

Mishpatim

Exodus 21:1 - 24:18

Chapter 21

1 These are the rules that you shall set before them: 2 When you acquire a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years; in the seventh year he shall go free, without payment. 3 If he came single, he shall leave single; if he had a wife, his wife shall leave with him. 4 If his master gave him a wife, and she has borne him children, the wife and her children shall belong to the master, and he shall leave alone. 5 But if the slave declares, "I love my master, and my wife and children: I do not wish to go free," 6 his master shall take him before God. He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall then remain his slave for life. 7 When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not be freed as male slaves are. 8 If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her. 9 And if he designated her for his son, he shall deal with her as is the practice with free maidens. 10 If he marries another, he must not withhold from this one her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. 11 If he fails her in these three ways, she shall go free, without payment. 12 He who fatally strikes a man shall be put to death. 13 If he did not do it by design, but it came about by an act of God, I will assign you a place to which he can flee. 14 When a man schemes against another and kills him treacherously, you shall take him from My very altar to be put to death. 15 He who strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death. 16 He who kidnaps a man — whether he has sold him or is still holding him — shall be put to death. 17 He who insults his father or his mother shall be put to death. 18 When men quarrel and one strikes the other with stone or fist, and he does not die but has to take to his bed — 19 if he then gets up and walks outdoors upon his staff, the assailant shall go unpunished, except that he must pay for his idleness and his cure. 20 When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod, and he dies there and then, he must be avenged. 21 But if he survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, since he is the other's property. 22 When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage ensues, the one responsible shall be fined according as the woman's husband may exact from him, the payment to be based on reckoning. 23 But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. 26 When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. 27 If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth. 28 When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox is not to be punished. 29 If, however, that ox has been in the habit of goring, and its owner, though

warned, has failed to guard it, and it kills a man or a woman — the ox shall be stoned and its owner, too, shall be put to death. 30 If ransom is laid upon him, he must pay whatever is laid upon him to redeem his life. 31 So, too, if it gores a minor, male or female, [the owner] shall be dealt with according to the same rule. 32 But if the ox gores a slave, male or female, he shall pay thirty shekels of silver to the master, and the ox shall be stoned. 33 When a man opens a pit, or digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or an ass falls into it, 34 the one responsible for the pit must make restitution; he shall pay the price to the owner, but shall keep the dead animal. 35 When a man's ox injures his neighbor's ox and it dies, they shall sell the live ox and divide its price; they shall also divide the dead animal. 36 If, however, it is known that the ox was in the habit of goring, and its owner has failed to guard it, he must restore ox for ox, but shall keep the dead animal. 37 When a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox, and four sheep for the sheep.

Chapter 22

1 If the thief is seized while tunneling, and he is beaten to death, there is no bloodguilt in his case. 2 If the sun has risen on him, there is bloodguilt in that case. — He must make restitution; if he lacks the means, he shall be sold for his theft. 3 But if what he stole — whether ox or ass or sheep — is found alive in his possession, he shall pay double. 4 When a man lets his livestock loose to graze in another's land, and so allows a field or a vineyard to be grazed bare, he must make restitution for the impairment of that field or vineyard. 5 When a fire is started and spreads to thorns, so that stacked, standing, or growing grain is consumed, he who started the fire must make restitution. 6 When a man gives money or goods to another for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the man's house — if the thief is caught, he shall pay double; 7 if the thief is not caught, the owner of the house shall depose before God that he has not laid hands on the other's property. 8 In all charges of misappropriation — pertaining to an ox, an ass, a sheep, a garment, or any other loss, whereof one party alleges, "This is it" — the case of both parties shall come before God: he whom God declares guilty shall pay double to the other. 9 When a man gives to another an ass, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to guard, and it dies or is injured or is carried off, with no witness about, 10 an oath before the Lord shall decide between the two of them that the one has not laid hands on the property of the other; the owner must acquiesce, and no restitution shall be made. 11 But if [the animal] was stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. 12 If it was torn by beasts, he shall bring it as evidence; he need not replace what has been torn by beasts. 13 When a man borrows [an animal] from another and it dies or is injured, its owner not being with it, he must make restitution. 14 If its owner was with it, no restitution need be made; but if it was hired, he is entitled to the hire. 15 If a man seduces a virgin for whom the bride-price has not been paid, and lies with her, he must make her his wife by payment of a bride-price. 16 If her father refuses to give her to him, he must still weigh out silver in accordance with the bride-price for virgins. 17 You shall not tolerate a sorceress. 18 Whoever lies with a beast shall be put to death. 19 Whoever sacrifices to a god other than the Lord alone shall be proscribed.

20 You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 21 You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan. 22 If you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as they cry out to Me, 23 and My anger shall blaze forth and I will put you to the sword, and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans. 24 If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, do not act toward them as a creditor; exact no interest from them. 25 If you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you must return it to him before the sun sets; 26 it is his only clothing, the sole covering for his skin. In what else shall he sleep? Therefore, if he cries out to Me, I will pay heed, for I am compassionate. 27 You shall not revile God, nor put a curse upon a chieftain among your people. 28 You shall not put off the skimming of the first yield of your vats. You shall give Me the first-born among your sons. 29 You shall do the same with your cattle and your flocks: seven days it shall remain with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me. 30 You shall be holy people to Me: you must not eat flesh torn by beasts in the field; you shall cast it to the dogs.

