

PARSHAT MISHPATIM – Exodus 21-24

Exodus 21

21 "These are the laws you are to set before them:

Hebrew Servants

² "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. ³ If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free.

⁵ "But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' ⁶ then his master must take him before the judges.^(a) He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.

⁷ "If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as male servants do. ⁸ If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself,^(b) he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has broken faith with her. ⁹ If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter. ¹⁰ If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. ¹¹ If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.

Personal Injuries

¹² "Anyone who strikes a person with a fatal blow is to be put to death. ¹³ However, if it is not done intentionally, but God lets it happen, they are to flee to a place I will designate. ¹⁴ But if anyone schemes and kills someone deliberately, that person is to be taken from my altar and put to death.

¹⁵ "Anyone who attacks[Ⓜ] their father or mother is to be put to death.

¹⁶ "Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession.

¹⁷ "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.

¹⁸ "If people quarrel and one person hits another with a stone or with their fist[Ⓜ] and the victim does not die but is confined to bed, ¹⁹ the one who struck the blow will not be held liable if the other can get up and walk around outside with a staff; however, the guilty party must pay the injured person for any loss of time and see that the victim is completely healed.

²⁰ "Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, ²¹ but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property.

²² "If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely[Ⓜ] but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. ²³ But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

²⁶ "An owner who hits a male or female slave in the eye and destroys it must let the slave go free to compensate for the eye. ²⁷ And an owner who knocks out the tooth of a male or female slave must let the slave go free to compensate for the tooth.

²⁸ "If a bull gores a man or woman to death, the bull is to be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible. ²⁹ If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull is to be stoned and its owner also is to be put to death. ³⁰ However, if payment is demanded, the owner may redeem his life by the payment of whatever is demanded. ³¹ This law also applies if the bull gores

a son or daughter. ³² If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels¹⁰ of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull is to be stoned to death.

³³ "If anyone uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it, ³⁴ the one who opened the pit must pay the owner for the loss and take the dead animal in exchange.

³⁵ "If anyone's bull injures someone else's bull and it dies, the two parties are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally. ³⁶ However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and take the dead animal in exchange.

Exodus 22

Protection of Property

22 ^{1a} "Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

² "If a thief is caught breaking in at night and is struck a fatal blow, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; ³ but if it happens after sunrise, the defender is guilty of bloodshed.

"Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. ⁴ If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession—whether ox or donkey or sheep—they must pay back double.

⁵ "If anyone grazes their livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in someone else's field, the offender must make restitution from the best of their own field or vineyard.

⁶ "If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.

⁷ "If anyone gives a neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double. ⁸ But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges, and they must^[b] determine whether the owner of the house has laid hands on the other person's property. ⁹ In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges.^[c] The one whom the judges declare^[d] guilty must pay back double to the other.

¹⁰ "If anyone gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to their neighbor for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, ¹¹ the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbor did not lay hands on the other person's property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required. ¹² But if the animal was stolen from the neighbor, restitution must be made to the owner. ¹³ If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, the neighbor shall bring in the remains as evidence and shall not be required to pay for the torn animal.

¹⁴ "If anyone borrows an animal from their neighbor and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, they must make restitution. ¹⁵ But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.

Social Responsibility

¹⁶ "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.

¹⁸ "Do not allow a sorceress to live.

¹⁹ "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal is to be put to death.

²⁰ "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed.^[e]

²¹ "Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.

²² "Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.

²⁵ "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest. ²⁶ If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it by sunset, ²⁷ because that cloak is the only covering your neighbor has. What else can they sleep in? When they cry out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

²⁸ "Do not blaspheme God^[a] or curse the ruler of your people.

²⁹ "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats.^[a]

"You must give me the firstborn of your sons. ³⁰ Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.

³¹ "You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

Exodus 23

Laws of Justice and Mercy

23 "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness.

² "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, ³ and do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit.

⁴ "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it. ⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it.

⁶ "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. ⁷ Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

⁸ "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent.

⁹ "Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

Sabbath Laws

¹⁰ "For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, ¹¹ but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what is left. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

¹² "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.

¹³ "Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

The Three Annual Festivals

¹⁴ "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me.

¹⁵ "Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Aviv, for in that month you came out of Egypt.

"No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

¹⁶ "Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field.

"Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in your crops from the field.

¹⁷ "Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁸ "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast.

"The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning.

¹⁹ "Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

"Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

God's Angel to Prepare the Way

²⁰ "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. ²¹ Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. ²² If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. ²³ My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. ²⁴ Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. ²⁵ Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food

and water. I will take away sickness from among you,²⁶ and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

²⁷ "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. ²⁸ I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. ²⁹ But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

³¹ "I will establish your borders from the Red Sea^a to the Mediterranean Sea,^b and from the desert to the Euphrates River. I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. ³² Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. ³³ Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

Exodus 24

The Covenant Confirmed

24 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance,² but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him."

³ When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." ⁴ Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said.

He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. ⁶ Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other

half he splashed against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

⁸ Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

⁹ Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

¹² The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and commandments I have written for their instruction."

¹³ Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God. ¹⁴ He said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are with you, and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them."

¹⁵ When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, ¹⁶ and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud. ¹⁷ To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain. ¹⁸ Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights.