

**Reformation Fellowship Notes • April 2, 2017**  
**Teacher: David Crabtree**  
**Handout #23**  
**Exodus 22:18 to 23:33**

**I. Introduction**

- A. We have been working through the laws given to Israel by God at Sinai.
  - 1. They constitute the agreement made by God with the people of Israel.
  - 2. There are three parts.
    - a) Ten commandments
      - (1) Spoken by God directly to the people
    - b) *Mishpatim* (ordinances)
      - (1) Spoken by God to Moses to relay to the people
      - (2) Case law; if X happens, Y is the just punishment
    - c) *Devarim* (words)
      - (1) Instruction; no punishments prescribed
  - 3. Today we will quickly go through all the *devarim*.
    - a) Divinely imposed standards of behavior
      - (1) “Not maxims born of human experience and wisdom” (Sarna)
      - (2) Self-enforced
      - (3) Instructions for one who wants to know what God values
- B. Organization of the *devarim*
  - 1. I have argued that the presentation of laws in ANE [Ancient Near East] is not tightly organized.
    - a) I have argued that the laws in OT are also not tightly organized.
    - b) But we have seen in the *mishpatim* that they are not entirely random.
      - (1) There was an organizational structure.
        - (a) Moved from most grievous crime to least grievous
  - 2. The *mishpatim* also appear to have an organizational structure.
    - a) But it is hard to identify.
  - 3. What I believe the structure to be
    - a) Relate to YHWH as the one true God.
      - (1) Don’t appropriate polytheistic values.
    - b) Instruction based on their experience as slaves in Egypt.
      - (1) The way they were treated in Egypt was unjust.
      - (2) They ought not treat others the way they were treated.
      - (3) Implications
        - (a) Don’t take advantage of the powerless in your midst.
        - (b) Don’t lend money to the poor to your advantage.
        - (c) Don’t shortchange the priesthood.
        - (d) Don’t pervert justice.

- c) Keep the divinely appointed times.
  - (1) Keep the Sabbaths.
    - (a) Sabbath year
    - (b) Weekly sabbath
    - (c) The sabbaths benefit the poor.
  - (2) Keep the Feasts.
    - (a) But don't appropriate polytheistic practices.

## II. Exodus 22:18-20

### A. Common features of these three commands

1. All are of foreign origin.
2. All are worthy of the death penalty.
3. All are designated elsewhere in Bible as an abomination.

### B. Sorcery

1. All surrounding cultures practice this.
2. Based on the assumption that the gods can be manipulated
  - a) Multiple gods
  - b) They are vulnerable to manipulation.
    - (1) Attempt to prevail over the will of God
  - c) Human beings can take advantage of this vulnerability.

### C. Bestiality

1. This appears to have been a practice of the Canaanites.
  - a) Leviticus 18:23-25
  - b) Leviticus 20:15,16; 20:22-23
2. It was probably a part of Canaanite religious ritual.
  - a) Bestiality is wrong because it is a violation of the purpose for which sex was created.
  - b) But here it is being condemned because it was a practice rooted in the religion of Canaan.

### D. Sacrifices to other gods

1. This is incompatible with belief that YHWH is the one true God.
2. Violator was to be utterly destroyed (*herem*—put under the ban).

### E. These three commands are targeted at the beliefs and practices of polytheism.

## III. Exodus 22:21-24

### A. Don't take advantage of the socially disadvantaged.

1. Don't victimize or defraud resident aliens.
  - a) Later rabbis translate this term "proselytes."
    - (1) It may have in mind people who are in the process of fully integrating.

- b) Resident aliens are at a social disadvantage and therefore vulnerable.
- c) Reason
  - (1) Because you were strangers in Egypt.
    - (a) Empathy should compel you to treat them compassionately.
- 2. Don't afflict widows or orphans.
  - a) Because if you do, they will cry out and God will hear them.
    - (1) And God will send invaders to kill you.
      - (a) Your women will become widows.
      - (b) Your children will become orphans.

#### IV. Exodus 22:25-27

- A. Do not loan to countrymen at interest.
  - 1. Loans were common in the ANE.
    - a) Typically at quite high rates of interest
  - 2. There was virtually no inflation.
    - a) Therefore no need to charge interest just to keep the value the same
  - 3. This prohibits loaning at interest to poor, countryman.
    - a) A countryman who is in need of a financial boost
    - b) Loans at interest were allowed to foreigners.
      - (1) People in Israel temporarily for business reasons
        - (a) Greater risk that the loan will not be repaid.
- B. Don't take a cloak as collateral.
  - 1. A pledge of repayment of the loan
    - a) A necessity of life
    - b) One of most treasured possessions
  - 2. Give it back before it is really needed.
    - a) Don't jeopardize the borrowers well-being for security of the loan.
    - b) Taking the cloak would become primarily symbolic.
  - 3. Reason
    - a) God will listen to his cries.
    - b) There will be divine retribution.

#### V. Exodus 22:28

- A. Don't curse God or leaders.
  - 1. Building on the last command in which it referred to the wronged poor crying out
    - a) When people are without food, this is what they do. (Isaiah 8:21)
  - 2. Just as the wealthy are warned against wronging the poor, the poor are cautioned against cursing God and their leaders.