Chapter 23

1 You must not carry false rumors; you shall not join hands with the guilty to act as a malicious witness: 2 You shall neither side with the mighty to do wrong — you shall not give perverse testimony in a dispute so as to pervert it in favor of the mighty — 3 nor shall you show deference to a poor man in his dispute.

4 When you encounter your enemy's ox or ass wandering, you must take it back to him.

5 When you see the ass of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him.

6 You shall not subvert the rights of your needy in their disputes. 7 Keep far from a false charge; do not bring death on those who are innocent and in the right, for I will not acquit the wrongdoer. 8 Do not take bribes, for bribes blind the clear-sighted and upset the pleas of those who are in the right.

9 You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.

10 Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; 11 but in the seventh you shall let it rest and lie fallow. Let the needy among your people eat of it, and what they leave let the wild beasts eat. You shall do the same with your vineyards and your olive groves.

12 Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor, in order that your ox and your ass may rest, and that your bondman and the stranger may be refreshed.

13 Be on guard concerning all that I have told you. Make no mention of the names of other gods; they shall not be heard on your lips.

14 Three times a year you shall hold a festival for Me: 15 You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread — eating unleavened bread for seven days as I have commanded you — at the set time in the month of Abib, for in it you went forth from Egypt; and none shall appear before Me empty-handed; 16 and the Feast of the Harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field. 17 Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Sovereign, the Lord.

18 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with anything leavened; and the fat of My festal offering shall not be left lying until morning.

19 The choice first fruits of your soil you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

20 I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have made ready. 21 Pay heed to him and obey him. Do not defy him, for he will not pardon your offenses, since My Name is in him; 22 but if you obey him and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

23 When My angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I annihilate them, 24 you shall not bow down to their gods in worship or follow their practices, but shall tear them down and smash their pillars to bits. 25 You shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will remove sickness from your midst. 26 No woman in your land shall miscarry or be barren. I will let you enjoy the full count of your days.

27 I will send forth My terror before you, and I will throw into panic all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn tail before you. 28 I will send a plague ahead of you, and it shall drive out before you the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites. 29 I will not drive them out before you in a single year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply to your hurt. 30 I will drive them out before you little by little, until you have increased and possess the land. 31 I will set your borders from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of Philistia, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hands, and you will drive them out before you. 32 You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. 33 They shall not remain in your land, lest they cause you to sin against Me; for you will serve their gods — and it will prove a snare to you.

Chapter 24

1 Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and bow low from afar. 2 Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him."

3 Moses went and repeated to the people all the commands of the Lord and all the

rules; and all the people answered with one voice, saying, "All the things that the Lord has commanded we will do!" 4 Moses then wrote down all the commands of the Lord. Early in the morning, he set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He designated some young men among the Israelites, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed bulls as offerings of well-being to the Lord. 6 Moses took one part of the blood and put it in basins, and the other part of the blood he dashed against the altar. 7 Then he took the record of the covenant and read it aloud to the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will faithfully do!" 8 Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord now makes with you concerning all these commands."

9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel ascended; 10 and they saw the God of Israel: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. 11 Yet He did not raise His hand against the leaders of the Israelites; they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and wait there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the teachings and commandments which I have inscribed to instruct them." 13 So Moses and his attendant Joshua arose, and Moses ascended the mountain of God. 14 To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; let anyone who has a legal matter approach them."

15 When Moses had ascended the mountain, the cloud covered the mountain. 16 The Presence of the Lord abode on Mount Sinai, and the cloud hid it for six days. On the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. 17 Now the Presence of the Lord appeared in the sight of the Israelites as a consuming fire on the top of the mountain. 18 Moses went inside the cloud and ascended the mountain; and Moses remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Haftarah for Mishpatim

Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26

8 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim a release among them - 9 that everyone should set free his Hebrew slaves, both male and female, and that no one should keep his fellow Judean enslaved.

10 Everyone, officials and people, who had entered into the covenant agreed to set their male and female slaves free and not keep them enslaved any longer; they

complied and let them go. 11 But afterward they turned about and brought back the men and women they had set free, and forced them into slavery again. 12 Then it was that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

13 Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel: I made a covenant with your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, saying: 14 "In the seventh year each of you must let go any fellow Hebrew who may be sold to you; when he has served you six years, you must set him free." But your fathers would not obey Me or give ear. 15 Lately you turned about and did what is proper in My sight, and each of you proclaimed a release to his countrymen; and you made a covenant accordingly before Me in the House which bears My name. 16 But now you have turned back and have profaned My name; each of you has brought back the men and women whom you had given their freedom, and forced them to be your slaves again.

17 Assuredly, thus said the Lord: You would not obey Me and proclaim a release, each to his kinsman and countryman. Lo! I proclaim your release - declares the Lord - to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine; and I will make you a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18 I will make the men who violated My covenant, who did not fulfill the terms of the covenant which they made before Me, ke] the calf which they cut in two so as to pass between the halves: 19 The officers of Judah and Jerusalem, the officials, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the halves of the calf 20 shall be handed over to their enemies, to those who seek to kill them. Their carcasses shall become food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. 21 I will hand over King Zedekiah of Judah and his officers to their enemies, who seek to kill them - to the army of the king of Babylon which has withdrawn from you. 22 I hereby give the command - declares the Lord - by which I will bring them back against this city. They shall attack it and capture it, and burn it down. I will make the towns of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.

Chapter 33

25 Thus said the Lord: As surely as I have established My covenant with day and night - the laws of heaven and earth - 26 so I will never reject the offspring of Jacob and My servant David; I will never fail to take from his offspring rulers for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Indeed, I will restore their fortunes and take them back in love.

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