

# Exodus 22 Commentary

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Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus	
<b>DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION</b>	<b>PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP</b>
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27	Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38
Getting Israel Out of Egypt	Getting Egypt Out of Israel!
Narration	Legislation

Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
Subjection				Redemption		Instruction			
Suffering and Liberation of People of God				Guidance of God		Worship of God			
Moses and Burdens of Israel		Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt		Red Sea Deliverance	Wilderness Provision	Sinai Instructions			
Bondage and Oppression				Deliverance and Provision		Law Pattern and Construction			
Israel in Egypt Ex 1:1-13:16				Israel to Sinai Ex 13:17-18:27		Israel at Sinai Ex 19:1-40:38			
God's People Enduring Bondage				God's Grace Revealed in Redemption		God's Glory Manifested in Worship			
Egypt 430 Years (15% of Exodus)				Wilderness 2 Months (30% of Exodus)		Mt Sinai 10 Months (55% of Exodus)			
From Groaning									To Glory!

[Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament](#) - online

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[Click another Exodus from Egypt](#)

[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH  
(from Believer's Study Bible)

**Exodus 22:1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.**

- **he shall:** Lev 6:1-6 Nu 5:7 2Sa 12:6 Pr 6:31 Lu 19:8
- **five oxen:** Pr 14:4
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**PROTECTION OF PROPERTY:  
RESTITUTION REQUIRED**

Are you still hanging in there, reading this section of specific laws. It certainly is less exciting than watching the Red Sea close over and drown the Egyptian army. However it is the Word of God and Paul clearly stated "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Ti 3:16-17). It follows that there is truth in chapters 21-23 which will be profitable and in some way train you in righteousness and prepare you for every good work. I won't necessarily recommend memorizing this section, but I would strongly recommend not skipping over it.

**RECOMMENDATION:** As you study these detailed **ordinances** in Exodus 21-23, keep the overall picture in mind so that you do not become bogged down in what appears to be tedious [minutiae](#). And to help you get a good perspective let me suggest taking 8 minutes to watch the summary by **Dr Gene Getz** in his [Video entitled "The Greatest Commandments"](#). Dr Getz reminds us that the first 4 of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 relate to our relationship with God ("vertical") while the last 6 commandments relate to our relationship with each other ("horizontal"). Then in Exodus 21-23 he notes that God focuses primarily on the last 6 commandments spelling out specific details on how the sons of Israel were to interact with one another.

- **Laws about Slaves**
- **Laws about Personal Injury**
- **Laws about Theft**
- **Laws about Crop Protection**
- **Laws about Seduction**
- **Law about Capital Offenses**
- **Laws about Protecting the Vulnerable**
- **Laws about Honesty and Justice**

As you read Exodus 22:1-17 you will encounter "Eleven major cases of theft and damage here establish legal precedents for dealing with the loss of property, safeguarding personal property rights." (Bruckner)

**Robert Rayburn** has an interesting introductory comment - while the laws of the covenant may have some very personal implications for us, they have very clearly **public and social implications**. **Those should not make them less interesting to us, but more.** In the case of these laws we are considering tonight and those we considered last time, they provide us with **principles of justice and jurisprudence by which human life and society should be judged**. It is precisely our departure from these principles as a civilization that is so radically reshaping our public understanding of what it means to be a human being, what **justice** is, how it ought to be served, and so on. And the proof that our departure is a capital mistake is found on every hand. We must have the confidence to restate our position from the Word of God until the culture realizes what it has lost and wants to get it back again. ([Studies in Exodus 21:33-22:15](#))

**If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep**

I am from the state of Texas and here we call this "[cattle rustling](#)!" The eighth commandment Exodus 20:15 says "You shall not steal," so clearly this law deals with that sin and calls for restitution (assuming the thief is caught!). While thieves may not steal oxen or sheep from you, theft is rampant in our modern society - stolen credit card numbers, fraudulent investments, ponzi schemes, hackers stealing vital information online, and the list goes on. In fact, Israel had it "easy" compared to our corrupt modern society, where men have literally become "inventors of evil" as Paul puts it in Romans 1:30. The ways in which one can steal today are limited only by one's evil imagination on ways to use the internet, WiFi, etc.

**J Ligon Duncan** - If a man steals an ox or sheep and slaughters it or sells it, that shows his intent. He didn't accidentally walk home with sheep that weren't his and sell them. It shows that he meant to steal them, he meant to sell them, and he meant to reap the benefit...oxen took a long time to train. They were a more valuable animal and so the restitution is higher....What is the thief trying to do? The thief is trying to enrich himself at the expense of the impoverishment of his victim. Now notice what the law says has to happen in this case. The law says that theft should result in the enrichment of the victim and the impoverishment of the thief. The law is designed to exactly counteract the intention of the thief's crime. What a tremendous deterrent to the crime itself. The law is designed to ameliorate the harm that has been done to the victim, and to bring upon the perpetrator the same harm that he was ready and willing to bring upon his victim. ([Exodus 21:33- 22:15 What God Says About Dogs, Cows & Property Rights](#))

**Rayburn** - As the crime becomes more deliberate and more malicious the penalties become steeper. The ox is more valuable than the sheep in any case and a trained ox harder to replace. The ox was to the Israelite farm what the family water buffalo is to a Southeast Asian family, almost a member of the family, and took years to train. ([Studies in Exodus 21:33-22:15](#))

**Slaughters** could reflect using it for food or to provide an animal for sacrifice, the latter of course being the ultimate hypocrisy, like the rich drug dealers who give extravagantly to their favorite church! We call that "[dirty money](#)!"

The word for sheep is really the word for the small "flock-animal" (Durham), which may be either "a sheep or a goat" (UBS Handbook)

We see that King David knows this law for when confronted by the prophet Nathan for what amounted to "stealing" another person's (Uriah's) wife (Bathsheba) and their life (Uriah's), "David's anger burned greatly against the man (THE HYPOTHETICAL CASE PRESENTED BY NATHAN), and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this **deserves to die**. He must make restitution for the lamb **fourfold**, because he did this thing and had no compassion." Note that David was even harder than the Law, for he called for the man's death PLUS restitution! In Luke 19:8+ after being saved by grace "Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, **half of my possessions I will give to the poor**, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, **I will give back four times as much**." Zaccheus' response was unprovoked, clearly reflecting the transforming effect salvation has on one's heart!

Paul while not speaking of restitution, does speak of reformation writing "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need." (Eph. 4:28+)

In ancient Israel to lose an ox would be devastating to one's financial well-being. "By way of comparison, consider the plight of a Philadelphia contractor who had all his tools stolen from his truck. Understandably, the workman was distraught because his tools were his livelihood." (Ryken) And if the ox (or sheep) was slaughtered, the evidence of the theft might even be destroyed. On the other hand if the thief was captured, he had to pay 5x (oxen) or 4x (sheep). The greater compensation for oxen presumably reflects their greater usefulness for oxen were used not just for food but also for labor, while sheep did no labor.

**Victor Hamilton** - Here the assessed penalty for the apprehended thief is 300 or 400 percent (atop restitution) if he has irreparably damaged what he stole (22:1 [21:37]), and 200 percent if he has not damaged, either through slaughter or sale, what he stole (v. 4 [3]). In the case where the thief has stolen something and even lied about it under oath, but then returned the stolen material undamaged (Lev. 6:1–7 [5:20–26]), the penalty is 20 percent. The penalty slides downward for returning damaged versus undamaged goods and for apprehension versus voluntarily turning oneself in. Still, restitution is at the heart of every penalty for theft. Even forgiveness does not cancel the need for making amends. (EEC)

**Exodus 22:2 "If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account.**

- **breaking:** Job 24:14 30:5 Hos 7:1 Joe 2:9 Mt 6:19,20 24:43 1Th 5:2
- **no bloodguiltiness** Nu 35:27
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account**  
**Breaking in** (machereth) is derived from the verb "to dig" (or tunnel - Ezek 8:8, 12:5) and reflects the easiest way to break into an ancient house that had earthen walls. This law gives the property owner the right to defend his property if he catches him **breaking in** at night, even if he has to kill the thief! There will be no "blood on his hands" (bloodguiltiness), for protecting his own property. However, the next passage gives a significant exception clause to protecting one's property if the crime occurs during the day.

The word for **breaking in** is used in Jeremiah 2:34 "Also on your skirts is found The lifeblood of the innocent poor; You did not find them **breaking in**. But in spite of all these things." There the charge was that the rich were stealing from the poor, even to the point of committing murder (thus the blood was on their hands). This is a sad description of Judah just prior to her defeat and exile by Babylon, and was one of many sins her people were committing against one another! Hamilton adds this note on Jeremiah 2:34 - "In this prophetic text God has caught Israel red-handed (in flagrante delicto) in the overt course of its covenant violation: "on your clothes men find the lifeblood of the innocent poor, though you did not catch them breaking in.""

**Duncan** - if the thief is breaking in the night, then his life is up for grabs. If the owner of the house kills him, that's just too bad for the thief, even though all he meant to do was steal, he wasn't trying to kill anyone, he was trying to break in and steal. Why? Because the owner couldn't know. It could have been someone breaking in to do harm to his family and, in that case, life takes precedence, and the owner of the house has the right to protect his family at the expense of the life of the intruder. But if it's daytime, and the man sees that it's a thief breaking in, then he doesn't have the right to do homicide to protect property. ([Exodus 21:33- 22:15 What God Says About Dogs, Cows & Property Rights](#))

**Bruckner** on why killing allowed at night but not in day - This allowed for the factor of darkness and the increased fear of what cannot be seen at night and the increased possibility of harm to the victim. Traditional interpretation allowed that homicidal intent (on the part of the thief) might be assumed at night, when residents were certain to be at home and were therefore more vulnerable.

**Exodus 22:3 "But if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft."**

NET Exodus 22:3 If the sun has risen on him, then there is blood guilt for him. A thief must surely make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he will be sold for his theft.

NLT Exodus 22:3 But if it happens in daylight, the one who killed the thief is guilty of murder. "A thief who is caught must pay in full for everything he stole. If he cannot pay, he must be sold as a slave to pay for his theft.

ESV Exodus 22:3 but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

KJV Exodus 22:3 If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

NIV Exodus 22:3 but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. "A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.

YLT Exodus 22:3 if the sun hath risen upon him, blood is for him, he doth certainly repay; if he have nothing, then he hath been sold for his theft;

- then he shall: Ex 21:2 Jdg 2:14 10:7 Isa 50:1
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But if the sun has risen on him** - That is to say if the crime occurs when the sun is shining, in the daylight hours.

**There will be bloodguiltiness on his account** - In the case of a criminal who is killed by the owner in the daylight, the owner will have "blood on his hands" and be held guilty for the killing. "The owner would be responsible for a homicide and vulnerable to blood vengeance." (Currid) The point is that in daylight the thief can be easily identified for capture and prosecution.

**Rayburn** adds that "Even the thief has rights, for he too was made in the image of God. But, of course, it is but one brief description of possible circumstances. If the thief is armed and attempts to kill the homeowner, even in the daylight, the homeowner has a right to defend himself and his family and if the thief is harmless and was visibly so the homeowner can't kill him, even at night. [Cassuto, 282-283]" ([Studies in Exodus 21:33-22:15](#))

**He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft-** **Make restitution** is literally "repaying he shall repay". **If he owns nothing** is literally "if [im] there is nothing to him." One paraphrase says "If he is dirt poor, he shall be handed over to the person he was to pay for his thievery." Thieves are hardly known for saving money or investing funds, stolen or otherwise! This describes the fate of the thief who is to make restitution, but if he cannot, he must be sold as a slave. Obviously they did not have a prison system in Israel, so they could not be thrown behind bars! It does not say specifically, but in the context, the money gained by selling him as a slave was to be paid to the victim of the crime. And recall that presumably even in this setting of thievery, the thief would gain his freedom at the end of six years of labor! So the system devised by God was filled with mercy.

**Restitution** is the Hebrew word [shalam](#) which speaks of completion, fulfillment and entrance into a state of wholeness, unity and restored relationship.

[Restitution](#) - The act of restoring to the rightful owner something that has been taken away, lost, or surrendered. The act of making good or compensating for loss, damage, or injury; indemnification. A return to or restoration of a previous state or position. The act of giving back something that has been lost or stolen. In Law the act of compensating for loss or injury by reverting as far as possible to the position before such injury occurred.

**Bruckner** - The Code of Hammurabi §8 called for the execution of a thief who could not pay and also inflicted heavier fines (30 times and 10 times the value) depending on the social status of the victim. Hebrew law never imposed death for violation against property. (Ibid)

**Victor Hamilton** - There are very few thieves who are wealthy except those who engage in crimes like fraud and extortion. Normally they are paupers, either because they are lazy and irresponsible and so want the "easy buck" or because they are victims of circumstances over which they have no control, such as losing one's job or house and thus losing the ability to provide for one's

family. Regardless, the text is clear that thievery is never justifiable. (EEC)

**Exodus 22:4 "If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.**

- **found:** Ex 21:16
- **he shall pay double:** Ex 22:1,7,9 Pr 6:31 Isa 40:2 Jer 16:18 Rev 18:6
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GIVE BACK THE STOLEN PROPERTY**

**If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double** In Ex 22:1 the animal has been slaughtered and thus the higher payment of 5x (ox) and 4x (sheep) versus 2x in this setting.

**Rayburn** - He must be punished for what he did and it is no punishment simply to make him give back what he stole. He must suffer some positive loss. The victim gains another animal for his trouble. In the Code of Hammurabi, a thief under such circumstances was to be executed. ([Studies in Exodus 21:33-22:15](#))

**Duncan** - the caught thief, assuming daytime and a caught thief, must do restitution. The same principle obtains. Even if what he was trying to steal was found in his possession, he still has to do double restitution, verse 4 says. Again, this passage shows that life is more valuable than property, but that a thief in the night forfeits his right to life, and so we see principles again for carefulness for our neighbors life and property. ([Exodus 21:33- 22:15 What God Says About Dogs, Cows & Property Rights](#))

**Exodus 22:5 "If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.**

NET Exodus 22:5 "If a man grazes his livestock in a field or a vineyard, and he lets the livestock loose and they graze in the field of another man, he must make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

NLT Exodus 22:5 "If an animal is grazing in a field or vineyard and the owner lets it stray into someone else's field to graze, then the animal's owner must pay compensation from the best of his own grain or grapes.

ESV Exodus 22:5 "If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard.

LXE Exodus 22:5 And if any one should feed down a field or a vineyard, and should send in his beast to feed down another field, he shall make compensation of his own field according to his produce; and if he shall have fed down the whole field, he shall pay for compensation the best of his own field and the best of his vineyard.

KJV Exodus 22:5 If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard, shall he make restitution.

NIV Exodus 22:5 "If a man grazes his livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in another man's field, he must make restitution from the best of his own field or vineyard.

NKJ Exodus 22:5 "If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

NRS Exodus 22:5 When someone causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets livestock loose to graze in someone else's field, restitution shall be made from the best in the owner's field or vineyard.

YLT Exodus 22:5 'When a man depastureth a field or vineyard, and hath sent out his beast, and it hath pastured in the field of another, of the best of his field, and the best of his vineyard, he doth repay.

- shall he make restitution: Ex 22:3,12 21:34 Job 20:18
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GRAZING BEASTS

### RESTITUTION FOR WILLFUL NEGLIGENCE

**If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard** - Notice this is simply another form of stealing that which belongs to another. In this case the guilty part does not just accidentally allow but willfully sends his animals to another person's field. The restitution is he must give the victim access to his best field and also give him access to his best vines. Clearly the punishment is greater than the crime and should serve to deter theft by grazing.

The verb **loose** ([shalach](#)) is used in Genesis to describe Noah purposely sending out birds to determine if the flood had receded (Ge 8:7, 8, 10), in Lev 16:10 of sending the scapegoat into the wilderness and in Nu 21:6 of Jehovah sending fiery serpents to bite the people of Israel. The Septuagint uses the rare verb *katabosko* which means to put a flock to graze or to feed flocks in a place. The point is that the guilty party's animals did were sent to graze in the victim's field.

Fields for farming and fruit-bearing vines or trees were the two basic ways for using land.

**Rayburn** - As in the Rogers and Hammerstein musical Oklahoma, the cowman and the farmer are not always friends. Nor were they in the ancient Near East. And for the same reason: the fields taken up by grain are or were grazing land for the animals. Restitution must come from a man's best, not his worst. Let him feel the loss he caused his neighbor. ([Studies in Exodus 21:33-22:15](#))

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F B Meyer - Exodus 22:5 He shall make Restitution.

This chapter is full of restitution, of which there is far too little in ordinary Christian life. We try to make amends for injury done to another by an extraordinary amount of civility; but we are reluctant in so many words to frankly confess that we have done wrong, and make proper reparation for the act or speech. We often excuse ourselves by the thought that we were fully justified in speaking or acting as we did, whereas we may behave ourselves wrongly in courses of conduct which are themselves legitimate.

Loosing a beast into another man's field (Exodus 22:5). — We may through our carelessness allow another to suffer detriment. The beast ought not to have been thus allowed to stray; and, as we let it loose, we should make amends for our carelessness in respect to our brother's interests. We wrong another not only by what we do, or permit to be done, but in what we carelessly fail to do.

Kindling a Fire (Exodus 22:6). — The tongue is a spark that kindles a great matter. If we drop firebrands and lighted matches in the inflammable material of a circle of gossip, we should make amends to the person whose character may have been thereby injured.

