



LIE #13: “I Need Jesus. But...” With Christopher Yetter

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Introduction:

At the beginning of the summer, I started reading *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It was great, in the first chapters Bonhoeffer writes about *costly grace and cheap grace*.

Cheap Grace: Is the grace we give to ourselves. Cheap grace allows us to live however we want, knowing that our sins will ultimately be forgiven.

Costly Grace: Is the grace that urges us to live a changed life. Grace “is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: “ye were bought at a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.” (Bonhoeffer 45).

This concept of cheap and costly grace got me spiritually charged up. But as I read further, I came across a chapter on **Matthew 5:17-20**, which seemed to be telling me “I Need Jesus. But... I also need to follow the Old Testament law”.

Matthew 5:17-20:

17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18** For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. **19** Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

When I first read this chapter, it sounded to me like Bonhoeffer was saying “I Need Jesus. But... I also *have* to follow the Old Testament law.” Is Bonhoeffer a heretic? Do I really need anything more than Jesus? Do I really need to follow the Old Testament Law?



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I'll return to Bonhoeffer later, but his book got me thinking about tonight's lie. "I Need Jesus. But..." We can so often get caught thinking that we need something other than Jesus for our salvation. We say "I Need Jesus. But... I also need this or that." It is a tricky lie since it is a half truth. We recognize our need for Jesus. But... we think we need something more.

Propositional Statement: "I Need Jesus. But..." is a lie.

1. It is an Arrogant Statement

Do we really believe this lie? Many of us would affirm that Jesus is all we need. We don't need anything aside from what Jesus has already done.

But then we may turn around and think our faith is a competition. We try to be better Christians than those around us, thinking that if we could just serve the best, sing the best, or preach the best, that we will accomplish something for our salvation. We make being better Christians than others a key part of our faith when it shouldn't be. We say, "**I Need Jesus. But... I also need to be better than other Christians**". Maybe we find self worth in this competition instead of just trusting in Jesus for our self worth.

Maybe we may feel like we have to earn our salvation through good works or do more good works than bad works. We may feel like we have to be good people because somewhere in the back of our minds we think we have to earn part of our salvation because what Christ did on the cross was not enough. We say, "**I Need Jesus. But... I also need to do good works**".

Maybe we think that, since Jesus did not abolish the Old Testament law, that we must follow it as part of our salvation. Like the lie I thought I read in Bonhoeffer, we say, "**I Need Jesus. But... I also need to follow the Old Testament Law**". We may believe this since obeying a law is easier than having relationships with God and people



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or it is easier than delving into why the command was given and how it may apply to us today.

However we may end up believing this lie, the idea boils down to this: **“I Need Jesus. But I also need to do something else for my salvation. What Christ did was not enough.”**

We may not believe our work will get us all the way to salvation, but maybe we believe our works will take us a few steps closer.

Why would we let this lie slip into our lives? I believe part of it is arrogance. We think we *can* contribute to our salvation or we don't want to give up control of the process. Maybe we want to make sure we have all the boxes checked so that our salvation is guaranteed; we want to check off boxes of do's and don'ts since that is easier than salvation. (I haven't had alcohol, I haven't swore, I haven't watched certain movies, etc.) **“I Need Jesus. But... I'll also get circumcised just to make sure I'm saved”**.

This is the same lie Paul dealt with for much of his ministry. “I Need Jesus. But...” Paul dealt with many Christians called Judaizers who believed and taught **“I Need Jesus. But... I also need to be/become a Jew”**. They thought they had to follow the OT law and have faith in Christ. They thought obedience to the Law was necessary for their salvation in Christ.

So why do we sometimes feel the need to follow the Old Testament law so legalistically? Is that what Jesus *really* asks us to do? Does he say, **“You need me. But... you also need to follow the Old Testament Law”**? How does the OT Law apply to us today?

“I Need Jesus. But...” is a lie.

1. It is an arrogant statement.

2. The Old Testament Law teaches righteous living.

The OT Law was not meant to bind us in our works, forcing us to earn our salvation. It is meant to lead us into following Christ.



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We have to remember, the Old Testament Law is in the Bible, so it has some use to us.

1 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

And Christ said he did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-20).

Today, the law serves as a teacher or a tutor for us. It teaches us so that we can know how to love God and love people.

Galatians 3:23-25

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

Romans 7:7

What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.”

The law teaches us what sin is and how to obey God, so that we may do our best to love him.

Interestingly, even for the Jews in the OT times, the OT Law was a teacher/tutor. It was instructional, not legal. It is not a comprehensive legal document, it was meant to teach Israel fundamental values about God and the world, “what it means to live all of life in the presence of God” (Klein 443). A lot of the laws do not specify a punishment if broken, instead they operate under the assumption that Israel will deal justly with sin.



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The Israelites were in a covenant relationship with God—He gave them blessings and protection, and in turn they obeyed His commandments. The OT Law was meant to teach the Israelites how to maintain a relationship with a loving God, not provide a legal system (Klein 444). The OT Law did influence their justice system, but it wasn't comprehensive.

So the Law is our tutor, but how exactly does the law tutor us? How does it teach us what sin and righteousness is? Is it a sin to get tattoos? Or to eat pig?

The Law and the OT completely applies to our lives as Christians today, but not without its fulfillment in Christ (Klein 445).

The OT Laws are timeless ethical, moral, and theological principles. They do not all literally apply to us today, but in some respect they do.

So what are the timeless truths of the OT Law?

REMEMBER: Just because the OT law may teach us about principles does not mean we are therefore under the law, needing to be justified by it.

According to my Textbook on interpreting the Bible:

1. Some Laws remain literally valid for Christians:
 - a. Do not murder, do not steal, love God with everything your have, etc.
2. Some Laws are stricter according to Christ's fulfillment:
 - a. (**Matthew 5:21-30**) Lust is adultery, anger without cause is murder, etc.
3. Some Laws are not literally valid anymore:
 - a. Food Laws (**Mark 7:17-23**), sacrificial system, boiling baby goats, etc.
4. All Laws teach important timeless truths:
 - a. **Deuteronomy 14:21**



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21 “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.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.

- b. Boiling baby goats in their mothers milk is not the sin forbidden by the law (although it is very strange). It was likely a rejection of a Canaanite religious rite. These laws weren’t given to the Israelites just so that they would have strict diets, but that they would be a set apart nation, visibly different from the surrounding Canaanite nations. So the timeless principle here, as with other food laws, would be to be a person set apart by God from the world and its false gods and religions.
- c. All of the OT Laws apply to us today in some form, whether literally or not, stricter or looser.

The OT Law should be interpreted in light of how Christ has fulfilled it in the NT.

This all begs the question: why are things the way they are? Why are we no longer under the law? How did Christ fulfill the law?

“I Need Jesus. But...” is a lie.

- 1. It is an arrogant statement.**
- 2. The Old Testament Law teaches righteous living.**
- 3. Jesus set us free from needing anything else.**

Hebrews 10:11-14 NKJV:

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His



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enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

Jesus' death on the cross was the sacrifice made for all sins forever. Through his sacrifice, he frees us from the burden of following the OT law, since salvation comes through Jesus alone.

Let's look at the book of Galatians. In Chapter 2:14-16, Paul is talking about an encounter he had with Peter. Some Jewish Christians were teaching that one must become a Jew before they could be saved by Christ. But Paul says that one cannot be justified or saved by the works of the law, but only by faith in Christ.

Galatians 2:14-16 NKJV:

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We *who are Jews* by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified..."

None of us will be justified by the works of the law, or by being the best Christians, etc. What is important for salvation is that we have faith in Christ Jesus.

Let's continue reading what Paul said to Peter...

Galatians 2:17-21 NKJV:

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in



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the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

We cannot earn our salvation; if we could, Christ died for nothing. The law only brings death, for Paul states in **Galatians 3:11-12 NKJV:**

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for "the just shall live by faith." Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."

So the law only brings death, but faith in Jesus Christ brings salvation and life.

To further my point, Jesus says in **John 14:6**

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Nobody gets to the Father except through Christ. Not by works of the law, not by perfectionism, not by being the 'best' Christians. Salvation comes through faith.

We cannot put our faith into anything else besides Jesus. We cannot say "I Need Jesus. But... I also need..." Because the only way to life and salvation is through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:2-4 NKJV:

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be* justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Paul isn't saying that everyone who is circumcised must keep the law. Remember, he is talking to Christians who have the choice between faith in Christ and works of the law. Christians who were asking, "I Need Jesus. But... maybe I also need to become a Jew?" When we attempt to be justified by the law or by any means, we are putting our



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faith and hope in something other than Christ. But Jesus is all we need.

Let's go back to **Matthew 5:17-20**. Remember, I was confused about this passage. Does Jesus command us to keep the whole law, down to the last jot and tittle? If Christ did not abolish the law, how can we be free from obeying it? It's because Christ fulfills the law. He satisfied it by becoming the sacrifice that pays the price for all our sin. The better righteousness we need to exceed the scribes and Pharisees is Jesus Christ living within us.

The law tutors us in the way of Christ, it teaches us how we may obey him.

What should be our relationship to the law today? I think there is a time in Jesus' ministry that answers this question:

John 8:1-11 NLT says this:

1 Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, **2** but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. **3** As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. **4** "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. **5** The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" **6** They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. **7** They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" **8** Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. **9** When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. **10** Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"



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11 “No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

That woman should have been stoned according to the OT law. Jesus was sinless, he could have thrown the first stone. But he chose not to condemn her. Jesus saved her. But He still desires that we “Go and sin no more...” He has set us free from the law’s unsparing severity, but He still desires that we live a life pleasing to God. The OT law teaches us how to do that, but it does not condemn us when we make mistakes. It does not hold us accountable to be the best Christians because we no longer need the law to connect with God. We may have a relationship with God through faith in Christ.

