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**BIBLE STUDY**

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**“I WILL NOT GO FREE!”**

**Exodus 21:1-36**

***Exodus 21:1 "Now these [are] the judgments which thou shalt set before them."***

This chapter provides various laws and ordinances for the children of Israel that were specific applications of the Ten Commandments of the last chapter. They showed Israel examples of how the commandments were to function and would provide a framework for resolving problems and disputes in the nation. God was explaining in detail to Moses how life’s challenges should be handled, and Moses would instruct the people.

***Deuteronomy 6:1-3***

***1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:***

***2 That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.***

***3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.***

***Jeremiah 10:23-24***

***23 O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.***

***24 O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.***

***Exodus 21:2 "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing."***

***Exodus 21:3 "If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him."***

***Exodus 21:4 "If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself."***

***Exodus 21:5 "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:"***

Unfortunately, slavery was a way of life and widespread in the ancient world. Even today in parts of the new world slavery remain a sad reality for far too many people. While God did not mandate the abolition of it, he did in this passage initiate rules that greatly abetted the horrors of slavery. An Israelite, for instance, might sell himself into slavery, that is, indentured servitude, for various reasons, such as paying off debt, because he had committed a crime or surviving a military calamity. He would serve a period of six years and then go free unless he elected to stay in permanent servitude out of love for his master and family.

***Deuteronomy 15:12-14***

***12 And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.***

***13 And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:***

***14 Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.***

Servanthood or slavery to man is a “curse” and a manifestation of man’s sinful nature as a result of willful disobedience to the commandments of God. Servanthood or slavery to God is a “blessing” and a manifestation of man’s willful submission to God’s divine nature and perfect will for all His creation. Throughout the bible God permitted slavery to vividly demonstrate why obedience and submission to God’s perfect will is essential to salvation. God never ordered slavery and its many demonic iterations, but He did identify, regulate and manifest it’s historical use.

***Genesis 9:25 “And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”***

***Exodus 21:6 "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever."***

A bondservant is “one who is subservient to, and entirely at the disposal of, his master; a slave.” This “bondservant” agreement would be made known by an earring. Many prominent men of the Old Testament were referred to as bondservants. Abraham, Joshua, David, Isaiah and even the Messiah. In the New Testament, the word bondservant, slave, or servant is applied metaphorically to someone absolutely devoted to Jesus. Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, and Jude, all describe themselves as “bondservants of Christ. Believers today should gladly consider themselves bondservants or slaves of Christ. He is our Lord, and our allegiance is due to Him alone. As bondservants, we renounce other masters and give ourselves totally to Him. In all these instances, the term servanthood carries the idea of spirituality. Interestingly, a roman citizen (a worldly example of human pride) would never willfully consider himself a slave to anyone. Being God’s servant is an honorable position of humility and spiritual nobility.

***Romans 6:6-7***

***6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.***

***7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.***

***Romans 6:12-13***

***12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.***

***13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.***

***Romans 6:22-23***

***22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.***

***23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***

***1 Corinthians 7:22 “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.”***

***Matthew 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”***

***Exodus 21:7 "And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, she shall not go out as the menservants do."***

***Exodus 21:8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.***

***Exodus 21:9 "And if he have betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters."***

***Exodus 21:10 "If he take him another [wife]; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish."***

***Exodus 21:11 "And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money."***

This sale of a daughter was very much like a marriage to the man, who purchased her. Her sale was more of a permanent nature, because, usually, this sale had to do with the man marrying her. The sale of a daughter was for her marriage. the man who bought her was obligated to support her, as a wife, the rest of her life. He had no right to sell her to strangers. Her family could get her back if the husband-to-be was displeased with her. The father did not have to refund the money paid for her. If he purchased her for a wife for one of his sons, he was not to sleep with her. She was his daughter because she was to marry his son. This was just a nice way of saying, even if he stopped loving her and found another, he had to support her for the rest of her life. She had the rights of wife until she died. This was just saying, if she desired to leave, and she had not been a wife to him or his sons, she could leave without having to pay any money for her freedom. We suddenly jump from slavery to punishment for various violent acts.

***Exodus 21:12 "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death."***

***Exodus 21:13 "And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver [him] into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee."***

***Exodus 21:14 "But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die."***

The laws dealing with personal injury begin with the most serious of injuries homicide. The death penalty was prescribed for intentional homicide only. We see the act of premeditated murder was to be punishable by death. Accidental slaying was not to be punished by death. In the event of unintentional homicide, the person could flee to an appointed place what would become known as a “city of refuge.” God would have a place of refuge for this person to go to for safety. Someone guilty of involuntary manslaughter, then, could go to one of these sanctuary cities for protection from those who would seek retribution. But there was no refuge or sanctuary for someone guilty of premeditated murder. God would not protect him. He could not run to the church for safety. He deserved to die (Numbers 35:9-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:1-13; Joshua 20:1-9).

***Exodus 21:15 "And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death."***

"Smiteth" has many meanings. It means to beat, strike, slaughter, or murder. Here this meant slap, or something like that with criminal intent.

***Exodus 21:16 "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."***

***Exodus 21:17 "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death."***

We see, here, the crime of kidnapping. God left no doubt in any of these crimes, what the punishment should be. Our society has gotten to where the criminal's rights are more important, than the rights of the victim. We must get back to Bible laws that work. Sins committed with the tongue seem to be very serious with God. Cursing God, or your parents, was punishable by death.

***Exodus 21:18 "And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with [his] fist, and he die not, but keepeth [his] bed:"***

***Exodus 21:19 "If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote [him] be quit: only he shall pay [for] the loss of his time, and shall cause [him] to be thoroughly healed."***

This was just an example of what they should have to pay if they had caused bodily injury to anyone. Personal injuries not resulting in death still required compensation to the injured party. These explanations of the amount of punishment for each crime was actually what the criminal justice system, here in the United States, was based on. There really should be no question about sentencing someone because the punishment for each crime was explicitly set by the Lord, Himself.

***Exodus 21:20 "And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished."***

***Exodus 21:21 "Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he [is] his money."***

Owners had the right to punish slaves, but such measures were not to involve violence. If a slave was struck and died, the owner was to be punished. This was not the same as someone missing money, because they were disabled. Here, the man who committed the crime was the one that suffered the loss, because the servant could not work. Nevertheless, no one has the right to injure anyone else, so the one who committed the crime would be punished, but not as severely as he would be if this was not his slave.

***Exodus 21:22 "If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart [from her], and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges [determine]."***

***Exodus 21:23 "And if [any] mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life,"***

This was when a fight occurred and caused the woman to miscarry but was not followed by rape would not be punishable by death but would be punishable by an amount the husband named and the judge approved. Compensation was mandatory for accidentally causing a premature birth, even if no injury resulted. Clearly, then, an unborn infant is considered a person with basic rights. Negligence resulting in injury or death to an unborn baby incurred consequences.

***Exodus 21:24 "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,"***

***Exodus 21:25 "Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."***

This “Law of retaliation is common in both Hebrew and other ancient Near Eastern law codes. The idea behind life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc. was to limit punishment given. The legal process was meant to provide fair punishment and to prevent escalation of hostilities. Penalties were to match and not exceed the damage done to the victim. Jesus taught that this natural Law is not a license for vengeance.

***Matthew 5:38-42***

***38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:***

***39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.***

***40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.***

***41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.***

***42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.***

The Savior’s point is that we should resist not evil. Evil is seen here, not as a state, but rather as the action of the evil ones or the malicious ones. It represents the evil and sinful element in man which provokes him to an evil act. Jesus shows how the believer should respond to personal injury. He is not discussing the government’s obligation to maintain law and order. These passages do not mean that a man should not defend his family or his country, but rather that he should not attempt personal vengeance, even through the means of the law, to compensate for a personal injury. Jesus gives multiple examples of how the believer should react spiritually to unfair or unreasonable treatment. In retaliation to physical violence, he is to turn to him the other [cheek] also. Man’s natural impulse is to strike back, but the disciple is not to be a natural man. He is to “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

***Exodus 21:26 "And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake."***

***Exodus 21:27 "And if he smite out his manservant's tooth, or his maidservant's tooth; he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake."***

Permanent physical harm to the slave resulted in his or her freedom and loss of the owner’s investment. Such laws limiting a slave owner’s power and respecting the rights of slaves were unprecedented and unique to Israel in the ancient Near East.

***Exodus 21:28 "If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox [shall be] quit."***

***Exodus 21:29 "But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death."***

Owners were accountable for any injuries or deaths caused by their animals. Compensation must be made. If the owner was not aware that the animal was a killer, he would not be held responsible for the accident. He must lose something for the crime, so he loses the animal. He could not save the meat. The animal was to be killed. We see, here, negligent homicide. the owner should have killed the animal, the first time he heard that it was dangerous, and not taken a chance on someone's life. His negligence had caused this person's death. the punishment was death for him and the animal. If his animal had a history of causing harm and he refused to restrain it, the owner would pay with his life.

***Exodus 21:30 "If there be laid on him a sum of money, then he shall give for the ransom of his life whatsoever is laid upon him."***

***Exodus 21:31 "Whether he have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him."***

***Exodus 21:32 "If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned."***

This was not the option of the owner of the animal, but the option lay with the family of the deceased. If they were willing to settle for a cash payment, instead of killing him, he was to pay it and not protest. In this, there was no male, or female. The punishment is the same. The price of a slave was thirty pieces of silver. The master had lost his property, so he was the one to receive money to offset his loss.

***Exodus 21:33 "And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;"***

***Exodus 21:34 "The owner of the pit shall make [it] good, [and] give money unto the owner of them; and the dead [beast] shall be his."***

***Exodus 21:35 "And if one man's ox hurt another's, that he die; then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the money of it; and the dead [ox] also they shall divide."***

***Exodus 21:36 "Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own."***

This was just saying that the animal's owner should be reimbursed for his loss, because of the carelessness of the one who digged the pit. The digger had to pay for his carelessness. There was no way to determine fault here. They divided the money and ox, so no one loses. The owner, who was negligent, would have to get the man whose ox was killed another ox, but the negligent man would get the dead ox.

**QUESTIONS**

1. How many years should a Hebrew servant serve before he was set free?
2. What should he pay for his freedom at that time?
3. If he brought a wife with him. What happened to her when he was freed?
4. For what two reasons was a Hebrew made a slave?
5. What happened, if the servant didn't want to go?
6. What was the sale of a daughter like?
7. How did her servitude differ from the man's?
8. Could he just sell her to anyone?
9. If he had bought her for his son, how should he treat her?
10. If he got another wife, what obligations did he have to the purchased female?
11. How could she receive freedom without money?
12. What punishment was for a man, who killed another not accidently?
13. What happened to one who accidently killed someone?
14. Premeditated murder would be punished by what?
15. If a man killed his father, what was the punishment?
16. What would the punishment for kidnapping be?
17. What was the punishment for cursing mother and father?
18. If you crippled a man, what was the punishment?
19. What department of government in the United States was set up by these laws in Exodus?
20. If she was raped or damaged, what would be the punishment for the one who caused it?
21. If a man put his servant's eye out, what would the punishment be to the master?
22. Was the penalty the same if a man or woman was killed?
23. What was the price of a slave?
24. If a man opened a pit, and did not close it, and an ox fell in it, what must the man pay?
25. If an animal killed another animal in a fair fight, how did they settle it?