

between them. This provision very probably ended up with both men being losers, but not losers to the degree that they would have been without this protective law.

If the ox that killed the other ox was known to be a gorer in times past and the owner had been warned and had not kept it in, then the owner assuredly paid for the dead ox totally, but the dead beast was to be his (21:36).

One of the laws at Eshnunna (No. 53) was very similar to the Hebrew law. It decreed that if an ox gored another ox and caused its death, that both ox owners should divide among themselves the price of the live ox and also the equivalent of the dead ox.

The concern often expressed in the O.T. prophets for fair dealing had its roots in the law of Moses, and, of course, ultimately in the very nature of God. To a struggling Israelite farmer a fair payment for the death of an ox might mean the difference between subsistence and hunger, or between freedom and slavery for debt.<sup>14</sup>

---

THE TEXT OF EXODUS  
TRANSLATION

**22** If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. (2) If the thief be found breaking in, and be smitten so that he dieth, there shall be no bloodguiltiness for him. (3) If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be bloodguiltiness for him; he shall make restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. (4) If the theft be found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall pay double.

(5) If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall let his beast loose, and it feed in another man's field; of the

---

<sup>14</sup>Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

(6) If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the shocks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field are consumed; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

(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, he shall pay double. (8) If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall come near unto God, *to see* whether he have not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods. (9) For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, *or* for any manner of lost thing, whereof one saith, This is it, the cause of both parties shall come before God; he whom God shall condemn shall pay double unto his neighbor.

(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: (11) the oath of Je-ho-vah shall be between them both, whether he hath not put his hand unto his neighbor's goods; and the owner thereof shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. (12) But if it be stolen from him, he shall make restitution unto the owner thereof. (13) If it be torn in pieces, let him bring it for witness; he shall not make good that which was torn.

(14) And if a man borrow aught of his neighbor, and it be hurt, or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make restitution. (15) If the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be a hired thing, it came for its hire.

(16) And if a man entice a virgin that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely pay a dowry for her to be his wife. (17) If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

(18) Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live.

(19) Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.

(20) He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto Je-ho-vah only, shall be utterly destroyed. (21) And a sojourner shalt thou not wrong, neither shalt thou oppress him: for ye were sojourners in the land of E-gypt. (22) Ye shall not afflict any widow, or

fatherless child. (23) If thou afflict them at all, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; (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.

(25) If thou lend money to any of my people with thee that is poor, thou shalt not be to him as a creditor; neither shall ye lay upon him interest. (26) If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: (27) for that is his only covering, it is his garment 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.

(28) Thou shalt not revile God, nor curse a ruler of thy people. (29) Thou shalt not delay to offer of thy harvest, and of the outflow of thy presses. The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. (30) Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, *and* with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with its dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me. (31) And ye shall be holy men unto me: therefore ye shall not eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

EXPLORING EXODUS: CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO  
 QUESTIONS ANSWERABLE FROM THE BIBLE

1. After careful reading propose a brief title or topic for the chapter.
2. What was the penalty (or required restitution) for stealing a sheep? An ox? Why the difference? (22:1)
3. What distinction was made in the responsibility upon one who smote a thief in the night so that he died, from the responsibility upon who killed a thief in the daytime? Why? (22:2-3)
4. What punishment was imposed upon a thief if a stolen animal was found in his possession? (22:4)
5. What was the penalty for letting one's animal graze in another's field? (22:5)
6. What penalty was imposed for letting fire burn in a neighbor's

- grain field? (22:6)
7. Who decided what was to be done when goods entrusted to someone were stolen? (22:7-9)
  8. What was to be done if entrusted animals died while under the care of someone? (22:10-11)
  9. What were people to do about borrowed things that were damaged or hurt? (22:14-15).
  10. What requirements were imposed upon those who seduced virgins? (22:16-17)
  11. What was the law about sorceresses (witches)? (22:18)
  12. What was the penalty for immorality with a beast? (22:19)
  13. What punishment was given to those who sacrificed to other gods?
  14. What treatment was to be given to sojourners? Why? (22:21)
  15. Who claimed the poor people as "my people"? (22:25)
  16. What interest was to be charged to poor people? (22:25)
  17. How long could garments held as security for a loan be kept? Why? (22:26-27; Compare Lev. 25:35-37)
  18. What was the law about reviling rulers (and God)? (22:28)
  19. Who quoted this law? (Acts 23:5)
  20. What was to be done with the firstborn? (22:29-30)
  21. What sort of men were the people to be unto God? (22:31)
  22. What rule was given about eating torn flesh? (22:31)

---

**EXODUS TWENTY-TWO: GOD'S COVENANT ORDINANCES**  
(CONTINUED)

1. Laws about theft; 22:1-4.
2. Laws about damaging others' produce; 22:5-6.
3. Loss of thing entrusted to others; 22:7-15.
4. Seduction of a virgin; 22:16-17.
5. Capital crimes; 22:18-20.
6. Laws protecting the weak; 22:21-27.
  - a. The sojourner; 22:21.

- b. The widow and orphan; 22:22-24.
  - c. The poor debtor; 22:25-27.
  - 7. Duties to rulers and to God; 22:28-31.
- 

EXODUS TWENTY-TWO: PROPERTY, PEOPLE, POTENTATES

I. Property.

- 1. Restitution for stolen goods; 22:1, 4.
- 2. Repayment for pasturing or burning fields; 22:5-6.
- 3. Responsibility for goods left in trust; 22:7-13.

II. People.

- 1. A homeowner - Right to self-protection; 22:2.
- 2. A thief - His life is to be spared; 22:3.
- 3. A virgin - Seduction brings consequences; 22:16-17.
- 4. A sorceress - Execution; 22:18.
- 5. A sodomite - Execution; 22:19.
- 6. An idolater - Execution; 22:20.
- 7. A sojourner - Kind treatment; 22:21.
- 8. A widow or orphan - Not afflicted; 22:22-24.
- 9. A poor man - Kind credit treatment; 22:25-27.

III. Potentates.

- 1. Rulers - Do not curse; 22:28.
  - 2. God; 22:29-31.
    - a. Offer your produce.
    - b. Offer your firstborn.
    - c. Be holy; eat no torn flesh.
- 

THE SACREDNESS OF HUMAN TRUSTS (22:7-13)

- 1. God recognizes the owner's possession of entrusted goods; 22:7.

2. God gives judgment in disputes over trusts; 22:8-9, 11.
  3. God holds a trustee responsible for theft; 22:12.
  4. God excuses the trustee in cases of violence; 22:13.
- 

#### CRIMES THAT FORFEIT LIFE (22:18-20)

1. Sorcery; 22:18.
  2. Sodomy; 22:19.
  3. Idolatry; 22:20.
- 

#### WITCHCRAFT! (22:18)

- |               |               |            |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
| 1. Dangerous; | 2. Deceptive; | 3. Doomed. |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
- 

#### GOD'S EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAN'S WORSHIP! (22:20)

1. Based on God's nature.
  2. Based on non-reality of other gods.
  3. Based on fact of God's creating man.
- 

#### TREATMENT OF THE WEAK AND THE MIGHTY (22:21-31)

- I. Treatment of the weak; 22:21-27.
  1. The sojourner - Not wronged or oppressed; (22:21).
  2. The widow and orphan - Not afflicted; (22:22-24).
  3. The poor debtor - Gentleness in lending; (22:25-27).

- II. Treatment of the mighty; 22:28-31.
1. Treatment of rulers - Curse not; (22:28)
  2. Treatment of God; (22:28-31)
    - a. Do not revile; (22:28)
    - b. Bring your offerings and firstfruits; (22:29-30)
    - c. Be holy in diet; (22:31)
- 

EXPLORING EXODUS: NOTES ON CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1. *What is in Exodus 22?*

Exodus twenty-two continues God's *covenant* ordinances, which are given in Ex. 21-23. The chapter deals with punishment of thieves, damage to field produce, goods left in care of non-owners, etc. The chapter has a section of laws protecting the weak (22:21-27), and closes with ordinances about duties to God (22:28-31.)

It might be helpful to remember the contents of this chapter by saying that it has ordinances about property, people, and potentates (rulers and God).

2. *What was the penalty for stealing an ox or sheep? (22:1)*

For stealing an ox and killing or selling it, a man had to restore or pay five oxen for the stolen one. The penalty for stealing and selling a sheep was four sheep. The word *sheep* (*seh*) may also refer to a goat. Killing or selling the animal would indicate that the theft was deliberate.

