

# Exodus 23-24

Bible Study

## Review

### Chapter 21

The **'judgments'** were guiding decisions to help judges in Israel respond to civil cases

- Many are applications of the ten commandments
- The cases selected are examples of the many judgment laws used

### Chapter 22

Statutes dealing with thieves (expanding 8<sup>th</sup> commandment)

Statutes dealing with idolatrous customs; moral behavior

- The judgments were the groundwork of administrative procedures to govern the new nation of Israel

## Chapter 23

2<sup>nd</sup> section of the  
book of the covenant  
continues

v. 1-9 Statutes regarding legal justice

➤ Based on the **9<sup>th</sup> Commandment**: ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor’

<sup>1</sup>“You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

Those involved in disputes must be sure that their testimony is truthful—a true witness in legal cases

<sup>2</sup>You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert *justice*.

<sup>3</sup>You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

v.2-3 Witnesses: Israelites were not to pervert justice by being influenced by the crowd or showing favoritism to the poor

(NSB) “God’s support of the poor [22:25-27] did not overrule his justice.”

(Barnes) “the part of the witness to take care lest his feelings of natural pity should tempt him to falsify evidence”

<sup>4</sup>“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.

<sup>5</sup>If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

(BKC) “The words ‘enemy’ [v.4] and ‘one who hates you’ [v.5] probably mean a ‘legal adversary’; an Israelite was to be kind even to the animals of someone with whom he had a legal disagreement”

<sup>6</sup>“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.

v. 6 Judges: part of the duty of the judge was to defend the poor against the oppression of the rich

<sup>7</sup>Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked.

(Expositors) “Justice demands that men distance themselves from any false charges. God will not hold such men or judges guiltless”

<sup>8</sup>And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

(BKC) “accepting a bribe for favoritism in court—this was a common problem in the Ancient Near East”

<sup>9</sup>“Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Remember how you felt when you were aliens in Egypt

**Third Section** of the book of the Covenant [23:10—19]

➤ The Sabbath and festivals

v. 10-12 Statutes regarding the Sabbaths—Expands upon the **4<sup>th</sup> Commandment**

v. 10-11 Sabbatical year/ Land Sabbath [repeated in Lev. 25:2-7]

- Unique in the world, and associated only with Israel

<sup>10</sup>“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce,

<sup>11</sup>but the seventh *year* you shall let it **rest** and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.

The root from which the word ‘Sabbath’ is derived is ‘rest’

(BRC) “A unique concept in O.T. law is that the land, like people and animals, requires a rest”



v. 11 “the beasts of the field may eat”  
Psalm 36:6 [last part] “O Lord you preserve man and beast”

## v. 10-11 The Land Sabbath

### Purposes:

- 1) “**rest** and lie fallow”—to regenerate nutrients in the soil
- 2) To allow the poor and animals to glean whatever grew on its own during the year that nothing was planted

(BKC) “The Sabbatical year reminded Israel that God owns the land and that it was theirs merely as a trust” (Lev. 25:23)



Lev. 25:23 (last part)  
“for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me”

This law promoted loving one’s neighbor....and it was an exercise of faith in God to provide during that year that they planted no crops

<sup>12</sup>Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be **refreshed**.

(BKC) “By resting on the seventh day man and animals could be refreshed for another six days of work”

**‘refreshed’**

(Companion) “quicken, have new life put in, renewed, revived”

Acts 3:19

<sup>19</sup>Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of **refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord,

(Expositors) “Verse 12 **repeats** the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment so that no one would gain the impression that once the Sabbatical year was observed, all ordinary observances of the regular Sabbath would no longer be required.”



Take heed

<sup>13</sup>“And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

(BKC) “This section ends with a general admonition to obey God’s commands and a warning not to recognize the existence of any other gods by mentioning their names”

‘make no mention of the name of other gods’

➤ Disobeyed often by Israel...but there is coming a day when this will be fulfilled:

Hosea 2:16-17

Ishi

<sup>16</sup> “And it shall be, **in that day,**” Says the Lord, “*That* you will call Me <sup>£</sup>‘My Husband,’  
And no longer call Me <sup>£</sup>‘My Master,’ Baali

<sup>17</sup> For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more.

v. 14-19 Statutes regarding annual festivals

<sup>14</sup>“Three **times** you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:

(Barnes) “The whole **three** are spoken of as if they were familiarly known to the people”

(Expositors) “Literally ‘**times**’ (Heb. *Regalim*) ‘is ‘feet’; perhaps three foot-journeys are required each year”


“The main force of the word (*regalim*) throughout the OT is the individual whose feet are mentioned as traveling...” (Theological wordbook of the OT)

<sup>15</sup>You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, **at the time appointed** in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty);

‘at the time appointed’—refers back to chapters 12 and 13 of Exodus

(Keil and Delitzch) ‘empty’= “not with empty hands, but with sacrificial gifts, answering to the blessing given by the Lord” [Deut. 16: 16-17]

**First mention** of the Feast of Harvest [Pentecost] and first mention of the Feast of Ingathering [Tabernacles]



<sup>16</sup>and the Feast of Harvest, the first fruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in *the fruit of your labors* from the field.

‘Feast of the Harvest’

(Expositors) “Fifty days after the offering of the barley sheaf as the ‘first fruits’ of the harvest, the Feast of Harvest, known later as Pentecost, was to be celebrated”

v. 16 “**first fruits** of your labors”

(JFB) “...the bread which was baked of the first-fruits of the field, and which, when offered as two wave loaves of the new corn, were called ‘first-fruits of the wheat harvest.’ (Lev. 23:17-20)

‘Feast of Ingathering’

The fuller harvest at the end of the agricultural year...of the field, orchard, vineyard, etc

17“Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord <sup>£</sup>GOD.

“...used to refer to the times appointed by God” (New Bible Dictionary)

(Word) “every male is to appear three times annually in the Presence, that is, in a place set aside for the worship of Yahweh, here called ‘the Lord, Yahweh’”

(BKC) “These were constant reminders to Israel of God’s provisions for his people”

“all your males”

(Tanakh) “The obligation is limited to males, probably because pregnant and nursing women could not travel to distant sanctuaries”

➤ I Samuel 1—women did go up with their husbands

v. 17 (last part) ‘Lord GOD’

(NSB) “Here two names for God, Adonai, translated Lord, and Yahweh, translated as GOD, are used together. This expression emphasized God’s sovereignty”

<sup>18</sup>“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning.

(Word) “Leaven would be considered an impurity in combination with the blood of the sacrifice to Yahweh; the fat was Yahweh’s alone and was to offered to him promptly”

<sup>19</sup>The first of the first fruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.

The pagans boiled a young goat in its mother’s milk as part of their sacrifices (fertility rite)

**Fourth Section** of the book of the Covenant [v. 20-33]

- How God would act on behalf of Israel to take possession of Canaan
  - Epilogue—final comments of the book

“I send”—Elohim speaking

<sup>20</sup>“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

“Angel”—Angel of the Lord, pre-incarnate Jesus Christ—who had been with them the whole time...

v. 21 “pardon your transgressions” .... “My name is in Him”

<sup>21</sup>Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not **pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him.**

<sup>22</sup>But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.


<sup>23</sup>For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

(Barnes) “The national existence of the Canaanites was indeed to be utterly destroyed, every trace of their idolatries was to be blotted out...”

<sup>24</sup>You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their **sacred pillars**.

(Expositors) “These ‘sacred pillars’ apparently were free-standing stones that were associated with the veneration of deities, particularly the male deity”

v. 25-28 A Blessing List:  
The nation committed to God is blessed in a variety of ways:



<sup>25</sup>“So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you.

<sup>26</sup>No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

(Tyndale) “Considered as a hygienic code, God’s law ensured a health standard for Israel far higher than that of neighboring lands, such as Philistia or Egypt, where plagues were endemic”

(Bible Readers Companion) “The O.T. covenant with Israel contains a unique guarantee:

If Israel obeys, God will take away sickness and give His people large families and a full life span.

Some have applied His promise to Christians, and assume that sickness is evidence of disobedience or lack of faith. But the New Covenant under which we live contains no such guarantee [Jer. 31: 31-34]

Even in O. T. times, the promise was contingent on obedience of the nation, not of individuals”



The panic and confusion to every nation Israel would face

<sup>27</sup>“I will send **My fear** before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you.

<sup>28</sup>And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you.

Some commentators take this as literal hornets, but it could be figurative:

“like running to escape the sting of a hornet, they would flee in fear and panic” (BKC)

<sup>29</sup>I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.

<sup>30</sup>Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.

(BKC) “If God had given them the land all at once rather than **little by little**, the land would have become desolate and over run by wild animals before Israel could settle in and cultivate it”

<sup>31</sup>And I will **set your bounds** from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the <sup>£</sup>River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.

(Barnes)

“in this verse the utmost extent of Hebrew dominion, as it existed in the time of David and Solomon, is set forth”

<sup>32</sup>You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

<sup>33</sup>They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

(Keil and Delitzch) “Making a covenant with them and their gods would imply the recognition and toleration of them, and with the sinful tendencies of Israel, would be inevitably followed by the worship of idols”

“their gods”

(NSB) “Principally Baal and other fertility gods”

Chapter 24

Ratification of the covenant—the narrative resumes

“Elohim of 20:1” (Companion)

<sup>1</sup>Now He said to Moses, “Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.

Nadab and Abihu—Aaron’s eldest sons

Moses, Aaron’s sons and 70 elders were to ‘come up’ to the mountain **after** the events in v. 3-8

<sup>2</sup>And **Moses alone** shall come near the Lord, but they shall not come near; nor shall the people go up with him.”

“Moses alone was to function as the mediator between God and the Israelites, just as Christ is designated the second Moses in Hebrews 3: 1-6 and thus is the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 12: 24)” (Expositors)

<sup>3</sup>So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.”

“Moses came and told the people all the words and all the judgments”

➤ As they had requested Moses to do in 20:19:

<sup>19</sup>Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

“All the words which the Lord has said we will do”

After Moses told the people all of God’s words, they agreed to do all God had commanded—thereby affirming **the marriage covenant** between them and God



## Marriage covenant agreement between God and Israel

v. 3 (last part)

And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has said we will do.”

Jeremiah 3:14

<sup>14</sup>“Return, O backsliding children,” says the Lord; “for **I am married to you**. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

Jeremiah 31:32

<sup>32</sup>not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, <sup>£</sup>though **I was a husband to them**, says the Lord.

Moses prepares the people for the ratification of the covenant [a contract]

'words' *dabar* "basically means what God said or says" (Theological Wordbook OT)

<sup>4</sup>And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

"wrote all the words"  
(Expositors) "This passage testifies to Moses' direct involvement in the composition of the book of Exodus"

"built an altar"—represented God

"twelve pillars"—represents the people  
[twelve tribes of Israel]

v. 5-8

(Companion) “This is the subject of Hebrews 9: 15-23, where testament should be rendered *covenant*, and the word ‘men’ which is not in the text, should be ‘over the dead sacrifices’ referred to here”



<sup>5</sup>Then he sent **young men** of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord.

v. 5 “young men” (Expositors)

“Were the firstborn, who officiated until the Levites were appointed in their place”



<sup>6</sup>And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

v. 6 “the blood”

The covenant was sealed with blood—the covenant was constantly broken by Israel, but was eventually terminated by the blood of Jesus Christ—and the New Covenant took effect

v.6 “the blood he sprinkled on the altar”

(Companion) “This was pledging Jehovah to this conditional covenant”




Hebrews 9: 19

<sup>19</sup>For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

<sup>7</sup>Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.”

