

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11, Exodus 21-22

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 11, Exodus 21-22.

Well, the hour cometh, and now is, so let's begin.

Let's pray together. Father, we come to you again, recognizing our absolute dependence upon you. We could study the Bible as we study any other book and would gain some value from it, but it is not any other book.

It is the very word of God, so we ask you to come and pour out your spirit upon us this evening. Help us to see your face beyond the sacred page. Help us, oh Lord, to hear your voice beyond the printed words.

Help us, oh Lord, to encounter you as we open our hearts to you through your word. In your name, we pray, amen.

We are looking at the middle section of this particular division, the covenant.

We saw, first of all, the preparation for the covenant in the way in which God both, not both, but triply, cognitively, as he reminded them of the past and made promises to them for the future, and he also prepared them volitionally as he gave them three tasks to fulfill, which would sort of be small baby steps on the way to obedience to the covenant, and finally, effectively, as he came in the sound of the trumpet blowing and the visual effects of the smoke coming down upon, the smoke and fire coming down upon the mountain. Now then, in chapters 20 through 23, we have the presentation of the covenant. We saw the historical, excuse me, the introduction: God made this covenant with them.

Then, in the historical prologue in chapter 20, verse 2, when we're told God had brought them out of Egypt. That's the basis for the offering of this covenant and then the covenant itself. We saw how in chapter 20, verses 1 through 17, we have the summary of the stipulations and the terms, and we noticed that these are not stated as cases.

These are not stated as, if this happens, then you do this. That's what we're going to see coming up this evening. Rather, they are stated in absolute terms.

You shall not, or you shall. And we talked about how this is possible because the maker of the covenant is the creator of the world. And that person can say, you may never do this, or you must always do this.

A king who is presenting a law code, all he can say is, in this kind of a situation, you have to do this. In that kind of situation, you have to do that. Why? Because I'm king, and I'll kill you if you don't.

But here, in this remarkable little summary, are the absolute principles upon which the cases, then, that we're going to look at tonight and again next week, are built. Now, then, in verses 18 through the end of chapter 21, verse 26, we have a kind of an interlude. And it's in two parts.

First of all, in 18 through 21. And we're told When the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood afar off and said to Moses, You speak to us and we'll listen, but do not let God speak to us lest we die. Moses said to the people, Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, so that you may not sin.

The people stood far off while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. Now, what does this tell us, first of all, about how they received the Ten Commandments? Yeah, but what are they asking not to happen anymore? Hearing God's voice. They heard God's voice speaking the Ten Commandments.

Turn over to Deuteronomy, chapter 4, verse 12. Someone read that, please. Yes, now 33, please.

Someone? Mm-hmm. Now, chapter 5, verses 23 to 27. You can't hear me.

And you said, Behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live. So, I think we often sort of slide over this.

The Bible says God spoke the Ten Commandments in an audible voice. And 40 years later, Moses says, Folks, remember this. Nobody else has ever heard God speak in an audible voice.

It's pretty amazing. Now, what is their response? Back to Exodus. They're afraid, and they want what to happen. They don't want God to talk to them anymore.

That's quite interesting. They want a little distance between them and God. Now, what does Moses give as the reason for God's doing this in verse 20? Anyone? It's a test.

A test of what? So that the fear of God. Now, notice, he says, Don't fear. For God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.

Now, don't fear because God wants you to fear. What's going on here? It's a different kind of fear. There is terror.

The terror of the unknown. The terror of the awesome. A voice was speaking out of the darkness, and you don't know where it's coming from.

Yes, God isn't interested in that kind of fear. It is a respect. It is a way of responding where you don't mess around with God.

You choose your life behavior very carefully because you know the kind of being you're dealing with. God doesn't want us to live in terror. God doesn't want us to live in that sense of abject fear, where we don't know what he's going to do to us next.

But he does want us to live our lives in the full knowledge that there is a God who is going to hold us accountable for our behavior. He doesn't want them to come to the last judgment and say, Well, I didn't know. So, Moses says God was doing this on purpose.

God was indeed trying to create in you that sense of awe. Who is it we're dealing with here? A half-blind great-grandpa who lives in the sky and says, Oh, that's all right, honey. No, no.

The awesome creator is himself morally pure and expects his people to be morally pure. Okay, now then, there's a second phase to this little interlude. Verses 22 to 26.

Now, as I say, these verses do have their commands. And yet, they're not part of the Ten Commandments. And in form, they don't quite fit what comes next.

