

Exodus 23

Read Exodus 23:1-9: God wants us to have the abundant life, that can only be found in his plan for a society. Unfortunately, we live far short of that. How much energy do we extend to build up our neighbors? How much energy and consternation do we spend on focusing on their imperfections? We are to be healers, not accusers. Unfortunately, we now have a very tribal environment that lends itself to unhealthy competition with our neighbor. We do things directly and by proxy to bring harm.

Attorneys are often looked down upon. They do the dirty work, allowing their client to hide in the background. There is not a commensurate penalty for the costs of malicious lawsuits. This chapter should act as a guardrail for lawyers. It is also a warning to those who join protest groups without doing their homework. If you interview the protesters in *No Kings*, *Black Lives Matters*, *Anti-Trump*, *No ICE*, etc... you quickly discover that they really do not have their facts in order. It is embarrassing that our nation has the same unhinged people participating in all of these things. That is not a coincidence. They are fighting a projection or a portrayal of an effigy. Nobody is doing their own homework. They do not have to pay a price for demonizing a person. That target personality may not even resemble their views of him. That is how propaganda works.

How applicably do the scriptures portray our current times? Are we living in a land that is producing false witnesses against our President, against ICE, against those who mention the name of the LORD, our God?

Are soul seekers appreciated and lauded, or are they shot in the neck? We have people dancing on each other's graves. That is not a good thing for a society. How should God deal with such a people? Does God turn his back on anarchy? It starts with our neighbor; but it effects our nation. God tells us clearly to not demonize our opponent. That is the Devil's work.

Whoever digs a pit will fall into it; if someone rolls a stone, it will roll back on them. (Proverbs 26:27)

Just share facts, without conflation. Who are we mimicking when we slander and commit character assassination?

For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night (Revelation 12:10b)

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

Even if we have the facts, are we looking to heal a situation, or to inflame it and bring harm upon our enemies?

The Law of Moses is about how to deal with your neighbor. You should help them if you can. You should look after their interests. Unfortunately, we have turned into a nation of victims who are owed something from their neighbors. Who wants to be a neighbor to that guy?

We also cannot take the attitude of not wanting to stick our nose into something if we are in a position to provide assistance. If our advice or assistance is rejected that's fine.

The rights of the poor may be inconvenient to many of us; but they are paramount.

¹⁷ For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. ¹⁹ And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10)

It would be easy to recharacterize bribes as lubrication to progress. Unfortunately, it also causes the decision maker to forego their due diligence to protect the interests of their employer.

Read Exodus 23:10-13: Now we move onto being good stewards of God's creation. The land sabbath requirement is to leave the land fallow (unfarmed) one year in each seven. Israel did not do that for 490 years, so God took his required cut of 70 missed land sabbaths and evicted the Jews from their land for 70 years.

¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷ He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. ²⁰ He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its

desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah. (2 Chronicles 36)

Shemita (שמיטה), often called the Sabbatical year, is a year-long agricultural and social cycle in Jewish law that occurs every seven years. Key points:

- Agricultural rest: Land in the Land of Israel lies fallow for the year—farmers must not plant or harvest ordinary crops; produce that grows is considered ownerless and available to anyone.
- Debt release: Certain personal debts between Jews are traditionally released at the end of the shemita year (the biblical practice of *shmitat kesafim*).
- Religious framing: The rules originate in the Torah (primarily Exodus 23:10–11; Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15) and are intended to emphasize trust in God, social equality, and care for the poor.
- Modern practice: Observance varies—some continue full traditional restrictions in Israel; others use legal mechanisms (*heter mechira* or symbolic sales) and rabbinic enactments to permit continued farming and commerce while aiming to respect the shemita spirit.
- Duration and cadence: The shemita year begins on Rosh Hashanah and runs one full Jewish year; it repeats every seventh year in a continuous cycle.
- Scope: Biblical agricultural laws apply within the Land of Israel; other shemita-related customs and certain legal applications affect Jewish communities elsewhere in different ways.

God tells his people to rest one day a week, and devote that day to honoring God. The Jews took that too far. They considered something as nominal such as turning on a light to be work. That is actually a burden, not a rest.

We are to bring God our first cut; not our leftovers. There is no faith in giving God discretionary income. There is faith in paying God and not knowing if you bills will get covered. I recall one time right out of college, not having enough money for rent. I did a mega tithe with no income in sight. It was not that risky, since I wasn't going to make rent anyway. Guess what? Things started to happen, and I covered rent.

Read Exodus 23:20-32: God tells Moses that he is putting his personal messenger ahead of the Jews who were wandering in the wilderness. The word for messenger and angel are the same word. You could assume it was an angel. In this case, God says that *his name is in him*; which leads me to believe that he is talking about the pre-incarnate Jesus. The actual man who led this charge back into the homeland was Joshua; which happens to be the same name as Jesus, but in Hebrew instead of Aramaic.

God clearly told the Hebrews to kill the Canaanites when they returned to their homeland. God is not a racist or into genocide. They were a culture that had become a broken, dystopian idol-worshipping culture. They burned their children who were unwanted by products of adultery and idolatry. In other words, they were

beyond help. They were infectious to the Jews. This proved to be true, as the Hebrews did not kill them all; and sure enough...the Canaanite culture overtook the Hebrews and that killed most of them. This was predicted just under 480 years prior:

¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³ Then the Lord said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴ But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. (Genesis 15)

Just as it pleased the Lord to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—² and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. ³ Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. (Deuteronomy 7)

⁶⁴ Then the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. ⁶⁵ Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. ⁶⁶ You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you will say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening, “If only it were morning!”—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. ⁶⁸ The Lord will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you. (Deuteronomy 28)

God gave the land to the Hebrews. They took a very small portion of it, though it was to be theirs.



King David took a bigger portion of land at the peak of his kingdom:



These verses show that God has a much greater plan for his people:

