

EXODUS

Chapter 23

“You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. 2 You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, 3 nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. 4 “If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him. 6 “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. 7 Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit the wicked. 8 And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. 9 “You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

23:1–9 Most of the regulations in this section pertain to 20:16. (CSB)

23:1 See Lev 19:16; Dt 22:13–19; 1Ki 21:10–13. (CSB)

23:3 *nor ... partial.* Justice must be impartial. Neither rich nor poor should have an advantage in court. (TLSB)

23:4–5 Those hostile to you are to be shown the same consideration as others (see Dt 22:1–4; Pr 25:21). Jesus teaches that this means “Love your enemies” (Mt 5:44). (CSB)

23:5 If an animal collapsed under its burden, help was to be given the animal and its owner, even if the owner hated you (Lv 19:18). (TLSB)

23:7 1Ki 21:10–13 is a vivid illustration of violation of this law. (CSB)

23:8 See Dt 16:19. Samuel exemplifies faithful stewardship in this regard (see 1Sa 12:3), while his sons do not (see 1Sa 8:3). (CSB)

Justice must not be perverted—it must be fair, honest, and impartial. Bribes were forbidden. (TLSB)

23:9 *You know the heart of a sojourner.* A traveler lacked protection and was often at the mercy of the locals. Israel should recall they all were “travelers” in Egypt and treat the sojourner with compassion and respect. (TLSB)

22:16–23:9 The Lord regulates human relations with sensitivity toward the poor and powerless, yet also with high regard for impartial justice. God protects the poor and vulnerable by building compassion and respect for justice into Israel's social laws. His two ways of Law and Gospel manifest themselves constantly for our good. • “To those who help in Christ have found And would in works of love abound It shows what deeds are His delight And should be done as good and right.” Amen. (LSB 579:3) (TLSB)

Laws About the Sabbath and Festivals

10 “For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. 12 “Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may

have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed. 13 “Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips. 14 “Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. 15 You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. 16 You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. 17 Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD. 18 “You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my feast remain until the morning. 19 “The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

23:10–13 Extensions of the principles taught in 20:8–11; Dt 5:12–15. (CSB)

23:11 The poor were allowed to forage in the fields during the Sabbath Year. (TLSB)

23:12 Cf Ex 20:8–11. A reminder of the Sabbath Day designed to refresh land, animals, and humanity. Luther: “Man was especially created for the knowledge and worship of God; for the Sabbath was not ordained for sheep and cows but for men, that in them the knowledge of God might be developed and might increase. Therefore although man lost his knowledge of God, nevertheless God wanted this command about sanctifying the Sabbath to remain in force. On the seventh day He wanted men to busy themselves both with His Word and with the other forms of worship established by Him, so that we might give first thought to the fact that this nature was created chiefly for acknowledging and glorifying God” (AE 1:80). (TLSB)

23:13 *make no mention.* Cf 20:3. God bound Israel to Himself in an exclusive relationship much like marriage. (TLSB)

Conquest of Canaan Promised

20 “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. **21** Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. **22** “But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. **23** “When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, **24** you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. **25** You shall serve the LORD your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. **26** None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. **27** I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. **28** And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. **29** I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. **30** Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. **31** And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. **32** You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. **33** They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

23:20 *place I have prepared.* Canaan (cf. the similar statement of Jesus in Jn 14:2–3). (CSB)

23:21 *Name*. Representing God’s presence. (CSB)

God’s name signifies His authority and presence in this messenger. (TLSB)

23:24 *break their pillars in pieces*. Stones (resembling pillars) were set up as worship sites for false gods. God wanted these pagan worship structures destroyed. (TLSB)

bless your bread and your water. God provided for their daily needs. (TLSB)

I will take sickness away. Physical health and well-being were part of God’s gifts to His people. (TLSB)

23:26 *the number of your days*. A full length of life. (TLSB)

23:28 *hornet*. The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) renders it “wasp,” but the translators may have been guessing. In any event, the Lord promises to send some agent to disable or frighten the peoples of Canaan so that they will not be able to resist Israel’s invasion. But probably the word involves concrete imagery and the focus of the statement is on the effects—therefore we are not to look for some historical agent to which the word metaphorically refers (cf. Isa 7:18). (CSB)

People Israel would conquer. (TLSB)

23:29–30 As numerous as the Israelites were, they would not yet fill the land. A general conquest would come quickly (Dt 9:3), but a complete conquest would require time. (TLSB)

23:31 *Red Sea*. The (south)eastern border (here the modern Gulf of Aqaba). (CSB)

Sea of the Philistines. The western border. (CSB)

the wilderness. The southern border (northeastern Sinai). (CSB)

the Euphrates. The northern border. (CSB)

23:32 A covenant is a binding agreement that would have indicated peaceful coexistence with these pagan peoples, who could become a fatal snare through their false gods and fertility religions. (TLSB)

23:33 *snare*. A symbol of destruction (see 10:7; Job 18:9; Ps 18:5; Pr 13:14; 21:6; Isa 24:17–18). (CSB)

23:20–33 God promises to drive out Israel’s enemies ahead of them if they remain faithful to Him and to the covenant given them through Moses. Because the Israelites fail to do as God commands, they fall victim to the false gods of the Canaanites. Despite Israel’s failure to keep God’s command, God preserves a remnant of Israel from which is born Jesus, Savior of all nations. • “God loved the world so that He gave His only Son the lost to save, That all who would in Him believe Should everlasting life receive.” Amen. (LSB 571:1). (TLSB)