The difference in penalty for stealing an ox from that of stealing a sheep is probably due simply to the greater value of the ox. It took years to train an ox well.

The fourfold restitution for a stolen sheep is referred to in King David's condemnation of the man who stole the little ewe lamb: "He shall restore the lamb fourfold" (II Sam. 12:6). Prov. 6:30-31 mentions a *sevenfold* restitution of stolen things. Perhaps that passage uses the larger number to emphasize the seriousness of theft, without meaning to be

legally precise in defining the punishment.

People have always made harsh laws against thievery, because it hits them where it hurts, in the pocketbook. They may wink at immorality (if no one is physically injured), but theft is not so excusable among men. Hammurabi's law (No. 8) reflects this common human feeling toward theft, and declared that if a man stole an ox or a sheep, or ass, or such, and it belonged to the church or state, he had to make a *thirtyfold* restitution. If it belonged to a private citizen, he had to make it good *tenfold*; and if he did not have enough to make restitution, he was put to *death!*

Possibly the law of Moses contained the law in 22:1 to oppose the extreme sentence of Hammurabi, which was probably a prevailing approach to punishing thieves. Certainly God's law never allowed that a man's life be taken for offenses against property.

Ex. 22:4 gives a related law about stealing animals. See below.

3. *How might the time of a theft affect its consequences? (22:2-3)*

If a thief was caught breaking in at *night* and was killed in the act, his slayer was not held accountable for the thief's death. If the sun had risen and the thief was smitten and slain, his slayer had bloodguiltiness (Heb., *blood*) upon him. The dead thief's relatives could attempt to take the life of the one killing the thief. Compare 21:12.

The proper punishment of a thief caught stealing in the daytime was that he had to make restitution (repay double; see 22:4, 7). If the thief could not repay, then he was sold for his theft. Compare 21:2.

The principle is that human life is greater than property. If the thief were breaking in at night, there was the possibility that he was going to harm or kill the householder or his family; thus the householder was not held accountable for striking and slaying the thief because this may have been necessary self-defence. But in the daytime the thief's intentions (whether he was just stealing or seeking to harm people)



would probably be visible by his actions. He was not to be smitten just to make certain that he did try to kill someone.

Admittedly 22:2 does not mention the *night* time, but the contrast of 22:2 and 22:3 indicates that 22:2 does refer to a nighttime breakin.

"Breaking in" (literally, "digging in") presupposes the houses were made of mud brick or other easily removeable materials.

The way Hammurabi's law dealt with thieves breaking in makes us shudder. If a citizen made a breach in a house, they put him to death in front of that breach, and then walled him up in the breach! (Law No. 21). If a citizen committed robbery and was caught, he was put to death.

4. *What was the penalty for a thief "caught with the goods"?* (22:4)

Whatever he was caught with (ox, or ass, or sheep), he had to pay double. (It seems that this was in addition to restoring the stolen animal.)

Possibly the reason for the lesser penalty (double instead of fourfold) was that if the stolen item was still with the thief, he yet might repent of his crime, acknowledge his guilt, and restore what he had stolen. He could not do this after the animal was disposed of.

The R.S.V. of the Bible places 22:3b-4 right after 22:1. The reason for doing this is that verse four deals with the same subject as verse one. We do not feel that anyone has the right to rearrange the Biblical text. The Greek Bible gives the verses in the same order as the Hebrew Bible and most English versions. Furthermore, the laws in Ex. 21-23 are not set forth as a comprehensive and systematic presentation of all Israel's laws. They are sort of a "sampler" of the fuller code of laws in Leviticus, Deuteronomy, etc. It is an indication of misunderstanding of the section (chs. 21-23) to assume that the section originally had all laws on the same topics grouped together in a polished and systematic legal and literary style.

5. *What was the penalty for pasturing another man's field?* (22:5)

The one who pastured another man's field or vineyard was to make restitution out of the *best* part of his own field or vineyard.

It appears that the pasturing of the field was intentional. The text could be translated literally, "If a man . . . shall *send* his cattle and cause them to eat in a field of another, . . . ." The Greek translates *send* as *aphiemi*, meaning to send away or let go. The law would be applicable, whether the pasturing was intentional or unintentional.

