

# LAWS GOVERNING SOCIAL AND MORAL OBLIGATIONS

## EXODUS 22: 16–31

### *Introduction*

Just and moral laws are an absolute essential for any nation to survive. The pages of history are littered with nations that have failed to enforce true justice and true morality. The result has been corruption, decay, ruin and collapse. The greatest threat to any nation's survival is from within not from without. A nation of people — in fact, any body of people — can remain strong only if they exercise true justice and morality among themselves.

The humanists and secularists are wrong. History proves that without the truth of God — without true justice and morality — society suffers.

- => Society suffers from rampant immorality, broken marriages, and terrible sexual diseases.
- => Society suffers from a gross perversion of religion and the acceptance of the occult.
- => Society suffers from unnatural acts between humans and animals, pressing the edge of vile wickedness.
- => Society suffers from false worship (idolatry and the deception of people who follow false worship).
- => Society suffers from the mistreatment of those who are different, whether of a different nationality or just a stranger.
- => Society suffers from indifference toward the weak and the helpless, such as widows and orphans.
- => Society suffers from the greed of people who seek to enrich themselves to the neglect of the poor.
- => Society suffers from a complete lack of respect for leaders and for God.
- => Society suffers from people who hold back on God, not wanting to share their resources in meeting the desperate needs of people who suffer and are dying without Christ and God.
- => Society suffers from a people who are defiled, both spiritually and physically.

God loves the world, every person in every society and every nation of the world. Therefore, God revealed His law to the Israelites to show exactly how their society was to be governed, and to show all future societies the very spirit and principles that were to underlie their laws.

God gave His law to people who had to relate to each other. The God of Israel has a very important role to play in every society. This is the subject of this portion of God's Holy Word. It is: *Laws Governing Social and Moral Obligations* Exodus 22:16-31.

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- I. The law governing seduction or premarital sex (vv. 16-17).
- II. The law governing sorcerers: to be executed (v. 18).
- III. The law governing bestiality: to be executed (v. 19).
- IV. The law governing idolatry: to be executed (v. 20).
- V. The law governing strangers (v. 21).
- VI. The law governing the weak and helpless, such as widows and orphans (vv. 22-24).
- VII. The law governing loans to the needy (vv. 25-27).
- VIII. The law governing cursing God and rulers: forbidden (v. 28).
- IX. The law governing offerings to God: must not hold back (vv. 29-30).
- X. The law governing livestock killed by wild animals (v. 31).

### ***I. Exodus 22:16–17 Law Governing Seduction or Premarital Sex***

There was the law governing seduction or premarital sex. There are few things more sacred to God than the sexual relationship between husband and wife. Sex is a gift from God, a gift that is to be enjoyed in marriage, but only in marriage. God gave sex for at least two purposes:

=> First, God gave sex so that man and woman could propagate the human race. Note that this purpose eliminates — totally eliminates — a temporary relationship between man and woman: it necessitates a permanent, life-long relationship. Why? Because it takes nine months for a child to be born and years — many years — for a child to grow into adulthood, and both parents are needed to teach and nourish the child through those years. Moreover, both parents are needed to help teach and nourish grandchildren. Sex was the process chosen by God for reproduction, a process that takes years — a lifetime of years — for just one child. Sex was given by God for husband and wife and for husband and wife alone.

=> Second, God gave sex so that man and woman could develop the closest and most intimate relationship imaginable, so they could become so close that they would be as one flesh and one spirit. Note that this purpose also eliminates a temporary relationship between man and woman. It takes years and years of intimacy for a husband and wife to become as one flesh and one spirit. Sex is to be the unique experience of marriage and marriage alone.

These two purposes clearly show why God declares that sex outside of marriage is wrong, tragically wrong. Sex becomes perverted and loses its purpose when committed outside marriage. This is the reason God gave Israel a law governing seduction and premarital sex.

There are many men and women who seem to be on a personal mission to seduce any person who will give in and say yes to their sexual advances. The rules of this mission are rules of...