Borrowed goods (Exodus 22:14). — To return a house, a book, a horse, in the state in which we received it, fair wear and tear excepted, or to make good any injury, should be a commonplace of Christian morality. Trustees are responsible for not making due inquiry into risky investments. Each is his brother's keeper. If we remember at the prayer-hour that he has aught against us, let us seek him, and confess, and restore.

**Exodus 22:6 "If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution."**

- **so that the stacked:** Judges 15:4,5 2Sa 14:30,31
- **started the fire:** Ex 22:9,12 21:33,34
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WILDFIRE DAMAGE

### DEMANDS RESTITUTION

**If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution** - Note this was not an accidental fire (started by lightning) but one **started** by one party. Controlled fires were used to clear fields. **Thorn bushes** could have served as a point of division from neighboring property. This law does not say the guilty party willfully sought to burn the victim's grain. Nevertheless, **restitution** (equal restitution not double) was necessary because it was a case of negligence. "What has started as controlled burning in your backyard becomes an out-of-control inferno, consuming everything in its path. (Pr 30:16, "And fire, which never says 'Enough!' ")." (Hamilton)

Harmer observes, that it is a common custom in the East to set the dry herbage on fire; which fires, from want of care, often produce



great damage. Hence a law to guard against such evils was highly expedient.

**Bruckner** - the negligent party was liable for the loss, but only in an equal amount since the outbreak of fire was not intended. (Ibid)

**Spurgeon - Morning and Evening** - Exodus 22:6 - But what restitution can he make who casts abroad the fire-brands of error, or the coals of lasciviousness, and sets men's souls on a blaze with the fire of hell? The guilt is beyond estimate, and the result is irretrievable. If such an offender be forgiven, what grief it will cause him in the retrospect, since he cannot undo the mischief which he has done! An ill example may kindle a flame which years of amended character cannot quench. To burn the food of man is bad enough, but how much worse to destroy the soul! It may be useful to us to reflect how far we may have been guilty in the past, and to enquire whether, even in the present, there may not be evil in us which has a tendency to bring damage to the souls of our relatives, friends, or neighbours. The fire of strife is a terrible evil when it breaks out in a Christian church. Where converts were multiplied, and God was glorified, jealousy and envy do the devil's work most effectually. Where the golden grain was being housed, to reward the toil of the great Boaz, the fire of enmity comes in and leaves little else but smoke and a heap of blackness. Woe unto those by whom offences come. May they never come through us, for although we cannot make restitution, we shall certainly be the chief sufferers if we are the chief offenders. Those who feed the fire deserve just censure, but he who first kindles it is most to blame. Discord usually takes first hold upon the thorns; it is nurtured among the hypocrites and base professors in the church, and away it goes among the righteous, blown by the winds of hell, and no one knows where it may end. O thou Lord and giver of peace, make us peacemakers, and never let us aid and abet the men of strife, or even unintentionally cause the least division among thy people.

**Exodus 22:7 "If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double.**

Hamilton - "Should a man give his neighbor money or goods to safekeep, and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is discovered, he shall make double restitution.

NET Exodus 22:7 "If a man gives his neighbor money or articles for safekeeping, and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he must repay double.

NLT Exodus 22:7 "Suppose someone leaves money or goods with a neighbor for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the neighbor's house. If the thief is caught, the compensation is double the value of what was stolen.

ESV Exodus 22:7 "If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double.

LXE Exodus 22:7 And if any one give to his neighbour money r goods to keep, and they be stolen out of the man's house, if the thief be found he shall repay double.

- **if the thief is caught** Pr 6:30,31 Jer 2:26 Joh 12:6 1Co 6:10
- **he shall pay double:** Ex 22:4
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PROPERTY "DEPOSITED" WITH TRUSTEE**

This next section deals with laws governing deposit's, money or goods entrusted to the care of a trustee (neighbor) for safekeeping

**If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double - To keep** (Heb - [shamar](#); Lxx - [phulasso](#) = watch, look out for) means to guard the property and protect it. If it was stolen by a thief and he were caught the thief must pay double. The text does not say where the thief gets the funds to make restitution. If he cannot pay does he have to become the victim's slave? That is possible but is simply not stated, so it is conjecture. Now this is the easy part to decipher. What if the thief is not caught? The next passage deals with that contingency.

**Constable** writes that "In the Hammurabi Code the penalty for losing or allowing a thief to steal what someone else had committed to one's trust was death as was falsely accusing someone of this crime.<sup>387</sup> The Torah required only twofold payment in both situations (v. 9)."

**Pulpit Commentary** - Deposition of property in the hands of a friend, to keep and guard, was a marked feature in the life of primitive



societies, where investments were difficult, and bankers unknown. Persons about to travel, especially merchants ... required someone to guard it [their property] in their absence. Refusals to return such deposits were rare.... Sometimes, however, they took place.... The penalty, if a man were cast in the suit, was ... "He shall pay double."

**Exodus 22:8 "If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property."**

Hamilton - If the thief is not discovered, the house's owner shall be brought to the Deity [to prove] he has not laid his hand on his neighbor's property.

NET Exodus 22:8 If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house will be brought before the judges to see whether he has laid his hand on his neighbor's goods.

NLT Exodus 22:8 But if the thief is not caught, the neighbor must appear before God, who will determine if he stole the property.

ESV Exodus 22:8 If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property.

LXE Exodus 22:8 But if the thief be not found, the master of the house shall come forward before God, and shall swear that surely he has not wrought wickedly in regard of any part of his neighbour's deposit,

KJV Exodus 22:8 If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.

NIV Exodus 22:8 But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges to determine whether he has laid his hands on the other man's property.

- **the judges:** Ex 22:28 \*marg: Ex 21:6 De 16:18 19:17,18 1Ch 23:4 Ps 82:1
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **LAW GOVERNING THE LOSS OF DEPOSIT BY THE TRUSTEE**

Exodus 22:7-8 is the law dealing with the loss of something while someone else ("trustee") was taking care of it ("the deposit").

UBS has two alternative translation models for this verse are:

- But if they do not find the thief, they must bring the person who was keeping the valuables to the place of worship. There he must make a strong statement (OATH), with God as his witness, that he has not stolen his neighbor's valuables.
- But if they do not catch the thief, they must take the person who was keeping the valuables before the judges, and the judges will decide whether he stole his neighbor's valuables or not.

**If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges**(ha elohim) - The owner of the house was the "trustee" of the other person's money or goods which were stolen. If the thief could not be found, the "trustee" was in a sense considered to be a "suspect." In other words the person who was responsible for safekeeping ("trustee") was to be examined by judges to determine whether or not he was responsible for the loss.

The interpretation of this passage is not absolutely clear as the alternative translations above indicate - in one case this man was to appear either before God making an oath or in the other case the man was to come before judges who would decide the case.

**To determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property** - He refers to the "trustee" to determine if he stole the property or was in some way involved in a plot to steal the property or money which was deposited with him.

Note some of the translations have **"appear before God"** (ha elohim). If this is the case, presumably this refers to the sanctuary (which will be described later in Exodus) and Ex 22:11 indicates an oath must be sworn before God. And since the "trustee" was a "suspect" presumably he was to declare an oath of innocence in the Name of God. In other words the "trustee" had to take an oath that he had not been involved in a plot to steal the money or goods. .

**Rayburn** - What the text literally says is that the owner of the house must "come near to God." No doubt "come to the sanctuary" is what is meant, where the judges will hear the case and where the man would take a solemn vow of innocence before the Lord and

invoking his name (as in v. 11). If the man swears falsely, well God will see to it that he answers for that. The covenantal bond between the two Israelite men is what makes all of this so serious and so effective. In any case, as the other cases make clear, if the loss was due to the negligence of the homeowner, he would be responsible to make restitution.

**Bruckner** - The judges (jury) decided rightful ownership, guilt, and declared the typical double restitution. (Ibid)

**Ryken** sums up Ex 22:7-8 - A man goes away on business and leaves his valuables with a trusted friend. When he comes back, the money is gone. His friend says that a robber came in the middle of the night, but is he telling the truth? In Israel the way to resolve such a dispute was by taking it to the elders, who were supposed to make a careful investigation. If the friend turned out to be the one who took the money, then he was the thief who had to make double restitution. If he was telling the truth, then apparently the original owner was out of luck. The friend who had been taking care of his property didn't owe a thing. (Preaching the Word - Exodus)

**Exodus 22:9 "For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before the judges; he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.**

Dunnam - "For any kind of trespass, whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.

NET Exodus 22:9 In all cases of illegal possessions, whether for an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any kind of lost item, about which someone says 'This belongs to me,' the matter of the two of them will come before the judges, and the one whom the judges declare guilty must repay double to his neighbor.

ESV Exodus 22:9 For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor.

LXE Exodus 22:9 according to every injury alleged, both concerning a calf, and an ass, and a sheep, and a garment, and every alleged loss, whatsoever in fact it may be,-- the judgment of both shall proceed before God, and he that is convicted by God shall repay to his neighbour double.

KJV Exodus 22:9 For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour.

NIV Exodus 22:9 In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to his neighbor.

CSB Exodus 22:9 In any case of wrongdoing involving an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or anything else lost, and someone claims, 'That's mine,' the case between the two parties is to come before the judges. The one the judges condemn must repay double to his neighbor.

- **'For every breach of trust:** Nu 5:6,7 1Ki 8:31 Mt 6:14,15 18:15,35 Lu 17:3,4
- **the case of both parties:** Ex 18:21,22 23:6-8 De 16:18,19 25:1 2Ch 19:10
- **pay double:** Ex 22:4,7
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Mackay** introduces this passage - what should be done not when property is missing, but when it is present but its ownership is disputed. (Mentor Commentary- Ex)

**For every breach of trust (ALL CASES OF ILLEGAL POSSESSIONS), whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, 'This is it,' (THIS BELONGS TO ME) the case of both parties shall come before the judges** - This is a difficult passage so several commentaries are quoted below.

**Mackay** gives two possible interpretations - **'Illegal possession' (breach of trust)** is the same word as 'rebellion' (Ex 23:21; 34:7). It denotes a wilful violation of a covenant obligation. Though the law arises out of the previous discussion regarding goods left for safekeeping, it is broadened out to cover any breach of an obligation owed to a fellow member of the covenant community. What is

involved is not so much theft as breach of trust. The livestock or goods had been entrusted to the other party, but he now blatantly repudiates the arrangement and claims them as his own. **Alternatively**, it may have been a genuine case of finding lost property (**any lost thing**), and then refusing to allow the claims of another alleging to have recognised the property as his own. There is here no acknowledgement of a principle of 'finders keepers'. (Ibid)

**Robert Rayburn** interprets this passage as follows - An object has been lost; the owner later sees a similar object in the possession of another man and claims that it is the very object that he lost and, thus, that it was stolen from him. The assumption is, of course, that the judges will weigh evidence, take testimony, and so on until they come to a verdict.

**Alan Cole** - An object has been lost: the owner later sees a similar object in possession of his neighbor, and claims it as his own. The Israelites apparently did not follow the Anglo-Saxon dictum of 'finders are keepers': a lost object remains the possession of the original owner, who can claim it on sight." (TOTC-Ex)

**Walter Betteridge** - This seems to be a supplementary law dealing with any form of property which may be found in a man's possession and to which another man may lay claim; in any manner, or charge, of trespass, transgression, probably misappropriation or theft (Gen. 31:36; Prov. 28:24) of anything whatever which has been lost, in regard to which a man says "this is the thing which I have lost," then the case shall be brought before God at the sanctuary for decision, and the one whom the judges, better, deity, convict of theft shall make twofold restitution. The method of ascertaining the will of the deity is not stated. (Exodus)

**Waldemar Janzen** - Disputed Ownership. Conflicting property claims can arise with respect to countless items and under circumstances too numerous to describe. Therefore, a general principle is inserted here. It consists of double compensation for the wronged party (cf. 22:4, 7). (BCBC-Ex)

**He whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor**- As with Ex 22:8 some interpret "the judges" (ha elohim) as a reference to God. So either God or the judges would decide who was guilty and the guilty party had to pay double.

**Exodus 22:10 "If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking,**

- Ge 39:8 Lu 12:48 16:11 2Ti 1:12
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CARE OF ANIMALS TO A TRUSTEE

**If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking** - The animal was entrusted to a neighbor and the animal dies or is injured and there are no witnesses to the event. **Hurt** is the verb "to break" and means the animal is harmed in any way. Driven away is more literally taken captive as by raiders who take the animal away. The Septuagint uses the adjective [aichmalotos](#) (aichme = spear + alotos = captured) meaning taken prisoner, captive or captured at spear point, again signifying armed robbers.

**Exodus 22:11 an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution.**

- **an oath of the Lord:** Lev 5:1 Lev 6:3 1Ki 2:42,43 Pr 30:9 Heb 6:16
- **that he has not:** Ex 22:8 23:1
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A BINDING OATH NEGATES RESTITUTION

**An oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands**(Lit stretched his hand) **on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution** ([shalam](#)) - This is relatively straightforward -- if the "trustee" vows before Jehovah he is innocent of any mischief, then that is the end of the matter. The idea of an oath is that which binds the parties before God as speaking the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. The Septuagint translates oath with [horkos](#) meaning a formal and binding statement as used by Jesus in Mt 5:33ff+. We see how this was even held to in King

Solomon's day because in breaking it Shimei paid with his life although this penalty is primarily because he had cursed King David (1Ki 2:42-46)

In Hebrews 6:16<sup>+</sup> we read "For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath ([horkos](#)) given as confirmation is an end of every dispute."

**Oath** ([07621](#))(**shebua** from **sheba** - seven) "a sacred promise attesting to what one has done or will do. God swore an oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He would fulfill His covenant with them (Gen. 26:3; Deut. 7:8; 1 Chr. 16:16). An oath could also be sworn by a person to declare innocence (Ex. 22:11[10]; Num. 5:21); to proclaim friendship (2 Sam. 21:7); to affirm a promise (Lev. 5:4; 1 Ki. 2:43); to ratify a peace treaty (Josh. 9:20); to pledge loyalty to God (2 Chr. 15:15); or to another person (Neh. 6:18). An oath was considered to be an unbreakable contract; however, in two instances, the Bible presents well-defined possibilities in which an oath could be nullified and the obligated party could be acquitted. Abraham provided for his servant to be released from his obligation to find a bride for Isaac if the woman refused to follow (Gen. 24:8); and the spies provided for their own release from their oath to Rahab if she did not display the scarlet cord and stay in her house or if she revealed the intentions of the Israelites (Josh. 2:17, 20)." (Complete Word Study Dictionary) "Abraham sealing an oath (shāba', q.v.) by Abimelech that a well of water is his, Abraham's, by forcing upon Abimelech seven lambs (Genesis 21:28, 30). So too in Genesis 29:18 it is precisely seven years that Jacob must serve Laban for Rachel and for Leah. These instances seem to be examples of an ancient traditional respect for the number seven, the original basis of which is a matter of conjecture and debate." (TWOT)

**Shebua** -30x in 29v - curse(1), oath(25), oaths(1), perjury\*(1), swear(1), sworn(1).Gen. 24:8; Gen. 26:3; Exod. 22:11; Lev. 5:4; Num. 5:21; Num. 30:2; Num. 30:10; Num. 30:13; Deut. 7:8; Jos. 2:17; Jos. 2:20; Jos. 9:20; Jdg. 21:5; 1 Sam. 14:26; 2 Sam. 21:7; 1 Ki. 2:43; 1 Chr. 16:16; 2 Chr. 15:15; Neh. 6:18; Neh. 10:29; Ps. 105:9; Eccl. 8:2; Eccl. 9:2; Isa. 65:15; Jer. 11:5; Ezek. 21:23; Dan. 9:11; Hab. 3:9; Zech. 8:17

**Rayburn** - Then as now the doing of a good deed, extending kindness to a neighbor, can lead to difficulties. We have good Samaritan laws to deal with precisely this problem.

**Mackay on the oath before the LORD** - The situations discussed continue in terms of livestock, not other goods. Taking such an oath constituted the most solemn form of protestation of innocence conceivable. It uses the LORD, the covenant name of God, and would invoke on the party taking the oath the curse of God if what they claimed were untrue. (Ibid)

**Victor Hamilton** on an oath before the LORD - **There are two kinds of oaths in the Bible. The first kind of an oath is a promissory oath**, in which the oath taker imposes some kind of an obligation on himself. See, for example, Lev. 5:4 ("Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything ..."), or 1 Kings 1:13, 17, 30, where Bathsheba and Nathan successfully convince elderly David that he has earlier made an oath to the effect that Solomon is to succeed him. This oath is a self-imposed obligation, which explains why in Scripture the terms "oath" and "covenant" are interchangeable (see, e.g., the line "His oath, his covenant, his blood, support me in the whelming flood" from the hymn "The Solid Rock," by Edward Mote). In making a covenant with Israel, Yahweh places an obligation on himself to care for, provide, guide, and nurture his people. The covenant as oath emphasizes not only God's control of Israel, but also his commitment to Israel. **The second kind of oath** we may call **assertatory**: an oath taken by an individual to exonerate oneself of a (false) charge brought against them and so clear their name. Clearly Exod. 22:8 and 11] fall into this category; see Nu 5:21 for another case. The depositor submits to an oath to prove that they did not steal or damage the item with which they were entrusted. The middle one in v. 9 is a bit different. Both party A and party B claim to be the ox's owner. Who is a truth teller, and who is a fabricator? This particular law is like the situation on which Solomon has to make judgment: which woman is the mother of the baby (1 Kings 3:16-28)? How do you determine guilt/innocence without the benefits of modern technology like lie-detector polygraphs and DNA testing? There is a passage in Leviticus (Lev. 6:1-7) that is close to this one. It too talks about somebody's deceiving his neighbor about "something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen." The difference between the two is that Lev. 6:1-7, unlike Ex 22:7-13, calls for the person suspected of and subsequently convicted of such illicit behavior first to make restitution plus 20 percent, and then offer up to the Lord a "guilt offering," a reparation offering ('āšām). The reason why a guilt offering is called for in Lev. 6 but not in Exod. 22 is that in the Lev. 6 the bailee "swore falsely" about his actions and needs forgiveness.

