

Exodus 23

Verses 1-3

“You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ² You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert *justice*; ³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.

“You shall not bear a false report; do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.

This is an extension of the 9th Commandment which states, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. This command states that one should not help a wicked person in a wrongful law suit.

² You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert *justice*;

Truthful decisions are based on what is just and equitable not on what is popular in the eyes of the public. The death of our Lord came about because a majority of the people called for the release of a criminal rather than the author of life. Enough said!

³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.

Don't show favoritism to any person in court, for any reason.

Verses 4 - 5

“If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying *helpless* under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him.

People have a responsibility to help their enemies.

See Matthew 5:43 - 48

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers *and sisters*, what more are you doing *than others*? Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

When Jesus said, “You have heard it said”, it would be interesting to know who was teaching the people to hate their enemies. Were the rabbis teaching this? When Jesus said, “But I say to you”, he is saying that their teaching was wrong. This had to raise some eyebrows.

Jesus was simply pointing out that if we want to be like our Father who is in heaven then we should act like Him. God blesses the evil and the good so we should do the same.

Verses 6 - 9

⁶ **You shall not pervert the justice *due* to your needy *brother* in his dispute.**

⁷ **Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.**

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

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

⁶ **You shall not pervert the justice *due* to your needy *brother* in his dispute.**

In verse 3, favoritism toward the poor in court based on sympathy was forbidden. Here discrimination against the poor is prohibited.

We would all like to believe that justice is blind but we all know that the rich often have better representation in the courts. Because of this many poor people go to jail quickly for minor offenses while those of great wealth can avoid jail time entirely for much greater offenses by using various legal strategies and tactics.

⁷ **Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty.**

False testimony that leads to the death penalty of an innocent or righteous person will bring God's judgment.

⁸ **"You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of the just.**

This was a problem in Israel.

See Isaiah 1:23

²³ **Your rulers are rebels
And companions of thieves;
Everyone loves a bribe
And chases after gifts.
They do not obtain justice for the orphan,
Nor does the widow's case come before them.**

See Micah 3:9 - 11

¹¹ **Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe,
Her priests teach for pay,
And her prophets divine for money.
Yet they lean on the Lord, saying,
"Is the Lord not in our midst?
Catastrophe will not come upon us."**

See Proverbs 17:8

⁸ **A bribe is a charm in the sight of its owner;
Wherever he turns, he prospers.**

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

Why should the stranger be protected? For the Jews of that time it was a matter of personal experience. They had suffered the injustice of slavery because there were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Verses 10 - 11

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

It seems that Israel never paid much attention to this law.

See 2 Chronicles 36:20 – 21

²⁰ He took into exile those who had escaped from the sword to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept the Sabbath until seventy years were complete.

The 70 year Babylonian captivity made up for the years this law was ignored. If we count from the time they conquered Canaan, distributed the land and planted their first crop (1392 BC) until the Babylonian deportation (586 BC) it had been 806 years. They failed to keep the 7 year rest 70 times during that time frame. 806 years – 490 years = 316 years. This means they only kept the 7 year rest of the land 45 times. However, the writer of 2nd Chronicles was probably more focused on making a spiritual point and these calculations are somewhat of a diversion.

The purpose of the 7 year rest for the land had three aspects to it.

1. It was a means of helping the poor.
2. It also was a source of food for the wild animals.
3. It was good for the land.

This 7th year rest also applied to their vineyard *and* olive grove.

Since the Dust bowl years (1930 – 1936), farmers routinely allow a portion of their land to go fallow, usually on a field rotational basis. Each year 1/7th of their land gets a Sabbath year rest.

In a material world everything needs rest. Man gets to rest every 7th day, land every 7th year and machines whenever they break down. ☺ ☺

Verse 12

¹² **“Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease *from labor* so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves.**

This is strait from the 4th commandment.

Here again the Sabbath is presented in a positive way. A day of rest gives the “working class” a day to recharge for the coming week.

Verse 13

¹³ **Now concerning everything which I have said to you, be on your guard; and do not mention the name of other gods, nor let *them* be heard from your mouth.**

The Book of Samuel avoided the name Baal. Instead of Baal, the word [~bosheth] meaning “shame” was introduced.

See Pic 2305

Scripture	Baal changed to bosheth (shame)
Judges 6:32	Therefore on that day he named him <u>Jerubbaal</u>
2 Samuel 11:21	Who struck down Abimelech the son of <u>Jerubbesheth</u>
1 Chronicles 8:33	Saul became the father of Jonathan, Malchi-shua, Abinadab and <u>Eshbaal</u> .
2 Samuel 2:8	But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken <u>Ish-bosheth</u>
1 Chronicles 8:34	The son of Jonathan was Merib-baal, and <u>Merib-baal</u> became the father of Micah
2 Samuel 4:4	And his name was <u>Mephibosheth</u> .

It seems that Samuel took this command very seriously because he did not use the name of Baal even when he was referring to a person whose name included the name of this false god.

Verses 14 - 17

¹⁴ “Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me. ¹⁵ You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. And none shall appear before Me empty-handed. ¹⁶ Also *you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest* of the first fruits of your labors *from* what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in *the fruit of* your labors from the field. ¹⁷ Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.

¹⁴ Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me.

These three festivals were known as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

1. Passover celebrated Israel leaving Egypt

The Feast of unleavened bread was often referred to as the week of Passover.

2. Pentecost celebrated the first fruits of their crops

3. Tabernacles celebrated the final harvest of their crops

See pic 2310 3 Jewish Feasts

Three Jewish Feasts

Feast	Scripture	Date Observed	Roman Calendar	Sabbath	Offerings	Commemorates
Passover	Lev. 23:05	Nisan 14 Near sunset	March/April	No	Numbers 28:16-24	Oldest son saved from death
Festival of Unleavened Bread	Lev. 23:6-8	Nisan 15-21	March/April	Day 1 & 7 Spec Sabbath	Numbers 28:16-24	The hasty flight from Egypt
Feast Of Weeks (Pentecost)	Lev. 23:15-22	50 days after F.F.	May/June	Special Sabbath	Numbers 28:26-31	beginning of the wheat harvest.
Tabernacles Temp. Shelters	Lev. 23:33-34	Tishri 15-22	Sept/Oct	Day 1 & 8 Spec Sabbath	Numbers 29:12-38	End of harvest

Verses 18 - 19

¹⁸ “You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor is the fat of My feast to remain overnight until morning. ¹⁹ “You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God. “You are not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother.

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

This is a reference to the Passover regulations.

¹⁹ You shall bring the choice first fruits of your soil into the house of the Lord your God.

This is a reference to the Feast of weeks. This also established giving as an essential part of worshipping God.

Why would God tell them not to boil a young goat in the milk of its mother? The pagan use of "a kid (baby goat) boiled in its mother's milk" was a magical formula they used to increasing the fertility of the land. The milk was sprinkled on the crops with the thought that the new life of the kid added to its mother's milk produced double fertility. Therefore the mixing of meat and milk dishes is not kosher for a Jew

Verses 20 - 24

²⁰ “Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him. ²² But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³ For My angel will go before you and bring you in to *the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites*; and I will completely destroy them. ²⁴ You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their *sacred* pillars in pieces.

²⁰ **“Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.**

This is a reference to the angel of the Lord (the son of God).

²¹ **Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since my name is in him.**

Since this is the Son of God all of the pronouns in yellow should be capitalized. This is based on the fact that only the Christ, not an angel, has the authority to pardon or not pardon. When the people refused to take Canaan the first time their rebellion was not pardoned and they died in the wilderness.

²³ **For My angel will go before you and bring you in to *the land of* the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them.**

In Joshua 12 a list of 31 kings that had been defeated is given. These 31 kings ruled over these city/states that were part of the six nations that are mentioned here. In some places 7 nations are listed but in each of these cases it refers to the land of Canaan as a whole.

²⁴ **You shall not worship their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their sacred pillars in pieces.**

Israel was commanded not to do the following:

1. Worship their gods
2. Serve their gods
3. Live as they lived.

They were commanded to do the following:

1. Utterly overthrow them.
2. Destroy their items of worship.

Verses 25 - 27

²⁵ But you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water; and I will remove sickness from your midst. ²⁶ There shall be no one miscarrying or barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you.

The Old Covenant contained a lot of physical blessing for serving God

1. Plenty of food and water.
2. Good health.
3. They will be blessed with children.
4. Long life.
5. Victory against their enemies.

Many physical blessing are needed to maintain a healthy family but our motive for serving God should be love and appreciation.

All of these blessings were conditional because it says, “you shall serve the Lord your God”.

When God said I will send my terror ahead of you it was also conditional. The first chance to enter Canaan was rejected and the people were defeated but the second time when they obeyed the Lord the other nations were terrified of Israel.

See Joshua 2:8 -11

⁸ Now before the spies lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men, “I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have despaired because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ When we heard these reports, our hearts melted and no courage remained in anyone any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth below.

God used the great miracle at the Red Sea to put fear in the hearts of the Canaanites. He also used the battles against their enemies to reinforce that fear.