The words *eat* in 22:5 and *consume* in 22:6 are in Hebrew the same word (*ba'ar*). This word usually (but not always) means to consume by fire. The New English Bible translates 22:5 as "burn off."

*Beast* in 22:5 is a collective word referring to cattle.

The law of Moses set a stiff penalty for presumptuously grazing another's field. Isa. 3:14 speaks of elders and princes in the land who ate up the vineyards of the poor. Probably some inconsiderate people thought they could profit more by pasturing another man's field than the law would possibly exact from them in punishment. Therefore God decreed that they had to make restitution from the best part of their fields.

No one pastures his neighbor's field and still loves his neighbor as himself. Lev. 19:18.

6. *What was the judgment for burning another man's field?* (22:6)

He that kindled the fire was surely to make restitution.

The fire referred to "got away" and "went forth." Small fires started for cooking or burning off stubble might break out in a strong breeze (and such a breeze is customary in Palestine), and catch in thorns, and quickly spread to fields of standing grain. Burning off fields of grain was a sure way to arouse an agitated response! See Judges 15:4-6; II Sam. 14:30-31.

Palestinian thorns are very flammable in the dry season and are used as fuel by the poor. The author has vivid memories of helping fight a fire in the thistles and thorns on Tell

Gezer in Israel. The strong breeze had caused a fire set in a nearby wheat field to burn off stubble to break out into the adjoining uncultivated hillside. The thorns and thistles and sheep dung in the hot dry late June air were almost explosively flammable, and the flames could hardly be beaten out.

7. *What was to be done if goods left in someone's care were stolen? (22:7)*

If the thief were caught, he had to pay double. This refers back to 22:4, where a thief caught with the goods was sentenced to pay double to the owner.

8. *What was to be done if goods left in someone's care were stolen and the thief was not caught? (22:8-9)*

In such a case the keeper of the goods had to clear himself. The keeper of the goods would come "unto God" (K.J.V., "Unto the judges") to determine whether he had stolen or embezzled the goods left in his care. The Greek and Latin translations add that the keeper was to swear that he had not taken the goods. God would reveal in some way who had transgressed, and whoever was condemned had to pay his neighbor double. Possibly this was done by the priests by their Urim and Thummim or other means of obtaining information from God (Ex. 28:30; Ezra 2:63; Deut. 1:16-17).

We prefer the translation "unto God" rather than "unto the judges" in 22:8. "Before God" is the Greek rendering here. Compare 21:6 and 22:28 on the translation of *elohim* as *God* or as *judges*.

If an owner of goods had entrusted the goods to someone and the goods disappeared, and then the owner located his lost livestock (or clothing or whatever it was), he could declare, "This is it!" "That's mine!" The Israelites did not follow the Anglo-Saxon practice of "Finders-keepers." A lost object remained the possession of its original owner, who could claim it on sight.

The practice of settling disputes over property in the presence of God (or "the gods") was common in the ancient Near East. Hammurabi's law (No. 120) commanded that a dispute about grain that disappeared while in the care of

someone was to be settled "in the presence of god," that is at the local idol sanctuary, which doubled as the court of justice. Certainly there is no evidence here that Moses borrowed his law from Hammurabi. Hammurabi decreed that the owner of the grain should go to their gods for the truth. Moses had the accused keeper to go before God to clear himself. The Torah here protected the accused man.

9. *How was a case involving uncertainty about the loss of livestock to be settled? (22:10-13)*

If livestock in the care of someone besides its owner died or was hurt or driven away (by enemy raiders or attacked by animals), and no one saw it happen, an oath in Jehovah's name was sworn out as to whether the keeper had stolen or slaughtered the animal for himself. In some way Jehovah would make known the truth of the matter. If the keeper was innocent, no restitution was made. Natural losses (from beasts or sickness, etc.) were not the responsibility of the keeper.

If wild beasts had killed a sheep or other animal, the keeper could bring the remaining pieces of the animal as evidence of what had happened. The keeper might rescue "two legs or a piece of an ear." (Amos 3:12).

If the animal(s) had been stolen from the one keeping them, the keeper had to make restitution to the owner. The keeper was responsible to protect against thievery.

Jacob spoke to his father-in-law, Laban, about animals stolen while under his care: "Of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night" (Gen. 31:39).

