

Legal Traditions of the Ancient Hebrews

Exodus (The Second Book of Moses)¹⁵

(from The Bible, King James' Version.) The Book of Exodus describes the birth of Moses and the travels of the Israelites after they leave Egypt. The excerpts below list some of the rules contained in the covenant between Jahweh and the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Chapter 19

19:1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

19:2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

19:3 And Moses¹⁶ went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

19:6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

19:7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD...

Chapter 20

The Ten Commandments

20:1 And God spake all these words, saying,

20:2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee

¹⁵From Julianne Nelson, ed., *Western Legal Traditions* (unpublished).

¹⁶ Moses was a member of the priestly caste descended from Levi (one of the twelve sons of Jacob). He was married to Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro (a priest from the Midian region of the western Sinai Peninsula).

out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

20:6 And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

20:9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

20:15 Thou shalt not steal.

20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

20:18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

20:21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

20:22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

23:32 Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

23:33 They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee....

for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, written with the finger of God.

Chapter 31

The Tabernacle and the Tablets

31:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

31:2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

31:3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

31:4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

31:5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

31:6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

31:7 The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle,

31:8 And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense,

31:9 And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,

31:10 And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,

31:11 And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

31:12 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

31:14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

31:15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

31:16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

31:17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel

20:23 Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

20:24 An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

20:25 And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

20:26 Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.

Chapter 23

23:1 Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

23:2 Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:

23:3 Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

23:4 If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

23:5 If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

23:6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

23:7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

23:8 And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

23:9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

The Sabbath, Sabbatical Years, and Feast Days

23:10 And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof:

23:11 But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard.

23:12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

23:13 And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

23:14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

23:15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou earnest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

23:16 And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

23:17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the LORD God.

23:18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.

23:19 The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

23:20 Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

23:21 Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.

The Covenant

23:22 But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

23:23 For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

23:24 Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.

23:25 And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

23:26 There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.

23:27 I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

23:28 And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

23:29 I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

23:30 By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

23:31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto