and justice is justice. Period.

"You shall have the same law for the sojourner and for the native; for I am Jehovah your God." (Le24:22)

## ***Animal Assault*** (21:28-36)

What did he know, and when did he know it?

"If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall be stoned to death with stones, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and the owner has been given warning, and he has not kept it restrained, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death." (vs28:29)

The opening question, here, is one that political pundits were tossing around, back ten years ago, when the 9/11 event killed thousands in New York City, when they were trying to assign blame onto President Bush for the event. Those were Bush's political enemies, looking for fodder for their agenda. However, it is a question that often needs to be asked.

Last lesson we observed that culpability for murder is based on motive. But here we also learn that a person can commit murder due to neglect. An example was given: if people are out chopping wood, and the ax head flies off the handle, hits another person and kills them, it is deemed 'accidental'. The person is NOT a murderer.

But something the example did not address: Supposing the person sees the ax, he can 'wiggle' the head on the handle, and does nothing to 'fix' the ax nor to tighten up the head; the head flies off and kills somebody. Is he guilty?

This passage with animals (oxen) who can have tendencies to butt into things and gore them, I think can answer the 'ax' question.

What is the ox's 'tendency'? Just like people, animals have temperaments and personalities. As an animal is with a person, they often take on the temperament of their owner. Just as you can tell what people are like from observing their children; often the same is true from observing a person's animals. A mean-spirited and nasty person will often have a dangerous and vicious dog that, anytime it gets out of the yard, or loose from its tether, will run around the neighborhood in a rampage, killing cats and biting people. A farmer using animals as beasts of burden and labor, depending on how the farmer treats the animal, the animal will tend to be either docile or always easily agitated. As the preacher observes...

"A righteous man understands the soul of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (Pr12:10)

Of course, an ox is a big animal. Even in a usually gentle environment, sometimes things set animals off. What might cause an ox to get spooked

and gore a person? Whatever the case, if an otherwise gentle animal kills a person, the animal was to be killed. But the owner was off the hook.

However, there are some animals that just never are tamed, but must always be guided with heavy hand. Even the animal's owner must continually take precautions. And so, the owner, through negligence, lets the animal loose, and it gores and kills a person...both the animal -AND- the owner are killed. The owner knew the animal's tendency and did not keep it under control.

This is often the case when a vicious dog violently attacks somebody, they are often collected by animal control and euthanized.

A couple of exceptions: Perhaps the case is such that execution is not proper? Maybe there were extenuating circumstances? Perhaps something happened beyond the owner's control and the ox got out? Remember, this is being adjudicated before the judge (priest), and it doesn't seem right to execute the person, a fine is imposed (vs30)

And this, like some other things that I don't understand: if the ox gores another's human SERVANTS, the penalty was a fine of "thirty shekels of silver" (vs32) Why a fine? Why not execution? Are servants not of equal value as free persons? Is their soul not as significant as a free person? Is blood not blood? This I don't understand

Or is this a prophetic type of when Jesus would be 'sold' for 30 pieces of silver? (Zec11:12-13, Mt26:15) As Jesus came and gave Himself in the form of a "bondservant" (Php2:7)

But there is also law regarding animals, as property.

Dig a pit and don't cover it, and your neighbor's animal falls into it and is killed...the one who dug the pit is liable for the dead animal. There's a reason construction zones put up barriers, cones, flashing lights and reflectors for night time. Is it the life of the animal God is concerned about? "Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?" (1Co9:9-10) The animal is of value to its owner in terms of his livelihood. The animal is killed, the owner's productivity suffers. Do harm to another person, compensation is due.

And even with animals to other animals, when -owned- by people. An ox gores another ox and kills it. Are the costs split equally? Or was the one ox -known- for goring? If so, its owner must compensate for his own negligence.

It is a matter of -responsibility-. We do not live life, caring only about -self-. Cain asked God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Ge4:9) When God answered, "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground" (vs10), He was saying, essentially, "Yes, you are!" In that case,

Cain had killed Abel with malice aforethought. In the previous lesson we discussed -direct- killing and injury of a fellow-human; where one makes -direct-, personal, physical contact to effect injury or death.

But in this lesson we see that responsibility is held also for INDIRECT contact and consequences. The things we are directly responsible for, if those things cause death or injury to others because of our negligence or inattention to circumstances or events; it is as if -we- had actually personally done those injuries.

What about that "ax" question? If an ax head is 'loose' on the handle, any reasonable person is going to assume that at some point the head might go flying off. It -could- happen. Just as in the case of an ox that -tends- to want to gore, so you know you better keep it in check, otherwise eventually it's going to kill somebody; same with the ax. The person knew the head was loose, and did nothing to fix it. If it kills somebody, certainly it was an "accident"; but was totally preventable. The person who didn't prevent the accident, by fixing the ax, is guilty of murder.

"And whoever kills a beast shall make compensation; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death. You shall have the same law for the sojourner and for the native; for I am Jehovah your God." (Le24:21-22)



## **Theft and Loss** (22:1-15)

"You shall not steal" (20:15)

Now, finally, we get to a commandment that does not require the death penalty for disobedience.

"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep...if the thing stolen is found in his possession alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double" (22:1,4)

Is not the text pretty self-explanatory.

*...And in these lessons, as with all writings at this website, I hope the reader is looking up the passages and reading them. These studies aren't intended to address every last word individually; assuming the reader has the ability, also, to read with understanding...*

What is the explanation for the differences in restitution? Is it that, in the one case he has stolen and made merchandise for profit, where the other he still has possession? In Proverbs it says...

"They do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry. But if he is found, he shall restore sevenfold.." (Pr6:30-31)

The tithe was collected for the poor, widows, orphans and Levites. It is not wrong to eat what belongs to someone else, if they 'give' it to the poor. But it is wrong for the poor to -steal- it.

Around Spokane, where I live, there are people all over, standing on the sidewalks at intersections, holding signs with various messages, looking for hand-outs. The other day as I was coming out of Walgreens with the jug of milk I had just purchased, I hear this voice to the side and behind me: Sir, do you have some change? And I turn to see this man sitting in the shade on the sidewalk, leaning against the building. About a year ago this old man used to walk by, pushing this old dilapidated bike (with his stuff strapped to it), and two scruffy scrawny dogs dragging along ahead of him at the end of this rope. He looked to be genuinely in bad shape; as did his dogs. On the other hand, more currently there is this person I can see regularly from my store windows, with his dog that is usually full of energy, running and jumping around at the end of the leash, but when I have happened to drive or walk by to see what his sign says: "I need food for my dog". And I've seen him over there 'training' his dog not to be so rambunctious, but to conform to the image of poverty, and droop his tail. With today's economy what it is, there truly are people hurting, and a person might feel a tug to give them a little something. On the other hand, it is pretty well known that there are the pan-handlers who "work the

system". I've heard tell that some will -drive- their fancy 'newer' model vehicles, park them, and go stand wherever it is they stand, and rake in the money by the fist-fulls. They make more money pan-handling than many do at well-paying jobs. This one a block over from the store, here, I have seen on occasion when he was walking to/from his 'home' (?) to the street corner, and where he was walking to/from was a neighborhood, certainly not the upper crust; but certainly also not the down-trodden part of town. He apparently -has- a 'home' he 'commutes' to/from to his street corner, where he begs for "food for his dog".

When I was in high school, my dad pastored this little church, and we lived in the parsonage, next to the church building. (My mother had died a few years previously, so it was the two of us) One evening as we had just sat down to supper, there is this knock at the door. This hobo, obviously on hard times: Can you spare a little change for bus fair? They never just ask for "money", but what they always attach some 'purpose' for which they need it. The hobo didn't get any money, but was invited in to share in our supper. (bachelor cooked, and served onto the plate directly from the cooking pans; no intermediate serving bowls [that would require more washing, you see]; no fancily spread table) Well, after that, on a few other occasions, right at supper time (they might not have had a watch, but they knew what time it was!), others would knock, asking for money, and get invited in for a meal, instead. They were obviously in need, and apparently the word got around in their community that they might be able to get a meal at this particular Baptist parsonage.

But do you give to panhandlers? How does one know they are -truly- in need, or are they merely 'acting' the part? Like the Gibeonites who put on torn and tattered clothes, old dried out water bottles, and worn out sandals, fooling Israel that they were from a "distant land" in order to con Israel into a peacite -Oy;n when they ctualely lived next to ~~Israel~~ J

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In God's economy there was no such thing as "criminal's rights". Even in the case involving accidental death, where the one who killed was not guilty of "murder" nor was executed; nevertheless, if he wanted to be safe from the kinsman avenger-of-blood, he needed to live in the city of refuge until the high priest died. (Num35:25-28) He could not be declared "not guilty" and go home. Even after being declared "not guilty", if he left the city of refuge, and the avenger found him and killed him, that was his tough luck. God's economy was heavily weighted in the direction of NOT KILLING, whether murder or involuntary manslaughter... and in the direction of retribution against the wrong.

"Surely the blood of your souls will I require; at the hand of every living thing will I require it, and at the hand of man. At the hand of every man's brother I will require the soul of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man." (Ge9:5-6)

These next verses I should think are pretty much self-explanatory, and we don't need to spend a lot of time. You can read them. The concepts and principles follow on what we've already observed.

In farming society, one farmer out of negligence allows his animals into his neighbor's fields, and they eat and trample the neighbor's crop, the owner of the offending animals is to compensate for the damages and loss. Somebody starts a fire and it does damage, he is to compensate for the damages. (22:5-6) Does this not make sense!

And then, what about the "he says, he says" cases? One's word against the word of another. As sometimes happens, somebody offers to store goods for another, but while in storage, they are stolen. Or animals are hurt or die while being kept? Or a person borrows something from another. Supposing the thing is hurt or broken while being borrowed, vs the same thing is hurt or broken while the owner is -there-, not only loaning, but also helping. (22:7-15)

There is a concept here that the person who is "in charge" at the moment is also "responsible" for what happens under their watch. Like the little saying by which certain politicians or managers in charge in this country will -own- their own responsibility.

"The buck stops here"

Sometimes disputes require a 3rd party, where...

"...the matter of both of them shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges declare guilty shall restore double to his neighbor" (22:9b)

The basic concept that occurs throughout is that: If a person causes injury or damage to another person, they are to MAKE GOOD. Make restitution.

Make compensation for the injury or loss they have caused. Take 'responsibility' for their actions.

Supposing a guilty person wants to make compensation, but the person is no longer alive and/or there are no relatives TO WHOM to make compensation?

"But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong shall go to Jehovah for the priest, besides the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him." (Nu5:8)

Also for "unintentional" trespasses they had offerings they made to God. (Num15:22-29)

"Thus the priest shall make atonement for the soul who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before Jehovah, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him." (Nu15:28)

However, the law is not only about "don't do this", or what happens if you did wrong. The law is not only 'reactive', but also proactive.

