

Exodus 22

Verses 1 - 4

“If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. ²“If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood guiltiness on his account. ³ *But* if the sun has risen on him, there will be blood guiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

He shall make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft

The cost for stealing was 5 to 1 for the ox and 4 to 1 for sheep

This had to be a strong deterrent for most people

Especially the thought of becoming a slave if you can't pay the fine

If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood guiltiness

Here is the principle that a man's home is his castle

It was not considered murder to kill a thief in the act of entering a residence at night.

However, killing the thief during the day would result in blood guilt

The right of the next of kin to take vengeance by killing the slayer

⁴ If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

If the thief still had the animals and they were alive, his penalty would be reduced to restoring double

This assumes the possibility that this was an unplanned theft and the person made a rash decision in a moment of opportunity

Verses 5 - 6

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

⁶ “If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field *itself* is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.

Citizens are responsible for any action that causes loss or injury to another

This is why people are compelled to have auto insurance. Many could not pay the loss to another in the case of an auto accident.

Verses 7- 9

⁷ “If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep *for him* and it is stolen from the man’s house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double. ⁸ If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, *to* determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor’s property. ⁹ For every breach of trust, *whether it is* for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, ‘This is it,’ the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.

If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep *for him*

There were no banks or bonded warehouses until recent times

The **first** Bank in the United States, opened in Philadelphia on December 12, 1791 a little over 200 years ago

So how did people secure their assets? There is a good chance they buried it in their field

In the case of some goods, there was not a sure-fire way of protecting them.

This is why the neighbor was not always held responsible

If the thief is caught, he shall pay double. If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property

The judges would make a decision if the home owner was telling the truth

It can be assumed that this involved interviewing witnesses such as family members or servants

Perhaps there had been a change in his spending habits, etc.

Verses 10-13

¹⁰ “If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for *him*, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, ¹¹ an oath before the Lord shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept *it*, and he shall not make restitution. ¹² But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. ¹³ If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.

If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for *him*, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking

The last paragraph covered money or goods

If these items disappear, then someone took them

But if animals are missing, they may have wandered off

Also, in the case of animals, there was not a sure-fire way of protecting them.

This is why the neighbor was not always responsible

So if there is no proof of guilt, the suspect is given the benefit of the doubt

This concept is the cornerstone of American justice, that people are innocent until proven guilty.

If it is all torn to pieces

A shepherd was accountable to the sheep-owner for any animal that was lost unless he could prove it was lost due to circumstances beyond his control

Shepherds tried to rescue animals, or portions of them, attacked by wild beasts

See Amos 3:12

Verses 14-15

¹⁴ “If a man borrows *anything* from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. ¹⁵ If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire.

If you ask your neighbor to lend you something, then you are responsible for seeing that no harm comes to it.

If you fail in that responsibility, you must make restitution

However, if the owner was present when some injury was incurred, no restitution was demanded.

Verses 16-17

¹⁶ “If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her *to be his wife*. ¹⁷ If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins.

This law concerns virgins who were not engaged.

The man who lies with a virgin must pay her father a dowry.

Whether her father allows her to marry him was a separate issue

If she was engaged the punishment would be death.

See Deuteronomy 22:23 - 29

Verses 18

You shall not allow a sorceress to live.

The Greek translation of the Hebrew word for witch is pharmakeus.

This is similar to our word for Pharmacy, meaning one who deals in drugs and poisons

So a sorceress was someone that used “magical spells” to harness the power of “evil spirits”

One of the principal reasons for consulting witches was to arrange their help in getting rid of an enemy.

They got rid of the enemy by poisoning them.

The penalty for both witches and warlocks was death by stoning

See Leviticus 20:27

Verse 19

Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death

Bestiality is punishable in many states by imprisonment and fines

Verse 20

He, who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed.

It seems as though this law was almost never obeyed

Verses 21-24

²¹ “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. ²³ If you afflict him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; ²⁴ and my anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

²¹ **“You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.** ²² **You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.**

Most Christians are well aware that should treat widows and orphans with kindness but do we feel the same way about the stranger (foreigner).

There is a large number of Americans that no longer believe in treating foreigners with respect and fairness. It is right and fair to point out that all foreigners need to respect and obey our immigration laws. Having acknowledged that, we should also agree that foreigners should not be mistreated or abused at the border.

This country has well established laws governing people who are fleeing hostile nations because of persecution. The law requires them to come to the border and apply for a hearing before a judge to see if they qualify as a legal refugee.

If showing respect and being fair to the “stranger” is no longer politically correct, then we need to ask ourselves an important question. Do we follow the teaching of God or our political party?

It seems clear that God has given the weakest among us the protection they need and deserve, despite their current status in life. God even makes the point that the Jews were foreigners in Egypt. And when Egypt treated them poorly, God turned his wrath on the Egyptians.

If you afflict him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; ²⁴ and my anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

See Jeremiah 22:3-5

Is this not some pretty strong language coming from God?

If we are not fair to the stranger, widow and orphan what will God do to us?

He will kill us (the men) with the sword.

And our family (wife & children) will be widows and fatherless.

Again, this seems like some very strong language coming from God

Should any Christian be on the wrong side of what God demands?

Verses 25-27

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

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest

The Jewish people were under a special covenant from the rest of the world.

When loans were made from one Hebrew to another as a matter of charity, it was to be done without interest

Commercial loans among fellow Jews did not have this restriction

Loans of any kind to foreigners did not have this restriction either

If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets

The poor were often paid for their labor at the end of the work day. So they might take a small loan from a willing source at the beginning of the day to have money for food or other needs.

They would give their cloak as a pledge of payment and when they were paid at the end of the day they could repay the loan and get their cloak back.

If the person could not pay back the loan for some reason, the holder of the cloak could not keep it overnight because this would deprive the person of a covering for the night.

This should have been done without a law, but mankind can be hard hearted.

Laws often come about because people are abusing the rights of the poor who are the most vulnerable.

See Deuteronomy 24:6

See Amos 2:6 and 4:1

Verse 28

²⁸ “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

The 3rd commandment forbids taking the name of the Lord God in vain

See Exodus 20:7

To use God's name in vain means to use his name in a frivolous or vulgar manner.

It was also forbidden to curse a ruler.

Some outspoken Christians should consider the implications of this commandment, because some of them claim to be men of God but they use ungodly language towards the leaders of the opposition party.

Also, many evangelicals in America believe they are supposed to be a shining light in a fallen world except when it comes to politics. Then it's ok to talk about the members of the other party as ungodly and treat them with contempt and even anger. But if that is the case, how can the church reach these lost souls?

Some will protest saying, but the other side talk's trash about us. Yes, that is true in some cases, but it is also true that Christians have the responsibility to be a good example for others. Christians are supposed to suffer for the sake of righteousness (for doing what is right) not for doing wrong (getting revenge).

We need to think about our language and attitude in all situations, but especially around those we would like to reach with the gospel message.

Verses 29 - 31

²⁹ “You shall not delay *the offering from your harvest and your vintage*. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. ³⁰ You shall do the same with your oxen *and* with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to me. ³¹ “You shall be holy men to me, therefore you shall not eat *any* flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

You shall not delay *the offering from your harvest and vintage*

This is looking forward to when the Israelites will be living in the land of Canaan.

The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me

See Exodus 13:1-16

When a Jewish woman gives birth to her first-born son, the father is obligated to redeem the child.

The redemption price for firstborn non-Levites was set at 5 shekels

See Numbers 3:44-47

³¹ **“You shall be holy men to me, therefore you shall not eat *any* flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.**

Animals slain by other animals were not properly bled.

To avoid the sin of eating blood, it was given to the dogs