- selfishness
- unchecked lust
- instant self-gratification

Illicit sex probably causes more pain within the human heart than any other single thing, more hurt for men, women and children. Illicit sex causes divorce, broken trust and relationships, financial loss, terrible emotional stress, unwanted pregnancy, and the slaughter of millions of unborn babies. On and on the list of painful, distressing examples could be given. This is the reason God gave the law governing seduction or premarital sex. If a man seduced a woman and went to bed with her, the law was specific, very specific:

1. The offender had to marry the woman and pay a dowry (the bride-price) to her parents if the woman's parents consented to the marriage. This dowry was not a set amount; the amount was determined by the social and economic status of her family.
2. The offender must still pay the dowry even if the woman's parents objected to the marriage. Note the understanding and compassion seen in this exception. A parent might object because of the critical differences between his or her daughter and the young man, or because the young man was unfit, immature or irresponsible. The guilty party still had to pay for the injury he had inflicted upon the misled or violated victim.

Note the power the father held in this particular society. By his word, he had the power to bless or to curse any man who took advantage of his daughter. In other societies, the courts might have to assume the authority to enforce the law.

**Thought 1.** What would happen in today's society if a man and woman were required to marry each other because they had premarital sex? If the guilty had to pay a large amount of money for victimizing a person? Would men and women behave differently knowing that a huge sum of money was directly tied to their treating one another with respect and dignity? How can a man and woman keep themselves pure?

**Phil 2:3-4** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

**Psa 119:9** *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

**Thought 2.** Note a significant fact: neither the marriage nor the payment of money removed the guilt and coming judgment of God upon the two lawbreakers. Guilt and forgiveness of sin come only through confession of sin and repentance, only by turning to God and beginning to follow Him anew.

**Luke 13:3** *"I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."*

**Luke 18:13** *"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"*

*Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the LORD.*

*Acts 8:22 Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

*2 Chr 7:14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

*Job 42:1, 6 Then Job answered the LORD, and said.... “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”*

**Thought 3.** This law places a great honour upon parents. It stresses how children should respect and their parents even in seeking to be married. Children should seek the consent of their parents for marriage, and they should listen to the advice and counsel of their parents.

*Prov 1:8 Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.*

*Prov 23:22 Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.*

*Eph 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honour your father and mother” — which is the first commandment with a promise. “That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”*

*Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.*

## **II. Exodus 22: 18 Law Governing Sorcery, Witchcraft, Occult, Magic**

There was the law governing sorcerers: they were to be executed.

Sorcery is a terrible and destructive evil. Why? How? By misleading and deceiving people. Sorcery claims to have contact with the spiritual world or with the basic force and energy of the universe; it claims to know the future and destiny of people and things. Sorcery misleads and deceives people by causing them to follow the false hopes and gods of sorcery. The result is a terrible evil, for people are misled and doomed to eternal death, doomed to separation from the only true and living God, JEHOVAH — YAHWEH Himself.

Note: this law would also apply to witchcraft, astrology, palm-reading, mysticism, divination, fortune-telling, seances and to the reading of the horoscope or the signs of the zodiac to foretell events in one’s life. God knows how easy it is for a person to be led into this forbidden area of life and how it can destroy human life. The warning is blunt and to the point: a person who is a sorcerer is to be destroyed.

*Deu 18:10-12 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft,*

*or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.*

**Mal 3:5** *“So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud labourers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.*

**Rev 21:8** *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

### **III. Exodus 22: 19 Law Governing Bestiality**

There was the law governing bestiality (sexual relations between a human being and an animal): the person was to be executed. Note the Scripture:

In the ancient world, bestiality was often involved in pagan worship, celebrating the fertility power of all living creatures. The very thought of bestiality is so detestable that it is barely imaginable. Bestiality is a detestable evil, disgusting and contemptible. Bestiality is a clear symptom of a much deeper problem, that of rebellion against God. This sexual pervert rejects the natural use of sex, the natural order given by God. Remember God has given us sex for two primary purposes:

=> to propagate the human race

=> to give intimacy and closeness, the most intimate way possible for husband and wife to grow together, to become as one body and one spirit

Bestiality rejects God’s purpose for sex, rejects the natural use for sex. Thereby bestiality rejects God and rebels against God, rejects and rebels in the most deviating, detestable, disgusting, perverted way imaginable. Bestiality was absolutely not to be tolerated. The pervert was to be executed.

**Exo 22:19** *Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal is to be put to death.*

**Lev 18:23** *Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.*

**Lev 20:15-16** *If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he is to be put to death, and you must kill the animal. If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.*

**Deu 27:21** *“Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with any animal.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen”*

**Thought 1.** Why would a human being, a person who was made in the image of God, stoop so low in depravity? One of the inherent principles of sin is that it pulls people down, not up. The weight of sin will never allow a sinner to gravitate upwards. This is why it is so important for all sexual perverts to take four immediate steps.

(1) Sexual perverts must repent of sin.

*Acts 2:38* Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Acts 3:19* Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the LORD.

*Acts 8:22* Repent of this wickedness and pray to the LORD. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

(2) Sexual perverts must be cleansed from sin.

*1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

(3) Sexual perverts must resist the temptation to sin.

*1 Cor 10:13* No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

*James 4:7* Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

(4) Sexual perverts must reject, turn away from the prevalent practices of modern-day Canaanites (those who live carnal, fleshly, immoral lives).

*Rom 1:24-27* Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

*Rom 1:28-32* Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing

*evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

**Thought 2.** George Bush says that God demanded the death penalty because it was a “monster of impurity”:

*This was a crime of such crying enormity that the earth itself was defiled by bearing such a monster of impurity as its perpetrator.* (George Bush. *Commentary on Exodus*, p. 331)

#### **IV. Exodus 22: 20 Law Governing Idolatry**

There was the law governing idolatry. The idolater was to be executed. Note the law:

Why such a severe penalty? To teach man the seriousness of the offense. The most terrible offense a person can commit is that of high treason, of betrayal (see 2 Pet 2:20). When a person betrays his family, people or nation, he has cast them away and turned away from them. The penalty for high treason in most nations has been execution.

Now think for a moment: there is only one living and true God, only one Sovereign Ruler and Master of the universe. Moreover, not only is He the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, He created everything, the entire universe. If a person commits high treason against Him, betraying God — hates Him so much that he actually turns away or denies God, creating false, imaginary gods to worship and serve — what kind of justice should God exercise upon that person? Again, the person who curses, rejects and denies God — the person who hates the Creator and Ruler of the universe — what does he deserve? What judgment would be fair and equitable? What does true justice require? God told Israel: the worshipper of false gods is to be executed. The idolater condemns himself to death. Scripture declares this time and again.

**Deu 11:16-17** *Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you.*

**Rom 1:18-23, 28-32** *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles....Furthermore, since they did not*

*think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.*

**Gal 5:19, 21** *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

**Rev 21:8** *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

## **V. Exodus 22:21 Law Governing Strangers or Foreigners**

There was the law governing strangers or foreigners.

What an unusual law, to require the citizens of a nation to accept and be kind to strangers, foreigners, immigrants, aliens, different nationalities; they were all to be treated with respect, dignity and justice. How desperately the law is needed within all lands, for mistreatment of strangers is common among both adults and children. Strangers and foreigners are often ridiculed, rejected and even oppressed. But this is not God's way: He even requires that His people love strangers and foreigners:

**Lev 19:34** *The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.*

1. The instructions of this law were clear: Israel was not to mistreat nor oppress a stranger.
2. The reason for this law was plain and simple: God's people had also been strangers in Egypt (the world). They knew the experience of being strangers, what it felt like to be mistreated and oppressed. As followers of God, they knew what it was to experience the rejection, ridicule and persecution of Egypt (the world). Therefore, they were to be tender toward strangers, accept and receive them.

**Thought 1.** The lesson for believers is emphatic: we are never to mistreat or oppress a stranger or foreigner, much less anyone else. On the contrary, we are to accept them and help them, even love them.

