

EXODUS 22:16-31 (THAT WHICH IS MORALLY RIGHT)

In analyzing passages of the Bible, it's often hard to see the context in how things are put together. The verses we'll look at today appear to be general and without any seeming order at all. In fact, this is so much the case that the great Bible scholar of the past, Charles Ellicott notes this about them -

"The remainder of the chapter contains laws which it is impossible to bring under any general head or heads, and which can, therefore, only be regarded as miscellaneous. Moses may have recorded them in the order in which they were delivered to him; or have committed them to writing as they afterwards occurred to his memory." Charles Ellicott

Though it is true that they seem random and miscellaneous, they are not. There is nothing arbitrary about them and they weren't haphazardly written down as they came back to Moses' memory. Proof of this came to me on the 30th of January 2013 as I was reading the passage. From verse 22:28 through to 23:13, a chiasm is formed, thus showing intent and purpose.

I will include and explain the chiasm now and then hopefully remember to do so again next week as we look at those verses of chapter 23 which complete the chiasm. If these verses are so structured, then all of the verses we look at likewise have purposeful order. There may be another chiasm which spans the rest of the verses as well which I just never found.

Exodus 22:28-23:13 - Help your enemy if his donkey/ox is in trouble

“Love your neighbor as yourself”

a 22:28 shall not revile God

b 22:30 oxen and your sheep shall be with its mother seven days

c 22:31 "you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field"

d 23:1 "You shall not circulate a false report."

e 23:3 not to show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

x 23:4 enemy's ox or donkey going astray, help him

x 23:5 donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, help
him

e 23:6 not to pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.

d 23:7 "Keep yourself far from a false matter;"

c 23:11 "and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat."

b 23:12 rest on seventh day, so ox and donkey may rest

a 23:13 no mention of the name of other gods

Text Verse: "Oh, how I love Your law!

It is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97

Today's passage contains a ton of details. So many so, that if you try to remember them all, you'll leave here mentally exhausted. Instead of trying to take everything in, simply sit back and enjoy the sermon. Each thing you hear, whether you remember it or not, will help you to piece together some other part of the Bible as you read it.

Just like the chiasm which jumped out of the pages at me one morning three years ago, things will be enlightened to you, a little bit at a time because you have a sound base of knowledge to build on. And so let's get into these verses today and enjoy all that comes at us from this superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Offenses Against God (verses 16-20)

Verses 16-20 may seem disconnected, but each actually defines an offense against God. The first is indirectly so because when a man defiles another man's daughter who is not betrothed, he is acting against the established authority within her house. As the representative of the Lord to his family, it is an indirect attack against the Lord.

The next concerns a sorceress, someone who is attempting to usurp God's authority in several distinct ways. After that is the perverse act of bestiality. As man is created in God's image, it is a defilement of that and thus an offense against God. And finally is the act of sacrificing to any god except the Lord. It is an offense against the One true God, Yehovah.

¹⁶ "If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her,

The following two verses are called by Adam Clarke "an exceedingly wise and humane law." He is correct because a defiled woman would often have been looked at in a much less favorable light in consideration for marriage.

Such would have been the case in earlier American history, but as time has gone by, for the most part morality has continued downwards and the thought of

marrying an undefiled woman is seen as an anachronism. In fact, marriage itself is no longer considered of any importance to the majority of people out there.

But in Israel's early history it was considered right that a woman would remain a virgin until she was married. Her virginity, however, was not only a valuable moral commodity, but a valuable civil one as well. This is because of the custom of the bride-price.

Because of this practice, a man enticing a virgin to sleep with him was to be taken as a direct attack upon a precious family possession. Such an unmarried daughter would be counted as the father's property. The loss of her virginity would mean her value to him would be reduced.

The word for "entice" here is *pathah*, it means to lure or entice someone to do something. This is its second use in the Bible, but the first time it is used in this way. The only other time it has been seen was in Genesis 9:27 where it is translated as "enlarge."

