

Exodus Chapter 22 Continued

Verses 21-27: God's laws protect the underprivileged because He cares for them ("I am gracious"). Foreigners were to be treated benevolently because the Hebrew people had been "strangers" in Egypt (23:9). Likewise, those without protection, "widows" and "the fatherless" and "the poor", were not to be exploited (Deut. 24:17-18; Jer. 7:6-7).

Exodus 22:21 "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

A stranger must not be abused, not wronged in judgment by the magistrates, not imposed upon in contracts, or any advantage taken of his ignorance or necessity. No, nor must he be taunted, or upbraided with his being a stranger; for all these were vexatious.

"For ye were strangers in Egypt ": And knew what it was to be vexed and oppressed there. Those that have themselves been in poverty and distress. If Providence enrich and enlarge them. Ought to show a particular tenderness toward those that are now in such circumstances as they were in formerly. Now doing to them as they then wished to be done to.

The word "vex", had to do with being violent toward a stranger. These Israelites knew better than most anyone, the sorrow of being caught in a strange land and being taken advantage of. Their bondage was hard in Egypt and was still fresh on their minds as this was given unto them.

Exodus 22:22 "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child."

God reserved His special attention for widows and orphans who often had no one to care for them. He also reserved a special reaction, His wrath, for those abusing and exploiting them. This wrath would work out in military invasions as the sword reduced the abusers' families to the same status of being without spouse or parents.

Exodus 22:23 "If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;"

Rather, If thou afflict them sore, and they cry earnestly unto me. On the transgression of the laws against oppression by the later Israelites (see Jer. 5:28; 7:6; 22:3; 22:17; Zech. 7:20; Mal. 3:5; Matt. 23:14). The sword of the Babylonians and the sword of the Romans avenged the sufferers, according to the prophecy of (Exodus 22:24).

Exodus 22:24 "And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless."

Against those that afflict them. Being so devoid of humanity, compassion, and tenderness, and so guilty of oppression and injustice, which are aggravated by the circumstances of the persons they badly treat, and therefore the more provoking to God.

"And I will kill you with the sword": With the sword of death, says the Targum of Jonathan. It designs one of God's sore judgments, the sword of an enemy. The meaning is, that when such evils should become frequent among them, God would suffer a neighboring nation to break in upon them in a hostile way, and put them to the sword. Hence it follows: "And your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless".

Be in the same circumstances with those they have injured, and therefore should consider not only the destruction that would come upon themselves. Being cut off by the sword, but the case of their families. And how, could they be sensible of it, they would like to have their wives and children used as they have used the widows and fatherless.

God's protection of widows is throughout the Bible. It was a widow named Anna, a prophetess eighty-four years old, who was one of the two witnesses recognizing Jesus as the Savior of the world at His dedication when He was forty days old. It was a widow Elijah stayed with during a terrible famine and God miraculously fed them. What this was really saying, was that God Himself protects those who cannot help themselves. If you do wrong to those who cannot protect themselves, you have God to deal with. He fights their battles for them. He will punish according to the sin. He would make your wives widows and your children orphans, because He would kill you.

Exodus 22:25 "If thou lend money to [any of] my people [that is] poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury."

"Usury": One way in which the people showed their concern for the poor and needy was to take no business advantage of them. Charging interest was allowable (Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 23:19-20), but not when it was exorbitant or worsened the plight of the borrower. The psalmist identified a righteous man as one who lends money without interest (Psalm 15:5).

"Usury" is interest on a debt. One of the saddest things in our society today, is excessive interest collected on loans. Most of these excessive interest loans are made to the very poor who could not get a loan anywhere else. And therefore, have to pay sometimes two or three times the regular interest rate to acquire the loan. People who have to borrow money and pay these rates, are already in terrible trouble and all this does is get them in debt deeper. A loan of this nature does not help them; it just digs them into a deeper hole to climb out of. This Scripture above is speaking of God's people (believers), loaning each other. In a case like this it would be proper to not charge any interest to help a brother. Christians should work together and help each other, instead of profiting from each other. The true meaning of usury I believe is excessive interest.

Exodus 22:26 "If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down:"

Under the law, a creditor had the right to seize a debtor's coat. Here however, God said the garment should be returned "by that the sun goeth down" so the impoverished person would not get cold. Compassion was always a part of the Law.

You can see right away, how terrible it would be to take a man's coat or wrap as security for a loan. It would be terrible anywhere, but in the desert, where this was given; a man's outer garment was also his cover to be used to keep warm at night, and he could not easily live without his garment.

Exodus 22:27 "For that [is] his covering only, it [is] his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I [am] gracious."

If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge. From the nature of the case, this is the description of a poor man. No Orientals undress, but, merely throwing off their turbans and some of their heavy outer garments, they sleep in the clothes which they wear during the day. The bed of the poor is usually nothing else than a mat; and, in winter, they cover themselves with a cloak. A practice which forms the ground or reason of the humane and merciful law respecting the pawned coat.

Anything that was necessary to live was not to be pawned. Only things that would not impair their ability to live could be pawned. God would not be pleased with anyone who is not concerned about his neighbor's welfare.

Exodus 22:28 "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people."

That is, the judges and magistrates. Princes and magistrates are our fathers, whom the fifth commandment obliges us to honor, and forbids us to revile. Paul applies this law to himself, and owns that he ought not to speak evil of the ruler of his people. No, not though he was then his most unrighteous persecutor (Acts 23:5).

See Acts 23:5, where Paul apparently violated this law, not knowing to whom he spoke.

We see that our belief in God should be a positive belief in Him alone. It is better not to be continuously speaking evil of false gods. In some instances, if we talk too much about the false gods, it is as if we do recognize them. It is also a very bad practice to speak evil of dignitaries, because God is the one who put them in that position for a purpose. We see in Jude:

Jude 1:8 "Likewise also these [filthy] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." God calls those who despise dominion and speak evil of dignities "filthy dreamers".

We have all been a little guilty of this, but we need to consider what we are doing. In Exodus Chapter 23:13:

"And in all [things] that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth."

We can easily see that God is displeased, even at the mention of a false god.

Exodus 22:29 "Thou shalt not delay [to offer] the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me."

Beyond the times appointed, lest this delay grow to a total neglect. And delay may here be put for neglect, as that word is used (Deut. 7:10; 23:21 Hab. 2:3); which may seem to be favored by the following clause, which commands the giving or offering of the first-born without any mention of the hastening or delaying of it.

"Thy ripe fruits": Hebrew thy fullness; and whereas this word is sometimes applied to seed or corn (as Numbers 18:27), and sometimes to the vintage (as Deut. 22:9). The circumstances must determine, as it doth in like cases, how it must be taken. Which here seem to restrain it to dry fruits, as corn, etc., because it is opposed to:

"Liquors": And so all sorts of fruits are comprehended here. Unless you will make this a usual figure called hendyadis, as judgment and justice (Deut. 16:18), is put for judgment of justice. Or just judgment. So here the fullness and liquors, for the fullness of thy liquors; and so this may be one kind mentioned for all the rest, than which nothing more frequent.

"Shalt thou give unto me": Not in kind, but by a price of redemption to be paid to me in their stead.

Here "liquors" mean steeped juice. This Scripture was just explaining that whatever we have, the tithe should be paid of it first. We must not try to give God leftovers. He wants the first of the crop and that goes for children as well. God wants our beloved, our first born. God required the firstfruit not only of their children, but of all their animals and of all of their crops. Whatever we treasure the most is what God wants. We must have no other gods before Him. The firstborn son had to be redeemed with a money payment. We will see later on that they had to be taken to the temple and dedicated to God on the fortieth day. We must not give reluctantly but freely, to get a blessing.

Exodus 22:30 "Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, [and] with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me."

