

Exodus Chapter 22

Exodus 22:1 "If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep."

The theft of an ox appears to have been regarded as a greater crime than the theft of a sheep, because it showed a stronger purpose in wickedness to take the larger and more powerful animal. It may have been on similar moral ground that the thief, when he had proved his persistency in crime by adding to his theft the slaughter, or sale, of the animal, was to restore four times its value in the case of a sheep (compare the marginal references). And five times its value in the case of an ox. But if the animal was still in his possession alive (see Exodus 22:4), he had to make only twofold restitution.

Here we see someone who had not just stolen, but also had done away with the stolen merchandise. The punishment fits the crime. This thief here, would feel the pain of the theft by restoring four and five times as much as he stole.

Exodus 22:2 "If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, [there shall] no blood [be shed] for him."

Rather, breaking in: i.e., making forcible entry into a dwelling-house. Most codes agree with the Mosaic in allowing the inmates of the house to resist such an attempt if made at night, and to shed the blood of the burglar, if necessary. He may be considered as having dissolved the "social compact," and converted himself from a fellow-citizen into a public enemy. A murderous intent on his part may be suspected.

If a person was breaking and entering to steal and was killed in the process, the person who did the killing was not to be prosecuted, because he was doing this in self-defense.

Exodus 22:3 "If the sun be risen upon him, [there shall be] blood [shed] for him; [for] he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft."

"If the sun be risen upon him": The culpability of a householder's actions against an intruder depended on whether the break-in (literally "digging through" the mud walls), was at night or in the daytime. At night, quick evaluation of an intruder's intentions was not as clear as it might be in daytime. Nor would someone be awake and on hand to help.

This person caught stealing, should completely restore what was taken. If he had nothing that he could restore with, then he would be a slave until it was paid. If we had carried this out in our country, the jails would not be so full today.

Exodus 22:4 "If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double."

If he had not converted it, consumed it, or, if it were an animal, killed it, then, instead of the four-fold or five-fold restitution of Exodus 22:1, a restoration of double was to suffice.

Here again, just giving the stolen goods back was not enough, he had to be punished. Paying back twice as much hurts someone who was greedy enough to steal, very badly.

Exodus 22:5 "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution."

On theft follows trespass, another injury to property. Two kinds of trespass alone are mentioned; but from these the principles to be followed in punishing trespass generally can be sufficiently made out. Accidental injury, such as that caused by fire extending from one man's field into another's, was to be simply compensated up to the amount of damage done. But voluntary injury, such as followed on the turning of beasts into a neighbor's ground, was to be more than compensated. The amount of produce destroyed was to be exactly calculated, and then the injurer was to make good the full amount of his neighbor's loss out of the best of his own produce.

In all of the instances of these thefts, the person stealing was caught up in greed and the punishment should fit the crime. The punishment hits at their greed, because they lost some of their personal worth.

Exodus 22:6 "If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field, be consumed [therewith]; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution."

In the East, as elsewhere, e.g., Italy and England; it is customary at certain seasons to burn the weeds and other refuse of a farm, which is collected for the purpose into heaps, and then set on fire. Such fires may spread, especially in the dry east, if care be not taken, and cause extensive damage to the crops, or even the corn-heaps of a neighbor. The loss in such cases was to fall on the man who lit the fire.

There were never more fire bugs around than now. If the punishment allotted was the same as in the Bible, the fires that are set on purpose would stop.

Verses 7-13: Honesty and integrity hold a healthy and productive society together. Neighbors need to be able to trust each other. These laws protected loans of personal property.

Exodus 22:7 "If a man shall deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double."

Property deposited in the hands of another for safe keeping might be so easily embezzled by the trustee, or lost through his negligence, that some special laws were needed for its protection. Conversely the trustee required to be safe-guarded against incurring loss if the property entrusted

to his care suffered damage or disappeared without fault of his. The Mosaic legislation provided for both cases.

On the one hand, it required the trustee to exercise proper care, and made him answerable for the loss if a thing entrusted to him was stolen and the thief not found. Embezzlement it punished by requiring the trustee guilty of it to "pay double." On the other hand, in doubtful cases it allowed the trustee to clear himself by an oath (Exodus 22:10). And in clear cases to give proof that the loss had happened through unavoidable accident (Exodus 22:12).

Exodus 22:8 "If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, [to see] whether he have put his hand unto his neighbor's goods."

And so, no account can be given of the goods deposited, what is become of them. And it becomes a doubtful case whether they have been stolen or embezzled, and there is suspicion of the latter.

"Then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges": Here called Elohim, gods, because they were God's vicegerents, and represented him, and acted under his power and authority. And who at this present were Moses, and those that judged the people under him, and afterwards the seventy elders, and all such who in succeeding times were judges in Israel, and bore the office of civil magistrates. Before these the master of the house, or the person who had any goods committed to his care, and they were lost, was to be brought and put to his oath. And upon it examined, in order to find out what was become of the goods committed to him: To see whether:

"He has put his hand to his neighbor's goods": Took them to himself, made use of them, or disposed of them to his own advantage, and which was no other than a kind of theft.

It seems that God did not always believe that something had been stolen just because the person it was entrusted to, said it was stolen. Today, I guess it could be proven by giving a lie detector test, but God always knows who is lying. He doesn't need a lie detector test. These judges were endued with a discerning spirit from God. They too knew when someone was lying. We can see again here, that the penalty to be paid was twice what was taken.

Exodus 22:9 "For all manner of trespass, [whether it be] for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, [or] for any manner of lost thing, which [another] challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; [and] whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbor."

With respect to what is committed to a man's trust, and it is lost to the owner of it, there must be somewhere or other a trespass committed. Either by the person into whose hands it was put, or by a thief that has stolen it from him.

"Whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing": By which it appears that either of these, or any other cattle not named, as well as money and vessels, or

household goods, or goods in trade, were sometimes, or might be lodged in the hands of another as a deposit for safety or convenience. And for which, or any other so deposited, and lost.

"Which another challengeth to be his": Or affirms that he put into the hands of his neighbor, to be kept by him for him. "Or who shall say this is he", or "he is" the person into whose hands I put it. Or this is "it"; such and such were the thing or things I delivered to him.

"The cause of both parties shall come before the judges": Who were to hear what each party had to say, and to examine the witnesses each of them brought, and consider the nature of the evidence given, and to judge and determine.

"And whom the judges shall condemn; or "pronounce wicked", as having done a wicked thing. Either the one as having brought a false accusation against his neighbor, charging him with a deposit he never had, or the other as having converted it to his own use.

"He shall pay double unto his neighbor": Either the depositor, who pretended to be so and was not, but brought a false charge against his neighbor, or a false witness, as Jarchi. Such a one was to pay double to the person charged wrongfully. Or, on the other hand, the person with whom the deposit was put, if it appeared that he had acted a fraudulent part, and abused his trust, then he was to pay double to the depositor.

This was just explaining that it didn't make any difference what the article stolen was, the penalty was the same. Twice the stolen article would be restored.

Exodus 22:10 "If a man deliver unto his neighbor an ass, or an ox, or a sheep, or any beast, to keep; and it die, or be hurt, or driven away, no man seeing [it]:"

The animal might "die" naturally, or "be hurt" by a wild beast or a fall down the rocks, or "be driven away" by the marauding tribes of the desert. Both parties might be agreed on the fact of its disappearance. The dispute would be as to the mode of the disappearance. Here the trustee might bring proof, if he could (Exodus 22:13); if not, he might clear himself by an "oath of the Lord" (Exodus 22:11).

Exodus 22:11 "[Then] shall an oath of the LORD be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept [thereof], and he shall not make [it] good."

"An oath of the Lord": Presumably an oath of innocence which would bind the two parties to a dispute over lost goods and preclude any further legal action being taken.

The friend, who had tried to do a favor for his neighbor, should not have to pay if something beyond his control happened to the animal.

Exodus 22:12 "And if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof."

This law appears to relate chiefly to herdsmen employed by the owners of cattle. When an animal was stolen (Exodus 22:12), it was presumed either that the herdsman might have prevented it, or that he could find the thief and bring him to justice (see Exodus 22:4). When an animal was killed by a wild beast, the keeper had to produce the mangled carcass, not only in proof of the fact, but to show that he had, by his vigilance and courage, deprived the wild beast of its prey.

This was within the realm of carelessness and responsibility.

Exodus 22:13 "If it be torn in pieces, [then] let him bring it [for] witness, [and] he shall not make good that which was torn."

If the animal be torn by wild beasts, the man entrusted with it has only to produce its torn flesh as evidence of the fact, and he need make no compensation. No reasonable precautions could guard against this most common misfortune to cattle in the East (Genesis 31:39). And the fact that the remains of the flesh could be produced would show that the shepherd had been watchful, and had even driven off the wild beast before it had completely consumed the dead body (1 Sam. 17:35, Amos 3:12).

Here again, this was beyond his control and not from negligence.

Exodus 22:14 "And if a man borrow [ought] of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof [being] not with it, he shall surely make [it] good."

If a man (suppose) lent his team to his neighbor, if the owner were with it, or were to receive profit for the loan of it, whatever harm befell the cattle the owner must stand to the loss of it. But if the owner were so kind to the borrower as to lend it him gratis, and put such a confidence in him as to trust it from under his own eye, then, if any harm happened, the borrower must make it good. We may learn hence to be very careful not to abuse anything that is lent to us. It is not only unjust, but base and disingenuous. We should much rather choose to lose ourselves, than that any should sustain loss by their kindness to us.

Here this was speaking of negligence on the part of the borrower.

Exodus 22:15 "[But] if the owner thereof [be] with it, he shall not make [it] good: if it [be] an hired [thing], it came for his hire."

Letting out for hire is akin to lending; but still quite a different transaction. Damage to a thing hired was not to be made good by the hirer, since the risk of it might be considered to have formed part of the calculation upon which the amount of the hire was fixed.

We see the responsibility for the borrowed item was reversed to the owner, because he was with the borrowed item.

The scene changes from property to human relationship, beginning in the sixteenth verse.

Exodus 22:16 "And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife."

“If a man entice ... endow her”: The male was held accountable for premarital intercourse and the victim was seen as having been exploited by him, for which he paid a price (Deut. 22:22-29).

This in God's sight was a very serious offense. The dowry to be paid for a wife ordinarily was fifty shekels of silver. This sum was to be paid to her father. To lie with a woman makes the two of you one in God's sight. This was completely against the custom of the Hebrews. The two fathers ordinarily made the marriage contract.

Exodus 22:17 "If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins."

This shows how ill a thing it is, and by no means to be allowed, that children should marry without their parents' consent. Even here, where the divine law appointed the marriage, both as a punishment to him that had done wrong, and a recompense to her that had suffered wrong. Yet there was an express reservation for the father's power; if he denied his consent, it must be no marriage.

We see that even if the father did not allow his daughter to marry this man, the man who committed the offense still had to pay for her. The father probably would not make this decision, unless there was some serious reason why the man would not be suitable for marriage.

Exodus 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

“Witch”: A woman who practices occultism.

Sorcery was considered a dangerous demonic practice; thus the Hebrew people were commanded to stay away from everything associated with the occult (Lev. 20:6; Deut. 18:9-14; 1 Sam. Chapter 28; 2 Chron. 33:6; Isa. 47:12-15). Paul calls sorcery a “work of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-20).

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”: The English phrase to wit (to know), may be related to *witch*. The Greeks rendered the word *witches* as *pharmakoi* (“poisoners”), since sorcerers and sorceresses dealt in drugs and pharmaceutical potions.

It would be a very serious crime to be a witch. Witches have power, but their power comes from the evil one. In the early days of the United States, witches were burned at the stake. The bad thing about this was who was to decide whether she was a witch or not. Joan of Arc was killed, because people classified her as a witch. After she was killed, these very same people who had condemned her, declared her as a saint. It was too late after they had taken her life. We must be very careful who we declare a witch. In our day, some people admit to being witches and warlocks. "Those" you could safely say were witches.

Exodus 22:19 "Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death."

Bestiality was forbidden (in Lev. 18:23; 20:15-16; and Deut. 27:21). The Canaanites practiced this offensive act. The Hittites forbade its practice with sheep, cows, or pigs, but not with horses or mules. Once again, the sanctity of the human person, marriage, and human sexuality called for separateness from a perverted self-destroying culture. Israel was to be holy, as Yahweh was (Lev. 11:44; 19:2).

Satan worshippers today, are heavily involved with bestiality (or having sex with animals). Chickens, dogs, sheep, cows, monkeys and many more varieties of animals are involved. This sort of thing is an abomination to God. The animal and the person should be destroyed, was what God's Word said. God doesn't want any mixtures of half people-like animals.

Exodus 22:20 "He that sacrificeth unto [any] god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed."

“Utterly destroyed” or literally meaning “put to the ban” or “devoted to sacred use,” which in this case, meant death (Joshua 7:2).

To sacrifice to a false god would in essence deny the one true God. Satan worshippers in the United States have been cutting cows and draining their blood. Many believe there have been human sacrifices made to these false gods. Some reports have come from people who have come out of Satan worship, that sacrifices have been made. Since I have never attended such a meeting, I have no first-hand knowledge of what goes on. We do know that television news was full of accounts of cows being cut in some sort of ritualistic services. Whatever is the case, we are not to worship anything or anyone except God. God Himself will destroy us if we worship other gods.

Exodus Chapter 22 Questions

1. What should determine the penalty for stealing?
2. In verse 1, how many sheep were to be paid for one stolen?
3. If a man was killed while breaking and entering, what would be done to the one who killed him?
4. If a person was convicted of stealing and had nothing to pay restitution, what would happen to him?
5. If the stolen animal was still with the person caught with it, what was the penalty?
6. What was the penalty for feeding your animal in another man's field without permission?
7. If you burned another man's field, what would be the punishment?
8. If a neighbor loses material he was holding for you, what happened?

9. What determines whether, or not, the holder paid for an animal, that died while in their care?
10. If you borrowed something and it broke, what was the correct thing to do?
11. If a man seduced a maid, what was required of him?
12. If her father did not want him for a son-in-law, could he get out of paying the dowry?
13. What was the penalty for being a witch?
14. Who was a woman killed as a witch, who was later declared a saint?
15. What would happen to anyone who had sex relations with an animal?
16. What would happen to anyone who sacrificed to a false god?
17. Tell in your own words, what you know to be going on in Satan worship today.