Verses 28-30

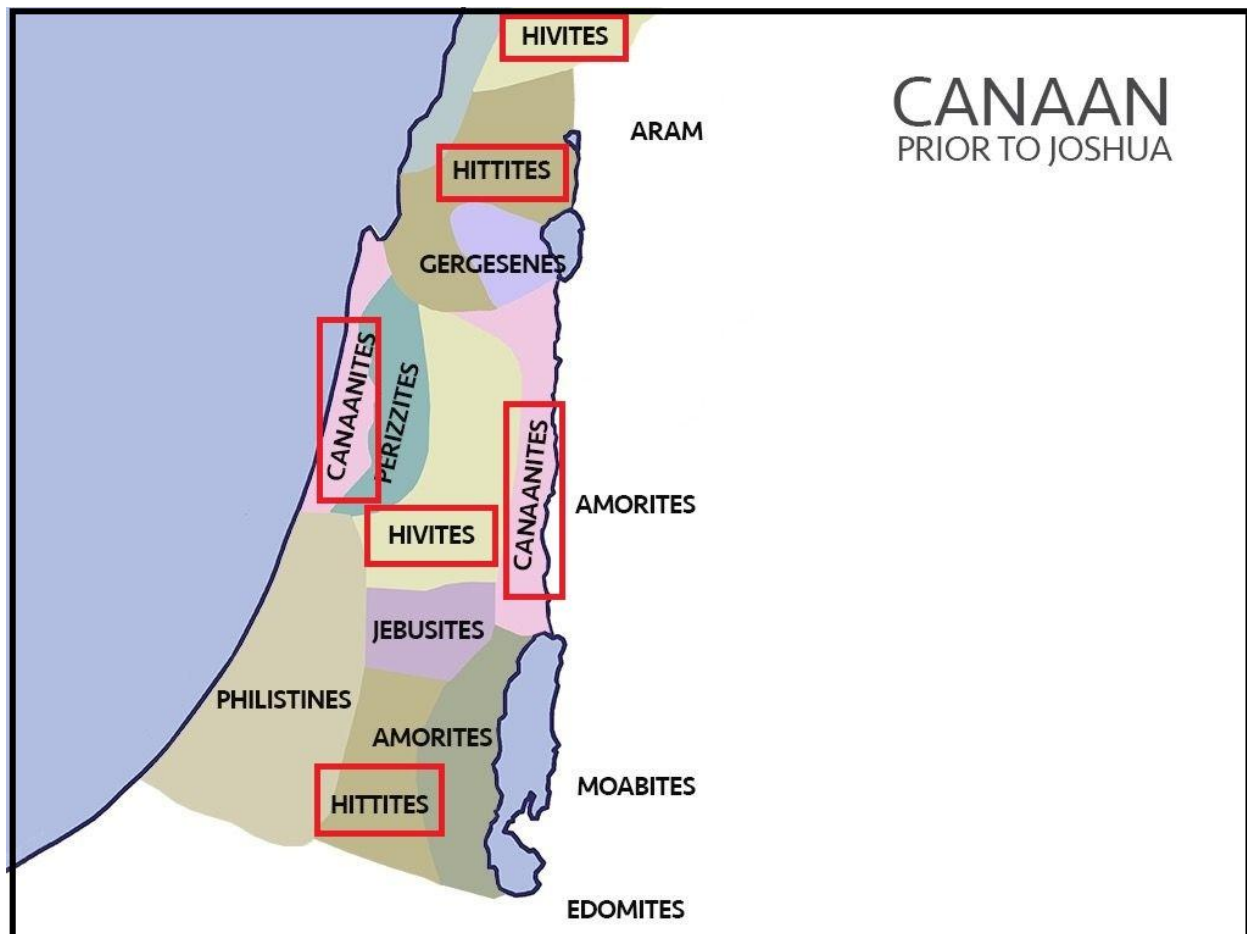
²⁸ I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. ³⁰ I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land.

²⁸ I will send hornets ahead of you so that they will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you.

Some people think the reference to hornets is metaphorical but the simpler (and most obvious) explanation is that He used actual hornets.

The mention of only three nations here is probably for the sake of brevity and it actually stands for all of them.

See pic 2315



²⁹ **I will not drive them out before you in a single year, that the land may not become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.**

The conquest of Canaan was meant to be a gradual process. It took 7 years to conquer the land and then 7 more years to divide the land up. If it had been done too quickly, then the other problems mentioned here would have appeared.

Verses 31- 33

³¹ **I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you will drive them out before you.** ³² **You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods.** ³³ **They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."**

I will fix your boundary from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates.

See Pic 2320 Red Sea to the Euphrates



The boundaries of Israel as outlined in verse 3 came about under David and Solomon.

See Pic 2325 David and Solomon



Ezion-Geber was at the head of that gulf where Solomon launched his great navy.

The boundaries under Joshua were more limited.

See Pic 2330Joshua