So, what do you think is going on here? What is the point of these verses? All right. All right. It's about worship.

It's about establishing this pattern of worship. And we worship the creator, not the created. Now, why is that important to say here? He talks about the kind of altar that you can make.

You shan't make gods of silver alongside of me. What's the point of saying these things here, sort of in between the summary and the full form, if you will? It has to do with idolatry. The whole fundamental issue that's been running through this book is who is God? I think it also refers to that.

Yes, yes. Yes, but they tried a little bit later on. Yes, I think this is what's happening here and in between.

He's saying, remember what this is all about. Your ethical behavior is an expression of worship of me. Now, again, this puts ethics on a completely different level than you have elsewhere in the ancient world.

Elsewhere in the ancient world, ethics are a matter of the state. They are not a matter of religion. The king is smart enough to know that a society where everybody lies is a society that's going to collapse.

And so, he says, nobody is going to lie in my kingdom. Why? Because I say so. Here, don't lie because the creator does not lie.

Here we get the reason why a society where everybody lies will collapse. Here we get the reason why a society where everybody steals everybody else's stuff will collapse. The pagans are smart enough to know they're not dumb people.

They're smart enough to know, well, I don't know why, but you can't let that stuff go on. If you do, it's all over. Now, it's fascinating to me to look at Russia.

Russia, the USSR, was a parade example of what I'm talking about. The rulers understood you can't allow theft. The rulers understood you can't allow adultery.

The rulers understood you can't allow lying. But that didn't apply to them because it's not written into the nature of reality.

It's just a pragmatic fact of life. Now comes decaying Western culture into Russia. And for the average citizen today in Russia, life is much more unethical than it was under the KGB.

Because previously it was enforced on the common people by the leadership because for whatever reason this is the way society works. Now, of course, again, I say this doesn't apply to us. Now, you say decaying Western culture. What do you mean? I mean, we used to be ethical, remarkably ethical, because we understood that ethics are an expression of worship.

We lost that idea 75 years ago, and we've been running on momentum, which is disappearing.

Why should I be ethical? It doesn't pay off. Lying is much more practical than telling the truth. So, this little passage, I think it's very important as sort of in between the Ten Commandments and the examples that are coming up, establishing ethical behavior is an expression of worship.

Why should we not lie? Because our Savior doesn't lie. Well, maybe lying works some of the time. Who cares? Our Savior doesn't lie.

Maybe stealing works some of the time. Who cares? Our Savior doesn't steal. And so, we've had this amazing, amazing couple of hundred years.

Where a culture has been remarkably ethical. Because underneath that culture has been this. Now, this is gone.

And we wonder where the ethics went. Okay. We come then to the examples of these absolute principles.

They are stated as cases. If this happens, then this is what you do. Now, as I commented in the background, three types of laws are intermingled throughout this covenant section.

You have moral laws. Moral laws express absolute truth. And they are typically stated absolutely.

They tend to deal with issues of life itself. And the punishment is typically death. Then you have civil laws.

Civil laws are typically stated as cases. And you have principles in time-bound form. The range of issues is very wide.

From issues of life itself to monetary matters. And in the same way, the punishments range from death to a fine. I've talked about this before.

But let me say it again in terms of an example. What do I mean? Time-bound form. You're dealing with matters that relate to that civil society.

So, you've got the law of the goading ox. I have an ox. And I know that he's mean.

And I don't spank him up. And he kills you. I'm a murderer.

And I'm liable for the death penalty. On the other hand, my ox has always been as mild-mannered as a butterfly. And so, of course, I don't spank him up.

Why should I? One day, for no apparent reason, he goes berserk and kills my neighbor. I'm innocent. And my neighbor's family may not exact blood vengeance upon me.

Well, I like that law because I don't have any oxen. I do have a car, however. And I know the brakes are bad.

And I drive it anyhow. And the brakes fail. And I kill you.

Whatever the state of Kentucky says, God says I'm a murderer. Now, as far as I knew, my brakes were fine. I had no reason whatsoever to wonder about them.

And all of a sudden, they fail. And I hit you and kill you. Whatever the state of Kentucky says, I am not liable.

What's the principle? The principle is knowledge is responsibility. But the principle is stated in a time-bound form. So always, in civil laws, we must constantly be translating.

What's the principle here? The eternal, unchanging principle that is expressed in this time-conditioned setting. Finally, then, there is ceremonial law. Ceremonial law is expressed both in absolute terms and in cases.

It concerns worship. The punishment is exclusion from worship, and it's often stated in terms of the community.

These laws are object lessons. They are teaching a spiritual truth. How serious is sin? You need to bring a lamb from your flock.

A lamb that is all that a lamb ought to be. No defects. One that you can sell in the market and get a good price for.

That kind of a lamb. And you bring it. And you lay your hand on its head.

And you, the sinner, slit its throat while the priest catches the blood. How serious is sin? Life and death are serious. There is no forgiveness of sin.

But in the shedding of blood. But one day, that wild man, out there along the Jordan, clothed in a ragged old camel skin. If you know about camels, you know there are better things to wear than camel skins.

That man says, behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And the sacrificial system comes to a screeching halt. Because you see, there are two things about object lessons.

I want to teach little Johnny a very, very complicated mathematical abstraction. And that is that squiggle, cross, squiggle, parallel lines, bent cross. Now, folks, that's a high-level abstraction.

So how am I going to teach him? Johnny, how many markers have I got? Daddy, how many markers? Eh, eh, three. No, no, no. Try again.

Two. Yes, yes. You're smart.

You take after your mother. All right, let's go. How many markers have I got? Daddy, can I see the other one? No.

How many? Two. Good, good. Now, how many markers? Oh, daddy.

When I add two to two, how many do I have? Four. Yes, yes, yes. You got it.

Object lessons. Now, there are two things about object lessons. Number one, they have to be done perfectly every time.

Two plus two is four. Two plus two is four. Every time, it's got to be done perfectly.

There is no room for fudging. Perfectly done. That's number one.

Number two is, once you get the point, you don't need the objects anymore. Johnny's going to go off to college and do calculus. As he goes out the door, I say, Johnny, you got your 50,000 markers? He says, no, Dad, I think I got it.

I think I got it. So, moral law is for all time, for all places, for all peoples, as it stands. Civil law is a timeless principle but encased in a time-conditioned form.

Ceremonial law is object lessons teaching spiritual truth. So, our opponents will say, well, you say we ought to keep the Ten Commandments. Why don't you people sacrifice sheep then? Because the Ten Commandments are not on the same level as the ceremonial law, that's why.

So, is the law done away with by Christ? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Are there aspects of it that are done away with by the coming of Christ? Absolutely.

But, in terms of the enduring moral principles, they are written into the nature of things by the creator himself. Okay, all that to get us started here. But all that to say, ethics, by putting the law code into the context of a covenant, puts ethics on a completely different basis than they are everywhere else in the Near East.

It's been pointed out that many of these cases that we're going to see, and most classically, the Law of the Goring Ox, many of them are found in other law codes in the ancient world. So, it's often said, well, Moses just copied something out of the book somewhere. No, God is very economical.

If these pagan people are bright enough to discover some enduring principles, God says, why reinvent the wheel? But the difference is, the difference is the motivation. Why do I do this? Because it expresses the will of my covenant Lord, who has

delivered me from captivity and is the creator of the world. So, the whole why is radically altered.

And that makes all the difference in the world. Okay. So, 21 to 23 are the examples of these principles.

What does it mean not to steal? What does it mean not to lie? What does it mean not to commit adultery, etc., etc.? So, 21, 1 to 11, what are these commands about? How you treat servants. Now, isn't that interesting? Again, I don't know why the laws are in the order they're in here. So, I cannot say I have the answer, and I hope you figure it out.

I just want us to think about the possible explanations. Why would you begin these examples of covenant obedience with laws about how you treat a slave? Number one, they came from being slaves. So, they need kind of easy sometimes to forget where you came from.

And God is saying, no, don't you do that. Don't you say, aha, now I'm free; now I can oppress other people? No, no.

Remember, the only reason you're not a slave is grace. And so, you extend grace to them as well. When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh, he shall go out free for nothing.

What we're talking about here, as I mentioned in the background, is what in our early days was called indentured servitude. Now, it's evident at various points in the Old Testament that the Hebrews did have slaves. People who had no freedom and had no possibility of becoming free.

These were typically foreigners captured in war. That's not what this is about. This is talking about this kind of situation where a person has sunk deeper and deeper and deeper into poverty, and they have no place to go and nothing to do.

That sort of a person can sell themselves to you for six years. And in return for their labor, you give them room and board. And at the end of that time, hopefully, they will be able to amass a little income and then stand on their own two feet again after this period of time.

So that's what we're talking about here in the whole issue of freedom in the seventh year. It's for this kind of situation. I have a particular interest in this because of my own heritage.

I come from Mennonite stock. Mennonites were hated by both the Calvinists and the Lutherans. Never mind the Catholics.

And so, they began in Switzerland. They were persecuted out of Switzerland. Many of them went to Southwest Germany.

Others went to Holland. The ones in Southwest Germany, they also were persecuted. And so, they decided many of them to come to the new world.

Between 1700 and 1755, 70,000 Mennonites came into Pennsylvania. Well, they had to get down the Rhine River to the Dutch ports. That was basically, they didn't want to go through France.

That's the death penalty there. But for many of them, the Rhine River was infested with robbers. Some of them are legal, and some of them are not legal.

The legal ones were called tax collectors. Many of the Mennonites, by the time they reached Rotterdam or Amsterdam, were penniless. Everything they had that they had sold and the money had been spent to get down the river.

So, a great number of them sold themselves to the sea captains as indentured servants. When they got to Philadelphia, the sea captain then, in turn, sold their indenture to some American. And these people then worked off their passage through indenture.

That's what's going on here. These are people who have, for reasons perhaps of their own doing or not of their own doing, been unable to continue to function on their own family lands. And so, they sell themselves.

So that's what's going on here. And it's interesting that you have a number of issues to deal with there. If he comes in with a wife, then he can go out with a wife and children.

If he comes in without a wife and the master gives him a wife from among his other indentured servants, she stays behind when his seven years come—assuming her seven years are not up yet. And it's at that point you have the famous picture of putting an awl through his ear into the wood saying, I make my indenture permanent because I love my wife and our children.

Interesting. All right. Is there anything further you want to comment on there? Yes.

Apparently, the seven-year cycle was absolute. So, their seven year cycles are never going to match. He would have to sign up for another seven years in the middle of which her seven years are up and she could go free, but he couldn't.

Not from this. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Okay. And I suspect part of it is just the complexity that begins to get involved there, and it's just trying to keep it simple.

Anything else on that one? Okay. Let's look at 12 to 17. What is the common theme here? Violence.

Yes. Yes. If you strike a man so that he dies, he'll be put to death.

But if he didn't lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I'll appoint for you a place to which he may flee. Now again, remember that blood in, quote, quote, primitive societies, blood demands blood. Otherwise, life becomes so cheap that it's worthless.

As we can see in any of our large cities. So, if you and I are working in the woods, chopping down trees, and my axe head flies off and kills you, your family has a right to seek my blood in return. That's in society in general.

Now, what this particular law is saying? In that case, I will create. Do you remember cities of refuge? Later on in Numbers and in Deuteronomy, it talks about how these cities are established. And if that should happen to me, and your family comes after me, demanding that your blood be repaid from my blood, I can go to the city of refuge and live there until the high priest dies. And a new high priest is appointed, and at that point, it's free days.

And I can go back to where I was. Now we say, well, why don't you just say, if it was accidental, you're innocent, and that's that. Again, the importance of blood.

Blood has been shed, and you can't just forget about it. And that relates, I've talked with you about this: why did Jesus have to die? Because God can't ignore sin, that's why. So, violence is being dealt with here; whoever strikes his father or mother will be put to death.

Whoever steals a man and sells him, kidnapping, be put to death. Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death. This, of course, is the flip side of honor your father and mother.

This is the very polar opposite of that one. And again, as we talked last time, this is a way of saying I am self-made and owe nothing to anybody. And God says, when you begin to say that, you're pretty much unsalvable.

It's pretty much over. All right, anything further you want to comment on there? Just apply the corporate way, give money to the church and not have to then give

anything to the support of the parent. And that's what Jesus was saying: by your law, you have made God's law of no effect.

Now remember, what we're talking about here is, after the return from exile in Babylon, thoughtful Jews said, why did this happen to us? Well, the answer is we broke the law, that's why. And you've got 613 laws. So how are we going to be sure we don't do that again and this doesn't happen to us again? We make 1,200 interpretations, which will help us know whether we're breaking these or not.

So, the Bible says, don't work on the Sabbath. Well, what's work? It doesn't spell that out. So, we'll spell it out.

Carrying something in your pockets is work. So, on the Sabbath, you better be sure your pockets are empty. Writing something down is work.

So, no paper, no pencil, no tablets, no scribes, nothing. In the Orthodox part of Jerusalem today, tourists are carefully warned and do not write things down on the Sabbath. If you do, and you're in that section, you will be mobbed, and you may not make it out alive.

You are breaking the law of God. Well, this is one of those interpretations. It says, honor your father and mother.