"You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall turn them back to restore them to your brother. And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks for it; and you shall restore it to him. You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you cannot hide it. You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall help him lift it up to make it stand." (De22:1-4)

Well.... isn't this just being "neighborly"? As this is being prepared, this year has seen an unusual number of devastating storms and tornadoes in the eastern half of this country. Many towns leveled into non-existence, and hundreds of deaths. The news stories continually show neighbors helping neighbors: sifting through the rubble, cleaning up, helping to rebuild, providing temporary housing and meals to those whose homes were wiped out. The news reporters, often from large cities where people tend to go about, "minding their own business", and not getting involved with neighbors, express wonderment at how everybody is helping each other; and the typical response is something on the order of: This is what we do. As if it is an -assumed- response.

**SOMEBODY IS IN NEED... YOU HELP THEM!**

But the reminder is also given regarding the blood. There is a difference between humans and animals. There are some today who wish to treat

animals just like mankind. They promote "animal rights". They would string up anybody who would harm any animal. But in God's economy...

"And whoever kills a beast shall make compensation; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death." (Le24:21)

"...for in the image of God He made man." (Ge9:6b)

## ***Treating People*** (22:11-27)

"You shall neither mistreat a sojourner nor oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (vs21)

Why is something like this commanded? Shouldn't this be normal natural behavior: to treat other people well? The nations that Israel was about to conquer were evil and violent. Anybody who has read the Bible will recall when Abraham and Sarah went into Egypt, Sarah was called his "sister"; Abraham fearing that the natives might kill him on account of her beauty (Ge12) and again at Gerar (Ge20); as did Isaac with Rebekah (Ge26)

A reading from Jasher ch19 might prove enlightening. [link] When a stranger would come to Sodom they might strap him down to a bed and 'stretch' him until he died. Why? Just because they wanted to. If a poor person came to town, they might bestow gold and riches upon him, but not allow him to eat; so when he died of starvation, they would clamor upon him and strip his body of his clothes and jewelry. Or if somebody wounded a person, making them bleed, the one who did the wounding would require "payment" from the one he injured, for providing the 'service' of making his "blood flow". When a man came to Sodom, the edict was declared that he was to be left on the street to starve to death, but one of Lot's daughters snuck food to him everyday. And so, as the man wasn't dying, the people of Sodom were curious as to why he wasn't dying, and caught her in the act of showing kindness, took her before the judge, and the judgment was that she was tossed into the fire and burned to ashes. Stuff like that. Their evil was not -just- that they did things, men-with-men. (Ro1:27) But they were worse than wild beasts in terms of normal human civility.

"for [Lot], dwelling among them, his righteous soul was tormented from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds" (2Pt2:8)

God often reminds Israel 'why' they are to do certain things. They had spent time in Egypt under cruel bondage. That scene in the movie "Ten Commandments" (if I remember correctly; it's been so long since I've seen it) where the slave falls and is crushed under the rolling sled carrying the huge cut stone or something-or-other, and nobody takes pity to stop and rescue him, as he gets crushed alive, might tend to show a bit of realism as to what things were like in those times. Just because Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2Pt2:5), and his family was "perfect" in their genetics (Ge6:9), did not change the fact that Noah was only "one of eight" and they came from a time when the earth was "filled with violence" (Ge6:11) Noah, himself, might have been righteous, but his family was not. What was it that Ham did to Noah? (Ge9:22) A precursor to what Sodom was known for? And they continued the "violence" that existed before the flood. The flood wiped out the genetic mixing that was going on between the demons and human females (Ge6:1-2); but it did not suddenly make everybody righteous, loving and civil to one another.

And so God calls upon Israel's -memory- of what they had endured, and were now liberated from. Remember how bad you had it, and don't do the same thing to strangers that come into your territory. Remember: "love your neighbor as yourself" (Le19:18). As Jesus would say...

"As you would have men do to you, you also do likewise to them" (Lk6:31)

And so then, what about the poor in your midst? Don't afflict them. Leave the gleanings of your fields so they can gather and be fed. (De24:19-21)

What does this mean for "welfare" the way it is typically run today? This law was for "widows and orphans". There had been a legitimate family unit, but the bread winner is dead. Is this God's license for today's slothful whores to sleep around, never get married, beget children by many different men; and the more children, the more 'benefits' the government will pay? In God's economy, earlier in the series we saw how promiscuity was to be eradicated by stoning. In God's economy there would not be the freeloading bitches. (please excuse the language. But a female dog is called a "bitch", and they often gad about with multiple males. These females are behaving like dogs. God's judgment is to those where "Outside are dogs" and "prostitutes" Re22:15) Since our current culture is run by Caesar, it is certainly a 'better' thing when the laws require "single mothers" to get training and work towards getting employment. The law on "gleaning" was so widows could go 'work' in the fields and gather their food.

They also had the tithe. (De14:27-29, 26:12) Notice, as you read these references, that this tithe was for the Levites (who were not given an inheritance/livelihood of land on which to grow crops because they were in service to God) -and- the poor. The tithe was one of the gifts to God for their system of 'welfare'. It was for those in legitimate need; not prostitutes, tramps and drunkards.

Paul said...

"If anyone does not desire to work, neither shall he eat." (2Th3:10)

Today's hussies 'work the system'. Another baby gets them more money from the government. They do not deserve to receive from the "tithe". God's tithe was not intended to support whore and prostitute "single mothers"! In God's economy there is no such thing as a "single mother". Procreation requires "male and female" who are "fruitful" (Ge1:27-28)

But God also knows that there will always be the legitimately poor.

"For the needy will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, You shall open, to open your hand unto your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land." (De15:11 see also: Mt26:11)

And also, related to this...