That is, with the firstborn, which were to be set apart to the Lord; and so the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it, "the firstborn of thine oxen, and of thy sheep;" for having spoken of the firstborn of men, the Scripture proceeds to speak of the firstborn of cattle, great and small, the separation of which was enjoined in one and the same precept (Exodus 13:2).

"Seven days it shall be with his dam": Whether it is a calf or a lamb; before it was seven days old it was not to be taken from it, and given to the Lord.

"On the eighth day thou shalt give it me": That is, they might do it then, but not before; yet they were not obliged to bring it exactly on that day, but they might do it any time within the month, and at a month's end they were obliged to redeem it, that is, give the priest the sum of five shekels for it (Num. 18:16). The Jewish canon runs thus; "how long are Israelites bound for the

bringing of the firstborn, i.e. before they offer it to the priest? In small cattle it is thirty days, in large cattle it is fifty days.

The "dam" was the mother. At birth, there was an interval of time called a time of uncleanness. Possibly that is what is meant here. Boy children were circumcised on the eighth day and dedicated on the fortieth day in the temple. Perhaps this is connected with that time. God has a time table that we do not fully understand. The number "eight" in Scripture seems to indicate new beginnings. All of this would fit right in together. When a child is dedicated to God, it truly is a beginning of a dedicated life to God. What is meant here, by giving the animal to God perhaps, meant sacrificing it to God.

Exodus 22:31 "And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat [any] flesh [that is] torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs."

“Holy men unto me”: All these laws and regulations caused Israel to be set apart in conduct, not just in name. The special calling as Yahweh’s firstborn son (4:22), and as His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (19:5-6), mandated ethical uprightness.

Neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn”: Flesh of an animal killed by another and lying in the field became unclean by coming into contact with unclean carnivores and insects and with putrefaction by not having had the blood drained properly from it. A set-apart lifestyle impacted every area of life, including from where one collected his meat.

God's chosen people had to be holy. They cannot do things of the world and be classed as belonging to God. God requires them to be a separate people, a peculiar people; a holy nation.

In 2 Corinthians 6 we read:

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you," "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

1 Peter 2:9 "But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:"

You see these chosen of God (physical Israel), and we believers, (spiritual Israel), are not to be like the rest of the world. We are to be separated to God. Pleasing God every day in everything we do should be our desire. He (God), has chosen us to bless us. Every restriction God puts on His people (like not eating an animal torn of beasts), is to help us. This animal might have been diseased or might have been sitting there too long or might have not been properly bled. In other words, it could make us very ill. This, like other restrictions that God puts on us, is for our protection. Giving it to the dogs is a useful way of disposing of it. Animals were not forbidden to eat unclean things. In fact, that was one of their purposes.

Exodus Chapter 22 Continued Questions

1. Why were they not to vex or oppress a stranger?
2. What does "vex" mean?
3. In verse 22, who were they not to mistreat?
4. If you mistreat them, who will punish you?
5. What was the name of the prophetess, who recognized Jesus in the temple?
6. What prophet did a widow allow to live and eat with her in a great famine?
7. If you lend money to God's people, what must you not do?
8. What is "usury"?
9. What is usury in our society today?
10. If you take _____ to pledge, you must return it before dark.
11. What was used for a cover to sleep under in the desert?
12. Who should we not curse, mentioned in verse 28?
13. What do we learn from Jude 8 about rulers?
14. What should they not delay?
15. What does "liquors" mean, here?
16. How could the firstborn son be redeemed?
17. On what day was the son taken to the temple for dedication?
18. How long was a baby sheep to stay with its mother, before it was given to God?
19. What does "dam", in verse 30, mean?
20. What does the author believe the number "eight" symbolizes?
21. What kind of men were they to be?
22. What restriction on eating meat did God give them?
23. In 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, what does God tell His people to do?
24. In 1 Peter 2:9, God's people are called what?

25. Who is spiritual Israel symbolic of?

26. Why does God put restrictions on His children?

27. Why did God tell them to give the torn meat to the dogs?