This enticement might be by subtle persuasions - being a Don Juan and alluring her to do what she shouldn't do, for promises of marriage, or for some type of reward or payment, but not specifically as a prostitute.

The word for "virgin" means exactly that. It is *bethulah* and it is the second time it is seen in Scripture. The first time was when referring to Rebekah in Genesis 24:16. The verse qualifies her state though. Not only is she a *bethulah*, but she is also "not betrothed."

The reason why this qualifier is used here is because if she were, then a different outcome would be the result of what happens. This word for "betrothed" is *aras*,

and is properly translated. It means to "espouse." It is the first of 11 times it will be used in the OT.

As an interesting spiritual picture, both the word for "entice" and the word for "betroth" are used in Hosea Chapter 2 concerning the Lord's relationship with Israel. However, Hosea is quoted by both Paul concerning the church, and Peter concerning Israel, in the New Testament, and so the spiritual application is rather complex and requires careful study to fully understand.

However, in the case of such a virgin of Israel, should this type of thing come about, there was to be a penalty for what occurred...

^{16 (con't)} **he shall surely pay the bride-price for her *to be* his wife.**

The words for "surely pay the bride price" are *mahor yimharenah* - "endowing, he shall surely endow the bride price." It is the same verb, *mahar*, repeated twice, and these are the only two times the word is used in the Bible.

Mahar is derived from the noun *mohar*, which is itself a rare word in Scripture. Once it was used to refer to the bride price for Dinah, the daughter of Jacob; once it will be used in this account in verse 17; and the final time is when David is asked to pay a bride price of 200 foreskins of Israel's enemies to King Saul for the price of his daughter Michal in 1 Samuel 18:25.

It is important to know that quite a few translations here use the word "dowry" instead of "bride-price." This is incorrect. It is not a dowry. A dowry is a transfer of the parent's property upon the marriage of their daughter. A bride-price, on the other hand, is payment made by the groom, or the groom's family, to the parents of the bride.

In essence, the dowry is some type of wealth passed from the family of the bride to the groom or the groom's family, ostensibly for the care of the bride. This bride-price though is an amount settled on for the marriage of the bride by the parents of the bride.

This is one reason why the virginity of the daughter was so important. The father had raised her and it was his work and effort which paid for her as she grew. Therefore, she is considered his investment. For a guy to do this, it could then deprive him of this repayment of his efforts by reducing or eliminating her value.

Consequently, he had a right to claim compensation and the enticer was required to pay a sufficient amount to make the matter right. The bride-price was set by the father. He could set it low if she weren't a treat to the eyes, or he could set it high if he knew that all the guys in town were after her. The interesting account of Saul and David shows us this -

""And Saul commanded his servants, "Communicate with David secretly, and say, 'Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'"

²³ So Saul's servants spoke those words in the hearing of David. And David said, "Does it seem to you *a light thing* to be a king's son-in-law, seeing I *am* a poor and lightly esteemed man?" ²⁴ And the servants of Saul told him, saying, "In this manner David spoke."

²⁵ Then Saul said, "Thus you shall say to David: 'The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. ²⁶ So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. Now the days had not expired; ²⁷ therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave

them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife." 1 Samuel 18:22-27

As can be seen from this, the father set the bride price. In the case of Saul, he had hoped that the challenge of killing 200 Philistines would be too much and David would die in the process, but David prevailed and also got the girl.

In the case here however, the father is given two different options. If he is ok with what has happened and is the forgiving sort, he can demand the bride price from the enticer and allow him to marry her. This is seen in Deuteronomy 22 -

"If a man finds a young woman *who is* a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days." Deuteronomy 22:28, 29

This amount, fifty shekels, was the highest amount required for the consecration vow of a person in Leviticus 27. Fifty shekels were set for a man in the prime of his life, between 20 and 60 years of age. In other words, this act of the enticer was noted as an exceptionally grievous offense. The working years of the father were, in essence, stolen from him.

In addition to paying this exceptional amount, the enticer was obligated to remain married to the woman for his entire life. The protections for the woman were especially strong in the Israelite society. However, there was another possibility...

17 If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.

im maen y'maen - "If in refusing, he refuses." It could be that the father simply did not want this guy, this loser who had defiled his daughter, to be his daughter's husband. In this case, he could still demand the fifty shekels and the enticer would get nothing.

The word for "pay" is *shaqal*. This is its second use in Scripture and it indicates "to weigh." In this case, he was to "weigh out" the entire bride-price of fifty shekels. If she were a beauty, the father may be able to secure another bride price off of her and she would be set with a husband.

If she weren't so lovely and she were also not a virgin, it could be that she would never get married and so the money would be sufficient to take care of her as an unmarried woman in her father's house. Or, as a third option, some or all of the money could be used by the father to entice someone to marry her. Maybe she was his only child and he longed for a grandchild.

No matter which, the payment of the bride-price legally reinstated her status as a virgin in the house and from then as a legally divorced woman, not bearing any reproach. Also, I mentioned earlier that the term "virgin" is qualified by the term "not betrothed." The importance of this is that if she were betrothed to another man, then a different outcome would result -

"If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because

he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you." Deuteronomy 22:23, 24

Although this may sound harsh against the woman, it is not. If this occurred in the city and she didn't cry out, then it is obvious that she was a participant in the action which was a crime against her fiancé and her family. As a protection for a woman who was raped, Deuteronomy 22 goes on -

"But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. ²⁶ But you shall do nothing to the young woman; *there is* in the young woman no sin *deserving* of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so *is* this matter. ²⁷ For he found her in the countryside, *and* the betrothed young woman cried out, but *there was* no one to save her." Deuteronomy 22:24-27

As we can see by this account and its more detailed explanation found in Deuteronomy, the actions of Joseph, the betrothed of Mary, were exceptionally pious -

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly." Matthew 1:18, 19

Even before learning the truth of what happened with Mary, he was willing to put her away secretly rather than having her stoned for what he thought was an act of adultery. Finally, concerning the loss of morality in the world over the years, Charles Ellicott looks to verses 16 and 17 and says -

"It might be well if modern societies would imitate the Mosaic code on this point by some similar proviso." Ellicott

He is right. If such a proviso and system existed and was adhered to, it would surely improve the morality within the society. Unfortunately, we have gone too far into the world of depravity to probably ever recover from the pit we are in.

¹⁸ **"You shall not permit a sorceress to live.**

The word for sorceress is *kashaph*. It means "to practice sorcery," but it is in the feminine singular and so it refers to a female who practices sorcery; a witch. Different opinions as to why women are singled out have been given.

Two reasons that seem sound are that culturally witchcraft was something more often practiced by women, thus the feminine is given to represent the class. Secondly, it was to show that no pity was to be given to such an offender, even if they were of the weaker sex.

In considering this verse, it doesn't make any distinction as to whether the witchcraft was real or a sham. Anyone who claimed such abilities was not to be allowed to live. This was because such practices seduced people away from their allegiance to God and His judgments.

It also involved matters of the future, which is something belonging to God alone. By claiming knowledge of the future, it was claiming to be, as it were, equal to God. In Leviticus 20, this is expanded on to include men -

"A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood *shall be* upon them." Leviticus 20:27

In 1 Samuel 28, almost the entire chapter is written about King Saul's going to the witch of En Dor to call up the spirit of Samuel the Prophet. It is an exciting account and the text clearly shows that she did raise Samuel's spirit which then conversed with Saul. If you remember the TV show Bewitched, the mother's name was Endora, having come from that very account in the Bible.

¹⁹ "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.

This is further explained in Leviticus 18 -

"Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It *is* perversion.

²⁴ 'Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you." Leviticus 18:23, 24

Bestiality is contrary to nature and is perverse. However, Israel had left Egypt where it was believed to have been practiced and they were heading to Canaan where it was a custom of the people. And so to ensure that they knew this was unacceptable to God, they are told this now. The penalty for a person practicing this perversion was *mowt yumat* - dying, he shall die.