**Lev 19:33-34** *When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.*



**Deu 10:19** *And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.*

**Psa 146:9** *The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.*

**Rom 13:8-9** *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

**Heb 13:2** *Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

**1 Pet 4:9** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.*

**Thought 2.** Mathew Henry says that “Humanity is one of the laws of religion.”

We must, therefore, be tender and show compassion and concern to strangers.

“Strangers...are known to God, and he preserves them.” (Mathew Henry. Mathew Henry’s Commentary, p. 293)

**Psa 146:9** *The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.*

## **VI. Exodus 22:22–24 Law — Treatment of the Weak and Helpless**

There was the law governing the treatment of the weak and helpless, such as widows and orphans. The commandment of God is strong and issues a severe warning to the oppressor:

1. This law warned people not to take advantage of the weak and helpless in society such as the widow and the orphan. These dear people are often weak and defenceless and are at the greatest risk in society. This law would apply to any person who is helpless, defenceless, unprotected or vulnerable. But in most societies the two most helpless classes of people are the orphans and widows. Therefore, the civil law addresses these two as the representative case to govern society’s treatment of the weak and helpless.
  - a. The widow had depended upon the provision and protection of her husband, and now he was no longer there. But other men on the prowl would be. They would come to gain personal or sexual favours or to offer fraudulent business deals. She would be bombarded with all sorts of proposals and most likely would be ill-equipped to handle them.
  - b. The orphan was in a more fragile position. Being a child meant that the orphan had little or no rights. He had no one to state his case or to speak out in his defence. He was alone, without the oversight of a parent to love and care for him.

2. The reason behind this law was clear: God cares for the weak and defenceless, for the widows and orphans. He would, therefore, hear their cry and judge the oppressor (v. 23-24). If a person dared to break this law, the punishment was to be a perfect, righteous judgment. God warned the oppressor: he would suffer the judgment of God, a judgment comparable to dying and leaving behind a widow and children who would be fatherless.

**Thought 1.** Note three lessons.

- (1) God demands that we protect and provide for widows and orphans, not mistreat nor take advantage of them.

**Deu. 24:17-22** *“Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.”*

**Deu 26:12-13** *When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. Then say to the LORD your God: “I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them.*

**Jer 7:3, 6** *This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place [God’s presence]....If you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm.*

**Jer 22:3** *This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.*

**Zec 7:10** *Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.*

**James 1:27** *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

(2) God declares that He is the husband and defender of the widow and the father of the orphan.

*Isa 54:5* For your Maker is your husband — the LORD Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

*Psa 68:5* A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

(3) God warns the oppressor of widows and orphans: the oppressor will face the fierce judgment of God.

*Mal 3:5* “So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud labourers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,” says the Lord Almighty.

*Mat 18:6* But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

*Mat 23:13-14* “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.”

## VII. *Exodus 22:25–27 Law Governing Loans to the Needy*

There was the law governing loans to the needy. Very simply, interest was not to be charged to the needy. This passage is not dealing with what the modern world calls commercial loans; it is dealing with...

- a neighbour becoming poverty-stricken
- some person within the community being poor due to a handicap or being unskilled and unable to find employment

1. The law was laid out in two main points:

- a. The person who loaned money to the needy was not to charge interest (v. 25). Believers are to help the poor and minister to them, not make money off them. The poor need compassion not abuse. God has called believers to be people of compassion and mercy, people who see the needs of the world and do all they can to meet those needs. The true believer would never take advantage of a person’s poverty: if a poor person needs money, the believer gives the poverty-stricken person whatever he can. He does not make a loan with interest to the poverty-stricken person; he reaches out in compassion and gives whatever he can to meet the need of the person. This is exactly what Christ taught: He instructed His followers to make loans to the poor and to count those loans as free gifts.

*Luke 6:34-35* “And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit

*is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."*

- b. The person giving a loan to the poor must not take any pledge of security, not even a simple cloak (coat, poncho) (vv. 26-27). The poverty-stricken person needs all he has (his cloak) to meet his basic needs. For the poor man, the cloak was more than an overcoat: it was used for a blanket or bedding at night. Without it, the cold would quickly make its way deep into his bones. The point is clear: the believer is not to demand security when making loans to the poor, not to demand anything as security, not even something as simple as a cloak. The poverty-stricken person needs what little he has to survive.
2. The reason or purpose behind this law is encouraging: God hears the cry of the needy and is compassionate toward them (v. 27). God truly cares for the poor and the needy, and He expects His people to care for them and to do all they can to meet their needs.

