

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.

“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.

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 one couldn't pay the fine.

² 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.**

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.**

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 230 years ago.

Prior to that time some people secured their assets by burying it in their field. In the case of some goods, there was no sure-fire way of protecting them. This is why the neighbor was not always held responsible.

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**

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.

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If animals are missing, they may have wandered off or a predator may have killed the animal and carried it away. This is why the neighbor was not always responsible. So if there was no proof of guilt, the suspect was given the benefit of the doubt. This concept is the cornerstone of American justice, that people are innocent until proven guilty.

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.

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

¹² “Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion’s mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear,
So will the sons of Israel living in Samaria be snatched away—
With *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch!

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 someone asked their neighbor to lend him something, then he was responsible for seeing that no harm comes to it. If he failed in that responsibility, he was required to make restitution for that item.

See 2 Kings 6:5

⁵ **But it happened that as one *of them* was cutting down a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Oh, my master! It was borrowed!”**

The son of a prophet that lost the axe head asked Elisha for help because he was responsible since he had borrowed it.

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. If a man lies with a virgin he must pay her father a dowry. Whether her father allows her to marry him was a separate issue.

If the virgin woman was engaged to another man and this happened then both of them would be put to death by stoning.

See Deuteronomy 22:23 - 24

²³ **“If there is a girl who is a virgin betrothed to a man, and *another* man finds her in the city and sleeps with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death: the girl, because she did not cry out for help *though she was* in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor’s wife. So you shall eliminate the evil from among you.**

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. Sorcery and witchcraft are condemned in the OT and are seen in connection with Spiritism, communing with the dead, and idolatry. The penalty for both witches and warlocks was death by stoning

See Leviticus 20:27

²⁷ ‘Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist must be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; *they have brought* their own deaths upon themselves.’”

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 that this law was hardly ever 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 widows and orphans should be treated fairly and 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 but having said that, we should also agree that they should not be mistreated or abused.

This country has well established laws governing people who are fleeing hostile nations because of persecution. The law requires that if they come to our border and apply for a hearing before a judge to see if they qualify as a legal refugee they are entitled to a hearing. For those who no longer believe in due process then they have forsaken not only our constitution but more importantly the word of God.

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? There is no getting around it; God wants us to treat the foreigner the same way we should treat the widow and the orphan.

See Jeremiah 22:3

³ **This is what the Lord says: “Do justice and righteousness, and save one who has been robbed from the power of *his* oppressor. And do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.**

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.

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.**

This is 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.

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.**

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The Jewish people were under a special covenant from the rest of the world. When loans were made from one Hebrew to another and the one needing the loan was poor, it was to be without interest. Commercial loans among fellow Jews and loans of any kind to foreigners did not have this restriction.

²⁶ **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 entire loan, 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

⁶ **“No one shall seize a hand mill or an upper millstone as a pledge *for a loan*, since he would be seizing *the debtor’s means of life as a pledge.***

The smaller hand mill was used to grind small amounts of grain. The upper millstone was the runner stone, which rotates on top of the bed stone, creating a grinding action to grind larger amounts of grain. In either case it would be unfair to seize these items because they were used to grind the wheat to make bread for the day or larger amounts to sell at the market.

The following scriptures denounce those who take advantage of the poor.

1. See Amos 2:6

**⁶ This is what the Lord says:
“For three offenses of Israel, and for four,
I will not revoke its *punishment*,
Because they sell the righteous for money,
And the needy for a pair of sandals.**

2. See Amos 4:1

**Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on the mountain of Samaria,
Who exploit the poor, who oppress the needy,
And say to their husbands, “Bring now, that we may drink!”**

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

⁷ “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

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. 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. Christians are supposed to suffer for the sake of righteousness (for doing what is right) not for doing wrong (getting revenge).

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.

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.

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

See Exodus 13:1-16

¹¹ “Now when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹² you shall devote to the Lord every firstborn of a womb, and every firstborn offspring of an animal that you own; the males belong to the Lord.

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.