²⁰ "He who sacrifices to *any* god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

This verse is only an initial verse which will be built upon in the law. Sacrifice, in this case, is noted, but it will eventually encompass any type of worship, including false prophecies and so on. In these words is the first use of the verb *kharam* in the Bible.

It, and the associated noun *kherem*, is an especially important tenet of doctrine. It means "accursed" or "anathematized." It signifies a complete withdrawal from the Lord and perverting to the exact opposite. Keil says he shall be "put to death, and by death devoted to the Lord, to whom he would not devote himself in life." John Lange gives even more insight by saying that -

"It may be that a sort of irony lies in the notion of the *kherem*; as being consecration reversed, it secures to God the glory belonging to Him alone; but it does this also as being consecration to the judging God in His judgment." John Lange

Such a person was to be wholly devoted as a ban offering to God and there could be no possibility of redemption for him. For a classic example of this type of penalty, you can read the account of Achan which is found in Joshua 7. Paul uses the same concept to explain the severity of polluting the Gospel message of Christ in Galatians 1 -

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." Galatians 1:6-9

To pervert the gospel requires the most severe curse because it is the only message which can bring man back to the very God who requires our wholehearted obedience and affection.

O God, we have offended You in so many ways

We have defiled ourselves in Your sight

And we have continued on for countless days

Who can purify us and make us right?

We have knocked on wood and read the horoscope

We have had our palms read and used the Ouija board

We have proved unworthy, each and every one a dope

Surely we are deserving of Your swift and sharpened sword

We have done that which is perverse and called it good

And have become ourselves an unclean thing

We deserve Your wrath, this is understood

But instead You sent us Jesus, us to Yourself to bring

For this marvelous mercy let our voices ring

And for this wondrous grace, to You praises we shall ever sing

II. Offences Against Humanity (verses 21-27)

²¹ “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

This verse follows logically after the last one. Although it was an accursed offense to follow after foreign gods, it was an admonition of the Lord to not mistreat nor oppress a stranger, meaning a foreigner. Obviously if they were foreigners, then they would not know the Lord.

By mistreating them, they would never come to know the Lord. Further, they were to remember this because of their own past, having come out of Egypt, which is subtly explained in the words chosen. The Hebrew word for "mistreat" is *yanah*. This is its first use in Scripture. But the word for "oppress" is *lakhats*. This was first used in Exodus 3:9 -

"Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them."

Israel was oppressed and the Lord delivered them. There was no reason for them to assume that they wouldn't receive His judgment for acting in the same manner towards foreigners among them.

²² “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.

Other than Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah who bore his child, widows have not been mentioned in Scripture. And this verse introduces *yathom*, or orphans into the pages of the Bible as well. Both the widow and the orphan have a special place in the Lord's heart.

They, along with the foreigner, were not to be abused or taken advantage of. Instead, in several passages, they are later commanded to actively bless them and care for them. And rather than giving the penalty for such mistreatment to the people, who could all become numbed to their plight in times of moral decay or famine in the land, the Lord reserved the judgment for such infractions for Himself...

²³ If you afflict them in any way, *and* they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry;

There is an emphasis in the Hebrew which isn't evident in our translations. There is a three-fold set of repetitions of words. *im anneh t'anneh otow ki im tsaqq ytsaq elay shamoah eshma saaqatow* - "if afflicting you afflict them in any way and crying they cry unto Me, hearing I will hear their cry."

The emphasis is certainly given to show the severity of the offense and the surety of His hearing their cries. Should this become standard in the land, there would be strict judgment for the abuse...

²⁴ and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

The penalty from the Lord for such treatment is that they would in turn be killed so that their own wives and children would then be susceptible to the same treatment that they had wrongfully meted out themselves.