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Conclusion:

Jesus said go and sin no more, that is exactly what Bonhoeffer was trying to say. Bonhoeffer is not a heretic—he is saying that people are dying for their faith, yet some have trouble following Christ’s most basic commandments. Bonhoeffer wasn’t telling me I had to follow Christ but I was still under the law, he was just urging me not to cheapen the grace I’ve been given.

Don’t use your liberty to satisfy the flesh (Galatians 5:13-15). We get to live the way the Holy Spirit tells us to and transforms us to (Galatians 5:22-26).

Since Jesus is all we need, you can also be freed from the burden of needing to earn your salvation in any way. I once heard a quote that said all we can do for our salvation is provide the sin that made it necessary.

Therefore, go and sin no more. Jesus has paid the price for our sins, and we are free from being under the Law.



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NOTES

Holy Spirit -

NKJV 1 Corinthians 2: 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the [a]Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. **14** But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

From ***Introduction to Biblical Interpretation 3rd ed. by William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard, Jr., (Pages 443-448)***
Principles of Interpretation-Law

OT law poses an interpretive challenge for the Bible student, mainly because of a common misunderstanding of the nature of biblical law. To the modern mind, the word "law" conjures up images of massive, intricate legal codes and a spirit of "legalism." Yet in reality, for all its detail the OT's legal sections do not constitute a comprehensive legal code. Many OT laws (eg, the Ten Commandments) fail to specify a penalty for violations and to task an authority with enforcing compliance. They seem simply to assume an honor system of self-enforcement by the Israelites themselves.

Instead of a code in a modern sense, OT laws present a select sample of illustrative cases or topics whose legal principles were to guide Israelite individuals, the larger community, and lawmakers in making decisions and in living out Israel's worldview. Taken together, they articulated what today we might call "national policy." Their purpose was to teach the Israelite fundamental values-what it means to live all of life in the presence of God-not to provide them with a handy legal reference tool. In short, their aim was instructional rather than judicial. Further, OT law is best understood in a covenant framework. It articulates the stipulations of the covenant made between God and Israel at Mt. Sinai; thus, OT law represents the personal demands of Israel's sovereign Lord, not an abstract system of morality or a technical legal code,"

In light of this, readers must interpret law relationally-as the guidelines that govern Israel's ongoing life with her gracious God. In return for his protection and blessing, God expects his people to obey what the law commands-in short, to maintain their covenant relationship with God on a healthy footing. The Ten Commandments (Exod 20; Deut 5) express the broad, overarching ethical principles whose details the subsequent legal codes flesh out. Thus, Bible students must interpret them as 92 foundational ethical principles to maintain relationship with a loving Lord and cultivate a covenant community, not as a legal code."³ Their complex contents aim to create a distinctive people of God, one whose community structure and ethics accurately mirror the nature of its Lord.



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For readers of this book the question is: How does the law apply to Christians today? In reply, we affirm two fundamental interrelated assumptions about the nature of OT law." First, we believe that God intends it to serve as a paradigm of timeless ethical, moral, and theological principles. In other words, the law is more than a temporary, dispensable cultural phenomenon. Actually, it plays a key role in Israel's priestly ministry as a "light to the nations" (Isa 49:6; cf. Exod 19:5-6). Christians who dismiss it as outmoded and irrelevant deprive themselves of the teachings God conveyed through it. They miss an additional resource for understanding what it might mean to be Christ-like.

Second, to interpret law properly the student must discover the timeless truth it conveys. In some cases the truth lies right on the surface unobscured by culture. Prohibitions like "Do not murder" and "Do not steal" (Exod 20:13, 15; Deut 5:17, 19) need no cross-cultural translation; they clearly identify murder and stealing as wrong. Similarly, the timeless aspect of the instructions about equitable legal procedure (Exod 23:1-8) is fairly obvious: witnesses should tell the truth, not cater to the crowd (vv. 1-3); opponents at law should treat each other civilly (vv. 4-5); and judges should judge by evidence and refuse bribes (vv. 6-8). In other instances the underlying, universal truth may be difficult to perceive behind its present cultural form-ancient Israelite law-so careful interpretation is necessary. Consider, for example, the perplexing laws that decree a woman's menstrual bleeding makes her and everything she touches unclean (Lev 15:19-30)." These laws seem rather harsh and unfair, in effect making women untouchable one week out of every four. We

wonder what timeless principle could possibly underlie them. To answer this question we need to consider the Israelite cultural background. Israelite women married early, had children early, weaned their children late (at ages two or three), and tended to have large families (cf. Ps 127:4-5). Thus, a monthly menses was much less common among married Israelite women than it is today. In actuality, unmarried, adolescent women were those most directly and frequently affected by these laws. We suggest, then, that these laws, in effect, sought to regulate teenage passions and discourage sexual relations between young, unmarried Israelites. If so, the underlying truth appears to be that sexual relations outside of marriage displease God and may adversely affect the orderly relations between Israelite families.

From early on Christians have often spoken of Christ as the key to interpreting the OT. Jesus himself established precedent for this view when he declared, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17). Clearly, the Gospel writers believed that Christ fulfilled many prophecies; five such fulfillment quotations appear in Matthew 1-2 alone. But here Jesus refers to "the Law" as well as to the prophets, presumably meaning all the Hebrew Scriptures, and Matthew goes on to illustrate Jesus' code of ethics in contrast to the OT Law. Therefore, to fulfill a law must mean to bring to completion everything for which that law was originally intended (cf. v. 18: "until everything is accomplished"),"



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In some cases, as with sacrifices and various ceremonies (cf. Col 2:16-17), that point of completion was Christ's death and resurrection. Throughout his ministry, Jesus challenged fundamental principles of both oral and written Torah, especially those relating to Sabbath and dietary laws. At the same time, he never broke any of the written law while it remained God's will for his people (i.e., before the cross, resurrection, and sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost inaugurated the age of God's new covenant).⁹⁸ In other cases, as with many moral injunctions, the point of completion will not occur until Christ's return.

Matthew 5:17, therefore, suggests the following hermeneutical principle for applying the OT in the NT age: All of the OT applies to Christians, but none of it applies apart from its fulfillment in Christ.⁹⁹ Thus, our view falls in the middle ground between the views of classic covenant theology (all the OT applies except what the NT repeals) and in classic dispensationalism (none of the OT applies except what the NT repeats). The former would logically lead to prohibitions against most modern farming practices and clothing fashions (Deut 22:9-12), while the latter would logically lead to the acceptance of sorcerers, mediums, and spiritists (despite Deut 18:9-13)! For in the case does the NT say anything one way or the other about these specific practices. Instead, we suggest that all of the OT laws as "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16), but only as one discovers how those laws are fulfilled in Christ.

How may we determine how Christ fulfills them? We suggest that where the NT specifically cites a particular law, the interpreter's task is eased considerably. We obey the laws of sacrifice by trusting in Christ as our once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 9:1-10:25), not by bringing sheep or goats to be slain each Sunday in church. The kosher laws were designed to set the Israelites apart from the other nations, so we obey this principle as we pursue a Christ-like lifestyle that avoids sin (2 Cor 6:17), even though Christ declared that all foods are clean (Mark 7:19). The symbol of baptism parallels the principle behind the law of circumcision (Col 2:11b-12a), though the rites are not identical in all aspects. For example, Christians baptize women as well as men, and most likely the NT envisioned only people old enough to repent from sin rather than infants as recipients (Col 2:11-12).

Where the NT does not address a particular law, we must discover if it fits a category of law the NT does address. For example, orthodox Jews today view the command "you shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 14:21) as a dietary law that prevents them from serving milk and meat dishes at the same meal. Even if this was the law's original intention, this command takes its place with the other kosher laws that no longer apply literally to Christians' diets since Jesus has declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19). Alternately, it may have been a command 100 meant to dissociate the Israelites from certain pagan, religious practices, much like the otherwise unrelated warnings, "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves" (Lev 19:27-28). Any practices, whether relating to diet or personal 101 appearance, that represent pagan worship (as in the self-mutilation practices of several world religions and



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occult sects today) remain strictly forbidden for believers. But if Christians partake of goat's meat and milk or get tattooed for some nonreligious reason, they do not transgress God's commands. To summarize, OT law relates to Christians in light of the NT in the following ways:

- Some laws retain literal validity for Christians. For example, Jesus reaffirmed the OT injunctions to love the Lord wholeheartedly and to love one's neighbor (Matt 5:21-48; 22:40; cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). Similarly, Paul invoked the OT legal requirement of two or three witnesses to establish guilt in the case of accusations against Christian leaders (1 Tim 5:19; cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor 13:1). Any other laws that the NT applies to Christians remain valid.
- In some cases, the NT actually makes the OT law stricter. For example, in the case of marriage, the seventh commandment forbids adultery, and the OT permits divorce and remarriage (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18; 24:1-4). But unlike the OT, Jesus regards divorce and remarriage (and, by implication, polygamy) as adultery (Luke 16:18; Matt 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12). Further, Jesus permitted divorce only when marital infidelity had occurred (Matt 19:9); Paul, only in the case of desertion by an unbeliever (1 Cor 7:15-16). The truth behind both OT and NT laws was the value of preserving stable marriages. Finally, Jesus intensifies the command against murder by forbidding anger (the root cause that may lead to murder; Matt 5:21-22) and forbids not only adultery but also lust (another root cause; Matt 5:27-28).
- Some laws no longer have literal validity because of NT teachings (i.e... their fulfillment in Christ renders their literal practice obsolete). Thus, Christians no longer need to follow literally the OT sacrificial system (Heb 10:1-10), to obey its food laws (Mark 7:19; cf. Acts 10:9-16), or to perform circumcision (Gal 5:2-6). But see the next point.
- Laws that no longer apply literally still teach important timeless truths. Thus, the OT sacrificial system graphically reminds Christians that God takes sin seriously, requires a severe penalty, yet graciously offers forgiveness. Similarly, the clean animals in OT food laws probably symbolized Israel as the chosen people, in contrast to her ritually "unclean" pagan neighbors. Hence, eating reminded Israelites (and, by implication, Christians) of their gracious election by God and their resulting duty to pursue God-like holiness." Even the cultic law concerning the sabbatical fallow year (Lev 25; Deut 15) proves instructive, underscoring that compassionate humanitarian service ultimately represents service for God. 105

Understanding Jesus as the fulfillment of the law also has implications for interpreting NT ethics more generally. Kingdom demands, like the Mosaic law, flow from and respond to the redemption of God's people but do not "earn" anyone's salvation.

