

Exodus

July 15, 2007

Chapters 21-23

I. Discussion Points:

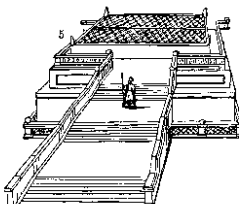
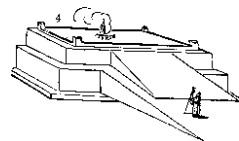
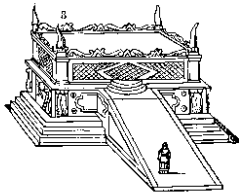
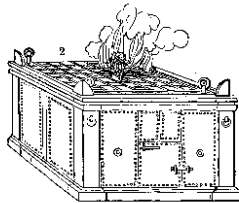
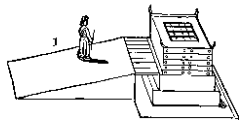
What is the purpose of the law?

Why is it so detailed?

Why is it not more detailed?

II. Ex. 20:22-26: The Law of the Altar

The altar was to be rather basic without a lot of frills so that the experience relates entirely to God and the sacrifice.



Supposed Forms of the Jewish Altar of Burnt-offerings. 1. According to Lamp. 2. Kitzur (Proc. 2000). 3. Rabbinic. 4. Calm. 5. Surenhusius (Mucina, ii, 160).

III. Ex 21:1-11: The Law Concerning Servants

This section deals with servants or slaves. The Bible does not condemn or affirm slavery as an institution. It does regulate slavery, and it requires that

the servant perform as well as possible even with a lousy slave-owner. This section deals specifically with the length of service of a slave and a slave woman bought to be a wife.

IV. Ex 21:12-27: The Law Concerning Violence

Various laws concerning violence are indicated in this passage. Generally, taking violent action when one is not already in a violent situation is sin in the Bible. Some special comments:

- Verse 21: The point is that the slave is property. Loosing the man's services punishes the owner.
- Verse 22: The verse is sometimes indicated as a prohibition against abortion. While it does place a property value on the fetus, it is not really aimed at abortion in any sense.
- Verse 24: If someone causes someone else to lose an eye, this does not mean that necessarily his eye will be put out. It means that the guilty party will be punished in a way that would be consistent with the punishment that a man would feel if his eye was put out and which would help the aggrieved party. In other words, the punishment should meet the crime and provide restitution to the offended party.

V. Ex 21:28-36: Animal Control Laws

People are responsible for their animals. Various regulations are identified in this section to assure the regulation of animals. Some special comments:

- Verse 29: If one knows an animal is dangerous but does not take precautions, the person is responsible for the death. This is basically manslaughter, which is punished in the law the same as 1st degree murder...per the sixth commandment.

VI. Ex 22:1-15: Responsibility for Property

While everything belongs to God, the Bible also recognizes human property ownership. Taking that property illegally is sin. This section identifies some of the ways that this can happen. It also discusses the punishment, which is usually restitution of some kind. Since ancient Israel did not have jails, punishment seems to be restitution or death. Some special comments:

- Verse 1: The goal is both punishment and restitution. The punishment discourages the wrong behavior. The restitution assures that the victim is made whole (or gets closer to it). The victim and the victimizer must work together which poses a rather interesting situation.

- Verse 3: This presumes that the homeowner is less surprised.
- Verses 5-6: Verses 5 and 6 appear to be laws concerning neglect. Basically, the one responsible for neglect must replace what is lost.
- Verse 7: In Hammurabi and other ancient laws, thieves are put to death or mutilated. Israel's law allows for restitution and reformation.

VII. Ex 22:16-31: Moral and Ceremonial Principles

This section has miscellaneous moral principles as indicated in it. The primary purpose of these laws is to keep purity in the Israelite community. Some special comments:

- Verse 16: As is often the case, sexual intercourse in ancient Israel becomes tantamount to marriage.
- Verse 20: "*Herem*" is the Hebrew word used and that is translated "destroyed." The actual definition means that something is dedicated to the LORD. Usually, what is dedicated is destroyed.
- Verse 21: The aliens, widow, and orphans represent the disadvantaged of society. These remarks are probably not limited to just them.
- Verse 23: Even if we think that we are better than the disadvantaged and can therefore take advantage of them and be harsh to them without concern, we should know that they could call to the Lord for the help in exactly the same as we call on the Lord.
- Verse 25: The primary point of loaning money was to help those in need, not to extract additional personal gain.
- Verse 26: If all a person can pledge is his only cloak, then that person is very poor. In such a case, the borrower will need the cloak when it gets dark. Also, the cloak becomes symbolic of other needed things as well, such as food, shelter, and other clothing.
- Verse 28: The word for ruler is not just the king but for any official.
- Verse 31: There can be several reasons why it would not be good to eat such animals. Disease would be a big reason. Another reason is that some of the blood would still be in the animal, which would break the command to be given in the next chapter.

VIII. Ex 23:1-9: Justice for All

This section has various regulations for assuring the process of seeking justice is not tampered with false reports or favoritism of some kind. Some special comments:

- Verse 2: "Majority" might be a better word to translate the Hebrew than crowd.

- Verse 4: As with many of these commands, they are paradigmatic examples. The Israelites are expected to do the right thing for any lost animal or possession.
- Verse 5: If one sees a distress, whether to an animal or to something else, even if it belongs to an enemy, the Israelite are obligated to do the correct thing.
- Verse 7: Even if the person is falsely found innocent, God knows the truth and will eventually take care of it.

IX. Ex 23:10-13: The Law of Sabbaths

Both the seventh-day and the seventh-year Sabbaths are addressed in this section.

- Verse 11: Some argue that each lot of land would be vacant on its own seven-year cycle. Others argue that all the lands were on the same cycle so that all the land was vacant in the same year. In either case, there is not much evidence that Israelites followed this Sabbath. Indeed there is evidence that they did not follow it:

2 Chron 36:21

21 The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

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X. Ex 23:14-19: Three Annual Feasts

The annual feasts have different names in different parts of Scripture. These are the Feast of Unleavened Bread (or Passover), Feast of Firstfruits (or Pentecost), and Feast of Ingathering (or Tabernacles).

XI. Ex 23:20-33: The Angel and the Promises

- Verse 20: The angel and God become difficult to disentangle
- Verse 25: Verses 25-30 show some of the blessings that the Israelites will receive if they follow God. If they do not, they get the curses.
- Verse 32: Gibeon (Joshua 9-10) is an example of failure.