The Jewish Talmud applied 22:7 to an unpaid custodian and 22:10 to a paid keeper of goods.<sup>1</sup> This has no authority to us, but it was probably generally true, because objects (as in 22:7) would usually be cared for without pay, but livestock would probably be kept by a paid guardian.

10. *What was done about borrowed animals that died or were hurt? (22:14-15)*

---

<sup>1</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

If the owner was not present when they were hurt, the one who borrowed the animals had to make restitution. If the owner was there when it happened, the borrower was not held responsible for the damage. Presumably the owner could have done something in such a case to prevent the loss.

If the keeper had hired (or rented) the animal and it was hurt or died, the renter did not have to make it good. The owner assumed this risk in return for the hire given to him.

"Borrow" in 22:14 is from the same verb that is used in 3:22 with reference to "asking" (or "borrowing") jewelry of the Egyptians. The verb itself leaves open the question as to whether the object was to be returned or not. But we feel that in this passage (22:14-15) the return of the goods is certainly implied.

An alternate translation of 22:15b has been suggested by Noth and others: "If the man [through whom the damage came] is a hired man, the damage shall be charged to his hire." This reading suggests the carelessness of a hired man as opposed to the care of the owner (John 10:12). The word translated "hired thing" does frequently mean a hired laborer or hireling (Job 14:6; Lev. 25:53). But it does not always mean that. See Isa. 7:20 where it just means "hired." We must agree with Keil and Delitzsch that this is not a good translation. The Hebrew simply reads, "If [it is] a hired [thing], it came in (or with) its hire." The past tense of the verb *came* argues against the idea that the verse refers to a future repayment coming out of a hired man's wages.

11. *What were the consequences if a man seduced a virgin?* (22:16-17)

He had to pay her father the bride-money (dowry), and take the woman as his wife, and could never divorce her. See Deut. 22:28-29. The dowry was fifty shekels of silver. If her father absolutely refused (the *absolutely* is stressed) to give her to him, the man still had to pay the marriage price.

If the woman had been a betrothed virgin, then both the

man and the woman were put to death. See Deut. 22:23-24. If the man forced the woman and she cried for help, only the man was slain. See Deut. 22:25-27.

It might seem strange to insert this section about seducing a virgin right after discussing the property laws. But a man's daughters were his property, although few men looked upon children as no more than property. In their culture a young woman who was not a virgin was generally rejected as a candidate for marriage. See Deut. 22:14ff. Thus, to violate the woman meant a probable financial loss to the father, to say nothing of the feelings of the girl.

The laws in Ex. 22:16-17 and Deut. 22:23-27 partly explain the consternation of Joseph, husband of Mary, in Matt. 1:9. Would Mary be sentenced to die? Would she be compelled to marry the father of her child?

The law in Ex. 22:16-17 is not full and complete, as is the law on the same subject in Deut. 22:22-29. This points up again that the covenant ordinances in Ex. 21-23 are not designed to be an exhaustive law code but a "sampler" of the laws later to be given in full.

12. *What was to be done with a sorceress (witch)?* (22:18)

She was not to be allowed to live. (I Samuel 28:3, 9)

This verse does NOT give authority to Christians now to execute witches, whether real or unreal. We are not under the covenant of the law of Moses which commanded this. Furthermore, to force confessions out of witches (or anyone else) by torture was never part of the Jewish law, much less of Christian doctrine.

Other passages condemning witchcraft, sorcery, consulting with a "familiar spirit," etc. include Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:10-11; I Kings 21:6; I Chron. 10:13; Isa. 8:19-20; Micah 5:12. The New Testament condemns sorcery and witchcraft in Gal. 5:20; Rev. 21:8; 22:15. It is an "abomination unto Jehovah."

Witchcraft has always been a forbidden practice for the people of God. It is an attempt to bypass the rule of God in nature and human life. It was a capital offense under the

law. We must not be involved with it, even to learn about it. Many who have been involved with it testify that it is dangerous. But we should not avoid it just for that reason. Our reason for avoiding it is that God says it is sin.

Although specifically forbidden by Israelite law, sorcery continued through much of Israel's history. It was also commonly practiced by other nations. See Ex. 7:11; Isa. 47:9, 12; Dan. 2:2; Num. 24:1.

The Hebrew word for *witch* in 22:18 is feminine, probably because many of those who practiced sorcery as a profession were woman. However, the law applied against men sorcerers as well.<sup>2</sup> See Lev. 20:2.

