

Dr. John Oswalt, Exodus, Session 12, Exodus 23-24 Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Oswalt, Exodus, Session 12, Exodus 23-24, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This transcription captures a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 23-24. **He analyzes the laws presented**, focusing on their emphasis on **justice and social responsibility**, contrasting them with pagan practices. **Oswalt connects these laws to the Ten Commandments**, highlighting their importance in demonstrating a covenant relationship with God. The lecture then **explains the significance of the Sabbath and three major festivals**, again drawing parallels and contrasts with pagan celebrations. Finally, **the session concludes with a discussion of the covenant-making ceremony in Exodus 24**, its symbolism, and its implications for understanding human nature and God's character.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, Exodus, Session 12 – 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).



Oswalt_Exodus_Session12.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 12, Exodus 23-24

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. John Oswalt's session on Exodus 23-24:

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on Exodus 23-24

Overview:

This session of Dr. Oswalt's teaching on Exodus focuses on chapters 23 and 24, which he interprets as a continuation of the covenant stipulations, and the formal sealing of the covenant between God and the Israelites. He breaks down these chapters into three main sections: Social Responsibility (23:1-9), Worship (23:10-19), and Covenant Promises (23:20-33), and finally, The Sealing of the Covenant (24). Oswalt emphasizes that the covenant is not a master-slave relationship, but a reciprocal agreement with mutual responsibilities. He also underscores the idea that the way the Israelites treat each other is a direct reflection of their covenant with God.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Social Responsibility (Exodus 23:1-9):

- **Justice and Fairness:** These laws are centered on justice, particularly the prevention of its perversion. Oswalt notes, "Don't spread false reports. Don't help a guilty person by being a malicious witness. Don't follow the crowd in doing wrong."
- **Impartiality:** The laws emphasize treating everyone fairly, regardless of their social standing, including the poor and even enemies. Oswalt points out, "Don't show favoritism to a poor person in his lawsuit." and contrasts this with, "Don't deprive the poor person of the justice that is theirs." He highlights the idea of "doing justice to your enemy" as a "beginning of the golden rule".
- **Compassion:** Extending beyond strict justice, the laws call for active help and restoration towards enemies, such as returning a wandering animal, or helping them with a donkey under a load.

- **Application of the 10 Commandments:** Oswalt argues that these social laws are practical examples of the last six commandments of the Decalogue (Honor your parents, don't kill, steal, lie, commit adultery, or covet). He connects this with the New Testament concept of showing love as the sign of discipleship, referencing John 13:35: "By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." He ties this into the idea that "there is no holiness except social holiness"
- **Reciprocity:** The emphasis is on treating others as you would want to be treated, drawing a parallel to the golden rule. This emphasizes their experience in Egypt: "Don't oppress a foreigner. You yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners because you were foreigners in Egypt."

1. **Worship (Exodus 23:10-19):**

- **Sabbath and Sabbatical Year:** These are not just about resting but about the benefit they bring to others - the poor, the animals, and the foreigners: "Because we worship Him in the sabbatical year, the poor can get food from it. Because we worship the Lord on the Sabbath day, the ox and the donkey may rest." He suggests worship of God is not for oneself but it has an effect on others, and ties this into Isaiah 58.
- **Monotheism:** The prohibition against invoking other gods (23:13) emphasizes the uniqueness of Yahweh and the importance of adhering to his specific form of worship. He comments "There are a thousand ways to heaven. One god's as good as another. Nope. Not in this covenant."
- **Feasts:** The three major festivals (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) are deliberately timed around pagan festivals to provide a contrasting worldview. "These festivals... are intentionally scheduled right against the pagan festivals." He explains how the pagans' view of these festivals includes mythical, cyclical concepts, while Israel's is rooted in historic, unique acts of God.
- **Theological Distinction in Rituals:** Dr. Oswalt highlights that, in contrast to pagan rituals focused on manipulating the cosmos or mourning a dying god, Israelite feasts are about remembering and celebrating God's actions in history and the need to repent for sins.
- **Temple Layout and Gender:** He addresses a question about the role of women in temple worship, explaining the layout and noting that while women were permitted to celebrate, only men could participate in certain aspects of the ritual.

He emphasizes that this distinction was not a statement of unequal value but a function of their culture and the way other cultures of that time would have arranged participation.

- **Specific Ritual Practices:** He also points out several ritual practices that carry specific symbolic meaning: not using yeast (symbolic of sin), burning fat (God's portion) and not cooking a goat in its mother's milk (possibly a pagan practice to avoid). He highlights how the practice of burning fat is in direct opposition to many cultures that see it as a delicacy, but that in this culture, "The fat is God's."

1. **Covenant Promises (Exodus 23:20-33):**

- **Divine Promises:** God promises fellowship, protection, and the land to the Israelites, contingent on their obedience. Oswalt notes, "You keep your side of the covenant and I'll keep my side. I'll give you fellowship with me. I'll give you protection from your enemies, and I will take you into the land."
- **Gradual Conquest:** God explains that He will not drive out the current inhabitants of the land all at once, in order to avoid the land becoming desolate, but "little by little." He describes this as a guerrilla-style operation, not a sweeping military conquest.
- **Boundary Protection:** The land's defined borders are not just geographical but also symbolic, representing protection from the pagan cultures.
- **Idolatry Warnings:** The warnings against making covenants with the pagans is because "The entire world believes that this world is God and there is nothing else," a concept that the Lord is saying is wrong. God emphasizes the hard and fast boundary between Himself and the world, and humanity and nature. He sees this as a rejection of a worldview that "has no boundaries."

1. **The Sealing of the Covenant (Exodus 24):**

- **Preliminary Agreement:** The covenant sealing process begins with Moses recounting the covenant and the people agreeing to it.
- **Symbolic Actions:** The process involves the erection of 12 pillars, the sacrifice of 12 bulls, and the splashing of blood on the altar and the people. He uses the analogy of "historical markers" to explain the significance of the 12 pillars.

- **Blood as a Covenant Seal:** The blood of the sacrifice is used to seal the covenant and it carries symbolic meaning. Oswalt says the blood on the altar means “May God strike God dead if God ever breaks this covenant” and the blood on the people was meant to make them understand the gravity of the agreement. He draws a direct parallel between this and Jesus’ statement about the “blood of the covenant” at the last supper.
- **Broken Covenant:** He emphasizes that the covenant was broken almost immediately by the golden calf incident. This covenant, because it was broken, stands as a curse, until Christ comes. Jesus, then, satisfies the requirements of this old covenant, and ratifies a new covenant, simultaneously.
- **Human Inability:** He says, despite the people being serious when they agreed to the covenant and “fully expected to keep this covenant”, they were unable to, because “there is something radically wrong in the human spirit.” He asserts that humans want God’s blessing but not his life.

Key Takeaways:

- The Covenant is a serious, reciprocal agreement with God.
- How the Israelites treat each other is a reflection of their covenant relationship with God.
- Worship is not just a private act but has implications for the community and their relationship with others.
- God is intentionally different from pagan gods and his worship should also be different.
- The covenant highlights both God's provision and human inability to perfectly follow His ways.
- The sealing of the covenant, while a serious event, contains within it the seeds of the necessity for a new covenant, that is satisfied in Christ.

Further Discussion Points:

- The relevance of these covenant stipulations for contemporary life.
- The implications of the concept of social holiness.
- The role of ritual in religious practice.
- The nature of God and His relationship with humanity.
- How the old covenant can be reconciled with the new covenant through Christ.

This briefing document should provide a comprehensive overview of the key points and themes covered in Dr. Oswalt's session. Let me know if you have any other questions or need further analysis.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, Exodus, Session 12, Exodus 23-24

Exodus 23-24 Study Guide

Short Answer Quiz

1. According to Oswalt, what is the primary focus of the laws in Exodus 23:1-9?
2. How does Oswalt connect the concept of justice in Exodus 23 to the treatment of enemies?
3. How do the Sabbath and the Sabbatical year in Exodus 23 demonstrate a connection between worship and social responsibility, according to Oswalt?
4. What is the significance of the verse in Exodus 23:13 prohibiting the invocation of other gods, within the context of Sabbath and festival instructions?
5. What are the three main feasts mentioned in Exodus 23:14-19 and at what times of year do they occur?
6. According to Oswalt, why were the Hebrew festivals intentionally scheduled at the same time as pagan festivals?
7. What is the symbolic meaning of yeast in the context of the Passover offering?
8. According to Oswalt, what three things does God promise to do in return for the Israelites keeping their covenant obligations?
9. According to Oswalt, what is the significance of the "angel of the Lord" mentioned in Exodus 23?
10. What actions are involved in the sealing of the covenant in Exodus 24, and how do they reflect ancient covenant-making practices?