**Robert Rayburn** has an interesting comment - Donkeys, oxen, and sheep were the most common domestic animals in Iron Age Palestine and the most common form of wealth. No wonder many of these property cases concern the loss of these animals. Not only is there no proof of complicity on the part of the homeowner in the loss of the other man's property, but a solemn oath of innocence is required. There the matter must be left. The oath amounts to be most solemn protestation of innocence of which anyone is capable and there is no evidence to affirm or contradict. In this world no one can expect perfect justice in every case. The law is willing to tell a man who has lost some of his property that there is nothing to be done and he must simply bear his misfortune. In our modern jurisprudence, too many efforts to circumvent this biblical realism have resulted in innocent people being made to

pay for a victim's losses. God's law does not permit the innocent to be held accountable when a guilty man cannot be found or cannot be made to make restitution.

**Exodus 22:12 "But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner.**

- **stolen from him:** Ex 22:7 Ge 31:39
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TRUSTEE NEGLIGENT IF ANIMAL STOLEN

**But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution([shalam](#)) to its owner** - **Actually stolen** is emphatic = "was certainly stolen." This law is similar to the law where the trustee had property stolen by a thief, but in this case the "trustee" is held responsible and has to repay the owner. Negligence indicates the "trustee" did not pay enough attention to the animal, giving due care to making sure it was safe and secure. Restitution was not double but was equivalent to the value of what was lost.

**Exodus 22:13 "If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.**

- **torn to pieces:** Eze 4:14 Am 3:12 Mic 5:8 Na 2:12
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TRUSTEE NEGLIGENT IF ANIMAL KILLED

**If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces-** Evidence is the Hebrew word ('ed) which means witness, so in effect the carcass serves as a "silent witness" against the trustee! This implies the animal that was entrusted to the man's care was not stolen but was torn by a predatory animal (cf Amos 3:12, 1 Sa 17:34-35).

**Rayburn** - Little remarks like these remind us that the Israelites were fully aware of the need for evidence in order to prove guilt and of the power of evidence to exculpate the accused. In this case the carcass would prove that the man had not stolen the animal and sold it or eaten it. The carcass stands for all manner of evidence, from eyewitness testimony to fingerprints to DNA.

**Mackay** comments that "Attack by wild animal was an ever-present possibility, and production of the carcass would prove not only the cause of death, but also that though the watch exercised had not prevented the attack, it was speedily detected before the carcass could be dragged off and fully devoured (cf Amos 3:12)." (Ibid)

**Exodus 22:14 "If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution.**

- **borrows:** De 15:2 23:19,20 Ne 5:4 Ps 37:21 Mt 5:42 Lu 6:35
- **make full restitution:** Ex 22:11 21:34 Lev 24:18
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### RULES FOR BORROWING

**If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution** - **Borrows** is literally "asks" (Lxx = [aiteo](#)) and does not imply borrowing at interest. Presumably this refers to animals because an ax could not be injured or die. The message is be careful what you borrow! "The ruling here implies an animal is borrowed, and if harm comes to it when the owner is not with it, the borrower is liable." (NET)

**Thompson** - If a man borrows anything from an owner and the owner is not present while using what he borrowed and something happens to what he borrowed, he is responsible to make it right and make restitution. ([Sermon](#))

**Ryken** - Anyone who has ever lent something to a neighbor knows how easy it is for borrowing to go bad. As Shakespeare famously wrote in Hamlet, "Neither a borrower nor a lender be." However, this advice came from a character (Polonius) who wasn't nearly as wise as he thought he was. The truth is that people often need to borrow something. The Bible recognizes this and also helps us know what to do when this leads to a dispute. (Ibid)

**Exodus 22:15 "If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire."**

NET Exodus 22:15 If its owner was with it, he will not have to pay; if it was hired, what was paid for the hire covers it.

NLT Exodus 22:15 But if the owner was present, no compensation is required. And no compensation is required if the animal was rented, for this loss is covered by the rental fee.

ESV Exodus 22:15 If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution; if it was hired, it came for its hiring fee.

LXE Exodus 22:15 But if the owner be with it, he shall not make compensation: but if it be a hired thing, there shall be a compensation to him instead of his hire.

KJV Exodus 22:15 But if the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be an hired thing, it came for his hire.

NIV Exodus 22:15 But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.

ASV Exodus 22:15 If the owner thereof be with it, he shall not make it good: if it be a hired thing, it came for its hire.

CSB Exodus 22:15 If its owner is there with it, the man does not have to make restitution. If it was rented, the loss is covered by its rental price.

NKJ Exodus 22:15 "If its owner was with it, he shall not make it good; if it was hired, it came for its hire.

NRS Exodus 22:15 If the owner was present, there shall be no restitution; if it was hired, only the hiring fee is due.

YLT Exodus 22:15 if its owner is with it, he doth not repay, -- if it is a hired thing, it hath come for its hire.

NAB Exodus 22:14 But if the owner is present, he need not make restitution. If it was hired, this was covered by the price of its hire.

NJB Exodus 22:14 But if the animal's owner has been present, he will not have to make good the loss. If the owner has hired it out, he will get the cost of its hire.

GWN Exodus 22:15 If the owner is with the animal, the borrower doesn't have to make up for the loss. If it is rented, the rental fee covers the loss.

- **it came for its hire:** Zec 8:10
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution-** The point is that if the **owner** was present he would have (or should have) taken care that the animal would not be injured or overworked. So if something happened (natural causes or accident), the one who borrowed the animal was not held liable.

**NET Note** - Literally "it came with/for its hire," this expression implies that the owner who hired it out and was present was prepared to take the risk, so there would be no compensation."

**if it is hired, it came for its hire- NET** = " if it was hired, what was paid for the hire covers it." "This expression implies that the owner who hired it out and was present was prepared to take the risk, so there would be no compensation." (NET) The point is that what the man had paid for rent would be all he would have to pay. He would not have to pay additional "damages." The owner knew



there were risks involved in renting his animals and thus he was held responsible to assume the risk. The **NLT** paraphrases it stating that "no compensation is required if the animal was rented, for this loss is covered by the rental fee."

**Robert Rayburn** - The last sentence indicates that if the animal had been rented for a fee the owner had already calculated the risk he was incurring and had provided for compensation in the fees he charged. He can't ask for more. He can't make a profit out of someone else's misfortune (for the one who hired the animal has not got full value for the fees he paid, having lost the animal). Once again, additional penalties beyond the loss itself are not imposed when there is no fault and no responsibility.

**Exodus 22:16** "If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife."

- **man seduces a virgin** Ge 34:2-4 De 22:28,29
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **ROBBING ONE'S CHASTITY AND REPUTATION**

**NET Note** comments that "The second half of the chapter records various laws of purity and justice. Any of them could be treated in an expository way, but in the present array they offer a survey of God's righteous standards: Maintain the sanctity of marriage (16–17); maintain the purity of religious institutions (18–20), maintain the rights of human beings (21–28), maintain the rights of Yahweh (29–31)."

**J Ligon Duncan** - God's people are not to rob the chastity of others.

**If a man seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife** - The word for **virgin** is [bethulah](#) meaning virgin, a mature young woman that has never had sexual intercourse, and under the authority and protection of the father. Although she was seduced the sex was considered consensual. "It was a seduction in the true sense of the word. The woman was receptive to the man's advances, for when the Bible says the man "seduces" (Ex. 22:16), it means "he persuades the girl and she consents."" (Ryken) Note the qualifying phrase **who is not engaged** (exact phrase in Dt 22:28) indicating that she is not betrothed to another man, for if she were the illicit act would be considered adultery and potentially be under threat of death. Similarly this was clearly not a case of rape which brought the death penalty (Deut 22:25-27). This man is in effect a thief because he steals the girl's virginity! Note that this is seduction and out of wedlock sex but it is not rape. Requirement to **pay a dowry** protects the woman, because in this society if a woman was not a virgin, her chances of ever being married were very remote.

**NET Note on pay a dowry** - The verb מָהַר (mahar) means "pay the marriage price," and the related noun is the bride price. B. Jacob says this was a proposal gift and not a purchase price (Exodus, 700). This is the price paid to her parents, which allowed for provision should there be a divorce. The amount was usually agreed on by the two families, but the price was higher for a pure bride from a noble family. Here, the one who seduces her must pay it, regardless of whether he marries her or not.

**Virgin** (01330)([bethulah](#)) is a feminine noun meaning virgin, a mature young woman that has never had sexual intercourse, and under the authority and protection of the father (translated as such 49x and once as maiden in the NAS). [Judges](#) 21:12 describes "400 young **virgins** who had not known a man by lying with him." So while the meaning of bethulah is unquestionably a virgin, that is not always the case for in Joel 1:8 we read "Wail like a **virgin** girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth," which suggests the **bethulah** is mourning for her husband. Bethulah also refers to cities or countries that are personified as females (Isa. 37:22; 47:1; Jer. 18:13; 31:4, 21; Amos 5:2). **Swanson** adds that bethulah also means "young women, i.e., a class of young female, though the class may be virgins, the focus is on the youth group (Dt 32:25; Ps 148:12; Jer 31:13; Am 8:13)." Swanson adds that a third meaning of bethulah is "dear one, one cared for, loved one, formally, virgin daughter, a young woman who is loved by the father, with the associated meaning of being pure, innocent, and under the protection and care of the father (2Ki 19:21; Isa 23:12; 37:22, 22; 47:1, 1; Jer 46:11; La 1:15; 2:10, 13)."

**Engaged** (0781)([aras](#)) means to betroth or be engaged. Pledge in marriage. **Gilbrant** - In Bible times, betrothal was the first step towards marriage, and the parties involved were considered as husband and wife (Deut. 20:7; 22:23, 25, 27). The betrothed woman was equal with a married woman in certain respects, and she is expressly called a wife in Deut. 22:24. The subject of this verb can be either the man (Deut. 20:7; 28:30), or the woman (Exo. 22:15; Deut. 22:28). This verb is used of the bride-price paid to the father of the bride (2 Sam. 3:14). The betrothal theme is also used figuratively in Hosea 2 to denote God's covenant mercy



to Israel (2:19, 20). Although many newer Bible versions translate it as "engaged," betrothal was much more binding than engagements in modern Western cultures. A betrothal, or engagement, could only be broken by a writing of divorcement, even if the marriage had never been consummated (Matt. 1:18-19)." (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary).

**Aras** - 11x in 10v - betroth(4), betrothed(1), engaged(6). Exod. 22:16; Deut. 20:7; Deut. 22:23; Deut. 22:25; Deut. 22:27; Deut. 22:28; Deut. 28:30; 2 Sam. 3:14; Hos. 2:19; Hos. 2:20

**Seduces** (066601)(**pathah**) means to persuade or entice a person to sin. **Entice** means to attract artfully or adroitly or by arousing hope or desire and suggests drawing by artful or adroit means. The idea is to lead astray from one's true course. This verb is used with a sexual connotation in Jdg 14:15 ("they said to Samson's wife, "**Entice** your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle,") smf Jdg 16:5 ("The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "**Entice** him") **Note** the use of this verb in this passage in Exodus 22 does not signify that the man rapes her, but talks her into a consensual relationship.

**David Thompson** comments "In God's world there is no such thing as a one night stand with no accountability."

**David Guzik** - This law emphasized the principle that there is no such thing as casual sex. Both Old and New Testaments state that sexual relations carry lasting consequences (1 Corinthians 6:15–16).

**Adam Clarke** points out that "This was an exceedingly wise and humane law, and must have operated powerfully against seduction and fornication; because the person who might feel inclined to take the advantage of a young woman knew that he must marry her, and give her a dowry."

There is a parallel passage in Deuteronomy which specifies the dowry amount although this passage is rape and not consensual as in Ex 22:16

"If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her (forces himself on her - aka "rape") and lies with her and they are discovered, then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days.(Deut. 22:28, 29)

**Alan Cole** - this comes under the general heading of robbery. An unmarried girl was, in a sense, her father's property, and he would in due course receive a marriage present or 'bride-price' for her. The handing over of such gifts marks the official 'engagement' to this day in many parts of the world. Naturally such 'engagement' is almost as binding as marriage, being a financial arrangement, and seduction of an engaged girl by another man is treated as adultery, and so punished (Deut. 22:23, 24). This accounts for Joseph's quandary in Matthew 1:19. But, in this instance, since a man has taken a girl without paying bride-price, bride-price he must pay, for who else will pay it now? Also, he must acknowledge her as his wife, unless her father refuses. Even if he does, the price must still be paid: this both recompenses the father and punishes the man. (Ibid)

**Mackay** - The bride-price was not really paid to purchase the girl, though that was what occurred in the case of a concubine (21:7–11). The bride-price, or bridal money, was a form of compensation for the loss of a daughter's services.

**Guzik** - A man illustrated the value of virginity with a true story about a friend who owned an antique store and had a table for sale. The table was worth \$600, but was marked down to \$300. A man tried to bargain her down to \$200, and not only did she refuse, but she realized the true value of the table, and upped the price to its true worth—even when offered \$300. The man finally bought the table for \$600, and certainly treated it like a \$600 table—because its worth had been recognized and fought for. Some women who know men treat them shabbily contribute to the problem by selling themselves cheaply.

**John Currid** - According to the law, if two people have sexual relations prior to betrothal, they are required to get married. The seriousness and severity by which the Torah regards the act of pre-marital intercourse ought to give us pause in the church today. We live in an age when sex before marriage is not only commonplace, but appears to be the norm. God is not pleased with such activity. He is not honoured by it. The message of abstention must be proclaimed to a world that is sleeping the sleep of death.

**Third Millennium** has a lengthy note - Laws on premarital intercourse required full responsibility from the male for the consequences (Exod 22:16-17). The exploited woman was to be protected. A "bride-price" is the money paid to the family for the loss of the bride's services. **Ryken** states:

The first law has to do with premarital sex and thus serves as a specific application of the seventh commandment: "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins" (Exod 22:16, 17).

This law is often misunderstood because people don't know the social context behind it. This was not a case of rape. If it had been, then the man who committed the crime would have been punishable by death (see Deut. 22:25-27). But in this case the couple's intercourse was consensual. It was a seduction in the true sense of the word. The woman was receptive to the man's advances, for when the Bible says the man "seduces" (Exod. 22:16), it means "he persuades the girl and she consents." Nor was the woman being bought and sold, although that is the way these verses often are taken. Some people think that the laws about seduction were part of the property law, like the scholar who said, "Underlining these rules is the thought that a virgin through sexual intercourse has been transferred from the ownership of the father to that of the seducer." Even though this interpretation is incorrect, it has a certain plausibility. The term "bride-price" naturally suggests that brides were bought and sold.

Notice, however, that the Bible does not indicate who received the bride-price (**mohar**). It may have been paid to the woman's family, but even then it was not really a purchase. The renowned Old Testament scholar **Roland de Vaux** wrote:

This obligation to pay a sum of money, or its equivalent, to the girl's family obviously gives the Israelite marriage the outward appearance of a purchase. But the **mohar** seems to be not so much the price paid for the woman as a compensation given to the family, and, in spite of the apparent resemblance, in law this is a different consideration. The future husband thereby acquires a right over the woman, but the woman herself is not bought and sold. The difference becomes clear if we compare the mohar marriage with another type of union, which really was a purchase: A girl could be sold by her father to another man who intended her to be his own, or his son's, concubine; she was a slave, and could be re-sold, though not to an alien.

There is another possible interpretation. Perhaps the bride-price was paid to the woman rather than to her father. In this case, the payment was the wife's guarantee of support in the event that something happened to her husband or to their marriage. There seem to be examples of this in Genesis, such as Rebekah, who received silver and gold from Isaac (Gen. 24:53). Rather than calling this kind of payment a "bride-price," it would be better to call it a "wedding-price." It was not intended to protect the property rights of the father, but to provide for his daughter.

A bride was not a commodity. In fact, rather than treating a woman as a piece of property, these laws were for her protection. There are always men around who would like to have the pleasures of sex without the responsibilities of marriage. Given the chance, they will take advantage of a young woman. But sex should never be separated from a covenant commitment. So in Israel a man couldn't just sleep around. If he seduced a girl, he had to do the right thing, which was to marry her.

There was one exception. Even after a seduction, a father could refuse to allow a man to marry his daughter. By itself, the act of intercourse did not establish a marriage, as if the couple were "married in the sight of God." No; if they were to be married at all, they had to be married properly, which included having the father's blessing. In most cases he would probably consent, partly to protect his daughter's reputation. But if he thought that the man was unsuitable, he had the right of refusal. This provided a strong incentive for a man who wanted to get married to conduct himself in an honorable way. If he went ahead and had sex with a girl, he was really pushing his luck! He still had to get her father's permission, only now his character was in question.

Furthermore, if her father did refuse, then the man still had to pay the wedding-price! He had robbed the woman of her virginity, which would make it harder for her to get married. Some people would probably treat her as "damaged goods." However, if she had her wedding-price, then at least she would have some means of support. This might also make it easier for another man to marry her, because he wouldn't have to pay the wedding-price.

These laws were designed to promote godly patterns of courtship, marriage, and sex - in that order. Although the cultural context has changed, many of the same basic principles still apply. Ordinarily a couple who has shared intercourse should get married, but this is not automatic. It is better to avoid a bad marriage. And when it comes to marriage, fathers have a duty to look after their daughters. Under ordinary circumstances, when a couple (especially a young couple) wants to get married, they should seek the permission and blessing of the woman's father.

Sex is for marriage, and not just for personal pleasure. Therefore, single men are called to sexual purity, and they bear full responsibility before God for any misconduct. This is not to say that women don't have to answer

to God for their own sin. But there is a Biblical principle of male leadership that is designed to protect women. These days most women have to look out for themselves, which puts them in an extremely vulnerable position. Things ought to be different in the church. A real man of God can be trusted to preserve his own chastity and to protect the purity of women. When a man fails to do this he causes real damage, and God will hold him accountable. This may seem old-fashioned to some, but it is in keeping with the character of God. Because he is holy and pure, he wants us to preserve the purity of our sexuality.

**Exodus 22:17 "If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins."**

- **absolutely refuses:** De 7:3,4
- **pay money,** Ge 23:16
- **dowry for virgins:** Ge 34:12 De 22:29 1Sa 18:25
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **DOWRY DEMANDED BUT NO BRIDE DELIVERED**

**If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins-** The father could refuse the dowry and refuse to let the man who seduced his daughter take her for his wife. The father had the final call. The man who seduced the daughter still had to pay the dowry but did not receive a wife! Notice there is no penalty on the woman.

**Rayburn** - We still today require the young man to pay if a child is conceived, but we have stopped caring about the loss of virginity itself. The social problems that have ensued from that loss of concern for virginity are some of the most painful and costly that we face as a society. ([Studies in Exodus 22:16-23:9](#))

**Exodus 22:18 "You shall not allow a sorceress to live."**

- Lev 19:26,31 Lev 20:6,27 De 18:10,11 1Sa 28:3,9 Isa 19:3 Acts 8:9-11 Ac 16:16-19 19:19 Ga 5:20 Rev 22:15
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **SORCERY CONDEMNED**

#### **Related Passages:**

Leviticus 19:26+ 'You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor practice divination or soothsaying.

Leviticus 19:31+ 'Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:6+ 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

Leviticus 20:27+ 'Now a man or a woman who is a medium or a spiritist shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones, their bloodguiltiness is upon them.'"

Deuteronomy 18:9-13 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire (SACRIFICE OF CHILDREN TO [IDOLS LIKE MOLECH](#)), one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a **sorcerer**, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 "For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.13 "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.

Jeremiah 27:9-10 "But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers or your sorcerers who speak to you, saying, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon.' 10"For they prophesy a lie to you in order to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out and you will perish.

Micah 5:12 I will cut off sorceries from your hand, And you will have fortune-tellers no more.

Nahum 3:4 All because of the many harlotries of the harlot, The charming one, the mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations by her harlotries And families by her sorceries.

From the related passages above, note that one effect of tampering with the forbidden "spirit world" is that the seeker might become **defiled**, the Hebrew verb [tame](#) meaning to become unclean. (Lv 19:31). In Lev 20:6 such a person is characterized as "**playing the harlot after them**," the Hebrew word ) [zanah](#) which described literal fornication, but in this case is used figuratively to describe marital infidelity (because Israel was considered the "wife" of Jehovah - Isa 54:5, Jer 31:32+) and to seek the demonic world was considered to be spiritual infidelity or unfaithfulness to Jehovah and the penalty was such a one would be cut off ([karath](#)) from Israel. Note the verb [karath](#) can convey the sense of destroy and that is probably the intent in this passage because the Septuagint translates [karath](#) here with the verb [apollumi](#) which means to destroy, kill, bring to ruin (used of Herod's intent toward the infant Jesus - Mt 2:13). The upshot is that toying with the demonic world might cost a person their life at worst or their ruin at best (Dt 18:12 would tend to support the latter penalty).

**Currid** points out that "The heinousness of idolatry, paganism and magic is affirmed in this next section. Specific statutes are provided that are grounded in the opening two commandments of the Decalogue. No one but Yahweh is to be worshipped. And if anyone bows down to another god, or practises the magic associated with such worship, then only the severest penalties will apply."

**Guzik** - Among the ancients, the practice of sorcery had two associations. First, contact with dark or demonic powers or persons. Second, altered states through drugs and potions. There was understood to be a connection between drug taking and occultist practices.

**J Ligon Duncan** comments that in Exodus 22:18-10 "we see three capital crimes dealt with: sorcery, bestiality and idolatry. Notice here how the first, second, and seventh commandments are being applied. What we learn from this passage is that there are some crimes that are particularly spiritually injurious to the covenant community. These laws are all put in the imperative; they sound just like The Ten Commandments. "You shall not allow; shall surely be put to death; shall utterly be destroyed." You get the imperative feel of The Ten Commandments even though they are dealing with specific situations. They are not phrased like the previous case laws--if this happens, if this happens, if this such and such. They are imperative; they are categorical laws about society; they are categorical ethical statements or religious stipulations and that reminds us that they are basic and fundamental." ([Exodus 22:16-31 God's Concern for Community](#))

**NET Note** - There still were many who wished to follow pagan beliefs and consort with the dead (see Deut 18:10–11). The sorceress was someone who dealt with drugs or herbs for occult purposes.

**You shall not allow a sorceress to live**- Capital punishment for the crime of sorcery. Such a person is an instrument of Satan and must be eradicated from a community lest this lying leaven spread because men are curious about the supernatural world. In Lev 20:27 not only is the sorceress (a female) to be killed but also male sorcerers.

The word "**sorcery**" is used only 3 times in the Bible (NASB) - 2 Chr 33:6 describing the evil king [Manasseh](#) who "He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom (see "god" [Molech](#)); and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced **sorcery** and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger (cf "more evil than the" pagans! - 2 Chr 33:9). Paul lists sorcery as one of deeds of the flesh (Gal 5:20+) and lastly in a description of Babylon in Revelation 18:23+ describing how the "nations **were deceived** ([planao](#)) by your (Babylon's) sorcery." This last use of **sorcery** is instructive because it shows that one of the main destructive effects of sorcery is to deceive people, enticing them with lies which lead them astray from the Truth of God, deluding them, causing them to wander astray from the path of Truth and Light and walk along the path of lies and darkness which is the broad road to destruction (Mt 7:13+). Little wonder that God has "zero tolerance" for sorcery!

One is reminded of the words of the **witch of Endor** - "But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" (1 Samuel 28:9)

#### Related Resources:

- [Did the witch of Endor really summon Samuel from the dead \(1 Samuel 28:7-20\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is seeing spirits / demons an ability God gives to some people? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Adam Clarke** - "Many of the Israelites had, no doubt, learned these curious arts from their long residence with the Egyptians; and so much were the Israelites attached to them, that we find such arts in repute among them, and various practices of this kind prevailed through the whole of the Jewish history, notwithstanding the offence was capital, and in all cases punished with death."

**Constable** - In the ancient world, people made a distinction between [black magic](#) and [white magic](#). The former sought to harm someone, and the latter did not. The Hammurabi Code prohibited the former only, but the Torah outlawed both without distinction. Magic constituted an attempt to override God's will.

**Alan Cole** - At a deeper level, we might say that to desire to know the future shows lack of faith, while to desire to control the future is even worse. With the decline of religion in the Western world, 'magic' has today taken on a new fascination as a substitute. Witchcraft is equally condemned in New Testament days (Acts 13:10; 19:19), but in spite of the practice of the church in the Middle Ages, there is no hint in the New Testament that mediums or witches should be put to death. We may assume that the Exodus 'rule of thumb' was designed to preserve the integrity of God's community from such dangerous influences, alien to faith, in early days, and to show for all time God's abhorrence of these things. (Ibid)

**Cassuto** - It is true that 'black' magic, whereby the sorcerer seeks to harm another person, is, of course, forbidden, even among the gentiles, and in the Eastern law-codes the death penalty is ordained for one who practices it and for one who falsely charges his neighbour with this practice (Hammurabi Code, § 2; Middle Assyrian Laws, § 47), but in Israel no distinction was made between permitted and prohibited magic. Every magical act, even for a purpose that is not evil, is forbidden, since it constitutes an attempt to prevail over the will of God, who alone has dominion over the world. Thus it is not without reason that in Israel the concepts of magic and idolatry were identified. Jezebel's efforts to spread the worship of the Tyrian Baal among the Israelites is termed by Jehu harlotries and sorceries (2 Kings 9:22); and the prophets mention sorcery as typical of gentile life (see, for example, Nahum 3:4; Isa. 47:9, 12-13).

**Sorceress** ([03784](#))([kashaph](#)) means to practice sorcery or magic. While the exact meaning of the word is obscure, it involved the use of supernatural powers that hardened hearts against the truth (Ex. 7:11). Those in Israel who used such powers were to be executed (Ex. 22:18). Judgment is promised against sorcerers when the Messiah returns (Mal. 3:5). "Sorcery is a religious act, as communication from the gods is sought. Further, sorcery is often associated with divination and with extispicy (reading various entrails of animals), a prime mode of divination. Extispicy requires cutting open the animal. The Septuagint translates **kashaph** here with the noun **pharmakos** (only used in Rev 22:15+ = "Outside are the dogs [male prostitutes] and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.") one who prepares and uses drugs for magical purposes or ritual witchcraft. **Pharmakos** is related to [pharmakeia](#) which refers to occult, sorcery, witchcraft, illicit pharmaceuticals, trance, magical incantation w drugs. **Pharmakon** can also refer to poisons, amulets, charms, séances, witchcraft, incantations, magic spells, contacting mediums, or any object that is tied to pagan idolatry to elicit lust or to seduce. People will dive deeper into the satanic trappings of false religion. Drugs were and still are believed to induce a higher religious state of communion with deities (aka demons!). [Pharmakeia](#) began as the attempt to use drugs and potions to harm one's enemies. (Ironically, on the positive side, it was out of this dabbling in drugs that modern medical science and the pharmaceutical industry originated.) By the time of Paul the word had come to include magic, incantations, drugs, and all the occult means by which men attempt to manipulate the dark powers of the supernatural world. Thus witchcraft and idolatry, alike in their condemnation by God (Dt 18:10-12), were also alike in their motive: the attempt to use the power of the unseen world for one's own selfish purposes.

**Robert Rayburn** - You will notice now a reversion to the [apodictic](#) form of law, rather than the case law form of the last several chapters. It lasts through most of the remaining commandments in this section. Lev. 20:27 applies the death penalty to men and women who practice as mediums or spiritists. Such practices – pretences then as now – were betrayals of God's word and revelation – as if God's Word were not adequate to guide our lives – and **open evasions of God's prohibition against seeking knowledge that he has denied to men. These were efforts to control the future without regard to God** or his covenant and in some other way than living in faithfulness before the Lord. For Israel this was the repudiation of everything God had called her to be. There is, alas, a great deal of this "magic" masquerading as divine guidance in even the evangelical church today ([See article at Gotquestions.org](#)). God withdrew the power of the sword from the church in the new epoch and the witch-hunts and executions of Christian history were based on superstition not biblical revelation. One hopes that, still today, anyone who was actually practicing some form of witchcraft would be excommunicated.

**J Ligon Duncan** - Sorcery is a challenge to the sovereignty and providence of God. It is either an attempt, in some cases, to know the future that God has prepared, or in other cases, it is an attempt to manipulate the future that God has prepared. In other cases it is an attempt to usurp His sovereignty and providence over His people by doing harm to people through magic; and therefore, it is a challenge to God and is considered a capital crime in Israel. ([Exodus 22:16-31 God's Concern for Community](#))

**Currid** - According to the polytheism of the ancient Near East, the true power in the universe is magic. The god who performs the greatest magical feats is considered the most powerful. Ancient peoples also rely on magic (i.e., sorcery, omens, divinations and necromancy) to manipulate the gods for their own benefit. The Hebrews would, of course, have been greatly exposed to such

**Question:** [What does the Bible say about sorcery?](#)

**Answer:** Sorcery, the use of spells, divination, or speaking to spirits, is clearly condemned in the Bible. The word *sorcery* in Scripture is always used in reference to an evil or deceptive practice.

For example, in 2 Chronicles 33:6, King Manasseh is condemned for his many evil practices, including sorcery: “And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.”

The apostle Paul lists sorcery as one of many sinful practices that mark the lives of unbelievers: “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife . . . and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Interestingly, the New Testament Greek word translated “sorcery” is *pharmakeia*, which is the source of our English word *pharmacy*. In Paul’s day, the word primarily meant “dealing in poison” or “drug use” and was applied to divination and spell-casting because sorcerers often used drugs along with their incantations and amulets to conjure occult power.

Sorcerers were common in the culture of ancient Egypt (Exodus 7:11; Isaiah 19:3). We also see sorcery in the kingdom of Babylon, especially in association with King Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 27:9; Daniel 2:2).

Sorcery is an attempt to bypass God’s wisdom and power and give glory to Satan instead. God has no tolerance for sorcery. In Deuteronomy 18:10-12, sorcery is listed among the sinful practices of the nations surrounding Israel. God calls it an abomination: “There shall not be found among you . . . anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you.”

Malachi also speaks of God’s judgment on those involved in sorcery: “Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers” (Malachi 3:5).

Apparently, sorcery will still be practiced in the end times. Spiritual Babylon, representing the false religious system of the last days, will deceive “all nations” with sorcery (Revelation 18:23) before judgment falls.

The book of Revelation says that sorcerers “will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8; see also Revelation 22:15).

Sorcery is clearly sinful and is not to be part of Christian living. There is a wisdom that is “earthly, unspiritual, of the devil” (James 3:15), and this is what sorcery offers. Our wisdom comes from God (James 3:17), not from deceiving spirits. The power of God is much greater than the power of sorcery (1 John 4:4). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Related Resources:**

- [What does the Bible say about black magic? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the difference between miracles and magic? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about enchantment? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about witchcraft / witches? Should a Christian fear witchcraft? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Simon the Sorcerer?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about white magic? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is Wicca? Is Wicca witchcraft? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Exodus 22:19 "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death."**

- Lev 18:23,25 Lev 20:15,16 De 27:21
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**BESTIALITY  
CONDEMNED**



## Related Passages:

Leviticus 18:23+ 'Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

Leviticus 18:25+ 'For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.

Leviticus 20:15; 16+ 'If there is a man who lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; you shall also kill the animal. 16 'If there is a woman who approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.

Deuteronomy 27:21 'Cursed is he who lies with any animal.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

**Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death- Lies with an animal** is not speaking of keeping warm by cuddling your husky in Alaska but is a euphemism for sex between and human and an animal. Bestiality is an abomination to God and to most men (but see Guzik's [note below](#))!

**Walter Kaiser** - "This offensive sex act apparently was prevalent among the Canaanites." (EBC-Ex)

**Cole** agrees - Bestiality was not only an obvious perversion: it figured so often in the Canaanite cycle 'Tales of Baal' that it probably had a religious significance for the Canaanites. Our attitude to perversions of God's natural order can hardly vary from those of the law, while our treatment of offenders will be very different today." (TOTC-Ex)

**John MacArthur** - The degree of sexual perversion in Canaanite culture was such that bestiality was fairly commonplace (cf. Lv 18:23, 24). Hittite laws, for example, even permitted cohabitation with certain animals. (MSB)

**Believer's Study Bible** - The practices of witchcraft, sexual acts with animals (Ex. 22:19), and sacrificing to other gods (Ex. 22:20) were probably all connected with Canaanite fertility worship. Note the parallel in Ro 1:18-32 (ED: SEE ESPECIALLY Ro 1:24-27+).