As an illustration of the character of witchcraft, we cite from an article in the *Joplin (Mo.) Globe*, Aug. 7, 1975, concerning a man and wife in Salem, Mo., who practice witchcraft. They declare that they are not satanists, and believe that Jesus Christ lived and was a great healer. But they object to Christian doctrine and the idea that humans have the ability to really know what God is. (This is a denial that God has ever revealed Himself through His prophets or in His word.) They tell of dancing nude under the full moon inside concentric circles of sulfur to gather power to heal or influence an event. Facing retirement, the couple said, "We feel a little sorrow in retiring, but it's not as bad as it used to be in the old days. In those days you didn't just retire. You were sacrificed in a ritual."

13. *What was the penalty for immorality with a beast?* (22:19)

Whoever lay with (that is, performed a sex act) a beast was surely to be put to death.

The verse begins in Hebrew with "All" (or "Everyone who"). So also do the parallel passages which condemn this

---

<sup>2</sup>The Greek translation of the Hebrew word for sorcerer is *pharmakeus*, one who deals in drugs and poison, a sorcerer, a poisoner. The Hebrew word for one having a familiar spirit is 'ob, meaning a hollow place, particularly a hollow space in the belly which was supposedly inhabited by the spirit, and from which came the muttering and peeping sounds. The Greek translation of 'ob is *eggastrimuthos*, meaning "one making utterance in the belly."

sin. (Lev. 18:23; 20:16; Deut. 27:1). *All* must die who do this. But *WE* must now leave this judgment to God, although such acts should result in suspension from a church.

This unnatural act was partly legal among the Hittites. Those who did evil with a pig were to die. But those doing this with a horse or mule were free of penalty.<sup>3</sup>

In Canaanite (Ugaritic) literature, there is a story of Baal (the god) coupling with a cow in order to be saved magically from death. Also in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh there are references to the relations of the goddess Ishtar with various animals.<sup>4</sup> The Hebrews were NOT to be like their pagan neighbor nations.

14. *What was the punishment for sacrificing to other gods? (22:20)*

Such people were to be utterly destroyed. Those who served other gods were to be stoned to death. Deut. 17:2, 3, 5; 13:1-16.

The verb translated "utterly destroyed" comes from the verb *haram*, "to utterly destroy." (The related noun is *herem*, an accursed thing, something devoted to destruction, something set apart for God's use or for destruction at God's orders.) The word *haram* has religious overtones absent in other words meaning kill or slaughter. Those who sacrificed to other gods were accursed, put under the ban, and devoted to destruction.<sup>5</sup>

15. *What was not to be done to sojourners? (22:21)*

They were not to be wronged (cheated) or oppressed. The Israelites had once been sojourners in Egypt and knew the feeling of strangers in a foreign land. Shielding an alien from wrong is a basic act of Godliness. Compare 23:9.

<sup>3</sup>Hittite Laws No. 199-200, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard, ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955), p. 197.

<sup>4</sup>Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>5</sup>The *herem* may refer to something "devoted" to God in a good sense, as for sacrifice, as well as something devoted to destruction. See Lev. 27:21, 28; Ezek. 44:29. But with both meanings the idea is present that the *herem* ("devoted thing") is set apart for God's disposal.



The "sojourners" referred to were resident aliens living amongst the Israelites. See Ex. 20:10; 23:12.

Deut. 10:18-19: "Jehovah loveth the sojourner, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the sojourner; . . . ." Compare Lev. 19:34; Matt. 25:35.

Note the singular *thou* and the plural *ye* in this verse. Right treatment of strangers is both an individual and a collective responsibility.

Love for aliens was not the practice in most ancient nations. The Egyptians hated "strangers," and the Greeks called them barbarians.

16. *What was the penalty for afflicting widows and orphans? (22:22-24)*

God would hear the prayer and cry of these lonely people and His wrath would grow hot, and He would cause their afflictors to be slain with the sword. Killing with the sword refers to wars in which men and their families would perish.

All through the scriptures God reveals that He has a special protective love for the widows and fatherless. See Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Ps. 94:6; Isa. 1:23; 10:2; Jer. 7:5-7; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5. In the New Testament we have James 1:27; Mark 12:40. If there is an especially hot corner in hell, it is reserved for those who cheat and oppress any widow or orphan.