**Thought 1.** Two clear lessons are gleaned from this law:

- (1) Believers are to show compassion and care for the needy of this earth: do all they can to meet their needs.
- (2) Believers are never to take advantage of the poor and needy, not by charging them interest on money loaned (given) to them.

**Lev 25:35** *"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you. You must not lend them money at interest or sell them food at a profit."*

**Deu 15:7** *If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother:*

**Deu 23:19-20** *Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.*

**Neh 5:6-12** *When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, "You are charging your own people interest!" So I called together a large meeting to deal with them and said: "As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!" They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say. So*

*I continued, “What you are doing is not right. Shouldn’t you walk in the fear of our God to avoid the reproach of our Gentile enemies? I and my brothers and my men are also lending the people money and grain. But let us stop charging interest! Give back to them immediately their fields, vineyards, olive groves and houses, and also the interest you are charging them — one percent of the money, grain, new wine and olive oil.” “We will give it back,” they said. “And we will not demand anything more from them. We will do as you say.” Then I summoned the priests and made the nobles and officials take an oath to do what they had promised.*

**Job 24:9** *The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.*

**Psa 15:5** *Who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.*

**Prov 28:8** *Whoever increases wealth by taking interest or profit from the poor amasses it for another; who will be kind to the poor.*

**Eze 18:8** *He does not lend to them at interest or take a profit from them. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two parties. (see v. 13, 17).*

**Eze 18:13** *He lends at interest and takes a profit. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.*

**Ezek 22:12** *In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest and make unjust gain from your neighbours by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign Lord.*

**Thought 2.** God hears the cry of anyone who hits rock bottom. God is always with the poor and poverty-stricken, there all the time, each step of the way. God is there to provide hope and help in the midst of the storm. We must always remember this fact: no matter where we are, God always knows where we are, what we need, and when we need it.

**Psa 102:1-2** *“Hear my prayer, LORD; let my cry for help come to you. Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.*

**Psa 107:9** *For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.*

**Psa 113:7-8** *He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people.*

**Psa 116:1-5** *I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the LORD: “LORD, save me!” The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.*

***Psa 118:5-9** When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD; he brought me into a spacious place. The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.*

***Psa 120:1** I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.*

***Psa 121:5-8** The LORD watches over you — the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm — he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more.*

***Psa 124:8** Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

***Psa 130:1-2** Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.*

### **VIII. Exodus 22: 28 Law Governing Cursing God and Rulers**

There was the law governing the cursing of God and rulers. Simply stated, neither God nor rulers are ever to be cursed, not by any of us. A people who grumble, complain, curse and speak evil always disturb the peace and keep people stirred up. If the rulers and God are the objects of the cursing and evil speaking, then the very foundation of the nation begins to crumble. Note the law:

Respect for God and rulers is a must if a society is to live in peace. A nation of people who curses rulers is a nation that will soon crumble into a thousand broken pieces. A nation cannot survive unless its rulers are respected and honoured. In addition, Scripture teaches that God as well as rulers must be respected and honoured. God does not tolerate His name being cursed, not for long. Judgment is soon pronounced upon an evil speaking people. Moreover, rulers are set in place and given their authority under the sovereignty of God. Therefore, rulers — their office, their position — must be respected not cursed.

Note how important respect and honour are to God: the penalty for cursing rulers and God was death. Why so severe a penalty? Because cursing and evil speaking disturb the peace and can eventually lead to rebellion and insurrection. And the result of rebellion and insurrection is terrible suffering and death. God is the God of peace and reconciliation, not of evil speaking, disturbance and war. Therefore, He demands respect and honour for both rulers and Himself. If not — if a person insists on malicious rebellion and insurrection against a ruler or God — the judgment is to be carried out.

***Thought 1.** The teaching of Scripture is clear:*

(1) We are to respect and pray for those in authority.