- a) Transitions to the next section in which it instructs people not to shortchange God

## **VI. Exodus 22:29-30**

- A. Give first-fruits offering promptly.
  - 1. Don't hesitate, and don't be begrudging.
  - 2. What needs to be offered
    - a) First of harvest
    - b) First-born sons
      - (1) A first-born son belongs to God but can be redeemed by giving an offering of sheep in his stead.
    - c) Ox and sheep
      - (1) After seven days
  - 3. When people were late with offerings or did not bring them, the priesthood suffered.
    - a) How well the priests were provisioned was later seen as a barometer of the spiritual health of the nation.

## **VII. Exodus 22:31**

- A. Don't eat meat of an animal that has been found dead in the field.
  - 1. One of dietary requirements
  - 2. Dogs were unclean animals; to eat carrion was not worthy of a holy people.
  - 3. Greed is what would push people to eat carrion.

## **VIII. Exodus 23:1-9**

- A. Uphold justice
  - 1. Don't testify falsely.
  - 2. Don't work together with others to do evil.
  - 3. Don't be partial to the poor.
    - a) Compassion for the poor does not include perverting justice for their benefit.
    - b) In fact, you should treat your enemies with due consideration.
      - (1) Return lost animal to enemy.
      - (2) Rescue animal of enemy.
  - 4. Don't pervert justice for your adversary.
  - 5. Don't contrive to punish the innocent.
    - a) Those guilty of doing this will not be forgiven.
  - 6. Don't take bribes.
  - 7. Don't oppress strangers.

- a) You were strangers in Egypt.

## IX. Exodus 23:10-13

- A. The establishment of the sabbath year
  - 1. For six years, fields are worked and crops are raised and harvested.
  - 2. Seventh year the fields are not worked.
    - a) What grows in the fields will not belong to anyone.
      - (1) The poor are allowed to glean.
      - (2) The beasts are allowed to eat.
      - (3) Vineyards and orchards also rest during that year.
  - 3. Every Israelite rests from work every seventh year.
    - a) Like the slave in 21:21
- B. Restatement of the weekly sabbath
  - 1. Work for six days
  - 2. Rest the seventh day
    - a) So that animals and slaves and strangers may rest
- C. Be on your guard against the practices of idolatry.
  - 1. The implication is that greed is an idol.
    - a) To allow the quest for economic security to take on a greater importance than it ought to have is to make it an idol.

## X. Exodus 23:14-19

- A. There are three feast times per year which all Israel is to observe.
  - 1. Appear to have all originated as agricultural celebrations
    - a) They have Canaanite counterparts.
  - 2. Feast of the Unleavened Bread (cluster of three holidays in Spring)
    - a) Passover (*Pesach*)—Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of First Fruits
  - 3. Feast of the Harvest (one day in Summer)
    - a) Pentacost (*Shavuot*)
  - 4. Feast of Ingathering (cluster of three holidays in Autumn)
    - a) Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*)—Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur
  - 5. With respect to Passover: “none shall appear before me empty-handed”
    - a) Token of gratitude for God bringing them out of Egypt
- B. Since all of these feasts had Canaanite counterparts, it was particularly important for Israel to recognize that they were celebrating a different God in a different way.
  - 1. I suspect the first and fourth are Canaanite practices associated with the worship of Canaanite gods, and the second and third are admonitions to make YHWH the object of their worship.

- a) Drinking blood with the bread
  - (1) Taking in the life strength of the animal
  - (2) Jesus plays on this at the last supper.
- b) Holding back that which was to be for YHWH
  - (1) Fat portion was to be given to YHWH.
  - (2) It is not clear why someone would be motivated to hold it back.
- c) Bringing choice first fruits to YHWH
  - (1) The first and the best is YHWH's due.
- d) Cooking a kid in its mother's milk
  - (1) I suspect this was a Canaanite religious practice.

## **XI. Exodus 23:20-33**

- A. God's preparations for the Israelites as they enter the land
  - 1. God will send an angel to guard them along the way.
    - a) The angel is God himself ("the angel stands only for the guidance and help of the Lord" Cassuto p. 306).
    - b) Obey him.
    - c) Don't be rebellious toward him.
    - d) He will not pardon you for your rebelliousness.
      - (1) He is directing you under my authority.
    - e) If you obey me, I will protect you from all your enemies.
      - (1) I will destroy your enemies completely.
      - (2) But don't adopt their gods or their religious practices.
    - f) Serve God, and he will bless you.
    - g) God will send his terror before you.
    - h) God will send his hornets before them to drive out the Canaanites.
      - (1) Egyptians? Plague? Terror?
      - (2) But God will not drive them out all at the same time.
        - (a) This would create a problem for you.
          - (i) Bare fields
          - (ii) Wild animals
        - (b) It will be gradual.
      - (3) God will establish your boundaries as he promised.
    - i) Make no covenants with them or their gods.
      - (1) Drive them out so that you are not tempted to follow their practices.

## **XII. Conclusion**