**Rayburn** - In those days as in our own, sex had widely been detached from its divinely ordered purpose and used simply as a means of physical thrill or, worse, as a method of accessing spiritual power. In jaded ages, the thrill is more and more likely to be induced by various forms of **perversion**. (See [What does the Bible mean when it refers to something as a perversion?](#)) But this debases God's gift and uses it not to adorn and bless the life of mankind, to draw men and women together in a sacred and unbreakable bond, to imitate God in creating life, but **only for sensual fulfillment. Such behavior strips man of his dignity and renders him more like a beast than a creature created in the image of God. Such behaviors are not private in their consequences** (READ THAT AGAIN!). Abroad in a culture such as ours, such practices alter man's view of himself and of the nature of human life. We have seen this alteration happen before our very eyes in recent years. Additionally, it seems very likely that bestiality also had some religious significance for the Canaanites (who practiced sexual fertility rites of various kinds) and this is another commandment meant to separate Israel's religious practices entirely from those of the peoples of the Promised Land to which she was going. [Durham, 328]

**J Ligon Duncan** - Sex with an animal as well as homosexuality was a capital crime in Israel. Now, it is interesting that some of the nations around Israel had laws like this but exempted certain animals from these laws. And so you can tell that since the law is begin given, it needed to be given. That is always a tip. When you see a law on the books there is a reason that it is there, and apparently in these times there is a relationship between this type of activity and certain types of worship of other gods in the neighboring nations. Bestiality is a perversion of the divine gift of sex and it is a perversion and a denigration of the dignity of the image of God in man. Man is made above the animals and this blurs that glorious divine distinction, and it is considered a threat to the whole community and is therefore a capital crime. How about idolatry? Well, it is a fundamental denial of our purpose for being. We exist to do what? To glorify and enjoy the one true God, and idolatry is seen as a fundamental denial of this. So as murder kills the body; as far as Moses is concerned, sorcery, idolatry, and false religion kill the soul. And so these things are treated as capital crimes in Israel. ([Exodus 22:16-31 God's Concern for Community](#))

**David Guzik** has a shocking comment - It is surprising to some that bestiality is legal in some European nations (YES I AM SURPRISED!), and a subculture practices and promotes it (**GOOGLE SEARCH** - "Hungary, Finland and Romania are now the only EU countries where bestiality, or zoophilia, is legal."). Yet there should be no surprise; if God's standard is rejected in one area of sexual morality, then the standards are often left up to the individual to decide. It is Christian civilization and morality that has discouraged and condemned fornication, adultery, pedophilia, polygamy, prostitution, homosexuality, gender confusion and the like. As Christian civilization and morality are increasingly mocked and rejected, it is no surprise that all of these sexual practices are increasingly practiced, supported, and encouraged. If the moral measure for a sexual act is, If it feels good, do it—then there is no moral measure, and the culture will become increasingly depraved until this changes. (ED: **NEWS FLASH! IT WON'T! IT WILL ONLY GET WORSE** - In the book of Revelation Babylon is **repeatedly** associated with the specific sin of immorality [\[porneia\]](#) - Rev



**Question:** [What does the Bible say about bestiality?](#)

**Answer:** The Bible mentions bestiality in four different passages. Exodus 22:19 says, "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death." Leviticus 18:23 declares, "Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion." Leviticus 20:15-16 commands, "If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death, and you must kill the animal. If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads." Deuteronomy 27:21 agrees, "Cursed is the man who has sexual relations with any animal." From these verses, it is abundantly clear that, according to the Bible, bestiality is a horrible, unnatural, and abominable sin.

Why is bestiality condemned so strongly? First, it is an unnatural perversion. Clearly, human beings were designed/intended to mate with other human beings, not animals. In the creation account, none of the animals were "suitable" for Adam (Genesis 2:20). Second, bestiality represents the ultimate of sexual deviancy. The fact that the animal was to be put to death (Leviticus 20:15-16), despite the fact that it would be "innocent," indicates how wickedly perverse bestiality is. Third, and perhaps most importantly, bestiality essentially denies the uniqueness of humanity which God created in His image (Genesis 1:27). Bestiality lowers humanity to nothing more than an animal, a beast which is unable to distinguish right from wrong, natural from unnatural, love from lust.

The New Testament nowhere mentions bestiality, but that should not be interpreted as an allowance for bestiality or a weakening of how strongly God condemns bestiality. While the Old Testament Law was fulfilled with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:23-25; Ephesians 2:15), the Law, in most instances, is still a guidepost for what is right or wrong, moral or immoral. Unlike some of the other Old Testament commands, there is nothing in the context of the biblical condemnations of bestiality that in any way limits the applicability to Israel as a nation or to any particular time period. While the death-penalty aspect of the command does not need to be enforced, the fact that bestiality is still a horrible, disgusting, perverted, and abominable sin is abundantly clear. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

**Exodus 22:20 "He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed."**

- **sacrifices:** Nu 25:2-4,7,8 De 13:1-15 17:2-5 18:20
- **utterly:** Nu 21:3 Jos 23:15,16
- Exo 32:8; Exo 34:15; Lev 17:7; Num 25:2; Deu 17:2, Deu 17:3, 5; 1Ki 18:40; 2Ki 10:25
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **IDOLATRY PUNISHED BY DESTRUCTION**

**He who sacrifices to any god** (elohim - literally "the gods"), **other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed** (literally "put under the ban" - see below) - **Sacrifices** to any **god** is tantamount to worship of idols and is utter foolishness. Throughout Scripture idolatry is often closely linked to immorality so one can understand the juxtaposition to Ex 22:19. It is interesting that sacrifice of an animal to other gods resulted in just recompense of "sacrifice" (total destruction) of one's life by God!

Clearly this is breaking the first and probably the second (for they likely are sacrificing to graven images) commandment, Exodus 20:2-5+. Proper sacrifice was described in Ex 20:24+.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

**Sacrifices** (02076) (**zabach**) to slaughter or kill an animal for sacrifice. Moses told Pharaoh that this was one reason the Israelites wanted to leave to "sacrifice to the LORD our God." (Ex 3:18, 5:3, 8, 17, 8:8, 25-29, 13:15). **Zabach** could refer to slaughter of animals for food (Dt. 12:21; 1 Sa 28:24). Zabach was used to seal a covenant (Ge 31:54). Sacrificial animals were presented to gods or the true God; Jacob's sacrifice was to God (Gen. 46:1) as were most of these sacrifices, but the nations sacrificed to other gods as well, such as Dagon (Judg. 16:23) or the gods of Damascus (2 Chr. 28:23).

**Vine** - This word is a common Semitic term for sacrifice in general, although there are a number of other terms used in the Old Testament for specific sacrificial rituals. There is no question that this is one of the most important terms in the Old Testament; *zābaḥ* is found more than 130 times in its verbal forms and its noun forms occur over 500 times. While there were grain and incense offerings prescribed as part of the Mosaic laws dealing with sacrifice (see Lev. 2), the primary kind of sacrifice was the blood offering which required the slaughter of an animal (cf. Deut. 17:1; 1 Chron. 15:26). This blood was poured around the altar, for the blood contained the life, as stated in Lev. 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life" (rsv). Since the blood was the vehicle of life, it belonged to God alone. Because the blood is the life, and because it is given to God in the process of pouring it about the altar, it becomes the means of expiating sin, as an offering for sin and not because it becomes a substitute for the sinner. *Zābaḥ* is also used as a term for "slaughter for eating." This usage is closely linked with "slaughter for sacrifice" since all eating of flesh was sacrificial among ancient Hebrews. The word carries this meaning in 1 Kings 19:21: "And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh... and gave unto the people, and they did eat." ([Vine's Dictionary](#))

**Baker** adds "Various kinds of sacrifices are given as the objects of this verb. For instance, sacrifices that open the womb (Ex. 13:15); offerings of well-being, peace offerings, and burnt offerings (Ex. 20:24); and animals of the flock and herd (Num. 22:40). Certain slaughtered sacrifices were prohibited, such as a sacrifice with blood and yeast in it (Ex. 23:18; cf. Ex. 12:15). In an exceptional setting, however, a prophet proclaimed the slaughter and sacrifice of the defiled priests who served at the forbidden high places (1 Ki. 13:2). God will exercise divine judgment on the enemies of His people, Gog and Magog, slaying and providing their carcasses as a great banquet for every kind of bird and animal (Ezek. 39:17, 19); Israel, in their rebellion, offered, although forbidden, their own sons as offerings (Ezek. 16:20). (Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament)

**Zabach** - 127v - made(1), offer(12), offer a sacrifice(2), offer to a sacrifice(1), offer sacrifices(3), offered(11), offered sacrifice(1), offering(2), offering sacrifices(1), offers a sacrifice(2), sacrifice(47), sacrificed(33), sacrifices(3), sacrificing(9), slaughter(3), slaughtered(3). Gen. 31:54; Gen. 46:1; Exod. 3:18; Exod. 5:3; Exod. 5:8; Exod. 5:17; Exod. 8:8; Exod. 8:25; Exod. 8:26; Exod. 8:27; Exod. 8:28; Exod. 8:29; Exod. 13:15; Exod. 20:24; Exod. 22:20; Exod. 23:18; Exod. 24:5; Exod. 32:8; Exod. 34:15; Lev. 9:4; Lev. 17:5; Lev. 17:7; Lev. 19:5; Lev. 22:29; Num. 22:40; Deut. 12:15; Deut. 12:21; Deut. 15:21; Deut. 16:2; Deut. 16:4; Deut. 16:5; Deut. 16:6; Deut. 17:1; Deut. 18:3; Deut. 27:7; Deut. 32:17; Deut. 33:19; Jos. 8:31; Jdg. 2:5; Jdg. 16:23; 1 Sam. 1:3; 1 Sam. 1:4; 1 Sam. 1:21; 1 Sam. 2:13; 1 Sam. 2:15; 1 Sam. 2:19; 1 Sam. 6:15; 1 Sam. 10:8; 1 Sam. 11:15; 1 Sam. 15:15; 1 Sam. 15:21; 1 Sam. 16:2; 1 Sam. 16:5; 1 Sam. 28:24; 2 Sam. 6:13; 2 Sam. 15:12; 1 Ki. 1:9; 1 Ki. 1:19; 1 Ki. 1:25; 1 Ki. 3:2; 1 Ki. 3:3; 1 Ki. 3:4; 1 Ki. 8:5; 1 Ki. 8:62; 1 Ki. 8:63; 1 Ki. 11:8; 1 Ki. 12:32; 1 Ki. 13:2; 1 Ki. 19:21; 1 Ki. 22:43; 2 Ki. 12:3; 2 Ki. 14:4; 2 Ki. 15:4; 2 Ki. 15:35; 2 Ki. 16:4; 2 Ki. 17:35; 2 Ki. 17:36; 2 Ki. 23:20; 1 Chr. 15:26; 1 Chr. 21:28; 1 Chr. 29:21; 2 Chr. 5:6; 2 Chr. 7:4; 2 Chr. 7:5; 2 Chr. 11:16; 2 Chr. 15:11; 2 Chr. 18:2; 2 Chr. 28:4; 2 Chr. 28:23; 2 Chr. 30:22; 2 Chr. 33:16; 2 Chr. 33:17; 2 Chr. 33:22; 2 Chr. 34:4; Ezr. 4:2; Neh. 4:2; Neh. 12:43; Ps. 4:5; Ps. 27:6; Ps. 50:14; Ps. 50:23; Ps. 54:6; Ps. 106:37; Ps. 106:38; Ps. 107:22; Ps. 116:17; Eccl. 9:2; Isa. 57:7; Isa. 65:3; Isa. 66:3; Ezek. 16:20; Ezek. 20:28; Ezek. 34:3; Ezek. 39:17; Ezek. 39:19; Hos. 4:13; Hos. 4:14; Hos. 8:13; Hos. 11:2; Hos. 12:11; Hos. 13:2; Jon. 1:16; Jon. 2:9; Hab. 1:16; Zech. 14:21; Mal. 1:8; Mal. 1:14

#### Related Resources:

- [Why did the sacrificial system require a blood sacrifice? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did God require animal sacrifices in the Old Testament?](#)
- [What was a blood covenant \(Genesis 15:9-21\)?](#)
- [What was the significance of the sprinkling of blood?](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Offerings and Sacrifices](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Sacrifice and Offering](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Sacrifice and Offering](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Daily Offering or Sacrifice](#)

**Utterly destroyed** (set apart/devoted as an offering to the Lord for destruction)([02763](#))([charam](#)) means to destroy, to doom, to be doomed; to be exterminated. This word is most commonly associated with the

Israelites destroying the Canaanites upon their entry into the Promised Land (Deut. 7:2; Josh. 11:20). In the present case the criminal who participates in idolatry is "put under the ban," meaning that everything associated with him must be destroyed! The Septuagint translates *charam* with the verb *olethreuo* which means to utterly destroy. It is the verb used in the Septuagint to translate "**the destroyer**" in Ex 12:23+ when the firstborn males were put to death on Passover night.

**Walter Kaiser** adds that "**Herem** (*charam*) is something devoted to God; however, it is not a voluntary but an involuntary dedication. It is now set apart to be banned from the earth and will totally come back to God. Thus a wall, as it were (cf. the king's wives, or harem, who were walled off from others), isolates the anathematized person, place, or thing from anyone touching, using, or benefiting from it ever again. Compare Achan's sin of taking the "devoted" items set apart for destruction in Josh 7:13." (EBC-Ex)

**NLT** - The Hebrew term used here ([charam](#)) refers to the complete consecration of things or people to the LORD, either by destroying them or by giving them as an offering.

**NET** - The verb חָרַם (*kharam*) means "to be devoted" to God or "to be banned." The idea is that it would be God's to do with as he liked. What was put under the ban was for God alone, either for his service or for his judgment. But it was out of human control. Here the verb is saying that the person will be utterly destroyed.

**Rayburn** - False religion, the repudiation of Yahweh as the living God struck at the foundation of Israel's life and her calling as Yahweh's people in the world. One supposes that if someone today were to worship other gods in evangelical churches they would still be excommunicated, the equivalent of the death penalty in our circumstances.

**Alan Cole** - The man guilty of this sin comes under the sacred 'ban': he must be destroyed, as the Canaanites were to be destroyed before Israel. (Ibid)

**Guzik** has an excellent observation - In ancient Israel, it was strictly prohibited to sacrifice to the pagan gods. This law was often broken, and this penalty was rarely applied. One rare example of its application was when Elijah executed the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:40. "Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and **slew them there**. (1 Kings 18:19 - "450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah")"

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#### **Question:** [What is the definition of idolatry?](#)

**Answer:** The definition of idolatry, according to Webster, is "the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing." An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God. The most prevalent form of idolatry in Bible times was the worship of images that were thought to embody the various pagan deities.

From the beginning, God's covenant with Israel was based on exclusive worship of Him alone (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). The Israelites were not even to mention the names of false gods (Exodus 23:13) because to do so would acknowledge their existence and give credence to their power and influence over the people. Israel was forbidden to intermarry with other cultures who embraced false gods, because God knew this would lead to compromise. The book of Hosea uses the imagery of adultery to describe Israel's continual chasing after other gods, like an unfaithful wife chases after other men. The history of Israel is a sad chronicle of idol worship, punishment, restoration and forgiveness, followed by a return to idolatry. The books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles reveal this destructive pattern. The Old Testament prophets endlessly prophesied dire consequences for Israel if they continued in their idolatry. Mostly, they were ignored until it was too late and God's wrath against idol-worship was poured out on the nation. But ours is a merciful God, and He never failed to forgive and restore them when they repented and sought His forgiveness.

In reality, idols are impotent blocks of stone or wood, and their power exists only in the minds of the worshipers. The idol of the god Dagon was twice knocked to the floor by God to show the Philistines just who was God and who wasn't (1 Samuel 5:1-5). The "contest" between God and His prophet Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel is a dramatic example of the power of the true God and the impotence of false gods (1 Kings 18:19-40). The testimony of Scripture is that God alone is worthy of worship. Idol worship robs God of the glory that is rightfully His, and that is something He will not tolerate (Isaiah 42:8).

Even today there are religions that bow before statues and icons, a practice forbidden by God's Word. The significance God places upon it is reflected in the fact that the first of the Ten Commandments refers to 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; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me" (Exodus 20:3-5).

Idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols and images and false gods. Our modern idols are many and varied. Even for those who do not bow physically before a statue, idolatry is a matter of the heart—pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against God. Is it any wonder that God hates it? (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

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#### Related Resources:

- [What are some modern forms of idolatry?](#)
- [What is a graven image?](#)
- [Why did people keep family idols?](#)
- [Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation?](#)

**Exodus 22:21 "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.**

NET Exodus 22:21 "You must not wrong a foreigner nor oppress him, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

NLT Exodus 22:21 "You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

ESV Exodus 22:21 "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

LXE Exodus 22:21 And ye shall not hurt a stranger, nor afflict him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

KJV Exodus 22:21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

NIV Exodus 22:21 "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.

- **You shall not wrong a stranger:** Ex 23:9 Lev 19:33 Lev 25:35 De 10:19 Jer 7:6 22:3 Zec 7:10 Mal 3:5
- **for you were strangers :** Ex 20:2 23:9 De 10:19 15:15 23:7
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TREATMENT OF FOREIGNERS

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 23:9 "You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33 'When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.

Leviticus 25:35 'Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.

Deuteronomy 10:19 "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

**Duncan** - God is extremely concerned with the welfare of those who are most vulnerable in the community...Strangers were resident aliens; they were foreign born, permanent residents and because they were foreign born, they were liable to discrimination and God explicitly prepares a law that demands that they not be mistreated and in fact, that they receive fair treatment from His people. This shows His compassion and His concern for those who are vulnerable. ([Exodus 22:16-31 God's Concern for Community](#))

**Alan Cole** - Verses 21–27 deal with the protection of the 'underprivileged' classes; aliens, widows, orphans and poor folk in general. It is striking, as Noth says, that all this is [apodeictic](#), not [casuistic](#); that is to say, it is basic to Israel's law, not a deduction from it. Israel must care for the poor and helpless, because YHWH cares for them: that is his very nature.

**You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him** - Note that **stranger** is not merely someone passing through their camp (not a mere foreigner), but is a resident alien who lives among them (see "sojourner" in Ex 20:10+) The Jews were not to mistreat (treat badly or abusively) foreigners in their midst. To oppress them speaks of more intense mistreatment, keeping them suppressed by severe and/or unjust use of force or authority, tyrannizing them, holding sway over them, essentially trampling them underfoot,

weighing them down. Malachi 3:5+ says they commit this sin because they do not fear the LORD (Pr 3:7,8:13, 16:6, Job 1:1b).

**Wrong** (03238)(**yanah**) means to wrong., mistreat, treat violently especially improper treatment of strangers (Ex 22:21, Lev 25:14, 17, Dt 23:16) An "oppressor, i.e., one who pursues, represses and subjugates another (Jer 25:38; 46:16; 50:16; Zep 3:1)" (Swanson) "**Yanah** seems to be used in the sense of "doing wrong" to someone as in the Mosaic legislation which protects the rights of the gēr "resident alien." (TWOT) The Hebrew term is utilized in a variety of ways but most frequently of intolerance toward or the suppression of the rights and privileges of others. It especially characterizes the rich and influential members of society who take advantage of the less fortunate (cf. Ex 22:21; Lev 19:33; Deut 23:16).

**Oppress** (03905)(**lachats**) means to physically push against someone or something, to squeeze, to crush and has the sense of pressing, crowding or tormenting. Used literally twice of Balaam's donkey in Nu 22:25 "When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she **pressed** herself to the wall and **pressed** Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again." "Hold the door shut" in 1 Ki 6:32. **Lachats** is used repeatedly in the dark days of Judges (lasted some 1200 years!) when Israel would be oppressed by some pagan enemy and would cry out to God for deliverance. The only problem was they kept falling back into sin after a period of rest! Sounds too familiar to my life sometimes! The **Septuagint** translates **lachats** with **thlibo** which literally means to press, squeeze, crush, squash, hem in and then to be narrow.

**For** (term of explanation) **you were strangers in the land of Egypt** - Memory of the misery and pain of suffering some sin is (or at least should be) a good antidote for practice of the same sin! Israelites knew mistreatment and oppression and were to be different in their treatment of foreigners. Exodus 23:9 says "You shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, **for you also were strangers in the land of Egypt.**"

**Exodus 22:22 "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.**

- Dt 10:18 Dt 24:17 Dt 27:19 Ps 94:6,7 Isa 1:17,23 10:2 Eze 22:7 Zec 7:10 Jas 1:27
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HELPING WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 10:18 "He (GOD) executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 24:17 "You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge.

Deuteronomy 27:19 'Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

Proverbs 23:10-11 Do not move the ancient boundary Or go into the fields of the fatherless, 11 For their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their case against you (cf Ex 22:23).

Jeremiah 7:6-7 If you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. (ED: JUDAH WAS EXILED IN PART BECAUSE THEY DID AFFLICT WIDOWS AND ORPHANS!)

Note the related passages above suggest the affliction of a **widow or orphan** was likely to be perversion of the justice due to them, for these two groups were usually defenseless and penniless!

**Walter Kaiser** - Like the sojourner or resident alien in v.21, so widows and orphans (vv.22-24) were to be protected (see Ex 23:11; Lev 19:9-10; Deut 14:21; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Ps 94:6; Isa 1:23; 10:2; Jer 7:3-6; 22:3; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5; Matt 23:14 [NIV mg.]). There are many other verses in the wisdom books of the OT, but it was the prophets who chided Israel for their neglect in this area of oppressing the poor and the weak. The cry of the weak will come directly up to God. (EBC-Ex)

**You shall not afflict any widow or orphan** - Literally it reads "**all** widows..." so it means **all** without exception. I like the NLT which says "You must not exploit a widow or an orphan." for "exploit" means to take advantage of someone, in this case two groups who

could not readily fend for themselves! God calls for humans not to harm the helpless but to help the helpless. The Hebrew verb for afflict ('[anah](#)) is translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with [kakoo](#) (from [kakos](#) = bad, evil) which means to physically harm or mistreat (as the Egyptians did to the Jews in Acts 7:6+). In Nu 20:15 Moses records "the Egyptians treated us and our fathers badly ([Lxx](#) = kakoo)."

Practicing this behavior toward helpless was practicing God-like behavior (cf Dt 10:18) for we are all helpless in His sight (Ro 5:6+)

**NET note** adds that widows and orphans were victims "at the mercy of the judges, businessmen, or villains. The righteous king and the righteous people will not mistreat them (Isa 1:17; Job 31:16, 17, 21)."

**James** wrote that "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." (James 1:27+).

**Afflict** (disturb, do violence to, oppress, violate) ([06031](#))('anah) means to afflict, be bow down and often speaks of harsh and painful treatment (Isa 53:4, Ge16:6). **NET** adds that 'anah "has a wide range of meanings: "afflict, oppress, humiliate, rape." These victims are at the mercy of the judges, businessmen, or villains. The righteous king and the righteous people will not mistreat them (see Isa 1:17; Job 31:16, 17, 21)."

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**Question:** [What does the Bible say about orphans and widows?](#)

**Answer:** Widows are women whose husbands have died, and orphans are children whose parents, for whatever reason, are not in the child's life. In biblical times, the main cause of a child being orphaned is that the orphan's parents had died. The Bible reveals God's attitude toward orphans and widows: He cares very deeply for them. God commands us to protect and care for orphans and widows (Psalm 82:3).

Husbands and fathers play an irreplaceable role in a family. When the man is not there, the wife and child can suffer in many ways. The Bible tells us that God Himself steps in to fill the role of protecting and caring for orphans and widows. "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (Psalm 68:5). In our world, those who are helpless tend to be taken advantage of by those who think they can get away with it. However, nothing escapes God's notice, and He will avenge the orphans and widows. "You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror" (Psalm 10:17–18).

God commands us to care for orphans and widows. When He gave the Law to Moses and the Israelites, He gave instructions for how to treat the orphans and widows among them—with harsh consequences promised if they failed in their responsibility (see Exodus 22:22–23). In the New Testament, James says that taking care of the needs of orphans and widows is part of religion "pure and faultless" (James 1:27). Caring for those in distress is not optional for followers of Christ.

In 1 Timothy, Paul lays out more detailed instructions for how to care for widows (1 Timothy 5:1–16). First, Paul puts an emphasis on a widow's family taking care of her, instead of leaving it all up to the church. "If a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God" (1 Timothy 5:4). Paul instructs that, for a widow to be supported by the local church, she must be over the age of 60 and she must have been faithful to her husband and have led a godly life. And she must have no family member to care for her (1 Timothy 5:9–10). The bottom line is that all widows should be receiving the care they need, without anyone getting overburdened by the responsibility.

We should not view caring for orphans and widows as simply a command from God we must fulfill "or else." There is tremendous blessing in serving and standing up for orphans and widows. In considering what our own attitude should be toward the orphans and widows around us, it's helpful to remember that all of us were adopted into God's family through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3–7) and betrothed to Christ (Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:7). It is our joy and privilege to partner with God in loving, serving, and protecting the orphans and widows among us. (Source: [GotQuestions.org](#))

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**Question:** [What does the Bible say about how widows are to be treated?](#)

**Answer:** A widow is a woman whose husband has died. Often in Scripture, when widows are referred to, it appears to carry the idea of a woman whose husband has died who also has no one to provide for her. Thus, widows are often grouped with vulnerable members of society such as the fatherless, aliens, and the poor (Deuteronomy 14:29; 16:11; 24:20; 26:12). The Bible says widows are to be treated with honor and compassion and offered protection so that no one takes advantage of them.

In ancient times, the primary purpose of women in marriage was to produce children and heirs to carry on the family line. A childless widow endured double adversity, with no husband to provide for and protect her, and no son to carry on the family name and care for



her in her old age. She might have been considered a disgrace to her family and left in a precarious position.

God recognized the widow's plight and rose to her defense: "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (Psalm 68:5). A person who denied justice to a widow was cursed by God: "Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow" (Deuteronomy 27:19). Laws and special provisions were put in place to safeguard widows against neglect and abuse.

At harvest time, widows could glean in the fields of grain and gather leftover grapes and olives: "When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands" (Deuteronomy 24:19).

The primary Old Testament law that protected widows from poverty and cruel treatment was that of the levirate marriage. The purpose of the law was to ensure that a man who died before producing a son might still be guaranteed a male heir. The unmarried brother of the widow's husband would take the widow as his wife and perform "the levirate duty." The first son born to the widow was regarded as the legal descendant of her deceased husband. The law of levirate marriage is illustrated in the stories of Tamar and Onan and of Ruth and Boaz.

In the New Testament, widows are also given special consideration. Proper religious work, according to God, involves caring for widows and orphans: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their ill-treatment of widows (Mark 12:40).

God has deep compassion for those who are left alone, and the church is to demonstrate that same compassion. In 1 Timothy 5, the apostle Paul gives a detailed outline of how the church and individual families are to care for widows.

According to Paul, a widow who received financial and material support from the church had to meet certain qualifications. First and foremost, the widow had to be truly in need and completely alone in the world: "But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God" (1 Timothy 5:4).

It is the duty and obligation of families to care for their aging and needy family members. Christian children and grandchildren have a special privilege and opportunity to put their faith in action by giving back love and support to their parents and grandparents, and especially to widows who are alone.

Today's Western societies, where independence takes precedence over family relationships, have lost sight of the value of God's purpose for creating extended families. But among God's people, families ought to be the primary source of support for widows.

Paul goes on to give guidelines for a widow to be eligible to receive the church's support. Besides having no one to take care of her, she ought to be a woman of prayer, a dedicated servant of the Lord, more than sixty years of age, faithful to her husband when he was alive, and committed to good deeds like caring for children, showing hospitality, and serving God's people (1 Timothy 5:9–10). Apparently, in order to receive charity in the early Christian church, eligible widows were enrolled on a list (verse 11). The age designation was likely because sixty was considered the age of retirement in the first century, and these women were probably past the age of remarrying. Younger widows were more likely to remarry; in fact, Paul counsels them to do so (verse 14).

Since God honors widows and treats them with compassion, believers should do the same: "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow" (Isaiah 1:17). (Source: [GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org))

**Exodus 22:23 "If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry;**

- **if he does cry out** : De 15:9 Dt 24:15 Job 31:38,39 Job 35:9 Lu 18:7
- **I will surely**: Job 34:28 Ps 10:17,18 Ps 18:6 Ps 140:12 Ps 145:19 Ps 146:7-9 Pr 22:22,23 Pr 23:10,11 Jas 5:4
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE WARNING FOR AFFLICTING WIDOWS OR ORPHANS

### Related Passage:

Deuteronomy 10:18 "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.



Psalm 68:5 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

Psalm 146:7-9 Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free. 8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous; 9 The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked.

Proverbs 22:22; 23 Do not rob the poor because he is poor, Or crush the afflicted at the gate; 23 For the LORD will plead their case And take the life of those who rob them.

**If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry** - The prayers of widows or orphans for relief, mercy, justice, etc from the hands of those who afflict them will surely ascend straight to the Throne Room of Jehovah! He will hear, and the next verse states He will act. This would have (or should have) been a clear warning to the Israelites not to mistreat the helpless in their midst. **Rayburn** comments that "This language – "cry out...hear their cry..." – echoes the language used to describe Israel's misery in Egypt at the beginning of the book and the Lord's response to her suffering."

This warning calls to mind the sobering warning to the rich in the epistle of James - **Behold**, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, **cries out** ([krazo](#) = same verb used in Lxx of Ex 22:23) **against you; and the outcry** of those who did the harvesting **has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth**" (Jas 5:4+)

**Cry out** (06817) ([tsaaq](#)) refers to shouting, complaining loudly, to pleading for relief or justice, calling for help. The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates [tsaaq](#) here in Ex 22:23 with the verb [krazo](#) which refers to a loud cry or vociferation, and is a strong word expressing deep emotion. **Krazo** is one of those [onomatopoeic](#) words, the very pronunciation of which imitates the hoarse cry of the raven ([listen](#)), and can be an inarticulate and brutish sound or an exclamation of fear or pain. What is interesting about the Septuagint of Ex 22:23 is that there is also a second verb for cry out - the verb **kataboao** (used in Dt 24:15, Ex 22:26 and Ex 5:15+ "cried out to Pharaoh") which means to make a loud outcry or to cry out in the sense of bringing charges against another, in this case the one who afflicts the widow or orphan. **Tsaaq** is used repeatedly in Exodus - Ex. 5:8; Ex 5:15; Ex. 8:12; Ex 14:10; Ex 14:15; Ex 15:25; Ex 17:4; Ex 22:23; Ex 22:27

**Exodus 22:24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.**

- **and My anger will be kindled:** Job 31:23 Ps 69:24 76:7 90:11 Na 1:6 Ro 2:5-9 Heb 10:31
- **your wives:** Job 27:13-15 Ps 78:63,64 109:9 Jer 15:8 18:21 La 5:3 Lu 6:38
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GOD'S WARNING CONSUMMATED!**

Hebrews 10:31<sup>+</sup> warns that "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Hebrews 12:29<sup>+</sup> adds that "God is a consuming fire."

**And My anger will be kindled** - God is addressing the people directly and he is placing himself directly in the role of special Protector, Prosecutor and Punisher! This picture should have gotten any sober minded Israelite's attention. The picture is of divine anger rising up like fire that is kindled! Fire is destructive by itself, but the to fall into the "fiery anger" of an omnipotent God is quite another thing all together.

**Anger** (nose, nostril, wrath) (0639) ([aph](#) from **anaph** = to breathe hard, to be angry) is a masculine noun meaning nose, nostril, and anger. By the act of breathing, emotions can be expressed. Perhaps it was observed that the nose dilates in anger. The Septuagint uses [thumos](#) (from **thúo** = air or wind in violent motion) here in Ex 22:24 describes **passion** (as if breathing hard) and so speaks of an agitated or "heated" anger that rushes along (impulse toward a thing). **Thumos** describes a tumultuous welling up of the spirit; a mighty emotion which seizes and moves the whole inner man. **Thumos** (especially when accompanied by breathing violently or hard) pictures a "panting rage". It is a blaze of sudden anger Of course with God it is always righteous anger! But oh what a frightening picture as it relates to the anger of the omnipotent God!

**Will be kindled** (02734) ([charah](#)) means to burn or be kindled with anger. The Septuagint translates it here with [orgizo](#). Gilbrant writes that **charah** "In the Qal stem, the noun **'aph** is usually the subject, yielding the

Hebrew idiom, "**nose was kindled**."

**And I will kill you with the sword** - This speaks of even a violent death and the executioner is God Himself!

**And your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless** - The irony of God's justice is clear - mistreatment of widows and orphans will result in their family suffering the same fate. So not only do they lose their life, but their family suffers because of their sin. This should have served as a significant motivation for the sons of Israel not to commit the sin of mistreating widows and orphans!

**NET** - The punishment will follow the form of talionic justice, an eye for an eye, in which the punishment matches the crime. God will use invading armies ("sword" is a metonymy of adjunct here) to destroy them, making their wives widows and their children orphans.

**Alan Cole** - Your wives shall become widows. This is a divine application of the **lex talionis**. This too could be illustrated from their Egyptian experience. Egypt afflicted Israel, God's first-born (Ex 4:23+), so Egypt's first-born died, and Egypt's wives were left widowed by the disaster at the Sea of Reeds. The society that lacks social justice will itself come under God's judgment. (TOTC-Ex)

**Duncan** - He says that if you take advantage of orphans and widows, I'll make your wife and children widow and orphans. God's warning of judgment in verses 23 & 24 promises that He will hear the cries of the mistreated and He will judge those who mistreat others correspondingly. It kind of reminds you of what happened in Egypt. The Pharaoh attempted to kill the male children; in the end the first-born of Egypt died—blow for blow, penalty to crime. God's attributes warnings and commands in our own experience ought to move us to have hearts of compassion for the weak. The importance of these laws in Israel is apparent from how often they are repeated-- especially in the laws of Moses. God is serious about concern for those who are most vulnerable. ([Exodus 22:16-31](#) [God's Concern for Community](#))

**John Currid** - Money-lending can be a vicious activity (see Lev. 25:35–37; Deut. 23:20–21; 1 Sam. 22:2; 2 Kings 4:1; Ps. 109:11). The rabbinical commentator **Rashi** says that the root of the word for 'interest' means **to bite**, and **'It resembles the bite of a snake ... inflicting a small wound in a person's foot which he does not feel at first, but all at once it swells, and distends the whole body up to the top of his head. So it is with interest.'** Therefore, God protects the needy of his people: no interest may be exacted from them. The lender may expect his principal to be returned, but he may not make gain from it. Hebrew creditors, however, were free to exact interest from foreigners—see Deuteronomy 23:19–20—and also from their own people who were not poor.

**Exodus 22:25 "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.**

NET Exodus 22:25 "If you lend money to any of my people who are needy among you, do not be like a moneylender to him; do not charge him interest.

NLT Exodus 22:25 "If you lend money to any of my people who are in need, do not charge interest as a money lender would.

ESV Exodus 22:25 "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact

KJV Exodus 22:25 If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

YLT Exodus 22:25 'If thou dost lend My poor people with thee money, thou art not to him as a usurer; thou dost not lay on him usury;

- Lev 25:35-37 De 23:19,20 2Ki 4:1,7 Ne 5:2-5,7,10,11 Ps 15:5 Pr 28:8 Jer 15:10 Eze 18:8,17 Mt 25:27 Lu 19:23
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **LAWS FOR LENDING TO THE POOR**

### **Related Passages:**

Leviticus 25:35-37+ 'Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. 36 **Do not take**

**usurious interest** from him, but **revere your God**, that your countryman may live with you. 37 'You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.

Deuteronomy 23:19-20 **"You shall not charge interest to your countrymen:** interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. **"You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest,** so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.

Psalms 15:1-5 A Psalm of David. O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? (GOOD QUESTION!) 2 He who walks with **integrity**, and works **righteousness**, And speaks **truth** in his heart. 3 He does not slander with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; 4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the LORD; He swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5 **He does not put out his money at interest**, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

Ezekiel 18:7-9 if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge **SEE** Ex 22:26), does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing, 8 **if he does not lend money on interest or take increase**, if he keeps his hand from iniquity and executes true justice between man and man, 9if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully—he is righteous and will surely live," declares the Lord GOD.

**If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him-** In other words when you lent a poor fellow Israelite money the lender was not function like a typical **moneylender**, who lends with the intent to charge interest and make a profit. And the **NET Note** adds "The moneylender will be demanding and exacting. In Ps 109:11 ("Let the creditor seize all that he has") and 2 Kgs 4:1 ("the **creditor** has come to take my two children to be his slaves.") the word is rendered as "extortioner."

**Creditor** (05383)(**nasah, nashah**) means to lend, to become a creditor. It is a person to whom money is owned as a debtor. It means to let a person have a loan, to use the owner's money for a time. Loans were canceled, released in the sabbatical years and in the Year of Jubilee (Deut. 15:2). In its participle form, it indicates a creditor, a person who had extended a loan (2 Kgs. 4:1; Ps. 109:11). Food and other items were loaned, as well as money (Neh. 5:10, 11).

**Nasah** - 12x in 11v - creditor(4), creditors(1), exacting(1), lending(1), lent(2), loaned(1), make(1), make the loan(1). Exod. 22:25; Deut. 15:2; Deut. 24:10; Deut. 24:11; 2 Ki. 4:1; Neh. 5:10; Neh. 5:11; Ps. 109:11; Isa. 24:2; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 15:10

**You shall not charge** (literally "lay upon") **him interest** - In other words, you are to show kindness and mercy to the poor man, even as God is gracious to all humankind, for we are all in essence impoverished by the wages of sin which is death! (Ro 6:23+)

**NET Note** - In ancient times money was lent primarily for poverty and not for commercial ventures (H. Gamoran, "The Biblical Law against Loans on Interest," JNES 30 [1971]: 127–34). The lending to the poor was essentially a charity, and so not to be an opportunity to make money from another person's misfortune. The word נֶשֶׁכְּ (neshekh) may be derived from a verb that means "to bite," and so the idea of usury or interest was that of putting out one's money with a bite in it (See S. Stein, "The Laws on Interest in the Old Testament," JTS 4 [1953]: 161–70; and E. Neufeld, "The Prohibition against Loans at Interest in the Old Testament," HUCA 26 [1955]: 355–412).

**Walter Kaiser** - This law is not dealing with "usury" in our modern sense of the word, i.e., exorbitant or illegal interest, but interest of any kind to a fellow Israelite. The main problem was that charging interest of one's brother was a way of avoiding responsibility to the poor and to one's fellow man (EBC-Ex)

**John MacArthur** - One way in which the people showed their concern for the poor and needy was to take no business advantage of them. Charging interest was allowable (Lv 25:35–37; Dt 23:19, 20), but not when it was exorbitant or worsened the plight of the borrower. (MSB)

**David Thompson** - It is not wrong to lend and borrow. This is part of doing business and it is not forbidden by God. What was forbidden was the exploitive interest charges for profit (Lev. 25:36-37). If God's people would lend money without interest, God promised He would abundantly prosper and bless the one who obeyed Him. ([Sermon](#))

**Alan Cole** - Not only are exorbitant rates of interest condemned here, but all interest on money lent to a poor man (Deut. 23:20 extends this rule to money lent to any fellow-Israelites). Anyone who has lived in underdeveloped countries will know the crippling burden of exorbitant rates of interest, especially in an agrarian society where the farmer is dependent on seasons. These laws

clearly date from long before the economic development of Israel as a trading power under Solomon. The reason for the prohibition is presumably that the poor man borrows in his need. The loan is seen as assistance to a neighbour, and to make money from his need would be immoral. Christ commands us to go still further along the same road, and forbids even the attempt to recover the principal (let alone the interest) in such cases (Luke 6:34, 35+). The interest-free loan to a brother in need has now become an outright gift. These great spiritual principles remain equally true in our 'affluent society', however applied in detail. (Ibid)

Interesting comment from the **Jewish Encyclopedia** - In the commonwealth of Israel, as among other nations of antiquity, loans of money, or of corn or like commodities, were made as a matter of favor by the wealthy to those standing in need, and but seldom, if ever, in the way of furnishing capital necessary for enterprises in trade or agriculture. At least in all passages of Scripture lender and borrower stand, at the time of the loan, in the attitude of benefactor and dependent (Psalm 112:5 ) after the loan, in that of master and servant (Proverbs 22:7 ) and, when the lender enforces his demand, in that of tyrant and sufferer (2 Kings 4:1). It is made the duty of the well-to-do Israelite to lend of his affluence to his poor brother (i.e. , fellow Israelite) according to the borrower's wants, at least when a pledge is offered (Exodus 22:25 Deuteronomy 15:8), and that without claiming interest (see [Usury](#)) and **he should not refuse even when the approach of the year of release endangers the recovery of the loan** (Deuteronomy 15:9 ), and though the security of the pledge is much weakened by the lender's duty of returning it when the debtor needs it (see [Pledges](#)). In truth, to lend is regarded in Scripture (ib. 1-11) as an act of benevolence the reward for which must be expected only from God.

#### Related Resource:

- [What is usury in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about lending money?](#)

### Torrey's Topic Usury or Interest

- The lending of money or other property for increase Leviticus 25:37
- Those enriched by unlawful, not allowed to enjoy their gain Proverbs 28:8
- The curse attending the giving or receiving of unlawful, Alluded to Jeremiah 15:10

#### THE JEWS

- Forbidden to take (interest), from brethren Deuteronomy 23:19
- Forbidden to take, from brethren specially when poor Exodus 22:25 ; Leviticus 25:35-37
- Often guilty of taking Nehemiah 5:6,7 ; Ezekiel 22:12
- Required to restore Nehemiah 5:9-13
- Allowed to take, from strangers Deuteronomy 23:20
- True and faithful Israelites never took, from their brethren Psalm 15:5 ; Ezekiel 18:8,9
- Judgments denounced against those who exacted unlawful Isaiah 24:1,2 ; Ezekiel 18:13
- Illustrative of the improvement of talents received from God Matthew 25:27 ; Luke 19:23

**Exodus 22:26 "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets,**

NET Exodus 22:26 If you do take the garment of your neighbor in pledge, you must return it to him by the time the sun goes down,

NLT Exodus 22:26 If you take your neighbor's cloak as security for a loan, you must return it before sunset.

ESV Exodus 22:26 If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down,

NIV Exodus 22:26 If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset,

KJV Exodus 22:26 If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down:

- **pledge:** De 24:6,10-13,17 Job 22:6 24:3,9 Pr 20:16, 22:27 Eze 18:7,16 Eze 33:15 Am 2:8

## TAKING A CLOAK FOR COLLATERAL

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 24:6; 10-13; 17 "No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in **pledge**, for he would be taking a life in **pledge**....10 "When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not enter his house to take his pledge. 11 "You shall remain outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the **pledge** out to you. 12 "If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. 13 "When the sun goes down you shall surely return the **pledge** to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.....17 "You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in **pledge**.

**If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge** - This law is about collateral on a loan and describes some people who were so poor that all they had to put up for a loan was their **cloak**. The **cloak** was the outer garment, a major piece of one's wardrobe that was valuable and thus could serve as a down payment. A widow's cloak could not be taken as a pledge (Dt 24:17). The person would offer their **cloak** in pawn which is deposited with the creditor as security for the repayment of money borrowed, or for the performance of some agreement.

**Kaiser** notes that "even an interest-free loan apparently required some type of pledge or security."

**Currid** - The practice of taking an outer garment as a pledge is well known in the Old Testament (see Deut. 24:17; Job 22:6; 24:3; Prov. 20:16; 27:13; Amos 2:8). Strictly speaking, under the terms of the law in the ancient Near East, the lender was permitted to keep a pledge until the money was repaid. However, the Israelite ethic calls for compassion beyond the letter of the law. Deuteronomy 24:12-13 says, 'And if a man is poor, you shall not sleep with his pledge. You shall certainly return the pledge to him when the sun goes down, so that he may sleep in his outer garment and he may bless you ...' One person was not to be the cause of another's suffering. This law was for the protection of the poor and more vulnerable members of the covenant community.

**You are to return it to him before the sun sets** - When the sun sets in the Middle East it gets cool, if not even cold! Covering is needed and so the **cloak** had to be returned (presumably each night until the debt was repaid).

**Cole** has an interesting analysis - Restore it to him before the sun goes down is an example of how Israel's understanding of God softens the application of the law, while maintaining its letter. Even an interest-free loan to a fellow-Israelite needed some pledge or security. Such a pledge was permitted, though even here Deuteronomy 24:10, 11 sets restrictions. The most obvious pledge (probably the only movable possession of any value) was the 'poncho' or shepherd's cloak, which functioned as a blanket at night, and a 'swag roll' by day (Exod. 12:34) for every Israelite. The general custom of taking clothing as a pledge for debt is illustrated by Amos 2:8. But if this cloak had to be returned each night (when its use was necessity, not luxury), its value as a pledge was minimal: it became purely a vexatious reminder of the debt. (TOTC-Ex)

**Hastings Bible Dictionary** says "The taking of a pledge for the re-payment of a loan was sanctioned by the Law, but a humanitarian provision was introduced to the effect that, when this pledge consisted of the large square outer garment or cloak called *simlah* (or *salmah*) , it must be returned before nightfall, since this garment often formed the only covering of the poor at night ( Exodus 22:26 f., Deuteronomy 24:12 f.; cf. Amos 2:8 , Job 22:6 ; Job 24:9 , Ezekiel 18:7 ; Ezekiel 18:12 ; Ezekiel 18:16 ; Ezekiel 33:15 ).

**Cloak** ([08008](#))(**salmah**) was a major piece of clothing, a mantle, and as such was a valuable element of their wardrobe. It was a loose outer garment that gave protection from the weather. It could be a long, warm garment used as a blanket at night to keep warm. These garments did not wear out during Israel's stay in the wilderness (Dt. 29:5). It may refer to a covering for sheep (1 Kgs. 10:25). The Lord uses light as a cloak to cover Himself (Ps. 104:2). A cloak could be perfumed and spiced to make it smell amorous (Song 4:11).

**Salmah** - 17x in 16v - cloak(5), clothes(6), clothing(1), garment(1), garments(3), robe\*(1). Exod. 22:9; Exod. 22:26; Deut. 24:13; Deut. 29:5; Jos. 9:5; Jos. 9:13; Jos. 22:8; 1 Ki. 10:25; 1 Ki. 11:29; 1 Ki. 11:30; 2 Chr. 9:24; Neh. 9:21; Job 9:31; Ps. 104:2; Cant. 4:11; Mic. 2:8

**Pledge** ([02254](#))(**chabal**) means require a pledge, demand a security, have surety, i.e., temporarily possess an object belonging to a debtor, as a security for repayment of a loan (Ex 22:25; Dt 24:6,17; Job 22:6; 24:3, 9; Pr 20:16; 27:13; Eze 18:16). To be taken in pledge (Am 2:8+). Eliphaz accused Job of unjustly demanding security from others, leaving them unclothed and naked, while Job saw actions such as taking the widow's ox

or even a mother's child as a guarantee as being typical of the evil of his day (Job 22:6; cf. Job 24:3, 9). Chabal can also mean to act corruptly, and in the Piel can mean to spoil or destroy (speaks of Israel's actions against Jehovah - Neh 1:7). Pr 13:13 "The one who despises the word **will be in debt** to it."

**Chabal** - 19x in 13v - debt(1), ever take(1), hold him in pledge(2), labor in Song 8:5 (2), pledge(4), retain(1), take(3), take a pledge(1), taken as pledges(1), taken pledges(1), taking a in pledge(1), travails(1). Exod. 22:26; Deut. 24:6; Dt. 24:17; Job 22:6; Job 24:3; Job 24:9; Ps. 7:14; Pr. 13:13; Pr. 20:16; Pr. 27:13; Song 8:5; Ezek. 18:16; Amos 2:8

**Holman Bible Dictionary** on **pledge** - Something given as downpayment on a debt. The Old Testament regulated this practice. An outer garment given in pledge was to be returned before night since it was the only protection the poor had from the cold (Exodus 22:26 ; Deuteronomy 24:12-13 ). One was not permitted to take as a pledge what was required for someone to earn a living (Deuteronomy 24:6). Creditors were prohibited from entering a house to seize a pledge (Deut 24:10). Job denounced abuses in the taking of pledges from family (Deut 22:6 ), from orphans and widows (Deuteronomy 24:3), as well as the practice of taking children as pledges (Deut 24:9 ). Ezekiel warned repeatedly against failing to restore pledges. Amos rebuked those who coupled idolatry with holding garments in pledge (Deuteronomy 2:8 ).

#### **Related Resources:**

- American Tract Society [Pledge](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Pledge](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Pledge](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Pledge](#)
- King James Dictionary [Pledge](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Pledge](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Pledge](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Pledge](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Pledge](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Pledge](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Pledge](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Pledges](#) -- very in depth discussion, including interpretation by the Mishnah

**Exodus 22:27 for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious.**

NET Exodus 22:27 for it is his only covering— it is his garment for his body. What else can he sleep in? And when he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am gracious.

NLT Exodus 22:27 This coat may be the only blanket your neighbor has. How can a person sleep without it? If you do not return it and your neighbor cries out to me for help, then I will hear, for I am merciful.

ESV Exodus 22:27 for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

LXE Exodus 22:27 For this is his clothing, this is the only covering of his nakedness; wherein shall he sleep? If then he shall cry to me, I will hearken to him, for I am merciful.

KJV Exodus 22:27 For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

NIV Exodus 22:27 because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

ASV Exodus 22:27 for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

CSB Exodus 22:27 For it is his only covering; it is the clothing for his body. What will he sleep in? And if he cries out to Me, I will listen because I am compassionate.

NKJ Exodus 22:27 "For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious.



NRS Exodus 22:27 for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.

YLT Exodus 22:27 for it alone is his covering, it is his garment for his skin; wherein doth he lie down? and it hath come to pass, when he doth cry unto Me, that I have heard, for I am gracious.

- **when he cries out to Me:** Ex 2:23,24 Ps 34:6 72:12 Isa 19:20
- **for I am gracious:** Ex 34:6 2Ch 30:9 Ps 86:15 136:10,11
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WHY A CLOAK MUST BE RETURNED

**For** - Term of explanation - explaining why the creditor is to return the cloak before sunset.

**That is his only covering - His only covering** reflects the fact that he was poor. NLT says "This coat may be the only blanket your neighbor has."

**it is his cloak for his body** - **Body** is literally skin.

**What else shall he sleep in?** - Literally the text reads, "In what can he lie down?" To take his only covering would be like taking the ["the shirt off his back"](#)

In Dt 24:15 we read a related passage about a poor man crying out...

"You shall give him his wages on his day **before the sun sets**, for he is **poor** and sets his heart on it; so that **he will not cry against you** to the LORD and it become sin in you.

**Comment** - The implication in the context of cloak for covering is that like not giving the poor man his wages before the sun sets will become a sin against the one who hired him, so too the creditor not returning the cloak will be held guilty of sin when the poor man cries out against him.

**And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me-** This is interesting. The one who cries out knows to Whom He should take his case for covering in the cold!

**Cries out** (06817)([tsaaq](#)) refers to shouting, complaining loudly, to pleading for relief or justice, calling for help. The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates [tsaaq](#) here with the verb **kataboao** (used in Ex 5:15, Ex 22:23, Dt 24:15) which means to make a loud outcry or to cry out in the sense of bringing charges against another (in this case with God regarding the action of the creditor in not returning his cloak before sunset).

**I will hear him, for I am gracious** - This same word **gracious** is used in Ex 34:6 "Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth." This is God's "go to" so to speak. He "leans toward" this attribute of showing favor to the one who is in need (all of us before we were placed in Christ by grace through faith!), in this case the man who needs his cloak. Notice that God is concerned about not just "big things" but about the small details of our lives! Here He hears the cry for a cloak!

**THOUGHT** - Dear believer, if you have a need and think it is too small to bother God about, then you need to think again and you need to "bother" Him! Perhaps you might go back and read the story about the woman in Luke 18:1-8+ and let that truth encourage you to importune the [Most High God](#) with your "little" issue or request. It is **NOT TOO LITTLE** to Him!

**Gracious** (02587)([channun](#) from **chanan** = be gracious) is disposed to bestow favors and/or blessings. It speaks of unmerited favor, an act and action based on love, which Yahweh bestows on His creatures. Many of the uses are coupled with *rechem* which is compassion or mercy (tender pity for someone helpless and suffering, "tender mercies"). There are 13 uses in the OT and all but one refer to the character of Jehovah. The one exception is a characteristic of the godly man in Ps 112:4NET = "In the darkness a light shines for the **godly**, for each one who is **merciful**, compassionate, and just." The Septuagint usually translates *channun* with the adjective [eleemon](#) which means merciful, compassionate, concerned about people in their need. *Eleemon* is used only in Mt 5:7+ "Blessed are the **merciful** ([eleemon](#)) for they shall receive mercy." and of Jesus in Heb 2:17+ "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a **merciful** ([eleemon](#)) and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."



**Channun** - Exod. 22:27; Exod. 34:6; 2 Chr. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Neh. 9:31; Ps. 86:15; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 111:4; Ps. 112:4; Ps. 116:5; Ps. 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2

**Rayburn** - Three laws in succession require Israel to pay special attention to the condition of groups of people who are weak and vulnerable to exploitation, and to make no profit at their expense. "What the market will bear" is not biblical law. In Deut. 24:10, God's people are obliged even to take care not to embarrass a poor man; to be sensitive to his feelings and so not require him to make public display of his need. The negotiations for the loan should be made in private and the one who advances the money should do so as another member of the family, not as a businessman seeking profit. If collateral is held, it must be returned before its absence causes hardship. Taking all biblical texts together, the loaning of money at interest is not forbidden in the Bible. What is forbidden is excessive interest when circumstances make that possible and loaning money at interest to a fellow believer who finds himself in difficult straits. If a fellow Israelite wanted money with which to build up his business, this law would not prohibit such a loan, even from a fellow Israelite. What is being forbidden is taking advantage of someone's misfortune. That would be mistreatment of the poor. God himself is merciful and his people must be as well. If they are not, they will have to answer to him. That is, you remember, a large part of the argument of prophets like Amos and Hosea. They accuse Israel of mistreating the poor and threaten God's vengeance as a consequence.

#### Exodus 22:28 "You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

NET Exodus 22:28 "You must not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

NLT Exodus 22:28 "You must not dishonor God or curse any of your rulers.

ESV Exodus 22:28 "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

KJV Exodus 22:28 Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

NIV Exodus 22:28 "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

YLT Exodus 22:28 'God thou dost **not** revile, and a prince among thy people thou dost **not** curse.

- **God**, Ex 22:8,9 Ps 32:6 Ps 82:1-7 138:1 Joh 10:34,35
- **curse**: Ex 21:17 1Sa 24:6,10 26:9 Ec 10:20 Ac 23:3,5 Ro 13:2-7 Tit 3:1,2 1Pe 2:17 2Pe 2:10 Jude 1:8
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### NO CURSING OF GOD OR RULERS

This passage is quoted by Paul in the NT

The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?" 4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 And Paul said, "I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, '**YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.**'" (Acts 23:2-5+)

**Currid** - This next section is an exposition of the Third Commandment, found in Exodus 20:7. The basic gist of that statute is the absolute prohibition on taking God's name in vain, that is, frivolously or lightly.

**You shall not curse God (Elohim), nor curse a ruler of your people - Curse** (note 2 different words for curse - see word studies below) is variously translated "blaspheme" (NET), "dishonor" (NLT), "revile" (ESV). The idea of this word is to esteem lightly. Currid adds that "The point of this cursing is not to treat God light-heartedly or in a light-minded way. Two examples of people acting in this manner are found in Leviticus 24:10-13 and 1 Kings 21:1-16."

The third commandment says we are not to take the Lord's Name in vain (Ex 20:7+) and this commandment says not to curse Him or revile Him. In other words the people were to respect their God-ordained leaders. One was not to verbal assault God or His ruler. Moses used this same verb in Ex 21:17+ writing "He who **curse**s his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." The Septuagint uses the same verb for cursing God, a ruler or one's parents, the verb **katalogeo** (kata = against + logeo = to speak) which means to speak evil, to revile, to denounce, to insult with unjustified and abusive language against the other party. It is interesting that there is no punishment appended to cursing God or a ruler whereas cursing parents carried the death penalty! Silence of this text on punishment certainly would not seem to exclude some significant punishment, because otherwise there would

be no significant motivation to impede cursing God or a ruler. Boy, do we see a different pattern in American culture which rabidly curses not only God but His ordained rulers (one thinks for example of the police forces who have become vilified in 2020!)

**Ruler** ([nasi](#)) means something (someone) lifted up, and thus an individual lifted up or exalted as leader and occurs most often in Numbers especially of the chiefs of the Israelite tribes (Nu 1:16, 44, 2:3,5, 7, 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 25, etc). The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **ruler** with [archon](#) which describes one who has eminence in a ruling capacity, referring to earthly figures (Mt 20:25) such as rulers (Acts 4:26+), Moses (Acts 7:27, 35+).

**Kaiser** - Any word or deed that detracts from the glory of God is a reviling or cursing of his name. (EBC-Ex)

**David Thompson** - Now we would say in our culture that we have unbridled freedom of speech to say anything we want about any leader we want. God's Law says, "no you do not." Now this principle is not just true for the O.T. Law, for the Apostle Paul actually cited it and applied it when he called the high priest, Ananias, a "whitewashed wall" (Acts 23:2-5+). ([Sermon](#))

**Curse** ([despise](#))([07043](#))([qalal](#)) means to be slight, to be trivial, to be small, "to be light," in weight or account. For example, the idea of "to be of no account in the eyes of" appears in Hagar's attitude toward her mistress Sarah (Ge 16:4 = Hagar was "**despised** in her sight.")

**Curse** ([07779](#))([arar](#)) refers principally to exclamations, or imprecations, uttered by one person against another. To inflict with a curse. This verb, in a more specific sense, means to bind (with a spell); to hem in with obstacles; to render powerless to resist.

**Victor Hamilton** - On the basis of Akkadian *arānu* "to snare, bind" and the noun *irritu* "noose, sling" Brichto, following Speiser, advances the interpretation that Hebrew *'ārar* means "to bind (with a spell), hem in with obstacles, render powerless to resist." Thus the original curse in Genesis 3:14, 17, "cursed are you above all cattle" and "cursed is the ground for your sake" means "you are banned/anathematized from all the other animals" and "condemned be the soil (i.e., fertility to men is banned) on your account." Similarly, God's word to Cain, "you are cursed from the earth" means Cain is banned from the soil, or more specifically, he is banned from enjoying its productivity. Cf. also Joshua 9:23; Judges 21:18; 1 Samuel 26:19; 2 Kings 9:34 (barred from proper burial); Malachi 2:2. One recalls the passage where King Balak of Moab hires Balaam to "curse" the Israelites (Numbers 22:6ff.). The king wants the magician to say some word or recite some incantation that will "immobilize" the Israelites, giving the Moabite king the necessary opportunity to defeat his numerically superior foe. Of course such was not automatically effective. According to Kaufmann, "The Israelite idea stripped magical actions of their autonomous, metadivine potency and made them serve as vehicles for the manifestation of the will of God" (Y. Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p. 84). **It will be observed that the majority of "curse" sayings with 'ārar fall into one of three general categories:** (1) the declaration of punishments (Genesis 3:14, 17); (2) the utterance of threats (Jeremiah 11:3; Jeremiah 17:5; Malachi 1:14); (3) the proclamation of laws (Deut. 27:15-26; Deut. 28:16-19. It is interesting that all these curse-sayings are a reflex of one violating his relationship to God. To illustrate from Deut. 27:15-26, idolatry (Deut. 27:15), disrespect for parents (Deut. 27:16), deceiving one's neighbor (Deut. 27:17, 24), manipulating the disadvantaged (Deut. 27:18-19), sexual aberrations (Deut. 27:20, 21, 22, 23), bribery (Deut. 27:5), and not observing God's law (Deut. 27:26) all bring the condemnation of the curse. (See [link to the TWOT](#))

**W E Vine** - "Cursed" is usually parallel with "bless." The two "curses" in Gen. 3 are in bold contrast to the two blessings ("And God blessed them ...") in Gen. 1. The covenant with Abraham includes: "I will bless that bless thee, and curse [different root] him that curseth thee ..." (Gen. 12:3). Compare Jeremiah's "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man" and "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord" (Jer. 17:5, 7). Pagans used the power of "cursing" to deal with their enemies, as when Balak sent for Balaam: "Come ..., curse me this people" (Num. 22:6). Israel had the ceremonial "water that causeth the curse" (Num. 5:18ff.). God alone truly "curses." It is a revelation of His justice, in support of His claim to absolute obedience. Men may claim God's "curses" by committing their grievances to God and trusting in His righteous judgment (cf. Ps. 109:26-31). The Septuagint translates *'ārar* by *epikataratos*, its compounds and derivatives, by which it comes into the New Testament. "Curse" in the Old Testament is summed up in the statement: "Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant ..." (Jer. 11:3). The New Testament responds: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree ..." (Gal. 3:13). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Gilbrant** adds it "carries the idea of being bound or banned from something. Therefore, God's **original curse to Satan** in Ge 3:14, 17, "cursed are you above all cattle and cursed is the ground for your sake," means you are banned from all the other animals and condemned to be the soil on your account. Likewise, God's curse upon Cain, "you are cursed from the earth" (Gen. 4:11, 12), means Cain is banned from enjoying the

productivity of the earth's soil. Furthermore, the curse pronounced upon Jezebel by Elijah (1 Ki. 21:23) barred her from a proper burial (2 Ki. 9:34). Balaam was hired by King Balak to curse the Israelites (Num. 22:6ff). Although his efforts were unsuccessful, Balak desired Balaam to disable the Israelite forces. The Israelites, however, eventually brought the curse of God upon themselves through idolatry and its accompanying immorality (Num. 25:1-9). Most of the curse sayings are within proclamations of laws (Deut. 27:15-26; 28:16-19) or pronouncements of threats (Jer. 11:3; 17:5). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Arar** - 62x in 52v - brings a curse(6), curse(10), cursed(43), cursed woman(1), curses(1), utterly curse(1). Gen. 3:14; Gen. 3:17; Gen. 4:11; Gen. 5:29; Gen. 9:25; Gen. 12:3; Gen. 27:29; Gen. 49:7; Exod. 22:28; Num. 5:18; Num. 5:19; Num. 5:22; Num. 5:24; Num. 5:27; Num. 22:6; Num. 22:12; Num. 23:7; Num. 24:9; Deut. 27:15; Deut. 27:16; Deut. 27:17; Deut. 27:18; Deut. 27:19; Deut. 27:20; Deut. 27:21; Deut. 27:22; Deut. 27:23; Deut. 27:24; Deut. 27:25; Deut. 27:26; Deut. 28:16; Deut. 28:17; Deut. 28:18; Deut. 28:19; Jos. 6:26; Jos. 9:23; Jdg. 5:23; Jdg. 21:18; 1 Sam. 14:24; 1 Sam. 14:28; 1 Sam. 26:19; 2 Ki. 9:34; Job 3:8; Ps. 119:21; Jer. 11:3; Jer. 17:5; Jer. 20:14; Jer. 20:15; Jer. 48:10; Mal. 1:14; Mal. 2:2; Mal. 3:9

**Exodus 22:29 "You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.**

NET Exodus 22:29 "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. You must give me the firstborn of your sons.

NLT Exodus 22:29 "You must not hold anything back when you give me offerings from your crops and your wine."You must give me your firstborn sons.

ESV Exodus 22:29 "You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you

NIV Exodus 22:29 "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats. "You must give me the firstborn of your sons.

KJV Exodus 22:29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

- **shalt not delay:** Ex 23:16,19 De 26:2-10 2Ki 4:42 2Ch 31:5 Pr 3:9,10 Eze 20:40 Mic 7:1 Mt 6:33 Ro 8:23 Jas 1:18,
- **the firstborn.** Ex 13:2,12 Ex 34:19
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## NO DELAY IN DIVINE OFFERINGS

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 26:1-10 "Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, that you shall take some of the **first of all the produce of the ground** which you bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. 3 "You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the LORD my God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.' 4 "Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. 5 "You shall answer and say before the LORD your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation. 6 'And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. 7 'Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; 8 and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders; 9 and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 'Now behold, **I have brought the first of the produce of the ground** which You, O LORD have given me.' And you shall **set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God;**

Exodus 13:11-13+ "Now when the LORD brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to

your fathers, and gives it to you, 12 you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD. 13 "But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

**You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage-** This speaks of giving proper priority to honoring God with one's offerings to Him, but the type of offering is not specifically stated in this passage.

**Currid** - The sense of the first sentence seems to be that postponing offerings of the first-fruits is forbidden. Thus, offerings are not only to be rendered to God, but they must be given at the right time.

**Robert Rayburn** - In context, the reference is either to the first fruits, the first yields of grain or produce or to the best of one's produce. What is to be offered is literally "your fullness and your dripping."

**David Thompson** - Offerings that honor God are not leftover; they are the first and the finest. It is very clear that God keeps the offering records of each person. When a person withholds their offerings from God, they are in direct defiance of the Word of God. All first fruit harvest offerings of grain and wine and all the firstborn sons and firstborn oxen and sheep are to be given to the Lord. Those who are right with God want to give God their best. They want God to have the best. People may think they will get more for themselves by not giving God what He really should have. But they will only cut their own throats, because God says in a Grace Age money passage—"He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). ([Sermon](#))

The principle Thompson alludes to is not only a "Grace Age" principle but an OT principle Solomon giving us excellent motivation to honor God first writing "Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce; So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine." (Pr 3:9,10)

**The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me** - God is not calling for child sacrifices! (Read Jeremiah 32:35) This requirement was mentioned in Exodus 13 (see comments there) where the LORD called Israel to "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me.....12 you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD." (Ex 13:2,12+)

**Firstborn** (01060) (**bekor**) means an offspring who came first in the order of birth (animals Ge 4:4) or persons (Ge 25:13). Swanson adds that **bekor** means "firstborn, usually, the first male offspring, the oldest son, with the associative meaning of prominence in the clan and privileges pertaining to clan and inheritance (Ge 43:33; Ne 10:37)." The firstborn of clean animals were sacrificed to the Lord (Dt. 12:6, 17), but the firstborn males of unclean animals could be redeemed (Nu 18:15) The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **bekor** with Greek word [prototokos](#) (from **protos** = first, foremost, in place order or time; rank dignity + **titko** = beget, to bear, bring forth) can mean **first-born chronologically** (Lk 2:7), which is the sense it is used in Ex 22:29.

**Exodus 22:30 "You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.**

- **You shall do the same:** De 15:19
- **seven days:** Lev 22:27
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **FIRST-BORN OF ANIMALS BELONG TO GOD**

**You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep-** Dt 15:19 says "You shall consecrate to the LORD your God all the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock; you shall not work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock." Currid adds that "clean animals of the type approved for use in sacrifice have no right of redemption (AS DOES A DONKEY WHICH IS NOT CLEAN) and, therefore, they are to be sacrificed at some point."

**Rayburn** - It was, of course, possible – as we have already read in Exodus 13:13, 15 – Israel could "redeem" their sons and even some of their livestock (e.g., donkey in Ex 13:13+) by the payment of money (Num. 18:15-16). The Lord has a claim upon his people and their lives and livelihood. That is the sense of these laws.

**It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me-** The newborn animal was allowed to stay with

its mother for **seven days**. Is this God's compassion for the mother who carried her newborn for months and gets to enjoy a bit of pleasure with her precious newborn?

**Currid** - It is unacceptable to give animals to Yahweh prior to the eighth day (see Lev. 22:27). They must live a complete week before dedication. This act finds a parallel in the laws of circumcision. Perhaps in both cases the stipulated period corresponds to the seven days of creation in Genesis 1.

**Exodus 22:31 "You shall be holy men to Me, therefore you shall not eat any flesh torn to pieces in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs."**

NET Exodus 22:31 "You will be holy people to me; you must not eat any meat torn by animals in the field. You must throw it to the dogs.

NLT Exodus 22:31 "You must be my holy people. Therefore, do not eat any animal that has been torn up and killed by wild animals. Throw it to the dogs.

ESV Exodus 22:31 "You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

- **holy**: Ex 19:5,6 Lev 11:45 19:2 De 14:21 1Pe 1:15,16
- **you shall not eat any flesh torn to pieces**: Lev 17:15,16 20:25 22:8 De 14:21 Eze 4:14 44:31 Ac 10:14 15:20
- [Exodus 22 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BE HOLY IN ALL BEHAVIOR

**You shall be holy men to Me** - Holy is [qodesh](#) meaning set apart from profane or common use and in this context for God's use. Ex 19:6+ says Israel was to be a "**holy nation**" and not just in name but in action and this long list of laws established guidelines and boundaries to help the Israelites carry out holy conduct in the midst of the wholly unholy pagan nations! Israel's dietary laws were designed to set them apart from the pagan nations.

In Leviticus 11:44+ God declared 'For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.'" So in Leviticus the issue was ceremonial uncleanness, and that is likely the reason for the rule in this passage.

**Kaiser** - "Men of holiness" (lit. tr. of 'anšê-qōdeš) were to be separate **inward principle** and **outward practice**—one of which was illustrated here." (Ibid)

**NET Note on holy** - The use of this word here has to do with the laws of the sanctuary and not some advanced view of holiness. The ritual holiness at the sanctuary would prohibit eating anything torn to pieces.

**Therefore you shall not eat any flesh torn to pieces in the field** - NLT paraphrases it "killed by wild animals." Wild animals in Palestine (including lions and bears at that time) would ravage flocks and tear the flesh of the domestic animals. Dead animal parts were not allowed on the dinner menu!

Ezekiel implies eating such meat is defiling, declaring "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth." (Ezek 4:14)

**John MacArthur** comments that "Flesh of an animal killed by another and lying in the field became unclean by coming into contact with unclean carnivores and insects and with putrefaction by not having had the blood drained properly from it. A set-apart lifestyle impacted every area of life, including from where one collected his meat." (MSB)

**Rayburn** has a reasonable thought - The main objection to eating this kind of meat may have been that, not properly slaughtered, it would still have the blood in it and, because of the special role of blood in Israel's sacrificial ritual, she was not to eat meat with the blood still in it.

**You shall throw it to the dogs** - The dead flesh was not completely wasted, nor allowed to rot and attract varmints, but was given to the ancient garbage disposal, the dogs.