God's *wrath* is often referred to in scripture. See Ps. 69:24; Rev. 14:10. We should fear the wrath of God.

The "surely" in 22:23 is emphatic.

Ex. 22:22 begins (in Hebrew) "*Every* widow and orphan. . . ." Placing the word *every* (or *all*) first stresses the fact that this command applies with reference to ALL. (Compare 22:19, which also starts with the word *all*.)

The punishment of "making your wives widows and your children fatherless" is a severe but strikingly appropriate punishment to those who afflict any widow or orphan.

17. *What were those who loaned money NOT to do? (22:25).*

They were not to speak and act roughly to their debtors. Neither were they to lay interest charges upon these people.

Note that the poor are called "my people" (GOD'S people).

The Israelites were not to act like the demanding creditors in II Kings 4:1 and Matt. 18:28, and seize a debtor or his family or land.

The law about not charging interest applied only to Israelite debtors. They could charge interest to foreigners. Deut. 23:19-21.

Note the switching between *thou* (singular) and *ye* (plural) in 22:25. The duty of not charging interest was both individual and collective.

Nehemiah (5:3-10) condemned wealthy Jews for charging usury (interest) to their less fortunate brothers. Compare Psalm 15:5.

Christ told us to give not even expecting the principal back, much less any interest. (Luke 6:34-35). Christians must be even more gracious and generous to their needy brethren than Ex. 22:25 requires.

In modern times money is usually loaned for commercial purposes, to increase a man's capital, increase his business, or enhance his comfort. It is proper that a reasonable interest or payment be collected for this help. Thus Ex. 22:25 does not mean we should demand that our banks stop charging interest. Jesus himself approved the taking of interest from a bank (Matt. 25:27; Luke 19:23). But this is quite a different thing from making gain out of a neighbor's need or being callous to the needs of a brother in the Lord.

18. *What restriction was made about taking security for loans? (22:26-27)*

Items that were necessary for a man's life were not to be taken as security (or pledge) for a loan. A creditor could not take a poor man's garment. It might be the only clothing he had. In the daytime it was his clothing. In the nighttime it was his bed covering, if he even had a bed.

Another item that could not be kept as security for a loan was a handmill or mill stone (Deut. 24:6). Without these

items a poor man (or woman) could not grind grain for his daily bread.

If the poor man's garment was taken as loan security, it had to be returned to him before the sun went down the same day. Taking a pledge was legal, but barely so.

God said in 22:27, "When he crieth unto me, I will hear!" This verse seems to be set as a parallel passage to part of 22:23.

The backdrop of many of God's laws about loving one's neighbor is the marvelous truth about God: "I AM GRACIOUS" (or compassionate).

19. *How were the Israelites NOT to speak about their rulers?* (22:28)

They were not to revile them nor curse them. This applied to rulers who were unreasonable, unjust, and harsh, as well as to the noble and respected ones.

The apostle Paul quoted this verse in Acts 23:5. Compare Rom. 13:1-7; Heb. 13:17; I Peter 2:13-17.

The King James version has "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*." The marginal reading gives "judges." The Greek O.T. also reads, "Thou shalt not revile the *gods*." This is an abominable translation. The O.T. nowhere recognizes the existence of other gods. Much less does it command us to speak respectfully of them.

The word translated *gods* in King James version is *elohim*, the word which is usually translated *God*. The word is plural in form (though singular in meaning when referring to God), and is therefore used to refer to the gods of all nations. Furthermore, the word *elohim* basically means *mighty ones*. See Gen. 23:6. (Its singular form *el* means "a mighty one, a powerful one."). Because of this meaning "mighty ones," *elohim* sometimes refers to judges or other mighty rulers among men. See Ex. 21:6; 22:8. Also it refers to angels (Ps. 8:5), which are mighty.

We think that here in Ex. 22:28 *elohim* refers to judges or other dignitaries among men. The fact that it is made parallel with "ruler of thy people" supports this view.

Whether the reviling and cursing is directed at God or earthly judges, it should not be done.

*Reville* is from the same Hebrew word translated "curse" in 21:17 ("curseth father or mother"). See notes on that verse for the meanings implied by *curse*.

Lev. 24:15-16 tells of one who blasphemed God's name and was stoned to death for doing so. God's name is holy.

"Reviling the king" is a bad act for God's children. Eccl. 10:20: "Revile not the king, no not in thy thoughts, . . . ." Compare I Kings 21:10. Jude 8 speaks of evil men who "set at nought dominion, and rail at dignities." (Jude even goes so far as to indicate that we would do well not to rail at the devil.)

If the apostles Paul and Peter could direct the early church to honor the emperor (Nero!), we need to shut our mouths when tempted to speak harsh things against our rulers. We may reprove wicked acts, but we should not condemn people.

Keil and Delitzsch<sup>6</sup> suggest that in 22:28 the "reviling" of God refers to disregarding His threats with reference to the poor (vss. 22-23), and withholding offerings of the firstborn, etc. This interpretation ties the verse closely to its setting, but it seems to us to restrict the applications of "revile" too much.

20. *What were people to do with the fruits they produced and their firstborn?*

These were to be brought to the Lord (at least certain parts of their harvest were to be brought to the Lord). Compare 23:19.

Ex. 22:29 speaks (literally) of "thy fulness and thy tear." *Tear* seems to refer to juice or liquid that could form drops, as from a wine press. Num. 18:27 speaks of the "fulness of thy winepress."

Ex. 22:29 may refer to several (or all) types of offerings

---

<sup>6</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 143.

of grain and produce, and not just to the firstfruits, although it certainly includes the firstfruits, and may refer to them primarily. The Greek version renders it, "Thou shalt not keep back the first-fruits of thy threshing floor and [wine] press."

The Israelites were not to delay offering their firstfruits or any other offerings. This would sometimes be a temptation.

The law about giving firstfruits and firstborn (men and beasts) is given more fully in Lev. 19:23-25; Num. 15:17-21; 18:12-17; Deut. 26:1-11; 15:19-20. The first produce of everything was the Lord's.

The firstborn sons were "given" by giving to the LORD five shekels of silver as a redemption price for them. See Ex. 13:2, 11-15. Firstborn animals were all either brought to the LORD (to His priests), or slain. Compare Num. 3:46-48; Deut. 15:19. Part of the meat of firstborn animals went to the priests as part of their livelihood. (Num. 18:15, 19).

The firstborn animal was left seven days with its dam (mother), and then on the eighth day was brought to the LORD as a sacrifice and offering. Apparently, in its first seven days the animal was not sufficiently developed to be regarded as a suitable sacrifice. Compare Lev. 22:27.

21. *What sort of men were the Israelites to be unto God?* (22:31)

They were to be *holy* men.

Among other ways, this holiness was to be shown by what they ate and did not eat. They were to eat no flesh of animals that had been killed and torn (chewed up) by beasts. Such flesh was to be cast to the dogs. They must not eat carrion.

All Israel was a holy nation. Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2. On the meaning of *holy*, see notes on Ex. 19:5-6.

Lev. 17:15 decreed that those eating an animal that died of itself or was torn by beasts were ceremonially unclean till the evening. Compare Ezekiel 4:14.

Presumably the rule forbidding the eating of animals torn in the field rested on the fact that such animals were not properly bled in slaughtering. The people who ate of them would eat blood. See Lev. 17:11-15.

What lesson or truth is there for Christians in the ancient rule about not eating torn beasts? Firstly, Christians should practice the same restriction, since we also are not to eat blood. Acts 15:20. Secondly, Israel's atonement was provided by the blood offered on the altar. Blood was not to be thought of as applicable to other purposes. This points out to us the incomparable value and unique power of the blood of the Lord Jesus. His blood was a covering for our sins.

---

#### THE TEXT OF EXODUS TRANSLATION

**23** Thou shalt not take up a false report: put not thy hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. (2) Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to wrest *justice*: (3) neither shalt thou favor a poor man in his cause.

(4) If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. (5) If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, thou shalt forbear to leave him, thou shalt surely release *it* with him.

(6) Thou shalt not wrest the justice *due* to thy poor in his cause. (7) Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked. (8) And thou shalt take no bribe: for a bribe blindeth them that have sight, and perverteth the words of the righteous. (9) And a sojourner shalt thou not oppress: for ye know the heart of a sojourner, seeing ye were sojourners in the land of E-gypt.

(10) And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather