

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11, Exodus 21-22 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11, Exodus 21-22, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This is a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 21-22, focusing on the presentation and implications of the covenant between God and the Israelites. He explains the structure of the laws within this section—moral, civil, and ceremonial—highlighting the unique ethical framework stemming from a covenant relationship with God, contrasting it with other ancient Near Eastern legal systems. Oswalt emphasizes that the laws are not merely pragmatic rules but expressions of worship and a reflection of God's character. The lecture uses examples from the text to illustrate these concepts, particularly focusing on the treatment of slaves and the importance of social justice within a divinely ordained framework. Finally, he differentiates between the enduring moral principles and the time-bound aspects of the law.

2. 25 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Exodus).



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3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11, Exodus 21-22

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's Session 11 on Exodus 21-22:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 21-22 (Session 11)

Introduction Dr. Oswalt's session focuses on Exodus chapters 21 and 22, which present examples of the covenant stipulations outlined earlier. He emphasizes that these laws are not arbitrary but stem from the very nature of God and his relationship with his covenant people. The session begins with a review of the covenant structure and then dives into the specific laws, highlighting the underlying principles and motivations.

Key Themes & Ideas

1. Covenant Structure Review:

- **Preparation for the Covenant:** God prepared the Israelites cognitively (reminding them of the past and promising a future), volitionally (giving them tasks), and effectively (with the trumpet and visual phenomena at Mount Sinai).
- **Presentation of the Covenant:** The covenant consists of:
 - An introduction (God's initiative).
 - Historical prologue (God's redemption from Egypt).
 - The summary of stipulations (the Ten Commandments in absolute terms).
 - Specific case laws (examples of how the absolute principles are applied)
- The Ten Commandments are stated absolutely as "You shall" or "You shall not" because they are given by the creator, whose very nature sets the rules. This is unlike a king whose laws are enforced by power, not by a inherent moral standard.

1. The People's Response to God's Voice:

- The Israelites were terrified by God's audible voice delivering the Ten Commandments and asked Moses to be their intermediary.
- Oswalt cites Deuteronomy 4:12 and 5:23-27, highlighting the unique experience of the Israelites hearing God directly.

- Moses explains that this experience was a test, meant to instill a "fear of the Lord," which is not terror but a profound respect and awareness of God's moral nature and accountability.
- Quote: *"Don't fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin."*

1. **Worship & Ethics:**

- Verses 22-26 in Exodus 20 serve as an interlude, connecting the Ten Commandments to the case laws. These verses focus on worship, specifically, the worship of the creator rather than created things.
- Ethical behavior is an expression of worship of God.
- Oswalt contrasts this with the ancient world where ethics were primarily matters of state, enforced pragmatically without a moral grounding.
- He argues that a society collapses when lying, stealing, and other forms of immorality become commonplace because it undermines the very fabric of its existence.
- Quote: *"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."*
- He points to the decline of Western culture, suggesting it was once grounded in a sense of ethics as worship, but has lost that foundation and thus lost its moral ground.
- Quote: *"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."*

1. **Types of Laws:**

- **Moral Laws:** Absolute truths, stated absolutely, concerning life itself, with the punishment of death typically associated with them. These are timeless principles
- **Civil Laws:** Stated as cases, time-bound, with a wide range of issues from life to monetary concerns, punishments range from death to fines. These express timeless principles in time-conditioned form.

- Oswalt uses the "law of the goring ox" to illustrate. If an owner knew of the ox's violent tendencies, they were liable, but if it was unpredictable, they were not. The principle at play is "knowledge is responsibility". He compares this to driving a car with known bad brakes, emphasizing that regardless of state laws, God would still judge someone liable for the outcome.
- **Ceremonial Laws:** Concerns worship, stated both in absolute terms and cases, punishment is exclusion from worship. They are object lessons teaching a spiritual truth, like the sacrifice of a perfect lamb for sin. Once the spiritual truth is understood, the object lesson is no longer needed. He uses the example of teaching Johnny math via the number of markers, eventually the abstract concept of math surpasses the need for markers.
- The sacrificial system is an object lesson about the seriousness of sin. The Lamb of God (Jesus) fulfills this when he takes away the sins of the world, making the physical sacrifices obsolete.

1. **Case Laws in Exodus 21-22:**

- **Treatment of Servants (21:1-11):** Laws about indentured servitude, emphasizing that former slaves should be gracious. Servants work for six years, are then set free, and their families stay or leave based on their situation.
- Oswalt relates this to Mennonites coming to Pennsylvania as indentured servants due to poverty.
- **Violence (21:12-17):** Distinguishes between accidental and intentional harm, establishing cities of refuge for unintentional acts. Blood demands blood, but that system should be tempered with mercy where appropriate.
- Oswalt notes this relates to the question of why Jesus had to die, citing God's inability to ignore sin.
- **Personal Relations (21:18-36):** Deals with lesser forms of violence and their consequences, illustrating the complexity of human relationships and the attempt to bring clarity to nuanced situations.
- **Property (22:1-17):** Addresses theft, restitution, and the responsibility of caring for another's property. God values individual property.
- **Morality and Social Justice (22:18-31):** Condemns sorcery, bestiality, and sacrificing to other gods, which Oswalt connects to pagan worldviews. It also

includes a humane law regarding a poor man's cloak, emphasizing compassion and concern for basic human needs.

- Oswalt notes that paganism blurs boundaries, while God defines distinctions between humans and animals, men and women.
- Verse 20 utilizes a word meaning "devoted to destruction" to describe those who sacrifice to other gods, which denotes being consecrated to God for sacrifice in judgment.
- Quote: *"If he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate."*

1. **Motivation for Ethics:**

- Ethical behavior is not just for social order but because it reflects the character of God, the creator and deliverer.
- Quote: *"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."*
- The covenant with God provides the motivation for ethical behavior, which is absent without a belief in the creator.
- Quote: *"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."*
- Oswalt criticizes atheists for their lack of altruism due to the absence of any worshipful motivation to set aside self-interest for the sake of others.

Conclusion Dr. Oswalt argues that the laws in Exodus 21-22 are not simply a legal code but a reflection of God's character and his desire for a just and holy society. He emphasizes that these laws are grounded in the covenant relationship with God, providing both the motivation and the foundation for ethical behavior that is above and beyond the pragmatism of mere social structure. The laws also point forward to Christ, who fulfills the ceremonial laws by being the perfect sacrifice for sin. The session highlights that ethics are best understood as an expression of worship.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11, Exodus 21-22

Exodus 21-22 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What is the key difference between how the Ten Commandments are stated compared to the laws in Exodus 21-22?
2. According to Moses, why did God speak the Ten Commandments in an audible voice to the Israelites?
3. What two key ideas does Oswalt suggest are being conveyed by the laws about altar construction in Exodus 20:22-26?
4. How does Oswalt define and differentiate between moral, civil, and ceremonial law?
5. What does Oswalt mean when he says civil law is expressed in a "time-bound form?"
6. Why are the initial laws in chapter 21 about the treatment of servants?
7. What is the purpose of the cities of refuge mentioned in relation to accidental manslaughter?
8. What does Oswalt say was the problem with the Pharisees' interpretations of the law?
9. What principle does Oswalt say underlies the laws about responsible treatment of property?
10. Why does Oswalt suggest that the prohibition of lending at interest to other Israelites is paired with the law of returning a cloak at sundown?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The Ten Commandments are stated as absolute principles, using terms like "You shall" or "You shall not," while the laws in Exodus 21-22 are presented as cases, using "If this happens, then this is what you do". The Ten Commandments outline absolute ethical principles while the following chapters give examples of how those principles are applied.

2. Moses suggests God spoke audibly to test the Israelites, instilling a "fear" (awe and respect) of God that would lead them to avoid sin. God sought not to cause terror but to instill a deep awareness of His moral purity and the accountability that came with it.
3. The laws about altar construction aim to establish the pattern of worship and to emphasize that the creator should be worshipped, not created things (idolatry). They emphasize that ethical behavior is an expression of worship.
4. Moral laws express absolute truth, are stated absolutely, deal with life itself, and carry a death penalty. Civil laws are stated as cases, are time-bound, cover a wide range of issues, and have punishments ranging from death to a fine. Ceremonial law is concerned with worship, uses object lessons to teach spiritual truths, and carries the punishment of exclusion from worship.
5. Oswalt means that civil law principles are applied to specific situations and are relevant to a particular society and time period. The timeless principle is expressed in a way that is relevant to the culture. This is why each law requires "translation" in order to extract the foundational principle.
6. The laws about servants remind the Israelites of their own history as slaves in Egypt, emphasizing that their freedom is due to God's grace and should lead them to treat others with the same grace. It also establishes a pattern for their society that the law will be concerned with the weak and poor.
7. The cities of refuge provided a place of protection for someone who accidentally caused another's death so that they would not be subject to blood vengeance by the victim's family. This demonstrates that blood demands blood, but also that the justice must be tempered by knowledge of culpability.
8. The Pharisees' interpretations added so many stipulations and rules that they made it difficult to follow the law in practice and obscured the true intent of God's commandments. They focused on legalistic adherence over genuine obedience.
9. The principle underlying the laws about property is that God values individual possessions, and there is a responsibility to care for them and be just in how one handles the property of others. This emphasizes the importance of ownership and responsibility.
10. The prohibition of lending at interest to other Israelites highlights the special nature of their relationship as fellow members of the covenant community. Paired

with returning a cloak at sundown, it shows God's concern for the well-being of the vulnerable and that even the law must be applied with compassion.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the covenant context in understanding the laws presented in Exodus 21-22. How does this context differentiate Israel's law from other ancient Near Eastern law codes?
2. Analyze how Oswalt's understanding of moral, civil, and ceremonial law helps to explain how the Old Testament law applies to Christians today.
3. Explore the concept of "fear of God" as presented by Moses in Exodus 20 and how it relates to ethical behavior within the covenant.
4. Compare and contrast the role of individual responsibility and community accountability in the legal examples provided in Exodus 21-22.
5. Examine the connection between ethics and worship according to Oswalt's lecture, and discuss why he considers this link crucial for a healthy society.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant:** A solemn agreement or pact, typically between God and humanity. In the context of Exodus, it's the binding agreement between God and Israel established on Mount Sinai.
- **Ten Commandments:** The ten fundamental moral laws given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17), which form the basis of the covenant between God and the Israelites.
- **Moral Law:** Principles based on absolute truth that deal with fundamental ethical issues of life, generally stated absolutely and carry a death penalty.
- **Civil Law:** Laws presented as "cases" or examples that are time-bound, addressing a wide range of societal issues, with punishments varying from death to fines.
- **Ceremonial Law:** Laws concerning worship and religious rituals; often uses object lessons to teach spiritual truths with the punishment of exclusion from worship.

- **Idolatry:** The worship of idols or false gods, which is a direct violation of the first commandment and a recurring problem in the Old Testament.
- **Cities of Refuge:** Specific cities designated as sanctuaries for those who had committed accidental manslaughter, protecting them from blood vengeance.
- **Indentured Servitude:** A form of labor in which a person works for a set period of time to pay off a debt or obligation, as opposed to chattel slavery where a person is owned with no rights.
- **Bloodguilt:** Liability for bloodshed that requires justice; refers to the responsibility for taking a life and how society must respond to such an act.
- **Restitution:** The act of restoring or compensating for a loss or damage, particularly in relation to property.
- **Social Justice:** The equitable distribution of opportunities and resources within a society; closely tied to ethical, moral, and religious considerations in this context.
- **Pagan Worldview:** A worldview that lacks sharp boundaries between the human, divine, and natural realms, often leading to practices like magic and mixing of moral categories.
- **Harem:** From the Arabic word for "forbidden" or "off-limits," it is a reference to a secluded space or group of people who are exclusively the property of a specific person.
- **Altruism:** The practice of selfless concern for the well-being of others, often motivated by religious or moral principles.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 11, Exodus 21-22, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Exodus 21-22 Based on Dr. John Oswalt's Lecture

1. **What is the significance of God speaking the Ten Commandments audibly to the Israelites, and what was their immediate reaction?** The audible delivery of the Ten Commandments by God was a unique and awe-inspiring event, unprecedented in human history, according to Moses. The Israelites were so overwhelmed by the experience—the thunder, lightning, trumpet, and fire— that they became terrified and asked Moses to be their intermediary, pleading with God not to speak to them directly again, showing a desire for distance from God's immediate presence.
2. **Why does God want the Israelites to have a fear of him, and how is this different from terror?** God's intention in causing the Israelites to fear him was not to instill terror, but to foster a profound respect and reverence. This "fear of the Lord" is a recognition of God's awesome power, moral purity, and the fact that He will hold us accountable for our behavior. It is a fear born of respect, not a cowering fear of arbitrary punishment. This respect is meant to act as a deterrent against sin, shaping their lives in accordance with God's will.
3. **How does the concept of worship tie into the ethical and moral laws presented in Exodus 21-22?** The ethical laws found in Exodus are not simply pragmatic rules for society, but expressions of worship to God. Ethical behavior, like not lying or stealing, is rooted in the fact that God is a moral being who doesn't lie or steal. This elevates ethics from mere state mandates to a direct reflection of the character of God and an act of worship, distinguishing the laws from other ancient law codes where morality was dictated by the state.
4. **What are the three main types of laws in the covenant, and how do they differ?** There are three types of laws: moral, civil, and ceremonial. Moral laws express absolute truths, are stated absolutely (e.g., "you shall not"), deal with fundamental life issues, and the punishment is often death. Civil laws are presented as cases, are time-bound, and deal with a broad range of issues from life itself to monetary matters. Punishments range from death to fines. Ceremonial laws, which relate to worship, are object lessons teaching spiritual truth. Their punishment involves exclusion from the community of worship.

5. **How does the "Law of the Goring Ox" illustrate the difference between a time-bound case law and a universal moral principle?** The "Law of the Goring Ox" differentiates between negligence and unforeseen accidents, based on the ox's known temperament. This illustrates how civil laws are presented as cases related to that society's specific situations. The principle underlying such laws is that knowledge is responsibility. However, the principle is framed in a time-bound situation where animals caused damage, and that universal principle needs to be translated to similar principles in modern life.
6. **Why does the law in Exodus 21-22 begin with regulations about how to treat servants or indentured servants?** The regulations on treating servants are given because they are rooted in the Israelites' own experience of slavery. It is a reminder not to forget their past and to treat others with the grace they themselves were shown by God. The laws on indentured servitude, in particular, were not designed to oppress people but to offer a path to economic recovery for those who had fallen into poverty.
7. **What is the significance of the "cities of refuge," and why does the law not simply declare accidental killings as innocent?** The cities of refuge provide a place of safety for individuals who have caused accidental deaths. In ancient cultures, shedding of blood demanded blood vengeance, and that had to be acknowledged. These cities did not automatically declare someone innocent, but acknowledged the shed blood while mitigating the consequence. It recognized the importance of acknowledging the value of life and blood while differentiating between accidents and intentional acts of violence.
8. **Why is the motivation behind following the ethical laws in the covenant so crucial, and how does it contrast with secular motivations for morality?** The motivation behind obeying these ethical laws is key. It is not for the pragmatism of societal order, but because they reflect the character of the covenant Lord. Secular motivations for ethical behavior often lack the worshipful underpinnings. Atheists, for example, often struggle to explain selflessness without a divine reference. The covenant, however, provides that, establishing that ethics are an expression of the covenant relationship with God, and that motivates action.