Answer Key

1. The primary focus of the laws in Exodus 23:1-9 is the perversion of justice and how to avoid it, emphasizing fair treatment of others, avoiding false accusations, and not showing favoritism based on wealth or poverty.
2. Oswalt connects justice in Exodus 23 to the treatment of enemies by highlighting laws that command Israelites to return a wandering animal or assist an enemy with a fallen donkey, thus extending the concept of justice beyond those within their community to those who might be hostile.

3. Oswalt argues that the Sabbath and the Sabbatical year demonstrate a connection between worship and social responsibility by showing that these practices benefit others: the poor can gather food during the sabbatical year, and the animals and servants are allowed to rest on the Sabbath.
4. The prohibition against invoking other gods in Exodus 23:13 serves to emphasize that true worship is exclusive to Yahweh; it is the negative of the positive, a warning against slipping into pagan practices during times of rest and worship.
5. The three main feasts are Passover (around April 1st), Pentecost (around June 1st), and Tabernacles (around October 1st); these festivals occur during the beginning of the harvest, between the barley and wheat harvests, and at the end of the harvest, respectively.
6. Oswalt states that the Hebrew festivals were intentionally scheduled at the same time as pagan festivals to present a counter-cultural and theological alternative to pagan practices, emphasizing remembering what God has done rather than manipulating the cosmos.
7. Oswalt says that yeast is symbolic of sin due to its capacity for decay and promoting decay, which is why it was prohibited during the Passover offering.
8. God promises the Israelites fellowship with Him, protection from their enemies, and that He will bring them into the promised land.
9. Oswalt suggests that the "angel of the Lord" is likely God's representation in the world, possibly equivalent to the spirit of God, serving as a way for God to interact directly with humanity.
10. The sealing of the covenant in Exodus 24 involved Moses reciting the covenant, the people agreeing, the erection of 12 pillars, the sacrifice of 12 bulls, half of the blood being splashed on the altar, the reading of the covenant from a book, the people agreeing again, and the remaining blood splashed on the people; this is all following patterns known throughout the ancient world.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the importance of social responsibility as outlined in Exodus 23:1-9, and how these laws demonstrate the character of God according to Oswalt. Consider how these laws relate to the concept of a covenant relationship.
2. Analyze the connection between worship and social responsibility as presented by Oswalt in his discussion of the Sabbath and the sabbatical year in Exodus 23:10-12. How does this relationship challenge or support traditional notions of worship?
3. Explain the significance of the three major festivals in Exodus 23:14-19 as outlined by Oswalt, considering their historical context and their role in the covenant relationship between God and the Israelites.
4. Examine Oswalt's interpretation of the covenant sealing in Exodus 24. How does it reflect ancient practices? How does it connect to the New Testament?
5. Discuss Oswalt's three purposes of the covenant, focusing on how the Israelites were meant to discover the depth of their own sinfulness through the experience of trying to obey God's commands.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Covenant:** A binding agreement between two or more parties, often involving mutual obligations and promises; in the context of Exodus, the agreement between God and the Israelites.
- **Sabbath:** The seventh day of the week, a day of rest and worship, intended to be kept holy according to God's command in the Torah.
- **Sabbatical Year:** A year of rest for the land, occurring every seventh year, during which fields were not to be sown and the poor could benefit from the land's natural yield.
- **Passover:** A Jewish festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, marked by the sacrifice of a lamb and the consumption of unleavened bread.
- **Pentecost:** A Jewish festival occurring fifty days after Passover, celebrated as a harvest festival in ancient times. It is associated with the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.
- **Tabernacles (Feast of In-Gathering):** A Jewish festival celebrated in the fall at the end of the harvest, during which the Israelites were to dwell in temporary shelters (tabernacles) in remembrance of their wandering in the wilderness.
- **Yeast:** A substance used in baking that causes dough to rise, often used as a symbol of sin and corruption due to its capacity for decay.
- **Aviv:** The ancient name for the month on the Jewish calendar when the Passover falls, corresponding to early spring.
- **Angel of the Lord:** A divine messenger of God, often seen as a manifestation of God's presence and authority; Oswalt proposes that this may be the equivalent of the Spirit of the Lord.
- **Propitiation:** An act of appeasement or atonement for sin, intended to satisfy divine justice and reconcile a broken relationship.
- **Social Holiness:** A concept emphasizing that holiness is not just an individual pursuit but is demonstrated through how one treats others in society.
- **Solomonic Kingdom:** The kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Solomon, often considered the peak of Israelite power and territorial control.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, Exodus, Session 12, Exodus 23-24, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Exodus 23-24 Based on Dr. John Oswalt's Session 12

1. **What is the primary focus of the laws presented in Exodus 23:1-9?**
2. These laws primarily focus on the perversion of justice and the importance of acting justly in all interpersonal relationships. They specifically address issues like bearing false witness, siding with the crowd to do wrong, and showing favoritism, highlighting the necessity of impartial and honest dealings in legal and social interactions. They also begin to show an emphasis on doing good to one's enemies.
3. **How does the concept of the "golden rule" emerge in Exodus 23:1-9?**
4. The "golden rule," or principle of reciprocity, emerges through commandments that emphasize treating others as one would want to be treated. For instance, the text commands returning a wandering animal even if it belongs to an enemy, and helping an animal in need, even if it belongs to someone who hates you. Furthermore, the emphasis on not oppressing foreigners or servants because of the Israelites' own experience of oppression underscores the importance of empathy and treating all individuals with fairness.
5. **What is the significance of the connection between social responsibility and worship according to Exodus 23:10-12?**
6. The connection between social responsibility and worship is demonstrated by the Sabbath and the sabbatical year. During the sabbatical year, the land is left to lie fallow so the poor can benefit, and on the Sabbath, even animals and servants are given rest, showcasing that worshipping God is not just a personal act but should have a positive impact on others. This is also illustrated in the command to not worship other gods, emphasizing devotion to the one true God rather than to false idols who cannot help others.

7. **Why are the three main annual feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) intentionally scheduled to coincide with pagan festivals?**
8. The timing of these feasts is deliberate, serving as a direct counter-narrative to pagan rituals. Rather than participating in mythical celebrations, the Israelites were called to remember God's historical acts of deliverance, such as the Exodus from Egypt. This intentional juxtaposition aimed to highlight the contrast between pagan worship of nature and the Hebrew worship of the one true God who acted in history, also demonstrating that God was in control of the cycles of nature and not them.
9. **How do the sacrificial laws, such as not cooking a young goat in its mother's milk or the burning of fat, reflect the covenant relationship between God and Israel?**
10. These laws were designed to set Israel apart from the surrounding pagan cultures and remind them that God is the ultimate giver of all good things and they have an obligation to Him because of this. By burning the fat on the altar, they were dedicating the most prized parts of the animal back to God, and refraining from cooking a young goat in its mother's milk might have been an effort to avoid pagan practices. These laws emphasized that Israel's relationship with God required dedication and obedience.
11. **What does God promise to do for the Israelites if they uphold their side of the covenant in Exodus 23:20-33?**
12. God promises several key things: fellowship with Him, protection from their enemies, and the successful taking of the promised land. He assures them that as long as they remain faithful and don't rebel, He will guide them and gradually remove their enemies from the land. God also promises to give them the territory described by the borders from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and from the desert to the Euphrates.

13. What does the ritual of blood-sprinkling in Exodus 24 signify in the sealing of the covenant?

14. The blood sprinkling is a key part of sealing the covenant between God and Israel. Half the blood is sprinkled on the altar, representing God's side of the covenant and the potential sacrifice he might have to undergo if it is broken. The other half is sprinkled on the people, symbolizing their commitment to the agreement and also the potential judgment they might receive if they break it. It signifies a deep, sacred bond, like what was seen in other political covenants, where an animal was split in half and people would walk through the middle to seal it. This action indicated that they were completely agreeing to the rules of the covenant, even under penalty of a possible negative consequence.

15. What are the three purposes of the covenant according to Dr. Oswalt?

16. According to Dr. Oswalt, the covenant serves three main purposes. First, it teaches the character of God, particularly His care for others. Second, it aims to build character necessary for God to dwell within the people. Finally, it reveals the deeply flawed nature of the human spirit, highlighting the inability of humanity to consistently live according to God's standards. This last point sets the stage for the future need for a solution to this broken nature, setting the stage for the need of a new covenant in the future.