"If you lend money to My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not lay interest on him" (vs25)

Remember previously we saw God chiding them about being stingy when they knew the 7th year of "release" was coming; realizing they might not get back everything they give. Your family (all Israel was 'family' to each other through Jacob's 12 sons) is in need? Don't be stingy. Give to them. Don't be making money off of their hard times like a profiteer. Go ahead and charge interest to foreigners, but NOT FAMILY. (De23:19-20, Le25:35-37) If you take care of family, God will richly reward you.

And in treating those in misfortune, who more than a blind person...

"Cursed is the one who makes the blind to wander off the road. And all the people shall say, Amen!" (De27:18)

As one reads in the Gospels, there are the accounts of the blind, sitting by the way, asking for handouts. Whether a blind person, widowed or just (plain) poor who are in need, God says to treat them well. If the well-to-do mistreats the downtrodden, and they cry out to God, -who- is God going to listen to?

"I will hear and give heed to their cry; and My anger will burn, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless...I will give heed, for I am gracious" (vs23-24,27)



## **Treating God** (22:28-31)

"You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain, for Jehovah will not leave unpunished one who takes His name in vain" (20:7)

"You shall not curse God, nor curse a chief of your people" (22:28)

What is cursing? Is it merely the asking of God to 'damn' somebody or some thing? (Please pardon while we give some examples here) What if somebody merely says "dad gummit" or "darn" or any one of a dozen "colorful" expressions of "pardon-my-french" that people might use? Is not the intent of the heart the same?

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." (Mt12:36)

In teaching, Jesus said it this way...

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is a debtor. Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? And, Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it is a debtor. Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. And he who swears by Heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it." (Mt23:16-22)

How might people curse God or a ruler? When Paul was brought before the kangaroo court, he lashes out...

"God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the Law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the Law?" (Ac23:3)

and when informed that he had just bad-mouthed the high priest...

"I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people." (Ac23:5)

Years ago, when Clinton was president, I went out to the local Air Force Base public open house day, and since the local base is a re-fueling tanker base, they had flown in a B52 bomber from Minot, NDakota for the show, to be on display. The pilot is standing there next to the plane, so I struck up a conversation with him, and made passing comment about "how busy" Clinton was keeping them, what with the conflicts at the time in the Balkans and Kosovo. He would not take up that topic to run with it, even to agree or disagree. A year or so later went to visit some old friends

I had known in Upstate New York years earlier, but he was now an orthopedic surgeon in the Army, over near Tacoma. Christians. During visiting I brought up a similar sort of topic about the kind of president Clinton was, his lies and impeachment, etc, hoping to get feedback from a -Christian- enlisted person; and -mum- was the word. He was in the Army, and Clinton (good or bad) was his Commander-in-Chief.

In what sorts of ways do people speak ill of (curse) God? If only, God would do X, Y or Z: as such, condemning how God is dealing with whatever the case is. Praying, Lord, Lord, Lord DO THIS THE WAY WE ARE DEMANDING OF YOU (because we have Jesus' 'resurrection power'): expecting God to hop-to to our will, as though He was the servant and we were the boss. God might have created the universe, but He did it through evolution, like the scientists say: doubting the Scriptures and as such, calling them lies and fairy-tales.

This passage says...

"You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me." (vs29)

"When you vow a vow unto Jehovah your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for Jehovah your God will seek to require it of you, and it would be sin in you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin in you. That which has gone forth from your lips you shall keep and do; that which you have voluntarily vowed unto Jehovah your God, what you have promised with your mouth." (De23:21-23, Ec5:4-5)

There is this commercial that runs: these two are eating and there is one last croissant roll left, and they both want it, so the one shows with his finger where he proposes to cut it, to the 'side' of the fat middle flap, he wants to keep the 'big half' and give the other the smaller part and says, "That's -half-" ... "No it isn't!" ...until somebody comes along to stop the argument with another plate -full- of rolls. They can now each have their own 'whole' roll.

What do we give the Lord? The left-overs after we've first been satisfied? The small half? In order not to be committing murder, the firstborn of their children were redeemed. Samuel, on the other hand, being the firstborn was 'given' to God for service, and grew to become the prophet that annointed David king. But in farming culture, that firstborn animal was 'profit' and 'livelihood'. After the long growing seasons the firstfruits of the produce was (tasty) food to eat. The first of the corn, peas, and such are the most tender and sweetest. The first and best was to go to God, to His priests and their families.

Let's leave off preaching and go to meddlin' a moment. If you happen to be blessed enough to have a congregation or fellowship where you have a God fearing and Bible teaching pastor, what does he get? What goes into

the offering plate? The -first- of your expenditures, or what's -left- after paying the bills?

Here God is exhorting Israel how they should give. Not cursing and giving are lumped together into the same thought. Did they obey?

"For I, Jehovah, change not. Therefore you sons of Jacob are not destroyed. From the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, says Jehovah of Hosts. But you say, In what way shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, How have we robbed You? In the tithe and the offering. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now with this, says Jehovah of Hosts, whether I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour out a blessing until there is not enough room to store it." (Mal3:6-10)

A reading of the entire book of Malachi would be in order right here. Here's just one thought...

"You offer defiled food on My altar, and say, In what way have we defiled You? By saying, The table of Jehovah is to be held in contempt. And if you offer the blind in sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Bring it now to your governor. Will he be pleased with you or receive you favorably? says Jehovah of Hosts." (Mal1:7-8)

God gave His FIRSTBORN, only begotten Son. (Jn3:16) And just as the sacrifices were given, on the 8th day Jesus was circumcised. (Lk1:59) Firstborn animals were to stay with their mothers a week, and on the 8th day they could be sacrificed. (vs30) Animals torn by wild animals were not to be eaten/sacrificed; being thus defiled were to be thrown to the dogs. (vs31) Only the first and choice was to be presented to God. And God says, in this context...

"You shall be holy men unto Me"

And another thing I don't know that I understand, but in this context is also given:

"The firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of Jehovah your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk" (23:19)

"You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the sojourner who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a holy people unto Jehovah your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk." (De14:21)

"If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall let the mother go free, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days." (De22:6-7)

Don't curse God.... Treat His fruitful creation with respect. In Him "all things consist" (Col1:17) Have respect for the mother/offspring relationship. Death is a serious matter, even for animals; especially for mothers who just gave birth. When I was young I would sometimes happen upon the hen -as- she was laying the egg. Just like for women giving birth, it is painful and hard work for that hen. Each egg we ever eat was supplied through much suffering. There is a reason they cackle! If you ever engage in egg-throwing fights...Shame on you! As to do that, might as well fling babies, puppies and kittens, and laugh hysterically when they go "Splat!" Working on one farm I had occasion to be involved in 'pulling' a couple calves from cows that were having problems. If it won't come by just grabbing and pulling, you put the wire stretcher on the front legs of the calf and start pulling, and the cow starts pushing, the cow is in labor. Sometimes they don't make it. That line between birth and death is a delicate one. And remember what we've already observed about the blood and soul. We can eat animals... but show respect for the life/soul that was given.

Although misguided by pagan demon-worship, the American Indians have good intentions when they "thank" the animal they are about to butcher, for giving its life and providing its meat to them. Their thanks should be to the Creator, God Most High, not the created thing. (Rom1:25)

In another couple lessons we'll see the standards for cleanliness. Eating animal flesh that died of itself (De14:21) or is "torn by beasts" (vs31) was forbidden. They might not have discovered microbes, nor had microscopes by which to see what was harmful, nor knew the source of sickness, but God knew. When He gave standards for cleanliness, it was also, by definition, standards of holiness and good health. Keeping separate from filth and disease. As God was making Israel into a holy nation, He also promised...

"I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought upon the Egyptians. For I am Jehovah who heals you." (Ex15:26)

## ***False Testimony*** (23:1-9)

"You shall not testify a witness of falsehood against your neighbor" (20:16)

"You shall not raise a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unjust witness" (23:1)

When the 9th commandment is taught to children in Sunday School it is usually changed around to say, "You shall not lie" Don't tell a lie. Always tell the truth.

But as this passage goes on to describe, it is so much more than that. It is legalese for behavior in court, law suits, prosecution and persecution. It is a judicial standard.

When it says to "not RAISE a false report", that word "raise" suggests that things might otherwise be at peace, but a person is concocting and - creating- an incident. For what reason? It doesn't say. But the passage also speaks of "enemy" (vs4); not everybody gets along. And so, somebody who doesn't like another person finds some incident or item over which to create an accusation, the outcome of which they desire to inflict punishment upon the person they are falsely accusing.

When a person does such a thing, what is to be done?

"If a false witness rises up against any man to testify against him regarding apostasy, then both men in the controversy shall stand before Jehovah, before the priests and the judges who hold office in those days. And the judges shall investigate thoroughly, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he had thought to do to his brother; thus you shall remove the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and thereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity: soul for soul, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (De19:16-21)

On the other hand, supposing somebody is witness to some situation that - should- go before the judges, but for whatever reason they shrink back and don't say anything?

"If a soul sins and has heard the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter; if he does not report it, he bears guilt." (Le5:1)

Things are to be -just- and -righteous-. As is said in other places to "let your yes be yes, and your no, no" (Mt5:37, 2Co1:17-19, Ja5:12) As in...

"You shall not have in your bag a stone and a stone weight, a great and small. You shall not have in your house an ephah and ephah, a large and small. You shall have perfect and just weight stones, a perfect and just ephah; that your days may be prolonged in the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you." (De25:13-15)

The law also says...

"Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death at the mouth of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death at the mouth of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. Thus you shall put away the evil from among you." (De17:6-7)

"One witness shall not rise up against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he sins; at the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established." (De19:15)

But this person who is at enmity really wants to 'get' this person, so he solicits unscrupulous people to be "witnesses" with him; like Jezebel did to Naboth (1Ki21) to get the garden for her husband Ahab...

"You shall not follow the majority in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after the majority to thrust aside justice" (23:2)

Supposing he offers money as a bribe...

"And you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and perverts the words of the righteous" (23:8 De16:19)

And furthermore, supposing one who is an enemy has animals that have gotten loose and you see them. Or supposing the enemy is in a pickle. The passage speaks of things as they were in ancient times. Let's speak of suppositions today. Supposing your enemy is doing work under his vehicle and the jack gave way, and he is now pinned and can't get out. His dogs are out and roaming the neighborhood? Pick up the phone and let him know. Go over and block and re-jack up the vehicle and pull him out, and if necessary, give him medical attention.

This passage is about righteousness and justice. Doing what is "right". Not taking out personal vengeance on an enemy. Respect your neighbor's rights. As you do, he also stands before God. God gave you property, He also gave to your neighbor; even if he is your enemy. Don't move his landmark/fence. (De19:14)

Remember: "And as you would have men do to you, you also do likewise to them." (Lk6:31)

Jesus said this to Jews, who had as background these passages we are studying. Even if he is your enemy, are there certain things you would hope for from your enemy if you were in straights? Well then, do similarly for him if he is in a pickle.

So, the matter goes to court, and the judge issues a verdict. The judge's verdict stands. Supposing somebody wishes to challenge the judge and refuses to abide by the ruling? In this country they have what is called "contempt of court". I don't know the system; but do they not have temporary imprisonments. If a witness is refusing to answer questions, they might be hauled off to prison until they agree to testify; or this or that. Things were a bit more brutal in Israel...