“be obedient”  
(Companion) “Connect this with the sprinkling of the blood in the next verse”



<sup>8</sup>And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on **the people**, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.”

This is the only instance in the Old Testament when *people* were sprinkled with blood”

1 Peter 1: 2

<sup>2</sup>elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for **obedience** and **sprinkling of the blood** of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

v. 8 “the people”  
(Companion) “Thus pledging them to their part of the covenant, which was thereby made conditional

(BKC) “The sprinkled blood then symbolized the legal transaction between God (represented by the altar) and the people (represented by the stones).

Israel was thus ceremonially set apart through blood (the blood of the covenant) as the people of the true God.

Later, the New Covenant , established by Jesus, was also ratified by blood, His own”

(Zondervan Bible Background Commentary)

“The blood seems to make binding the people’s commitment to abide by the obligations that the agreement places upon them.”

Blood was used in ancient times for binding agreements

<sup>9</sup>Then Moses **went up**, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,

They all 'went up' to confirm and ratify the covenant before God on the mountain

<sup>10</sup>and they saw the God of Israel. And *there was* under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in *its* clarity.

v. 10 They saw a manifestation of the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ and were given a vision of the throne of God

➤ Sapphire is used in other scriptures to describe God's throne [Eze. 1:26; 10:1]

Ezekiel 1: 26

And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone;

<sup>11</sup>But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So **they saw God, and they ate and drank.**

**“they saw God, and they ate and drank”**

(NSB) “was a grand celebration of the presence of the living God”

Eating associated with the special union between God and Israel

(BKC) “It was common to symbolize the ratifying of a covenant with a meal”

[24:12—31:18] “This section deals with ordinances pertaining to the sanctuary and the priestly ministry” (BKC)

<sup>12</sup>Then the Lord said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.”

First mention of the ‘**tablets of stone**’

(BKC) “Moses was called into God’s presence to receive the Decalogue in stone along with other commandments and he returned forty days later” [31:18; 34:28].  
God had given Moses the Decalogue earlier but now it was inscribed in stone.”

<sup>13</sup>So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

<sup>14</sup>And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.”

Aaron and Hur are left in charge as Moses and Joshua go farther up the mountain

<sup>15</sup>Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

<sup>16</sup>Now the **glory** of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

(JFB) “The summit of the mount was covered by a dark cloud, which, with the resplendent glory, the shechinah, in the midst of it, symbolized the Divine presence on the summit of the mount, as afterwards in the holy of holies”

(Expositors) “As Moses ascended the mountain, all he could see was a cloud [v.15]. When the glory of God ‘settled’ on the mountain, the same word (*sakan*) is used as the ‘shekinah’ glory

(cf. John 1:14, the Word ‘tabernacling’ among us)”



John 1:14

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and **dwelt among us**, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>16</sup>Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the **seventh day** He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

v. 16 “the cloud covered it six days...on the seventh day He called Moses...”

(JFB) “At an elevated spot on the skirts of that mystic cloud Moses remained for the space of six days—a period of trial to his faith, humility and patience....



....and he was at length summoned on the seventh day, God having chosen the Sabbath for the commencement of the glorious revelation, in order to put the greater honor on it, and to inspire the people with a deeper reverence for that sacred institution”



<sup>17</sup>The sight of the glory of the Lord *was* like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. [from down below]

<sup>18</sup>So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

(Expositors) “Once Moses entered the ‘cloud’ he would not be seen again for ‘forty days and forty nights’.

During this time Moses received all the instructions on the tabernacle and its furnishings in chapters 25-31.

Not until chapter 32 do Moses and Joshua come down to face Israel’s apostasy”

## Lessons

God's laws, statutes and judgments together lay a foundation for a righteous society

### **Psalms 119:160**

<sup>160</sup> The entirety of Your word *is* truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.

Israel agreed to obey God—but they were not a good example of it throughout their history

➤ Our examples as disciples are extremely important to others