But failure to observe OT laws often led to specific sanctions and punishments, failure by the nation at large eventually led to loss of peace, prosperity, and land. Because Jesus' single sacrifice has fulfilled all of God's demands in Scripture for justice, few NT ethical texts suggest that keeping or transgressing God's lead to the identical material blessings or punishments. 106



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One example is Paul's warning to the Corinthian Christians that their abuse of the Lord's Supper explains "why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep (1 Cor 11:30) s commandments today

Although the story of the woman caught in adultery almost certainly was not in John's original text, a good case can be made for its authenticity as a true story about what Jesus did and said. In it he establishes a precedent for forbidding the application of OT sanctions even for such a fundamental moral issue as adultery. A possible exception appears in the case of murder. Because what we would call "first degree homicide" was the only sin for which a ransom could not be substituted for a sacrifice (Num 35-31), some Christians believe capital punishment for murder 108 remains appropriate in the Christian era. But many others point to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice as obliterating the need for further sanctions-whether physical or spiritual-for all sin. was not

As for specific principles of interpretation, we recommend the following:

1. Whatever its literary type, the collection or series in which an individual law appears serves as its literary context. Thus, the student should investigate surrounding laws for interpretive clues.
2. The student should endeavor to understand the original meaning and purpose of laws in light of their cultural background. Since many readers lack such knowledge, we recommend that they liberally consult Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and other background sources. See the bibliography at the end.
3. Apply laws primarily to the NT counterpart of the original audience. For example, laws aimed at Israel as a whole make proper application to Christians in general. Since the NT affirms the "priesthood of all believers," both priestly and ritual instructions would also apply to Christians in general, not just to clergy.
4. Whether a given law applies literally, in principle, or both, depends upon how it compares to laws in the categories discussed above. The reader may use the latter as guidelines for making application.

From: ***The Cost of Discipleship, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pages 44-45***

Yet it is imperative for the Christian to achieve renunciation, to practice self-effacement, to distinguish his life from the life of the world. He must let grace be grace indeed, otherwise he will destroy the world's faith in the free gift of grace. Let the Christian rest content with his worldliness and with this renunciation of any higher standard than the world. He is doing it for the sake of the world rather than for the sake of grace. Let him be comforted and rest assured in his possession of this grace for grace alone does everything. Instead of following Christ, let the Christian enjoy the consolations of his grace! That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace



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which amounts to the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs. Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. way, and Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Costly grace is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world, and not thrown to the dogs. It is therefore the living word, the Word of God, which he speaks as it pleases him. Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow. Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

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MOSAIC LAW:

LAW IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST An overview of the legal tradition and codified laws of ancient Near Eastern societies.

Overview and Examples

As societies formed in ancient Mesopotamia, communal standards developed and became codified as law (Bederman, *International Law*, 16–31). The expansion of civilization brought about the development of international law and treaties to facilitate trade and travel



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(Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 11). Examples exist of law codes from various ancient societies, including:

- Ur-Namma (ca. 2100 BC)
- Lipit-Ishtar (ca. 1900 BC)
- Eshnunna (ca. 1770 BC)
- Hammurabi (1750 BC)
- Middle Assyrian Laws (ca. 1400 BC)
- Neo-Babylonian (ca. 700 BC)
- Hittite (1600–1200 BC)
- The covenant and Deuteronomistic law codes in Hebrew Bible (post 14th century BC)

Although law codes from ancient Egypt have not survived, there are various extant royal decrees, especially from the New Kingdom. The Canaanites in the Levant did not have their own legal code, but instead relied on Babylonian forms (Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 13).

Characteristics

Much of ancient criminal law reflected *lex talionis*—the principle of retribution “in kind”—and acted as a deterrent to both crime and the escalation of retaliation. The penalties were not usually a literal eye-for-an-eye retribution, but rather an equivalent to compensate for the offense. For example, the penalty for physical harm was often payment of a fixed sum.

Race, class, gender, and slavery all factored into rights within the legal system. For example, legal systems treated a foreign slave differently than a native born slave (Westbrook, “Character,” 37–41).

Family law was a category to itself, governing marriage, sexuality, children, and adoption. These areas were influenced by property law. Land rights, inheritance, and dowries were all regulated to safeguard property rights.

Ancient Near Eastern Law Codes and the Old Testament

Israel reflected other societies of the ancient Near East in its belief in divine rule. However, Israel was unique in that its legislation came from its deity, Yahweh, whereas elsewhere “the king was the primary source of legislation” (Westbrook, “Character,” 26). Israel’s divinely-imparted law code regulated religious activity as well as peripheral elements like diet, warfare, and national and ethnic identity.

Biblical property, family, and civil laws contain multiple ancient Near Eastern parallels. For example, George Mendenhall described a second-millennium Hittite suzerain-vassal treaty whose form reflects the literary structure of Deuteronomy (Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant*, 24–48). Albrecht Alt identified two forms of law in the Hebrew tradition (Alt, “Origins,” 81–132):

1. apodictic or unconditional law, which was rooted in the will of Yahweh and was unique to Israel
2. casuistic or case law, which was part of the broader ancient Near Eastern legal convention



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However, Israelite legal tradition also contains significant variations from its neighbors. For instance, the Old Testament lacks laws governing adoption, which were common in the region. Similarly, many ancient law codes call for various forms of mutilation as penalties. This type of penalty appears in the Old Testament only once in a safeguard of progeny (Deut 25:11–12).

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ROB FLEENOR

LAW IN THE HEBREW BIBLE Serves as a key element of God’s covenant with His people, a formative part of Israelite culture, and the primary description of the earliest sections of the Hebrew Bible. Provides instruction for avoiding idolatry and injustice.

Major Precepts in the Law

The law provides instruction for avoiding two sins:

1. Idolatry (or “covenant breaking”)—refers to forsaking God for idols. The law emphasizes keeping covenant with God and not forsaking Him or His instruction. The Decalogue begins with a command prohibiting idolatry: “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them” (Exod 20:3–5).
2. Injustice—Refers to rejecting God by mistreating His image bearers. People commit injustice when they ignore God’s instruction.

Law in the Minds of the Biblical Authors and Their Audiences



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The Hebrew term *torah*, which is often translated as “law,” means “instruction.” The English term “law” connotes rules and norms that are typically enforced by the state. However, the Old Testament concept of law is broader, and goes beyond this meaning. Old Testament law includes:

- Moral admonishments (e.g., Lev 19:18)
- Commands without any means of enforcement (e.g., Exod 21:2)
- Commands where God, not the state, is the enforcer (e.g., Deut 30)
- Ceremonial instructions (e.g., Exod 25:10)

An exclusively judicial understanding of law can be misleading. For example, the *lex talionis*—“life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (Exod 21:22–25; Lev 24:19–20; Deut 19:15–21)—is a key concept in the law. From a legal vantage point, this could be construed as a form of harsh enforcement for rule breaking. In reality, however, this is not a rule about enforcement but instruction about justice: there should be proportionality between crime and punishment.

Another difficulty in understanding law in the Old Testament is that *torah* is used in multiple ways without clear distinction. In addition to carrying the meaning “instruction” or “command,” it is also used as a designation for a portion of Scripture—specifically Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the Pentateuch (Wegner, *Journey*, 42). Thus the entire Pentateuch is labeled *torah* even though a large portion is narrative or poetry without legal or judicial application.

The Psalms provide a description of *torah* that is much broader than mere rules or commands, calling it:

- A delight (Psa 119:92)
- Something to be loved (Psa 119:97)
- A treasure (Psa 119:72)

These descriptions fit well with the scriptural concept of law, which includes instruction, ethics, and wisdom in a relational covenant context. In the Bible, law and ethics are intertwined. As Waltke notes, “Implicitly, the Pentateuch unites creation and ethics; the order of creation supports the order of redemption. Moderns are accustomed to considering the ‘laws’ in creation (i.e., the consistent natural phenomenon they observe) as inviolable ... But moderns consider a system of ethics as *evaluations*—what people at a given time and place may think ... The biblical narrative forbids this kind of dualistic thinking; the ethical and the natural realms are united” (Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, 205). Accordingly, the concept of law in the Hebrew Bible should not be removed from its relational and covenantal setting. Law in the Hebrew Bible can be understood as relational, grace dependent, and far broader in meaning than the English term “law.”

This is not to say, however, that there are no judicial or legal nuances to the term; rather, our understanding must not be limited to law as rules, but also embrace law as cherished instruction for covenant living.

Rather than providing detailed rules covering every contingency, the Old Testament presents a form of case law. These laws fall into two general types:



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1. Apodictic Law states an unconditional command or prohibition, such as “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exod 20:3).
2. Casuistic Law states a conditional command or prohibition: in the event that “X” happens, you must do “Y” (e.g., Exod 22:25; 23:4).

Viewed from within a covenant relationship where an individual is seeking wisdom, these laws provide the needed instruction for right living.

Analogs in the Ancient Near Eastern World

The ancient Near East provides several examples of law codes that provide insights into the concept of law in the Hebrew Bible.

Archaeology

Archaeology has provided several examples of legal material from surrounding cultures. These texts provide a shared cultural backdrop for Old Testament law and highlight the unique aspects of biblical law.