What does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean that you can't give what you would have given to them to the church. You can. And Jesus says, by your law, you have made God's law of no effect.

Yes. Did you all hear that? There's a Sabbath elevator in the hospital, which automatically stops at every floor, so you don't have to raise your arm and punch the button. Turning on a light switch, yes.

Yes. Yes. You cannot make a journey on the Sabbath of more than 200 yards.

So, that means that worship has to be in centers that are 200 yards from each other. Yes, yes, yes. The rabbi in Lexington years ago had a house.

The synagogue was where Joe Bologna's Pizza was later, which has its own ironies. But anyway, he had a home out on Tate's Creek. And so, on Friday afternoon, at about 4:30, his wife would drive him to his apartment, which was within 200 yards of the synagogue, so that on the Sabbath day, he did not have to walk more than 200 yards.

But that's the kind of thing we're talking about. There were 613 of them. Yeah, that's the way they counted out.

So, the people are somewhat interpreted as The Pharisees. So, did that not confuse everything? No, no, because all of these are interpretations of these. And that made it so literal.

Oh, yes, yes, yes. Your whole life is. And that's why Jesus and Paul are attacking that sort of thing.

They're not attacking the Ten Commandments. They're not attacking even the Covenantal laws. But they're attacking this stuff.

For instance, you can't eat an egg that a chicken laid on the Sabbath. She worked. You don't think so? Just listen to her.

So, you know, we're going to cover every possible thing here to make absolutely certain we do not break the law. And this is the kind of person Jesus is talking about, about the man who stands in the temple and says, I thank my God that I'm not like this public. Was childbirth on that day? There was then.

The period of cleansing was doubled. A woman would be unclean for seven days after a boy baby, 14 days after a girl baby. On the Sabbath, it's 14 and 28.

Okay. Verses 18 to 36. What do these have in common? Personal relations, yes.

And typically, again, it is violence, but not of the level that we had in verses 12 through 17. In 12 through 17, it tends to be vicious violence that frequently, commonly, almost always leads to death. Here, we're talking about a lesser level of that, although, once again, you can have death involved, but it is more a byproduct of what has been taking place than the actual intended effect.

You can see there is a gradation in the kind of punishment. Notice 20 and 21, for instance. If a man strikes a slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged.

Now it's interesting, we're not told what the avenging is, but an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, would say the master's going to die. On the other hand, if the slave survives a day or two, he's not avenged, for the slave is his money. So again, trying to deal with various gradations of what's going on here.

The same thing, verses 18 and 19 are so interesting. If two guys get in a fight, and one of them doesn't die but goes to his bed, then the man rises again and walks outdoors with his staff. He who struck him shall be clear. Only he shall pay for the loss of his time and shall have him thoroughly healed.

So, now, if this guy dies four or five days later, that's another story. So again, trying to deal with the complexities of life and the various elements of life. Is there anything further you want to comment upon there? Do you think there might have been any difference in this had they had prison? Perhaps.

Again, these are pretty similar to the laws that you have in Mesopotamia. They tend to be more humane than the Mesopotamian laws. We do know that the Mesopotamians had prisons, but they were places where you did not want to go because, typically, you never came out of there again.

So, but it might. All right, let's continue on. 22:1 to 17.

What do these commands have in common? Property, yes, and responsible treatment of property. Dealing with restitution. 22:1. If a man steals an ox for a sheep and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, four sheep for a sheep.

If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguilt for him. A guy breaks into your house, and you shoot him, and he dies; that's the way it goes. But if the sun has risen on him, there shall be blood guilt for him.

What are we talking about? The guy is in my house, and he turns and looks at me as he runs out the door, and I recognize him. So tomorrow morning, I went to his house, and he opened the door, and I blew him away. The Bible says, uh-uh, that wasn't self-defense, that was vengeance, and vengeance belongs to the Lord.

So, an interesting, interesting line being drawn here between defense of yourself and your property and vengeance for what has been, you think has been done to you. Yes? So, this is not referring to if somehow he broke into your house during the daytime. Right.

It's not talking about that. Not particularly. And I think, again, in that society, there would almost always be somebody around the house in the daytime, so it's not likely to happen.

Someone gives you property to care for, and you misuse it. You've got to repay it with restitution. You lose it.

Then you've got to go before the priest and take an oath. And, uh, the assumption is if you lie under oath, something bad is going to happen to you. If it is stolen, you have to give evidence that it was stolen.

So again, this whole thing of my relationship to your property and the value that God is putting upon an individual's possessions. If there's anything, now here, excuse me for getting political, but if there's anything that prejudices me against socialism, it's

this kind of thing. God values your property, and I can't take it as our common property and use your stuff for what I think is the common good.

You don't have to agree with me. Okay. So, is the kind of background that Jesus was talking about the guys with the talents that were given talents to keep for the master? Mm-hmm.

Mm-hmm. That's precisely it. That's precisely it.

They were given to multiply, and they did not do it. All right. 2218 to 31.

Let's look at these and call it a night. What are these about? Morality. Yes.

Yes. In particular. Yes.

Social justice is in an ethical, moral setting. You shall not permit a sorceress to live. She probably would not call that social justice, but number one, magic is not going to have any place in this society.

Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death. Whoever sacrifices to any God other than the Lord alone shall be devoted to destruction. Probably all three of those are about pagan religion.

I've talked to you before about the pagan worldview. The idea is that there is no fundamental distinction between human, divine, and nature. All three of these realms partake of each other.

What happens here? It is automatically replicated there. What happens here is automatically replicated here. Etc.

So, if I want something to happen in nature, I do something in my world that the gods reduplicate and the result is it happens in nature. There are no boundaries. So, there is no boundary between male and male.

There is no boundary between father and daughter. There is no boundary between humans and animals. And you go on down the list.

There are no boundaries. That's the world in which we live today. Our world is deeply, fundamentally pagan.

And if you say there is a boundary, you are guilty of discrimination. A hate crime. Yes, oh yes.

So, it seems pretty clear that in pagan rituals, there was practiced bestiality to make a theological point. So, this is probably not just a miscellaneous organization here. The sorceress, bestiality, sacrificing to any other god.

Let me comment on the word that is used in verse 20. Whoever sacrifices to any other god other than the Lord alone shall be devoted to destruction. Not just killed.

Not just put to death. Got two different Hebrew words for those two. This is a third word.

This is the word, I suspect we've talked about it before, it's the word based on the three radicals, or their three consonants, Chet, a rough H, R, and M. And it means that which is off limits. We have it in English. It's an Arabic loan word.

A harem. Those women are off-limits. They belong to the sheik.

And nobody else can touch them on the pain of death. God is saying that the person who sacrifices to another god than himself makes themselves holy to God, in the sense that they become the sacrifice.

That's what Jericho was. The Canaanites were. So, it is putting a strong religious thing here.

They have, in a sense, forfeited themselves into the hands of God and cannot be used for anything other than a sacrifice to him. So that's verse 20. And I think that's significant.

Let me comment on verses 25, 26, and 27. Now, of course, you cannot lend money at interest to any of your Hebrew brothers and sisters. You can lend money at interest to Gentiles, but you can't lend money at interest to any of your own people.

But here's a poor person. He's got to have some cash. And he comes to me and says, Sir, would you please loan me a shekel? I'll be able to pay it back in two days.

And I say, what have you got for collateral? And he says, All I've got is my cloak. Okay, I'll take your cloak. Now the law says, at sundown, you go find that guy and give him his cloak back.

That's the only blanket he has. In the morning, you can take it back again. But here again is this humane element, this concern not just for cold legalities, but for functioning human relationships.

If he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. Now, again, Patricia said this section is about social justice. It is.

But it's social justice that is thoroughly wedded to the worship of God. And that brings us back to where we started from. Why do I do these things? Why do I treat a person who doesn't have any social leverage as a true human being? Well, just out of the goodness of my heart.

No. Because that person, like me, was made in the image of God. So, the worshipful underpinning of all of this is critical.

One of the things that continues to embarrass atheists anonymous in America, well, they're not anonymous anymore, but is the fact that there's no altruism among atheists. Why not? Because there is no worshipful motivation to lay aside my self-interest for the sake of others. They were running right through here.

This is a divine covenant. This is a covenant with God. Why do we act this way? Why do we do these things? Because they reflect the character of the creator God.

If there is no creator, God, then we're left at a total loss to explain why, in the world, anybody should be ethical. It's stupid. It's a dog-eat-dog world.

Who cares about anybody else? Ah. But if, indeed, you belong to the God who has delivered you from slavery by grace, then to live His life, a life that is passionately concerned about the well-being of all His children, ah, that changes everything. All right.

We'll continue on next week with the third of these examples of covenant behavior and then the sealing of the covenant, S-E-A-L-I-N-G, in Chapter 24.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Exodus. This is session 11, Exodus 21-22.