***Eccl 10:20** Do not revile the king even in your thoughts or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird in the sky may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.*

*Acts 23:5* Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.’”

*Rom 13:1* Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

*1 Tim 2:1-2* I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

*Titus 3:1* Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good.

*1 Pet 2:13-15* Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

*1 Pet 2:17* Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.

*Jude 1:8* In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.

(2) We are not to curse and blaspheme the name of God, never speak evil of Him.

*Exo 20:7* “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”

*Lev 19:12* “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.”

*Lev 24:15-16* Say to the Israelites: ‘Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death.’

*Mat 5:34-37* “But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne. Or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

*Jas 5:12* Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear — not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple “Yes” or “No.” Otherwise you will be condemned.

## **IX. Exodus 22:29–30 Law Governing Man’s Offerings to God**

There was the law governing man’s offerings to God. The law was clear: a man was not to keep, not even hold back, the offering. He was not even to delay in giving his offering to God.

The exhortation is clear: a person is not to hold back those things that belong to God.

Three offerings were required of the Israelites:

1. The first fruit of the harvest was required: the crop had been planted, tended, and harvested by the sweat of the brow (v. 29). And every farmer in every generation has had to cope with the same set of problems:
  - 1) Will the seed or plants or trees be good?
  - 2) Will enough rain fall to water the crops?
  - 3) Will some disease strike the crops?
  - 4) Will labour be available to harvest the crops on time?

The believer was to trust God through all, and when the harvest came, he was to give the very first of the fruit or harvest to God. Large or small, God was to receive the best of his crops.

2. The first-born son of a family was required as part of the offering (v. 29). (See notes, Exo 13:1-16; see *Redeem*, Exo 13:13.) There is nothing more dear to parents than their children. Thus, the point was clear to God’s people: the first and most joyful was to be given to God. Note that children were to be redeemed by a money payment.

*Exo 13:13 Redeem with a lamb every first-born donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every first-born among your sons.*

*Num 3:46-48 To redeem the 273 first-born Israelites who exceed the number of the Levites, collect five shekels for each one, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. Give the money for the redemption of the additional Israelites to Aaron and his sons.*

3. The first-born livestock was required as part of the offering (v. 30). The livestock was to be given on the eighth day. A man’s animals were an important commodity to his financial well-being, and a good ox was worth a lot of money. Nevertheless, the offering was to be made, no matter the sacrifice required.

**Thought 1.** The lesson of this law must be heeded by God’s people. The desperate of the world are crying out for help. We must, therefore, obey God in our tithes and offerings. We must give and give, and we must give generously from a broken heart.

**Mat 6:19-21** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”



**Mat 6:24-25, 33** “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?...But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

**Mat 16:26** “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

**Mal 3:8-10** “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse — your whole nation — because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. “Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”

**Luke 6:38** “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

**2 Cor 9:6-7** Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

## **X. Exodus 22: 31 Law Governing Livestock Killed by Wild Animals**

There was the law governing livestock killed by wild animals. Note exactly what this law said:

Holy or holiness means to be consecrated, sanctified, set apart to God; it means to be distinct and different from other things. God’s people are to be holy people, people totally set apart to God. But note: holiness is to be outward as well as inward. This is the point of this law: people would know that followers of God did not eat livestock killed by wild animals. There was a health reason for abstaining from this practice. The blood of the livestock would not be totally drained: some blood would still be in the tissues. Consequently, the animal would be unclean and perhaps dangerous. The dead animal was to be cast to the dogs.

**Thought 1.** God’s calling is the highest of callings, that of living pure and holy lives. God’s people — those who truly believe and follow Him — are to be totally set apart to Him both in heart and in deed (conduct, behaviour).

**Exo 19:5-6** “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for

*me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”*

**Lev 11:44** *I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves along the ground.*

**Lev 20:7** *“Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God.”*

**Lev 20:26** *“You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.”*

**Rom 12:1-2** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

**2 Tim 1:8-9** *So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our LORD or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.*

**1 Pet 1:15-16** *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

**1 Pet 2:9** *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ■*