- Middle Assyrian Laws (ca. 1100 BC)—Laws composed in the cuneiform writing system of ancient Mesopotamia. The documents were written in the Middle Assyrian dialect of Akkadian. The existing copies were apparently edited during the reign of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser I (ca. 1115–1077 BC).
- Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1700 BC)—Attributed to King Hammurabi of Babylonia and carved onto a stela made of diorite. About half of the code deals with contracts, establishing wages, transaction terms, and liability. About a third of the code addresses household and family issues like inheritance, divorce, and sexual behavior.
- Laws of Eshnunna (ca. 1800 BC)—Contains the first exact parallel to any early biblical law. This parallel concerns the division of oxen after a fatal combat between animals (Exod 21:35). This law code is highly structured, with a “If A then B” pattern. The code breaks down into five subcategories (Yaron, *The Laws of Eshnunna*):
 - Theft and related offenses
 - False distress
 - Sexual offenses
 - Bodily injuries
 - Damages caused by a goring ox and comparable cases

Similarities

The Old Testament law is similar in subject matter and formulation to the laws of its historical and cultural neighbors because Israel lived in a similar cultural, political, and economic context. For example:

- HL 17, the Sumerian Laws 1–2, LH 209–214, MAL A 21, 50–52, and Exod 21:22–25 all discuss cases of striking pregnant women and causing a miscarriage.
- Laws on slaves and goring oxen are common to both.



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- Several ancient Near Eastern laws agree with Biblical law condemning murder, adultery, and incest (LH 1, 129, 157).

The orientation of law toward practical problems is common to both the Bible and the laws of their surrounding culture. As both groups experienced common crises, they understandably share common laws for dealing with those situations. Examples of similarity between biblical law and the laws of the ancient Near East include:

- Exodus 21:24 matches sections 196, 197, and 200 of the Hammurabi code.
- Both Exod 21:28–36 and the Eshnunna code contain similar material about an ox that gores.
- Deuteronomy 22:23–27 and the Hittite code (section 197) are similar in their laws regarding rape.

Differences

While there are similarities between the laws of the ancient Near East and biblical laws, there are also key differences. For example, in the Torah an ox goring a slave differs from an ox goring an ox (Exod 21:28–31; 35–36). In other ancient Near Eastern law codes (LE 53–55), both oxen and slaves are simply property. Additional differences include:

- Biblical law imposes limitations on kings (Deut 17:14–20), the laws of the surrounding nations do not—they foster support for the unlimited authority of their kings.
- Biblical laws value human life over property. While surrounding nations might require restitution of thirtyfold for theft (and even execution), biblical law limits restitution to fivefold and spares the thief (Exod 22:1–4).
- Biblical law places a much higher value on women. For example, an unloved wife (even a slave) still had to be given the full rights of a wife.

The main aspects of biblical law that is absent from the laws of other ancient Near Eastern communities are the two underlying themes:

1. Loving God (Deut 6:5)
2. Loving neighbor (Lev 19:18)

This absence is fitting because law in the Hebrew Bible is more than just a law code; it is part of a covenant governing relationships between people and their Creator.

Significance of Ancient Near Eastern Law

The significance of the similarities between the ancient Near Eastern laws and the Old Testament law is debated. Some argue that these similarities indicate that Moses was not inspired—just well read. Others argue that it is fitting that the laws given to Moses would be culturally relevant to his setting (and therefore similar, but not identical, to the laws of the neighboring nations). One value of these other law codes is that they highlight (by way of contrast) the unique covenantal and relational aspects of the biblical law.



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Additionally, new studies in ancient Near Eastern law have discredited the 19th century critical view that codes of laws like the Pentateuch must be anachronistic. Since other nations had advanced legal and ethical law codes like these, it is reasonable to assume that Israel might have as well.

Law and Covenant

The Law exists in the context of God’s covenant with Israel; covenant, not law-keeping, is the basis of this relationship. The role of law is to administrate the covenant. The Law provides instruction for things that ruin relationship with God (e.g., idolatry and injustice). It also shows what loving God and others looks like.

Legal Corpora in the Hebrew Bible

Legal material in the Pentateuch is concentrated in several distinct sections. Jewish tradition identifies 613 laws in the *Torah*, interwoven with the other narrative material.

The Decalogue

The Decalogue is found in Exod 20:1–17 and in Deut 5:6–21. God gave the Decalogue to the people at Mount Sinai (Exod 20:1–17); Moses then repeated it in his sermon over 40 years later (Deut 5:6–21). The formulation in the Decalogue is apodictic (unqualified): God as king imposes demands in a “thou shalt/shalt not” form upon His subjects. These commandments represent the minimum moral and religious requirements for those in covenant relationship with God. These laws are directed at individuals as members of the covenant. Furthermore, these laws do not present particular consequences or rewards.

Covenant Code

The Covenant Code (or Book of the Covenant) is found in Exod 20:22–23:33. The Book of the Covenant (Exod 20:22–23:33; partially repeated in 34:10–26) consists of religious, humanitarian, and civil regulations. Most of its civil regulations follow the casuistic formulation of cuneiform laws: “If X (offense), then Y (legal consequences).” In general, these laws interpret the Decalogue or provide insight into its application in specific circumstances. This section also establishes rights for slaves (Exod 21:1–11) and establishes the calendar for Israel (Exod 23:10–19).

Priestly Code

The Priestly Code, found in Exod 25–Lev 16, is a large collection of laws (approximately 1/3 of the total) focused primarily on the priests and worship. Major topics covered include:

- circumcision
- the Passover meal
- keeping of the Sabbath
- inappropriate behavior for priests
- clean and unclean animals
- purification and atonement
- redeeming property



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- oaths
- cleansing lepers
- keeping Yom Kippur and Sukkot
- Nazirite vows
- consecration of priests
- ritual of the Red Heifer

Holiness Code

The Holiness Code is found in Lev 17–26. While the Priestly Code concentrates on the priesthood and worship, the Holiness Code is concerned with personal holiness. This section distinguishes between clean and unclean. It discusses:

- sacrificial law (Lev 17)
- ethics (Lev 18–22)
- holy days and occasions (Lev 23, 25)
- blessings and curses (Lev 26)

The Significance of the Legal Corpora

Opinions regarding the significance of various law sections within the Pentateuch vary. Wellhausen and Harnack consider the differences between these sections and their apparently haphazard structure as evidence of redactional activity or development of religious thought over time. Much effort has been spent attempting to reconstruct the sources from which these various legal corpora may have come and the circumstances which prompted them to be included in the canon.

Sailhamer emphasizes the importance of considering “the purpose of these various collections in *the final arrangement of the text*” (Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 357). He suggests that “one way to get at this question is to ask what each collection of laws contributes to the sense of the whole Pentateuch” (Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 357). Sailhamer argues that the legal codes in the Pentateuch “make good sense,” considering that the “author has a story to tell that involves both the interweaving of these events within the narratives and the specific laws to which they are connected” (Sailhamer, *Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 361). In this scheme, the author is highlighting the changes that occur in Israel’s relationship with God: as Israel fails to respond, additional laws are given. In contrast with those who follow a more critical view, this strategy focuses on the text as it stands and how the different parts contribute to the message of the whole. In this view, all three of the major law collections are intentionally embedded within the Sinai narratives:

- The simple laws of the Decalogue, Covenant Code, and the construction of the tabernacle are given first as “instruction” for covenant living.
- At Sinai, Israel fails to respond to God and forsakes Him, turning to the golden calf. At this time, the more elaborate laws of the Priestly Code are given.
- Israel sins again by making sacrifices to goat idols (Lev 17:1–9), and once again additional laws are given (Holiness Code).



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Thus, Sailhamer sees neither the development of religious thought nor redactional activity within the legal corpora of the Pentateuch. Instead, he asserts that there is an intentional message made up of laws and narrative working together to provide instruction.

Selected Resources for Further Study

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BRIAN JOHNSON¹

LAW OF MO’SES (Heb. *tōrah mōsheh*). Signifies the whole body of Mosaic legislation (1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 23:25; Ezra 3:2); called with reference to its divine origin *the law of the Lord* (Pss. 19:8; 37:31; Isa. 5:24; 30:9). In the latter sense it is called by way of eminence *this law* (Heb. *hattôrâ*, Deut. 1:5; 4:8, 44; 17:18–19; 27:3, 8). The law is especially embodied in the last four books of the Pentateuch. Respecting the question of the *origin* of the Mosaic law, we quote from J. Robertson, *Early Religion of Israel*, pp. 335ff.: “It occurs at once as a striking thing that the uniform tradition is, that Moses gave laws and ordinances to Israel; and that it is not a blind ascription of everything to some great ancestor may be gathered from the fact that there are ordinances and customs which are not traced to him. The Sabbath is made as old as the creation; circumcision is a mark of the covenant with Abraham; sacrifices are pre-Mosaic; and the abstaining from the sinew that shrank is traced to the time of Jacob. The body of laws, however, that formed the constitution of Israel as a people is invariably referred to Moses. The persistence with which it is represented that law, moral and ceremonial, came from Moses, and the acceptance of the laws by the whole people as of Mosaic origin, proves at least that it was a deeply-seated belief in the nation that the great leader had given some formal legal constitution to his people.... The testimony of a nation is not so lightly to be set aside; it is the work of criticism to explain and account for tradition, not to give it the lie.”

For a more recent study see George E. Mendenhall, “Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East,” in *Biblical Archaeologist* 17, no. 2 (May 1954): 26–46; no. 3 (Sept. 1954): 49–76.

¹ Rob Fleenor, “[Law in the Ancient Near East](#),” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).



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Principles. At the root of the Mosaic code lies (1) the principle of strict but righteous retribution, the intention being to eliminate evil and produce reverence for the righteousness of the holy God in the heart of the people; (2) the principle that punishment should correspond to the heinousness of the offense, that there shall fall upon the culprit what he has done to his neighbor; and that the punishment is to be limited to the guilty party and not be extended to his children (Deut. 24:16); (3) the principle that all presumptuous disobedience to God and to His holy ordinances should be punished with unsparing severity; and (4) the threat of “a curse and severe punishments from God, the avenger of all evil, for offenses which either escape the eye of civil justice, or which, like apostasy from the Lord to idolatry, may prevail to such a degree that the arm of the earthly magistrate is overpowered and paralyzed by the spirit of the time.”

Division. In analyzing the Mosaic code we adopt the divisions usual in systems of law—civil, criminal, judicial, constitutional, ecclesiastical, and ceremonial.

Civil. Civil law regulated the daily life of the Israelites and had provisions regarding persons and possessions.

Of Persons. The authority of the father was to be sacred; cursing, striking (Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9), or stubborn and willful disobedience were to be considered as capital crimes; but punishment of death was vested only in the congregation (Deut. 21:18–21); also the vow of a daughter was conditional upon consent of her father (Num. 30:3–5).

The right of the *firstborn* to a double portion of the inheritance was not to be set aside by partiality (Deut. 21:15–17); inheritance was allowed to daughters in default of sons, if the heiress married within her own tribe (Num. 27:6–8; cf. chap. 36); *unmarried daughters* were entirely dependent upon their fathers (30:3–5).

The power of the husband over his wife was such as to make the wife dependent even to the fulfilling of an engagement before God, as in the case of a vow (30:6–15); but a widow or divorced wife became independent and was bound by any vow she may have made (v. 9); upon marriage the husband was excused from war or public duties for one year (Deut. 24:5); *marriages* within certain degrees were forbidden (Lev. 18:1–24); *divorce* for “indecency” was allowed, but the divorced wife could not be taken back after marriage to another (Deut. 24:1–4); *slander* against a wife’s virginity was punishable by fine and by deprivation of power of divorce, but if the wife was proved guilty she was put to death (22:13–21); *a slave wife*, bought or captive, was not to be actual property, or to be sold; if ill-treated, was to be freed (Ex. 21:7–9; Deut. 21:10–14); *raising up of seed* (Levirate law) was a right to be claimed by widows with a view to preserving the family (25:5–10).

The *power of the master over the slave was limited*, so that the slave’s death under chastisement was punishable (Ex. 21:20), and maiming gave liberty (vv. 26–27). The *Hebrew slave* was freed at the Sabbatical year (his wife and children, if they entered bondage with him, were to go out with him), unless he formally consented to remain in perpetual servitude (21:1–6; Deut. 15:12–18); but in any case he seems to have received his freedom and that of his children at the Jubilee (Lev. 25:10); if a slave was sold to a resident alien (“stranger”), he was always redeemable, at a price proportional to the distance from the Jubilee (25:47–54). *Foreign slaves* were held and inherited as property forever (25:45–46), and fugitive slaves from other nations were not to be given up (Deut. 23:15).



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Strangers seem never to have been *sui juris*, or able to protect themselves; kindness toward them was enjoined as a duty (Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:33–34).

Of Possessions. All land was considered as belonging to Jehovah, with its holders as His tenants (Lev. 25:23); *sold land*, therefore, was to return to its original owners at the Jubilee, the price of sale to be calculated accordingly and redemption on equitable terms to be allowed at all times (25:25–28); a *house sold* was to be redeemed within one year, and if not, to pass to the purchaser altogether (25:29–30); land was to rest in Sabbatic and Jubilee years, and spontaneous growth of these years was to be for the poor, the stranger, and so on (23:22; Deut. 24:19–21). The *houses of the Levites*, or those in unwalled villages, were to be redeemed at any time, in the same way as land, and Levitical suburbs were inalienable (Lev. 25:31–34). *Sanctified* land or houses, tithes, or unclean firstborn animals might be redeemed at the addition of one-fifth their value (reckoned by a priest according to the distance from the Jubilee), if devoted and unredeemed by the owner, to be hallowed at the Jubilee forever and given to the priests (27:14–33). Regarding *inheritance* (which see), the following were the regulations respecting *losses*: if two men fought together, and as a result one was disabled from work, the other was to pay for the lost time (Ex. 21:18–19); claims for losses from trespass, or for any lost thing, were to be brought before the judges, and adverse judgment was followed by double payment to the other (22:9); a man finding any lost thing, and denying it, was obliged, when he wished to present a trespass offering, to restore the lost thing with an added fifth to the one to whom it belonged (Lev. 6:3–5). The general principle upon which these enactments were based was that an Israelite’s fellow countrymen were his brothers, and he was always to act the brotherly part. Therefore, whenever he found anything that was lost he was commanded to care for it and to make diligent search for its owner with a view of restoration (Deut. 22:1–4).

All *debts* to an Israelite were to be released at the Sabbatical year, but they might be exacted of strangers (Deut. 15:1–11); *interest* from an Israelite was not to be taken (Ex. 22:25–27; Deut. 23:19–20); *pledges* were not to be insolently or ruinously exacted (Deut. 24:6, 10–13, 17–18).

Taxation included *census money*. A poll tax (of a half shekel) was to be paid for the service of the Tabernacle (Ex. 30:12–16). *Spoil* in war was to be divided equally between combatants and the congregation; of the combatant’s half 1/500, and of the people’s 1/50, was to be given as a heave offering unto the Lord (Num. 21:26–30). *Tithes* (which see) included *poor laws* providing for the legal right of the poor to *glean* fields and vineyards (Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 24:19–22); for the hungry to eat of grain, and so on, on the spot (23:24–25); for daily payment of wages (24:15); and for the *maintenance of priests*. See Priest.

Criminal. Criminal law dealt with crimes and their punishment.

Offenses Against God. Offenses against God that were considered treason were all forbidden, in principle, by the Ten Commandments. The *first commandment* prohibited the acknowledgment of false gods (Ex. 22:20) and all idolatry (Deut. 13; 17:2–5). The *second commandment* prohibited witchcraft and false prophecy (Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:9–22; Lev. 19:31). The *third commandment* prohibited blasphemy (Lev. 24:15–16). The *fourth commandment* prohibited breaking the Sabbath (Num. 15:32–36). Punishment in all cases was death by stoning. Idolatrous cities were to be utterly destroyed.



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Offenses Against Man. The *fifth commandment* prohibited disobedience to, the cursing of, or the striking of parents (Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 21:18–21); it also prohibited disobedience to a priest or supreme judge. Punishment was death by stoning (cf. 1 Kings 21:10–14; 2 Chron. 24:20–21). The *sixth commandment* prohibited the wrongful taking of life. (1) Murder was punished without sanctuary, reprieve, or satisfaction (Ex. 21:12, 14; Deut. 19:11–13). If in a quarrel a pregnant woman was struck, and she lost her child, fine was exacted; but if she suffered other injury, full retribution (Ex. 21:22–23). Death of a slave by striking with a rod was to be punished (21:20–21). (2) Death by an ox known to gore was punishable by the death of the ox and its owner, but as this was not an intentional crime the owner was allowed to redeem his forfeited life by expiation money (Ex. 21:28–30). (3) In the case of accidental homicide, the guilty party could escape the avenger by fleeing to a city of refuge until death of the high priest (Num. 35:9–28; Deut. 4:41–43; 19:4–20). (4) Death at the hands of an unknown person was to be expiated by formal disavowal and sacrifice by elders of the nearest city (Deut. 21:1–9).

The *seventh commandment* pertained to the marriage relationship. (1) *Adultery* was punished by the death of both offenders; the *rape* of a married or betrothed woman, by the death of the offender (22:22–27). (2) The rape or seduction of an unbetrothed virgin was to be compensated by marriage, with a dowry (fifty shekels) and without power of divorce; or, if she was refused, by payment of a full dowry (Ex. 22:16–17; Deut. 22:28–29). (3) Unlawful marriages (incestuous, etc.) were to be punished, some by death, some by childlessness (Lev. 20).

The *eighth commandment* dealt with theft or trespass. (1) If stolen property found with the thief was an ox, donkey, or sheep, the thief had to make twofold restoration; if he had killed or sold the property, he had to make fivefold restoration for an ox and fourfold for a sheep (Ex. 22:1, 4). If the thief was unable to make restitution, he might be sold (v. 3); if he was killed while breaking in his death was unavenged (v. 2). (2) *Trespass*, injury to things, or money lent was to be compensated (22:5–15). (3) Perversion of justice by bribes, threats, and so on, was strictly forbidden (23:6–9). (4) Kidnapping was to be punished by death (Deut. 24:7).

The *ninth commandment* prohibited false witness and slander. (1) A false witness was punished with that which he wished done to the one against whom he testified (Ex. 23:1–3; Deut. 19:16–21). (2) Slander of a wife’s chastity was punished by a fine and the loss of the power of divorce (Deut. 22:13–19).

The *tenth commandment* forbade coveting and was applied in the criminal law in various ways. It was forbidden to remove boundary lines, under penalty of a curse (Deut. 27:17); a neighbor’s straying animal was to be returned (Ex. 23:4–5), or helped if in trouble (Deut. 22:1–4); injury done to the field or vineyard of another by animal or fire was to be compensated by the best of one’s own (Ex. 22:5–6); the killing of an animal was to be made good, animal for animal (Lev. 24:18); a blemish caused to another was to be punished by *lex talionis*, or damages (Ex. 21:18–19, 22–25; Lev. 24:19–20).

Judicial. See Law, Administration of.

Constitutional. See Israel, Constitution of.

Ecclesiastical and Ceremonial. Ecclesiastical and ceremonial law pertained to sacrifice and offerings and to holiness. For these, see the articles Sacrificial Offerings; Holiness, Ceremonial.



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Mosaic and Near Eastern Laws. As a result of archaeological excavations, especially of the past three decades, the law of Moses appears in a much clearer context. The Code of Hammurabi, dating from c. 1700 B.C., and discovered at ancient Susa (biblical Shushan) in 1901–2 has been classic in illuminating and illustrating Mosaic law. Now, however, Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hittite, and Canaanite codes are shedding their light on the Mosaic legislation. Especially must be mentioned the laws of Lipit-Ishtar, king of Isin, in central Babylonia, dating c. 1875 B.C., and even the earlier laws of Eshnunna, an ancient city NE of modern Baghdad. (See Francis R. Steele, *American Journal of Archaeology* 3 [1948]: 445–50; Albrecht Goetze, *Sumer* 4 [1948]: 63–102; P. A. Pohl, *Orientalia* 18 [1949]: 126–29.) In this context the famous Code of Hammurabi appears as a comparative latecomer in Babylonia. The Code of Eshnunna, antedating Hammurabi’s code by almost two centuries, contains the first exact parallel to any biblical law, namely, that concerning the division of oxen after a fatal combat between the animals (Ex. 21:35). In addition to these codes must be mentioned the old Babylonian and Assyrian tablets from Kanish in Cappadocia (nineteenth century B.C.). A wealth of legal material (fifteenth century B.C.) has also been recovered at Nuzi, near modern Kirkuk, since 1925. Assyrian laws have been recovered by the Germans in the city of Ashur on the Tigris, much of it coming from the period of Tiglath-pileser I (c. 1110 B.C.). Hittite laws have also come to light and date a century or two earlier than the laws of Tiglath-pileser. In comparison with these various laws “the Book of the Covenant exhibits a combination of simplicity in economic life and ethical humanitarianism in human relations which could have arisen only in early Israel” (W. F. Albright, *The O. T. in Modern Study* [1951], pp. 39f.).

Mosaic Law and the Code of Hammurabi. This famous seven-foot-tall piece of black diorite that regulated the commercial, domestic, social, and moral life of the Hammurabi period (c. 1728–1676 B.C.) constitutes one of the most astonishing legal finds in history. It antedates the Mosaic legislation by three centuries. This famous legal code illuminates the Mosaic laws. As a result of the careful study of the two bodies of material, it will be found that the Mosaic code is neither borrowed from nor dependent upon the Babylonian, but is unique in those specific features that suited Israel’s need as an elect, theocratic nation. In comparing the two it might be observed (1) that the Mosaic and Hammurabic codes are different in content, the Mosaic laws containing numerous ritual regulations and religious stipulations, Hammurabic laws being almost purely civil; and (2) the two codes regulate different societies, Hammurabi’s laws governing an urban, commercial, thickly settled, irrigation culture; the Mosaic laws governing a simple agricultural, pastoral people not urbanized or commercially developed but conscious of their divine calling.

The two codes vary in their morality. Alfred Jeremias succinctly states the essential contrast of the two bodies of laws, noting that the Babylonian code is characterized by significant limitations: “(1) There is no control of lust. (2) There is no limitation of selfishness through altruism. (3) There is nowhere to be found a postulate of charity. (4) There is nowhere to be found the religious motif which recognizes sin as the destruction of the people because it is in opposition to the fear of God. In the Hammurabic Code every trace of religious thought is absent; behind the Israelite law stands ever the ruling will of the Holy God; it bears throughout a religious character” (*The O. T. in the Light of the Ancient East* [1911], 2:112). It may be fairly said that the



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resemblances or the likenesses between the two codes are traceable to similarity of antecedents and general intellectual and cultural heritage.

M.F.U.

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See also Law; Ten Commandments.²

LAW OF MOSES. It will be the object of this article to give a brief analysis of the substance of this law, to point out its main principles, and to explain the position which it occupies in the progress of divine revelation. In order to do this the more clearly, it seems best to speak of the law, 1st. In relation to the past; 2nd. In its own intrinsic character. 1. (a) *In reference to the past*, it is all-important, for the proper understanding of the law, to remember its *entire dependence on the Abrahamic covenant*. See Gal. 3:17–24. That covenant had a twofold character. It contained the “spiritual promise” of the Messiah; but it contained also the temporal promises subsidiary to the former. (b) The nature of this *relation of the law to the promise* is clearly pointed out. The belief in God as the Redeemer of man, and the hope of his manifestation as such in the person of the Messiah, involved the belief that the Spiritual Power must be superior to all carnal obstructions, and that there was in man a spiritual element which could rule his life by communion with a spirit from above. But it involved also the idea of an antagonistic power of evil, from which man was to be redeemed, existing in each individual, and existing also in the world at large. (c) Nor is it less essential to remark the *period of the history* at which it was given. It marked and determined the transition of Israel from the condition of a tribe to that of a nation, and its definite assumption of a distinct position and office in the history of the world. (d) Yet, though new in its general conception, it was probably *not wholly new in its materials*. There must necessarily have been, before the law, commandments and revelations of a fragmentary character, under which Israel had hitherto grown up. So far therefore as they were consistent with the objects of the Jewish law, the customs of Palestine and the laws of Egypt would doubtless be traceable in the Mosaic system. (e) In close connection with, and almost in consequence of, this reference to antiquity, we find an *accommodation of the law* to the temper and circumstances of the Israelites, to which our Lord refers in the case of divorce, Matt. 19:7, 8, as necessarily interfering with its absolute perfection. In many cases it rather should be said to guide and modify existing usages than actually to sanction them; and the ignorance of their existence may lead to a conception of its ordinances not only erroneous, but actually the reverse of the truth. (f) In close connection with this subject we observe also *the gradual process by which the law was revealed* to the Israelites. In Ex. 19–23, in direct connection with the revelation from Mount Sinai, that which may be called the rough outline of the Mosaic law is given by God, solemnly recorded by Moses, and accepted

² Merrill F. Unger, [“Law of Moses,”](#) ed. R.K. Harrison, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).



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by the people. In Ex. 25–31 there is a similar outline of the Mosaic ceremonial. On the basis of these it may be conceived that the fabric of the Mosaic system gradually grew up under the requirements of the time. The first revelation of the law in anything like a perfect form is found in the book of Deuteronomy. Yet even then the revelation was not final; it was the duty of the prophets to amend and explain it in special points, Ezek. 18, and to bring out more clearly its great principles.

2. In giving an analysis of *the substance of the law*, it will probably be better to treat it, as any other system of laws is usually treated, by dividing it into—I. Laws Civil; II. Laws Criminal; III. Laws Judicial and Constitutional; IV. Laws Ecclesiastical and Ceremonial.

I. LAWS CIVIL.

1. LAWS OF PERSONS.

(a) FATHER AND SON.—*The power of a father* to be held sacred; cursing or smiting, Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9, and stubborn and willful disobedience, to be considered capital crimes. But uncontrolled power of life and death was apparently refused to the father, and vested only in the congregation. Deut. 21:18–21. *Right of the first-born* to a double portion of the inheritance not to be set aside by partiality. Deut. 21:15–17. *Inheritance by daughters* to be allowed in default of sons, provided, Num. 27:6–8, comp. 36, that heiresses married in their own tribe. *Daughters unmarried* to be entirely dependent on their father. Num. 30:3–5.

(b) HUSBAND AND WIFE.—*The power of a husband* to be so great that a wife could never be *sui juris*, or enter independently into any engagement, even before God. Num. 30:6–15. A widow or a divorced wife became independent, and did not again fall under her father’s power. ver. 9 *Divorce* (for uncleanness) allowed, but to be formal and irrevocable. Deut. 24:1–4. *Marriage within certain degrees forbidden*. Lev. 18, etc. *A slave wife*, whether bought or captive, not to be actual property, nor to be sold; if ill-treated, to be *ipso facto* free. Ex. 21:7–9; Deut. 21:10–14. *Slander* against a wife’s virginity to be punished by fine, and by deprivation of power of divorce; on the other hand, ante-conubial uncleanness in her to be punished by death. Deut. 22:13–21. *The raising up of seed* (Levirate law) a formal right to be claimed by the widow, under pain of infamy, with a view to preservation of families. Deut. 25:5–10.

(c) MASTER AND SLAVE.—*Power of master so far limited* that death under actual chastisement was punishable, Ex. 21:20; and maiming was to give liberty *ipso facto*. vs. 26, 27. *The Hebrew slave to be freed* at the sabbatical year, and provided with necessaries (his wife and children to go with only if they came to his master with him), unless by his own formal act he consented to be a perpetual slave. Ex. 21:1–6; Deut. 15:12–18. In any case, it would seem, to be freed at the jubilee, Lev. 25:10, with his children. If sold to a resident alien, to be always redeemable, at a price proportioned to the distance of the jubilee. Lev. 25:47–54. *Foreign slaves* to be held and inherited as property forever, Lev. 25:45, 46; and fugitive slaves from foreign nations not to be given up. Deut. 23:15.



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(d) STRANGERS.—These seem never to have been *sui juris*, or able to protect themselves, and accordingly protection and kindness toward them are enjoined as a sacred duty. Ex. 22:21; Lev. 19:33, 34.

2. LAW OF THINGS.

(a) LAWS OF LAND (AND PROPERTY).—(1) *All land to be the property of God alone*, and its holders to be deemed his tenants. Lev. 25:23. (2) *All sold land* therefore to return to its original owners at the jubilee, and the price of sale to be calculated accordingly; and redemption on equitable terms to be allowed at all times. Lev. 25:25–27. *A house sold* to be redeemable within a year; and if not redeemed, to pass away altogether. ch. 25:29, 30. *But the houses of the Levites*, or those in unwalled villages, to be redeemable at all times, in the same way as land; and the Levitical suburbs to be inalienable. ch. 25:31–34. (3) *Land or houses sanctified*, or tithes, or unclean firstlings, to be capable of being redeemed, at six-fifths value (calculated according to the distance from the jubilee year by the priest); if devoted by the owner and unredeemed, to be hallowed at the jubilee forever, and given to the priests; if only by a possessor, to return to the owner at the jubilee. Lev. 27:14–34. (4) *Inheritance*.

(b) LAWS OF DEBT.—(1) *All debts* (to an Israelite) to be released at the seventh (sabbatical) year; a blessing promised to obedience, and a curse on refusal to lend. Deut. 15:1–11. (2) *Usury* (from Israelites) not to be taken. Ex. 22:25–27; Deut. 23:19, 20. (3) *Pledges* not to be insolently or ruinously exacted. Deut. 24:6, 10–13, 17, 18.

(c) TAXATION.—(1) *Census-money*, a poll-tax (of a half shekel), to be paid for *the service of the tabernacle*. Ex. 30:12–16. All spoil in war to be halved; of the combatants' half, one five-hundredth, of the people's, one fiftieth, to be paid for a “heave offering” to Jehovah. (2) *Tithes*.—(α) *Tithes of all produce* to be given for maintenance of the Levites. Num. 18:20–24. (Of this one tenth to be paid as a heave offering for maintenance of the priests. vs. 24–32.) (β) *Second tithe* to be bestowed in religious feasting and charity, either at the holy place or (every third year) at home. Deut. 14:22–28. (γ) *First-fruits* of corn, wine, and oil (at least one sixtieth, generally one fortieth, for the priests) to be offered at Jerusalem, with a solemn declaration of dependence on God the King of Israel. Num. 18:12, 13; Deut. 26:1–15. *Firstlings* of clean beasts; the redemption money (five shekels) of man and (half shekel, or one shekel) of unclean beasts to be given to the priests after sacrifice. Num. 18:15–18. (3) *Poor laws*.—(α) *Gleanings* (in field or vineyard) to be a legal right of the poor. Lev. 19:9, 10; Deut. 24:19–22. (β) *Slight trespass* (eating on the spot) to be allowed as legal. Deut. 23:24, 25. (γ) *Second tithe* (see 2 β) to be given in charity. (δ) *Wages* to be paid day by day. Deut. 24:15. (4) *Maintenance of priests*. Num. 18:8–32. (α) *Tenth of Levites' tithe*. (See 2 α.) (β) *The heave and wave offerings* (breast and right shoulder of all peace offerings). (γ) *The meat and sin offerings*, to be eaten solemnly and only in the holy place. (δ) *First-fruits* and redemption money. (See 2 γ.) (ε) *Price of all devoted things*, unless specially given for a sacred service. A man's service, or that of his household, to be redeemed at 50 shekels for man, 30 for woman, 20 for boy, and 10 for girl.



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II. LAWS CRIMINAL.

1. OFFENCES AGAINST GOD (of the nature of treason.)

1st Command. *Acknowledgment of false gods*, Ex. 22:20, as e.g., Molech Lev. 20:1–5, and generally all *idolatry* Deut. 13; 17:2–5.

2nd Command. *Witchcraft and false prophecy*. Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:9–22; Lev. 19:31.

3rd Command. *Blasphemy*. Lev. 24:15, 16.

4th Command. *Sabbath-breaking*. Num. 15:32, 36.

Punishment in all cases, death by stoning. Idolatrous cities to be utterly destroyed.

2. OFFENCES AGAINST MAN.

5th Command. *Disobedience to* or cursing or smiting of *parents*, Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 21:18–21, to be punished by death by stoning, publicly adjudged and inflicted; so also of disobedience to the priests (as judges) or the Supreme Judge. Comp. 1 Kings 21:10–14 (Naboth); 2 Chron. 24:21 (Zechariah).

6th Command. (1) *Murder* to be punished by death without sanctuary or reprieve, or satisfaction. Ex. 21:12, 14; Deut. 19:11–13. Death of a slave, actually under the rod, to be punished. Ex. 21:20, 21. (2) *Death by negligence* to be punished by death. Ex. 21:28–30. (3) *Accidental homicide*: the avenger of blood to seek safety by flight to a city of refuge, there to remain till the death of the high priest. Num. 35:9–28; Deut. 4:41–43; 19:4–10. (4) *Uncertain murder* to be expiated by formal disavowal and sacrifice by the elders of the nearest city. Deut. 21:1–9. (5) *Assault* to be punished by *lex talionis*, or damages. Ex. 21:18, 19, 22–25; Lev. 24:19, 20.

7th Command. (1) *Adultery* to be punished by death of both offenders; the rape of a married or betrothed woman, by death of the offender. Deut. 22:13–27. (2) *Rape or seduction* of an unbetrothed virgin to be compensated by marriage, with dowry (50 shekels), and without power of divorce; or, if she be refused, by payment of full dowry. Ex. 22:16, 17; Deut. 22:28, 29. (3) *Unlawful marriages* (incestuous, etc.) to be punished, some by death, some by childlessness. Lev. 20.

8th Command. (1) *Theft* to be punished by fourfold or double restitution; a nocturnal robber might be slain as an outlaw. Ex. 22:1–4. (2) *Trespass* and injury of things lent to be compensated. Ex. 23:5–15. (3) *Perversion of justice* (by bribes, threats, etc.), and especially oppression of strangers, strictly forbidden. Ex. 22:9, etc. (4) *Kidnapping* to be punished by death. Deut. 24:7.

9th Command. *False witness* to be punished by *lex talionis*. Ex. 23:1–3; Deut. 19:16–21. Slander of a wife’s chastity, by fine and loss of power of divorce. Deut. 22:18, 19.

A fuller consideration of the tables of the Ten Commandments is given elsewhere. [TEN COMMANDMENTS.]

III. LAWS JUDICIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL.

1. JURISDICTION.



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(a) *Local judges* (generally Levites, as more skilled in the law) appointed, for ordinary matters, probably by the people with approbation of the supreme authority (as of Moses in the wilderness), Ex. 18:25; Deut. 1:15–18, through all the land. Deut. 16:18. (b) *Appeal to the priests* (at the holy place), or to *the judge*; their sentence final, and to be accepted under pain of death. See Deut. 17:8–13; comp. appeal to Moses, Ex. 18:26. (c) *Two witnesses* (at least) required in capital matters. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6, 7. (d) *Punishment*, except by special command, to be personal, and not to extend to the family. Deut. 24:16. Stripes allowed and limited, Deut. 25:1–3, so as to avoid outrage on the human frame. All this would be to a great extent set aside—1st. By the summary jurisdiction of the king, see 1 Sam. 22:11–19 (Saul); 2 Sam. 12:1–5; 14:4–11; 1 Kings 3:16–28, which extended even to the deposition of the high priest. 1 Sam. 22:17, 18; 1 Kings 2:26, 27. The practical difficulty of its being carried out is seen in 2 Sam. 15:2–6, and would lead of course to a certain delegation of his power. 2nd. By the appointment of the Seventy, Num. 11:24–30, with a solemn religious sanction. In later times there was a local sanhedrin of twenty-three in each city, and two such in Jerusalem, as well as the Great Sanhedrin, consisting of seventy members, besides the president, who was to be the high priest if duly qualified, and controlling even the king and high priest. The members were priest, scribes (Levites), and elders (of other tribes). A court of exactly this nature is noticed as appointed to supreme power by Jehoshaphat. See 2 Chron. 19:8–11.

2. ROYAL POWER.

The king's power limited by the law, as written and formally accepted by the king; and directly forbidden to be despotic. Deut. 17:14–20; comp. 1 Sam. 10:25. Yet he had power of taxation (to one tenth) and of compulsory service, 1 Sam. 8:10–18, the declaration of war, 1 Sam. 11, etc. There are distinct traces of a “mutual contract,” 2 Sam. 5:3; a “league,” 2 Kings 11:17; the remonstrance with Rehoboam being clearly not extraordinary. 1 Kings 13:1–6.

The princes of the congregation.—The heads of the tribes, see Josh. 9:15, seem to have had authority under Joshua to act for the people, comp. 1 Chron. 27:16–22; and in the later times “the princes of Judah” seem to have had power to control both the king and the priests. See Jer. 26:10–24; 38:4, 5, etc.

3. ROYAL REVENUE.

(1) *Tenth of produce.* (2) *Domain land.* 1 Chron. 27:26–29. Note confiscation of criminal's land. 1 Kings 21:15. (3) *Bond service,* 1 Kings 5:17, 18, chiefly on foreigners. 1 Kings 9:20–22; 2 Chron. 2:16, 17. (4) *Flocks and herds.* 1 Chron. 27:29–31. (5) *Tributes* (gifts) from foreign kings. (6) *Commerce;* especially in Solomon's time. 1 Kings 10:22, 29, etc.

IV. ECCLESIASTICAL AND CEREMONIAL LAW.

1. LAW OF SACRIFICE (considered as the sign and the appointed means of the union with God, on which the holiness of the people depended).

a. ORDINARY SACRIFICES.



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- (α) *The whole burnt offering*, Lev. 1, of the herd or the flock; to be offered continually, Ex. 29:38–42; and the fire on the altar never to be extinguished. Lev. 6:8–13.
- (β) *The meat offering*, Lev. 2; 6:14–23, of flour, oil, and frankincense, unleavened and seasoned with salt.
- (γ) *The peace offering*, Lev. 3; 7:11–21, of the herd or the flock; either a thank offering or a vow or free-will offering.
- (δ) *The sin offering or trespass offering*. Lev. 4, 5, 6.
 - (a) For sins committed in ignorance. Lev. 4.
 - (b) For vows unwittingly made and broken, or uncleanness unwittingly contracted. Lev. 5.
 - (c) For sins wittingly committed. Lev. 6:1–7.

b. EXTRAORDINARY SACRIFICES.

- (α) *At the consecration of priests*. Lev. 8, 9.
- (β) *At the purification of women*. Lev. 12.
- (γ) *At the cleansing of lepers*. Lev. 13, 14.
- (δ) *On the great day of atonement*. Lev. 16.
- (ε) *On the great festivals*. Lev. 23.

2. LAW OF HOLINESS (arising from the union with God through sacrifice).

a. HOLINESS OF PERSONS.

- (α) *Holiness of the whole people* as "children of God," Ex. 19:5, 6; Lev. 11–15, 17, 18; Deut. 14:1–21, shown in
 - (a) The dedication of the first-born, Ex. 13:2, 12, 13; 22:29, 30, etc.; and the offering of all firstlings and first-fruits. Deut. 26, etc.
 - (b) Distinction of clean and unclean food. Lev. 11; Deut. 14.
 - (c) Provision for purification. Lev. 12, 13, 14, 15; Deut. 23:1–14.
 - (d) Laws against disfigurement. Lev. 19:27; Deut. 14:1; comp. Deut. 25:3, against excessive scourging.
 - (e) Laws against unnatural marriages and lusts. Lev. 18, 20.
- (β) *Holiness of the priests (and Levites)*.
 - (a) Their consecration. Lev. 8, 9; Ex. 29.
 - (b) Their special qualifications and restrictions. Lev. 21, 22:1–9.
 - (c) Their rights, Deut. 18:1–6; Num. 18, and authority. Deut. 17:8–13.

b. HOLINESS OF PLACES AND THINGS.

- (α) *The tabernacle* with the ark, the vail, the altars, the laver, the priestly robes, etc. Ex. 25–28, 30.



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(β) *The holy place* chosen for the permanent erection of the tabernacle, Deut. 12, 14:22–29, where only all sacrifices were to be offered and all tithes, first-fruits, vows, etc., to be given or eaten.

C. HOLINESS OF TIMES.

- (α) *The Sabbath*. Ex. 20:9–11; 23:12, etc.
- (β) *The sabbatical year*. Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:1–7, etc.
- (γ) *The year of jubilee*. Lev. 25:8–16, etc.
- (δ) *The passover*. Ex. 12:3–27; Lev. 23:4, 5.
- (ε) *The feast of weeks* (pentecost). Lev. 23:15, etc.
- (ζ) *The feast of tabernacles*. Lev. 23:33–43.
- (η) *The feast of trumpets*. Lev. 23:23–25.
- (θ) *The day of atonement*. Lev. 23:26–32, etc.

Such is the substance of the Mosaic law. The leading principle of the whole is its THEOCRATIC CHARACTER, its reference, that is, of all action and thoughts of men *directly and immediately* to the will of God. It follows from this that it is to be regarded not merely as a law, that is, a rule of conduct based on known truth and acknowledged authority, but also as a *revelation of God's nature* and his dispensations. But this theocratic character of the law depends necessarily on the *belief in God*, as not only the creator and sustainer of the world, but as, by special covenant, *the head of the Jewish nation*. This immediate reference to God as their king is clearly seen as the groundwork of their whole polity. From this theocratic nature of the law follow important deductions with regard to (a) the view which it takes of political society; (b) the extent of the scope of the law; (c) the penalties by which it is enforced; and (d) the character which it seeks to impress on the people. (a) The Mosaic law seeks the basis of its polity, first, in the absolute sovereignty of God; next, in the relationship of each individual to God, and through God to his countrymen. It is clear that such a doctrine, while it contracts none of the common theories, yet lies beneath them all. (b) The law, as proceeding directly from God and referring directly to him, is necessarily *absolute in its supremacy* and *unlimited in its scope*. It is supreme over the governors, as being only the delegates of the Lord, and therefore it is incompatible with any despotic authority in them. On the other hand, it is supreme over the governed, recognizing no inherent rights in the individual as prevailing against or limited the law. It regulated the whole life of an Israelite. His actions were rewarded and punished with great minuteness and strictness—and that according to the standard, not of their consequences but of their intrinsic morality. (c) *The penalties and rewards* by which the law is enforced are such as depend on the direct theocracy. With regard to individual actions, it may be noticed that, as generally some penalties are inflicted by the subordinate and some only by the supreme authority, so among the Israelites some penalties came from the hand of man, some directly from the providence of God. (d) But perhaps the most important consequence of the theocratic nature of the law was the *peculiar character of goodness* which it sought to *impress on the people*. The Mosaic law, beginning with piety as its first object, enforces most emphatically the purity essential to those who, by their union with God, have recovered the hope of intrinsic goodness, while it views



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righteousness and love rather as deductions from these than as independent objects. The appeal is not to any dignity of human nature, but to the obligations of communion with a holy God. The subordination, therefore, of this idea also to the religious idea is enforced; and so long as the due supremacy of the latter was preserved, all other duties would find their places in proper harmony.³

LAW OF MOSES—is the whole body of the Mosaic legislation (1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 23:25; Ezra 3:2). It is called by way of eminence simply “the Law” (Heb. Torah, Deut. 1:5; 4:8, 44; 17:18, 19; 27:3, 8). As a written code it is called the “book of the law of Moses” (2 Kings 14:6; Isa. 8:20), the “book of the law of God” (Josh. 24:26).

The great leading principle of the Mosaic law is that it is essentially theocratic; i.e., it refers at once to the commandment of God as the foundation of all human duty.⁴

Law of Moses, The

1. Is the law of God. Le 26:46.
2. Given
 - a. In the desert. Eze 20:10, 11.
 - b. At Horeb. De 4:10, 15; 5:2.
 - c. From the Mount Sinai. Ex 19:11, 20.
 - d. By disposition of angels. Ac 7:53.
 - e. Through Moses as mediator. De 5:5, 27, 28; Joh 1:17; Ga 3:19.
 - f. To the Jews. Le 26:46; Ps 78:5.
 - g. After the exodus. De 4:45; Ps 81:4, 5.
 - h. To no other nation. De 4:8; Ps 147:20.
3. None to approach the Mount while God gave. Ex 19:13, 21–24; Heb 12:20.
4. Remarkable phenomena connected with, at giving of. Ex 19:16–19.
5. Terror of Israel at receiving. Ex 19:16; 20:18–20; De 5:5, 23–25.
6. Additions made to, in the plains of Moab by Jordan. Nu 36:13.
7. Called
 - a. A fiery law. De 33:2.
 - b. Word spoken by angels. Heb 2:2.
 - c. Ministration of death. 2 Co 3:7.
 - d. Ministration of condemnation. 2 Co 3:9.

³ William Smith, [*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986).

⁴ M. G. Easton, [*Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*](#) (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 417.



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- e. Lively oracles. Ac 7:38.
- f. Royal law. Jas 2:8.
- g. Book of the law. De 30:10; Jos 1:8.
- h. Book of Moses. 2 Ch 25:4; 35:12.
8. Rehearsed by Moses. De 1:1–3.
9. Entire of, written in a book. De 31:9.
10. Book of, laid up in the sanctuary. De 31:26.
11. Tables of, laid up in the ark. De 10:5.
12. Divided into
 - a. Moral, embodied in the ten commandments. De 5:22; 10:4.
 - b. Ceremonial, relating to manner of worshipping God. Le 7:37, 38; Heb 9:1–7.
 - c. Civil, relating to administration of justice. De 17:9–11; Ac 23:3; 24:6.
 - d. A covenant of works to the Jews as a nation. De 28:1, 15; Jer 31:32.
13. Taught the Jews
 - a. To love and fear God. De 6:5; 10:12, 13; Mt 22:36, 38.
 - b. To love their neighbour. Le 19:18; Mt 22:39.
 - c. Strict justice and impartiality. Le 19:35, 36.
 - d. All punishments awarded according to. Joh 8:5; 19:7; Heb 10:28.
14. All Israelites required
 - a. To know. Ex 18:16.
 - b. To observe. De 4:6; 6:2.
 - c. To lay up, in their hearts. De 6:6; 11:18.
 - d. To remember. Mal 4:4.
 - e. To teach their children. De 6:7; 11:19.
15. Kings to write and study. De 17:18, 19.
16. Good kings enforced. 2 Ki 23:24, 25; 2 Ch 31:21.
17. Priests and Levites to teach. De 33:8–10; Ne 8:7; Mal 2:7.
18. The scribes were learned in, and expounded. Ezz 7:6; Mt 23:2.
19. Public instruction given to youth in. Lu 2:46; Ac 22:3.
20. Publicly read
 - a. At the feast of tabernacles in the sabbatical year. De 31:10–13.
 - b. By Joshua. Jos 8:34, 35.
 - c. By Ezra. Ne 8:2, 3.
 - d. In the synagogues every Sabbath day. Ac 13:15; 15:21.
21. A means of national reformation. 2 Ch 34:19–21; Ne 8:13–18.
22. A shadow of good things to come. Heb 10:1.
23. Could not give righteous and life. Ga 3:21; Ro 8:3, 4; Heb 10:1.
24. A schoolmaster to lead to Christ. Ga 3:24.
25. Christ
 - a. Made under. Ga 4:4.
 - b. Circumcised according to. Lu 2:21; Ro 15:8.
 - c. Came not to destroy but to fulfil. Mt 5:17, 18.



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- d. Attended all feasts of. Joh 2:23; 7:2, 10, 37.
 - e. Fulfilled all precepts of. Ps 40:7, 8.
 - f. Fulfilled all types and shadows of. Heb 9:8, 11–14; 10:1, 11–14.
 - g. Magnified and made honourable. Isa 42:21.
 - h. Bore the curse of. De 21:23; Ga 3:13.
 - i. Abrogated, as a covenant of works. Ro 7:4.
26. Was not the manifestation of the grace of God. Joh 1:17; Ro 8:3, 4.
27. Could not disannul the covenant of grace made in Christ. Ga 3:17.
28. Jewish converts would have all Christians observe. Ac 15:1.
29. The Jews
- a. Jealous for. Joh 9:28, 29; Ac 21:20.
 - b. Held those ignorant of, accursed. Joh 7:49.
 - c. From regard to, rejected Christ. Ro 9:31–33.
 - d. Accused Christ of breaking. Joh 19:7.
 - e. Accused Christians of speaking. Ac 6:11–14; 21:28.
 - f. Broke it themselves. Joh 7:19.
 - g. Dishonoured God by breaking. Ro 2:23.
 - h. Shall be judged by. Joh 5:45; Ro 2:12.
30. Was a burdensome yoke. Ac 15:10.
31. Darkness, &c at giving of, illustrative of obscurity of Mosaic age. Heb 12:18–24.⁵

⁵ R.A. Torrey, [*The New Topical Text Book: A Scriptural Text Book for the Use of Ministers, Teachers, and All Christian Workers*](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2001).