

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