The mistreatment of these three classes obviously became commonplace in Israel's history. By the time of Jeremiah, he actively called out on several occasions for the ending of such treatment. One example is found in Jeremiah 7 -

"For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, ⁶ if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, ⁷ then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever." Jeremiah 7:5-7

Jeremiah repeats the admonition later, and Ezekiel uses similar words against them, explaining the sins of Jerusalem and thus the reason for their punishment. Even to the last book of the Old Testament, the Lord was still warning the people concerning this -

""And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,"
Says the LORD of hosts.

⁶"For I *am* the LORD, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.
⁷Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My ordinances
And have not kept *them*.
Return to Me, and I will return to you,"
Says the LORD of hosts.

"But you said,
'In what way shall we return?'" Malachi 3:5-7

²⁵ “If you lend money to *any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest.*

The poor, or *ani*, are introduced into the Bible at this time, but the fact that there is a word to describe them indicates that the poor already existed. Later in the law and by the mouth of Jesus, we will learn that the poor will always be among us. In the case of Israel dealing with poor Israelites, they were not to act as moneylenders by becoming their creditors.

This also is a new concept to the Bible - the *nashah* or creditor. For any Israelite who was poor, money could be lent to them, but without *neshek* or interest, another term new to Scripture. All of these had to have existed, but the Lord is forbidding the practice among their own people. This noun *neshek* or interest comes from the verb *nashak* which means "to bite."

If one were to charge interest from a poor person, it would be as if allowing a serpent to bite him. Matters for the poor man would only get worse, not better. And so the Lord forbids it.

²⁶ If you ever take your neighbor’s garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down.

The concept of taking a pledge, comparable to what modern pawn brokers do, was not unknown to Israelite society, but there were restrictions such as this one. The word for "pledge" is *khaval* which is a verb meaning "to bind." A pledge then is seen as something which binds someone.

If the pledge were their garment, it then implied that this was all they had worth pawning. Because of this, it was to be returned out of compassion for the poor person who had nothing else. And the reason is next explicitly given...

27 For that *is* his only covering, it *is* his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in?

If someone had to pawn their cloak, then they were truly destitute. When the day was ending and the sun was going down, it would get cold. In the case of a poor person, their garment would be used at night as their covering.

Without having the pledge returned, the obvious question then is, "What will he sleep in?" It would be unjust in the extreme to allow him to suffer at night because of a pledge which would otherwise sit unused, serving no purpose at all. Each day the cloak would be returned to the creditor as a sign of the pledge, but if it was withheld at night, it would be a wonton act of cruelty.

27 (con't) And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I *am* gracious.

Should someone so mistreat their own neighbor in such a vile way, it is certain that the person would lay in unease throughout the night and cry out to the Lord in their misfortune. In his cries, the Lord promises that He will hear. What is implied but unstated is that when the Lord hears, he will also judge and act.

And the reason is *ki khannun ani* - "for gracious I am." This is the first time that the adjective *khannun* or gracious is used in the Bible, and all 13 times it is used, it is ascribed to either God or the Lord. It is one of His personal attributes. Therefore, to be ungracious to one's neighbor was to shun one of the very attributes of the Lord and to set oneself up in opposition to Him.

The Lord expected mercy. If it was withheld, judgment was due. Two important verses on this concept are found in Matthew and James -

"Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy." Matthew 5:7

"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.
Mercy triumphs over judgment." James 2:13

*Lord, give us hearts that will have compassion
Help us to be right with our fellow man
Let it not be just a temporary, short-lived fashion
But instill in us the desire to do the best we can*

*When a neighbor needs our helping hand
Grant us the sense to reach out and offer it freely
Keep us from tying in some personal demand
When you look on our hearts, we pray you see only purity*

*Let our tender mercies to others be acceptable in your sight
And may we forever strive to be pleasing to You
Help us to be charitable to our neighbor, always living right
Let these, O Lord, be the things that we are inclined to do*

III. Honoring the Lord (verses 28-31)

²⁸ "You shall not revile God,

elohim lo t'qallel - These words are translated in several ways. "You shall not revile God." "You shall not revile the gods." Or, "You shall not revile the judges." The word *elohim* can mean any, but "the gods" makes no sense. There is one God and all other gods are false and *are* to be reviled.