"And the man who acts presumptuously to not heed the priest who is standing to serve there before Jehovah your God, or the judge, that man shall die. Thus you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously." (De17:12-13)

In Israel, the priests were the judges. They not only represented the Law, but they also were God's representatives. When a person refused the priest, it was as if they had blasphemed God. You disobeyed God at the peril of your life.

What were the punishments? In prior lessons we observed Restitution: making right what had been wronged. In some cases the punishment was capital punishment. In other cases it might be stripes...

"If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie prostrate and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, by number. He may beat him forty times and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many stripes above these, and your brother be degraded in your eyes." (De25:1-3)

Paul mentions being beaten by the Jews "forty stripes minus one" (2Co11:24) The maximum God ordained, "minus one"; which was a Jewish tradition.

And of course, for whatever offense for which a person was punished, punishment was not commuted. One person was not punished for another's guilt.

"Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall the sons be put to death for their fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin." (De24:16)

As Paul says...

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2Co5:10)

"Who are you to judge another's servant? To HIS OWN MASTER HE STANDS OR FALLS. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand." (Ro14:4)

And so, the person has been condemned to death; what then? If he is to be stoned...

"The hands of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people..." (De17:7, 13:9)

And once he is dead...

"If a man is guilty of a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you have hung him on a tree, his corpse shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanging is accursed of God." (De21:22-23)

This phrase, "He who is hanging is accursed of God" is prophetic to Jesus hanging on the cross. (Ga3:13) But also, even in guilt, a dead person has given up their soul. Just as the blood was to be covered with dirt, a dead person was also to be buried.

Now... just as justice is to be fair and truthful, it is also to be equitable. Don't treat one person one way, and another another. This passage speaks of differentiating between the "needy" (vs6) and "poor" (vs3) Supposing a person cannot afford a high-priced attorney who is skilled at twisting words and logic, and has a reputation for getting the guilty off scott-free. That's not how justice is to be meted out. It is to be based on the facts and truth.

Also, the law is the law for all people: the native as well as the foreigner. Just as the observance of Passover was the same for the foreigner as the native (Nu9:14), the matter of civil law was also the same...

"And if a stranger sojourns with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering by fire, a soothing aroma unto Jehovah, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who sojourns with you, a perpetual ordinance throughout your generations; as it is for you, so shall it be for the sojourner before Jehovah. ONE LAW AND ONE CUSTOM SHALL BE FOR YOU AND FOR THE STRANGER WHO SOJOURNS WITH YOU." (Nu15:14-16)



And finally, along those same thoughts, the thing God continually repeats and reminds them....

"Also you shall not oppress a sojourner, for you know the soul of a sojourner, because you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (23:9)

## ***Odds and Ends***

"When you besiege a city many days, to make war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them, if you can eat from them; do not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, to be besieged by you? Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siege works against the city making war with you, until it is subdued." (De20:19-20)

With the kind of non-detailed study like we are doing here, there are some 'civil' topics that don't really lend themselves for inclusion with the other bigger topics; nor are they big enough to make individual studies out of them. So let's just throw them together, here, shall we.

So, with this topic, is God going "green" here? Is He an environmentalist and promoting "sustainability"? "Save the forests" and all that stuff? Is God making sure there is 'food' to eat? ...for people and animals? I don't know. But one thing I notice with God's laws is that He made all living things to be "fruitful". Back in the first couple chapters of Genesis He mentions several times, for mankind, animals, plants...to "be fruitful", multiply and fill the earth. Whatever is edible from trees is their 'fruit'; their fruitfulness.

"When you build a new house, then you shall make a railing for your roof, that you may not bring blood upon your house if anyone falls from it." (De22:8)

Remember back to the "loose head" on the ax handle concept? Similarly, if a person has people access to a potentially hazardous place, but does not provide a safety rail, and a person falls and dies; would that not be the same as "murder", as we discussed in that lesson with the ax. That is one thing that today's world seems to understand, having various government "safety" agencies to govern and regulate various standards for buildings, vehicles, roadways, etc.

"Take a head count of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male by head, from twenty years old and above; all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies." (Nu1:2-3)

The age for military enlistment was 20. In this country it is 18. For years the age for drinking and voting was 21. Is this somewhat a universally understood age at which a young man attains to adulthood?

On the other hand...

"Take a head count of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tent of

meeting. This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting, regarding the set apart, holy things" (Nu4:2-4)

"And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age..." (Lk3:23)

There is a certain age by which certain maturity is attained to conduct earthly physical things. But God's service requires a bit added development. When selecting a pastor for the Lord's work Paul says...

"not a new convert, that he not be puffed up with pride and fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1Ti3:6)

Around the time this is being prepared, there have been various things going on in the news, and individuals being interviewed on TV. I notice when they interview older teenagers, they appear to possess a measure of maturity. But I also see myself back at that age. I was filled with fire "for the Lord" and was gung-ho to serve Him. But as an older person now, having a lifetime of experiences I have been through, and the errors I was trapped in, not realizing back then that they were errors, but I was gung-ho in those errors, -THINKING- that I was serving the Lord, and pleasing to him. What would have happened if I had waited till I was 30 to begin serious service? At 20 there was NO WAY that I was qualified to minister to adults! But I'll tell you what! Back then, I KNEW IT ALL. I thought!

"When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war nor leave for any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring gladness to his wife whom he has taken." (De24:5, 20:5-7)

Well now! Doesn't this go counter to what often happens in our modern societies. I remember the accounts from many different wars where there might be an engaged couple, and he is being deployed to go fight, and will be away for some time... and they scramble to HAVE THE WEDDING so they can be 'married' BEFORE HE LEAVES. They might get married, have the honeymoon night, and the next day he reports to take off.

Now, as I recall the history of this nation, there was an era when this nation's morality -began- to descend to eventually become what we see today. Those days were called the "Roaring 20s" They came on the heels of "The Great War", WWI. The jazz, parties and dancing. Servicemen during times of war find entertainment where they can, and they come home with the same mentality. Dancing with swapping of partners. When the girl's new husband is off to war, but she is at a party, she meets up with some other man whom she enjoys dancing with. Same with her husband overseas. So men and women are meeting each other, mixing it up, getting married, getting divorced because while he was away, she was playing; or while he was away he met somebody. And then, after WW2 was the 50s and the introduction of Rock-n-Roll and everything that has come about since then. Both of these phenomena, on the heels of major wars. When military personnel go to war, by its very nature, it splits

families up: either temporarily until they come home, or permanently through divorce or death. Again... God's design is "fruitfulness". If a couple get married, and get separated immediately, that is the opposite of God's design.

OK...so, we picked on "warfare". The passage also addresses leaving for business. Don't get married with the idea that one is immediately going to be far away for business. Either get married and stay put, get married and move together so you can be together... or, don't get married. Marriage is about "cleaving" to each other (Ge2:24, Mk10:7, Eph5:31); not forming a union and then splitting up right away. A husband and wife are supposed to be -together-.

Marriage is a picture of the Believer's relationship with Jesus Christ. (Eph5:23) Jesus does not save us and then take off and leave us stranded. Certainly He went to Heaven with the promise to "come again and receive [us] to [Himself]" (Jn14:3) But through the indwelling sealing Holy Spirit of promise (Rom8:9, Eph1:13) He fulfills the promise, "By no means will I ever leave you nor ever forsake you." (Heb13:5b) Even though we don't see Him right now (1Pt1:8), we know His presence through the Holy Spirit. (Jn16:13-15)

# ***Cleanliness***

"to make a distinction between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah has spoken to them by the hand of Moses." (Le10:10-11, 11:47, 14:57)

But Israel disobeyed...

"Her priests have violated My Law and defiled My holy things; they have not divided between the holy and profane, nor have they declared between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them." (Ezk22:26)

As we wind down this series on "civil" laws, we have addressed the intended passages from Exodus 21-23 that started the series. But as one goes through the rest of the Pentateuch/Torah (Genesis thru Deuteronomy) various other statutes are scattered here and there. Some things are not necessarily issues that modern-day courts might feel the need to address. They are, more, things that civilized people just -know-. Some things modern technology has discovered and knows, which ancient peoples did not. But God knew them and taught Israel -safeguards-.

Israel was a -theocracy-. In theory, -God- was supposed to be their -King-. But as we see from the Ezekiel passage, and as the rest of the Bible and History inform us, Israel was not faithful to God. They did not obey his laws and statutes, and... suffered the consequences. The things in this series about "no other gods" and about "treating God" were to Israel, the theocracy. Modern nations might not adhere to them, seeing as how they typically espouse -religious- "freedom"; Caesar allows his subjects to worship -any- god/s they choose. And of course, in their denial of the Most High, they often suffer the consequences, as He brings periodic judgment upon them for rejecting their Creator.

God's laws to Israel included both the Civil and Levitical aspects. We have tried to limit this series to the "civil". The levitical included various -ceremonial- dippings, sacrificing of animals, dipping of blood, anointing of oils, burning of incense, washing under running water; all prescribed according to the specific topic. Things which the writer of Hebrews says, "which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience" (Heb9:9) Our eternal standing before God is not based on the physical rituals, but the -heart-.

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:28-29)

But even though, in Christ, we no longer adhere to the Levitical rituals, many of the statutes were of 'practical' -physical- benefit. There is a whole series of statutes in Leviticus 11-15 that cover things regarding the eating of clean/unclean animals, giving birth, skin blemishes and leprosy, and physical discharges. You can read these chapters for the specifics. But let's just consider a few highlights:

Fish with scales could be eaten, but if they did not have scales they were not to be eaten. A non-scaled fish that immediately comes to mind is the catfish/bullhead. These have a slimy smooth skin, and they are bottom-feeders. Now, in the midwest, around the Mississippi River regions, catfish is considered a delicacy. They even grow upwards of 4ft long, or more, and I've heard the tales of people trudging around in the shallows and physically picking them up, out of the water, to then butcher them for eating. Also, not without the incidents where the fish might have 'stuck' the person in the stomach with their barbs.

Science tells us that we -are- what we eat. If a person eats onions or garlic, their sweat and body odor can often smell like onions or garlic. You can tell what they've been eating, by what they smell like. After first growing up in Japan, and then living in the midwest, and then NDakota, I didn't much care for catfish and bullheads. They always tasted "slimy" to me. Same with duck. Duck bob their behinds up in the air, while with their beaks they go foraging around in the bottoms. Think about the eco-system. As pollution and debris washes into the water drainage system, the stuff the creatures above (in the clean water) discharge fall down into the bottom areas, where the catfish and ducks come along and forage. Same as pigs and dogs, compared to cattle and sheep, that feed on above-ground grass. Some of the carrion birds in the 'unclean' list are birds that eat dead animals. Why are they dead? What -disease- did they die of? Or even if not a disease, how long have they been dead, and what microbes are now growing in the rotting flesh, which the bird also eats. Just like -we- are what we eat, so are the animals we eat...they are what they eat. If they were feeding on unclean, diseased and rotting substance; and then we come along and eat them; we, in turn, are eating of disease and rot. And a couple lessons ago we observed God promising Israel -not- to have all the diseases of Egypt. Part of that was accomplished by Israel eating "clean" foods.

I don't know enough about the birth process to understand everything God commanded there. Nor why a mother would be "unclean" longer when giving birth to a daughter, than when giving birth to a son.

But some of the rest makes 'sense' with modern medical understanding. Certain rashes you don't scratch lest it spread. Open sores that are oozing another person doesn't want to touch, lest they catch it. There is lots of washing to wash away the infection. When a person has had a condition that discharges into the clothing, the clothing is washed. These are things that make sense to us. But ancient peoples did not understand the

connections. God taught them to Israel. And even if they didn't understand, if they obeyed, they could remain healthy. When Miriam was punished with leprosy, God uses an example of spitting. Today they have PSAs to teach people to cough/sneeze into their elbows, and to wash their hands after being in public. Something that is making the news recently is the matter of how much fecal matter is found on things like shopping carts. People don't wash; they put their babies in the carts with dirty diapers; it sticks to the carts, and others come along and handle them. The Japanese have a national tradition that I don't recall hearing about from any other nation: If somebody has a cold, they wear surgical-like masks over their nose and mouth, to contain their own cold germs. Sometimes, even healthy people will wear them to keep from catching whatever might be floating around in the air during the cold and flu season.

We think nothing of it, we have toilets. But God even gave a directive about when doing certain bodily functions, to take a spade and dig it into the ground and cover it.

"and you shall have a spade among your tools, and when you sit outside, you shall dig with it and turn over and cover your excrement." (De23:13)

Don't be like most animals (except cats) that just go, and there it is, for anybody to come along and step in it, or some beasts to come along and eat it. (Where did cats learn, by nature without needing to be trained, to dig and cover?) I don't know if Japan is today like it was in the 50s when I was a kid there, but many other countries still are... where the sewage ran in ditches along-side the roads, and people would 'use' the ditch. And then farmers and others who grew produce would bring the produce and 'wash' it in those same ditches. How "clean" was that?? As I think back to those days, I guess that's why we never ate 'raw' veggies, but everything was well-cooked.

In Israel, if somebody had a severely communicable disease like leprosy, they were "unclean" and would take up residence "outside the camp" (Nu5:2-4) away from the general population. Don't -contaminate- what is clean with what is unclean. If you've just cleaned/windexed a window or mirror, you don't keep it clean by -touching- it with dirty hands. The clean mirror will -never- make the dirty hands clean; nor will the dirty hands -ever- clean a mirror.

This business of physical cleanliness not only keeps people -physically- healthy, but is a type/picture of how we should conduct ourselves spiritually. The writer says...

"For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.... Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." (Heb13:11-13)

"Outside the camp" was a place of filth and reproach. A place NOT to go. Certainly NOT a place from which to partake. Just as a sick person can infect the healthy, so too the sinful life when embraced will infect the spiritually holy. Since this ministry is aimed, somewhat, at those claiming to be "Christians", this same concept applies to the apostasy.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE to embrace the ways of apostasy, and not become infected. Just as with Israel, they did not keep the unclean out; when a Church congregation refuses to keep the apostates and unsaved 'out' of the assembly, they will NEVER (IT IS NOT POSSIBLE) clean-up the unclean that are in their midst. But the unclean -WILL- tarnish their holiness.

In the days of the boy-king Joash, Jehoiada the priest set about to restore holiness, and it says...

"And he stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of Jehovah, so that no one who was in any way unclean could enter." (2Ch23:19)

You see, God was making Israel into a COMPLETE PACKAGE. Many of you, like I must say about myself, probably have tended to read through the Pentateuch with all the multitude of variations and subtleties of the clean/unclean laws, and all the sacrifices, blood sprinklings and anointing oils, the washings, dippings, quarantines and everything that made up "Israel" and possibly have considered it 'boring' reading. After all, why do I need to read all that? That was for them. We do things differently. Perhaps it all seems 'tedious'. Why can't God just "let live" already, and just have Israel observe the "important" rituals.

Paul says...

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole SPIRIT, SOUL, and BODY be preserved BLAMELESS at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1Th5:23)

God was "detailing" Israel. There is an auto detailing business up the street from me. I've not been there, but these shops typically -clean- vehicles. They clean them more carefully than I do my own vehicles. I wash, vacuum, take the windex to the windows. With the motorcycle's plastic windshield I 'wax' it (so it doesn't get scratched). But I do not get into every nook and cranny; I know that as soon as the wind blows some dust around, or it rains, it's just going to be dirty again. But -detailing- shops do. By definition. They take Q-tips to the little recesses of heater vents, control panels and switches; take special chemicals to the tires, and clean the corners and creases of the wheels. And when a customer gets their vehicle back, it is cleaner than 'show-room'.



Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1Co6:19) Does not a holy God deserve a -clean- temple! Our souls are our personhoods which either obey or disobey God. Our souls are what make our bodies -do- whatever it is that others see. And our spirits are that which knows God.

These "civil" laws cover more than worldly human civil laws do because they are given to God's people. God's standards are higher than Satan's. That's why they cover the SPIRIT: "no other gods" SOUL: servants, treating people, behavioral issues BODY: sexual, cleanliness, etc. The reason the world's civil law continues to fail is because it is minus God. They think their strength is that they are tolerant of all religions. But they do so at the rejection of their Creator. They cannot possibly succeed without God and His holy standards, and His Salvation.

Spirit, Soul and Body... -BLAMELESS- before God.

"looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit2:13)

And "...we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him PURIFIES HIMSELF, just as He is pure" (1Jn3:2-3)

"...just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Eph5:25-27)

Amen!