If it is "judges" then the next clause might not seem needed, and so that is probably incorrect. Rather, this is speaking of God who is, "the fountain of justice and power" (Clarke). This then leads naturally to the second half of the verse...

^{28 (con't)} nor curse a ruler of your people.

The rulers of the people of Israel derived their authority from God and therefore to curse him was to lay a curse upon the Lord who established the ruler of the people. This part of verse 28 is actually cited by Paul in Acts 23:5 during a trial with the ruling council where he notes the high priest as a ruler of the people.

The entire verse in substance is repeated several times in Scripture and in both testaments where honoring the Lord and honoring a ruler of the people are tied hand in hand. In all, verses 20-28 are summed up by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:17 -

"Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

²⁹ **“You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices.**

This verse is an idiomatic phrase in Hebrew which wouldn't be understood if literally translated. It actually and quite beautifully says, "Your fullness and your trickling you shall not delay." The imagery is alive and active in the Hebrew.

The "fullness" is the word *meleah* which means the first of ripe fruit. This is the first of only eight times it will be used in the Bible. It is the first of any grain or produce which the land puts forth and is harvested.

The "trickling" is *dema* and this is its only use in the Bible. It means "vintage" and come from the word *dama* which means "a tear" or "weep." It then "is a poetical epithet for the produce of the press, both wine and oil" (Keil). As fruits are pressed, they then weep out their vintage.

The first of all of these were to be gathered and made ready. Without delay, they were then to present them as the law will later detail. To delay in offering them would, as these things go, turn into total neglect of presenting them. As Clarke says about this precept -

"This offering was a public acknowledgment of the bounty and goodness of God, who had given them their proper seed time, the first and the latter rain, and the appointed weeks of harvest." Adam Clarke

Because of the beauty of the passage, please take the time today to read the accompanying ritual that goes along with this command we are looking at. It is found in Deuteronomy 26:1-11.

²⁹ (con't) **The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.**

The firstborn of the sons of Israel were likewise to be given to God. Their consecration was mandated in Exodus 13 and it is repeated here with the words that they are not to delay in this consecration. The consecration for Jesus is recorded in Luke 2 -

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."
Luke 2:22-24

³⁰ **Likewise you shall do with your oxen *and* your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.**

Unlike a person that was to be redeemed, a firstborn animal remained the property of the Lord and was to be sacrificed to Him. The term "oxen" is incorrect. It should be "cattle." All oxen and cows fall under the term "cattle," but not all cattle are oxen and cows.

Oxen are working animals, whereas cows are females kept for milk, meat, or breeding. Both however are being referred to here. The firstborn male of such an animal was to be with its mother seven days. The reason for the seven days is debated, but two good reasons are noted.

The first is for the comfort of the mother which needed relief by suckling its offspring. The second is impurity involved in the birthing process. For these, or for

whatever other reason, the animal was to be with its mother until the seventh day and then it was to be given to the Lord.

³¹ **“And you shall be holy men to Me:**

This thought sums up the entire passage in one succinct thought. It was first given to Israel in Exodus 19 -

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."
Exodus 19:5, 6

With their own voices, they had accepted the covenant with the Lord and had obligated themselves to the law which he is now giving. This holiness necessitated outward rituals, but these outward things could not make a person either pleasing to God or inwardly holy.

However, in order to keep the need for inward purity always before their minds, they were given these outward rituals. By having them, the intent was to lead them to live in an inwardly holy manner as well. Going on, a thought which is tied into this holiness, that of Israel's dietary restrictions, is given...

³¹ (con't) **you shall not eat meat torn *by beasts* in the field;**

The eating of meat which was torn by beasts was forbidden for two reasons. The first is that it had not been properly bled, making it unclean. Secondly, the beast which tore the animal would have been an unclean animal and thus passed on ceremonial defilement. Hence, there was defilement in both ways.

Eating such meat, however, was not some sort of unpardonable sin. In Leviticus 17, instructions were given which supplement this early prohibition in Exodus -

“And every person who eats what died *naturally* or what was torn *by beasts, whether he is* a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. ¹⁶ But if he does not wash *them* or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt.” Leviticus 17:15, 16

Therefore, it cannot be that eating the meat in and of itself makes one unclean. It was already inside their body! Rather, the external washing signified the internal knowledge that they had transgressed the Lord's commandment. It is, as always, the intent of the heart which is being evaluated.

***31 (fin) you shall throw it to the dogs.**

Again, like the previous words, this is further explained in Deuteronomy 14 -

"You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself*; you may give it to the alien who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God." Deuteronomy 14:21

The idea of throwing the carcass to the dogs was to show that the flesh was to be abhorred by the people. Again, it was an outward demonstration of inward purity. If there was a foreigner around, it could be passed on to them - the term dog is not unknown as a metaphor for aliens. Or, it could also be given to literal dogs.

As we conclude, we should look back at the three major sections of today's verses, Offenses Against God, Offenses Against Humanity, and Honoring the Lord.

All of these require more than just external acts in order to be complete. They also require inward purity.

But we, by our very nature lack this. It takes real effort to keep our hearts on doing what is right and our minds free from defilement. It is so easy to dismiss reading a horoscope as being just a fun thing to do. It is so easy to buy a new car or a house and then to forget about thanking the Lord for it and asking Him to bless it.

And how many times have we given our attention to false gods at one time or another in our lives - money, sex, addictions. But there is an answer for each of these failings. It is Jesus. He came and perfectly fulfilled all of these precepts in the law, and now we are admonished to fix our eyes on Him.

In so doing, we will always have the perfect example of how to conduct our lives towards God and towards our fellow man. Let each of us rededicate ourselves to Him today and for those who have never taken the first step of receiving Him, today would be a great day to do so...

Closing Verse: "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith..." 1 Timothy 1:5

Next Week: Exodus 23:1-9 *Important instructions for me and you* (Justice, Justice You Shall Do) (62nd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Acting in a Moral Manner

If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed
And lies with her
He shall surely pay the bride-price
For her to be his wife, yes - he shall do it for sure

If her father utterly refuses to give her to him
Being sure that for his daughter he is not so nice
He shall pay money
According to the virgin's bride-price
You shall not permit a sorceress to live
No mercy to that one shall you give

Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death
Whether his name is Sam or her name is Beth
He who sacrifices to any god
Except to the Lord only
He shall be utterly destroyed
This command comes directly from Me
You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor him oppress
For you were strangers in the land of Egypt, your land of duress
You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child
If you afflict them in any way

And they cry at all to Me with cries so wild
I will surely hear their cry, this to you I say
And My wrath will become hot
And I will kill you with the sword;
Your wives shall be widows, such will be their lot
And your children fatherless; such is My word

If you lend money to any of My people
Who are poor among you
You shall not be like a moneylender to him
You shall not charge him interest; such you shall not do
If you ever take as a pledge your neighbor's garment or gown
You shall return it to him before the sun goes down

For that is his only covering
It is his garment for his skin
If you take that
Then what will he sleep in?
And it will be that when he cries to Me
I will hear, for I am gracious, you see

You shall not revile God, nor a ruler of your people curse
Towards your leaders you shall not be terse

You shall not delay to offer
The first of your ripe produce and your juices too
The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me
These things you shall do
Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep
It shall be with its mother seven days
On the eighth day you shall give it to Me; it you shall not keep
You are to be obedient in these ways

And you shall be holy men to Me
You shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field
You shall throw it to the dogs
To any temptation to eating them, you shall not yield
These precepts from the Old Testament are a mirror
They show us how far away from Your glory we truly are
But Hallelujah! You have taken away the terror
Through Christ, You have removed every stain and mar

O God, help us to live by Your law, that which honors You
The covenant sealed in the blood of Jesus
Help us to remain steadfast and true
Yes grant this favor to each one of us

Hallelujah and Amen...