

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

Ex. 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*:

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

Tell the truth; do what is right. Don't give in to peer pressure. Don't try to overthrow a righteous judgment or avoid making a righteous judgment. (Verse 2b needs more study.) Don't pass judgment on a poor man based on his condition of need. Be no respecter of persons.

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

Ex. 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.

You can have differences with someone to the point that you consider him your enemy, but you are still to treat him with respect and provide assistance when the situation calls for it.

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

Don't take advantage of the helpless or abuse your privilege.

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

Champion the cause of truth and justice. You will not be held guiltless if you put someone to death unjustly.

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

Don't accept bribes. It will cloud or distort your vision/judgment/discernment.

Ex. 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.

Be kind to strangers. Remember your experience as strangers in the land of Egypt and act accordingly.

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

Ex. 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.

Ex. 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.

The principle of the Sabbath applies to the land (in terms of years) as well as to humans and work animals (in terms of days). God is establishing a principle that will keep them and their animals and the land healthy and productive.

Again, He is making a statement regarding providing for the poor.

Ex. 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.

The people are warned again to be very careful regarding ALL the instructions God has given them. They are not even to mention the names of other gods. I guess the mentioning is the same as acknowledging that these false gods have some type of credibility—which we know is untrue. It is the first step to justifying your sins in light of appeasing these false gods.

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

Ex. 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 camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

Three feasts are to be kept in obedience to God each year.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread:

- 1) Eat only unleavened bread for seven days.
- 2) This is a command, not a request, for a specific time each year.
- 3) It is a reminder of their deliverance from Egypt.
- 4) Everyone is to participate.

Ex. 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.

Ex. 23:17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

Ex. 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.

Ex. 23:19 The first of the firstfruits 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.

The Feast of the Harvest: Rejoicing for the first crops of the year.

The Feast of the Ingathering: Rejoicing for the final crops of the year.

- One must labour/work to enjoy harvest.
- Every male is to appear before the Lord at these three times each year.
- Leavened bread is not to be offered with a blood sacrifice. (Leaven represents sin and sacrifices are to be without blemish.)
- No fat is to be left over from a sacrifice until the next day. (I believe it was to be totally consumed.)
- God is to be given the first portion of the harvest each year. (This would not only reflect an obedient spirit, but would show recognition of the one supplying the harvest.)
- A young goat is not to be cooked in its mother's milk. ??
(7/06) I was listening to Zola Levitt on a podcast interviewing Nehemiah Gordon, a Karaite Jew (one who follows the Hebrew scripture vs. the teaching of the Rabbis from the Talmud). He explained that this was a practice associated with a Canaanite fertility ritual for the goddess Ashtoreth. This would connect with me with the teaching of avoiding even the appearance of evil.

1Th. 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Ex. 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.

Ex. 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.

Ex. 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.

Ex. 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.

Ex. 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.

- 1) God is sending an Angel to go before them. This indicates that He is providing their direction.
- 2) "The place which I have prepared" – indicates advance planning, predetermined purpose and deliberate readiness on their behalf.
- 3) They are to listen to the angel and obey him and not provoke him (make him bitter toward them). (3/10) Again, 1Corinthians 10:1-5 identifies this angel as Jesus. See note at chapter 14:19-22.)
- 4) The angel will not tolerate your sins. The KJV translators seem to indicate that this is the preincarnate Son of God, although I didn't get this from looking at the Hebrew. It is obvious that the angel is God's representative before the people. "My name is in him"--the Hebrew indicates an intimate connection. (cf comments at 14:19)
- 5) Whatever the angel speaks is from the mouth of God.
- 6) Obedience would result in strength, protection, and victory.
- 7) God's intention is to CUT OFF the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites.
- 8) The Israelites are not to show any respect for the false gods of these people. They are not to serve them in any way. Their images are to be completely destroyed.

Ex. 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.

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

Ex. 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.

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

Ex. 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.

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

- 1) Only "Yhwh Elohiym" is to be served (as a bonds slave).

- 2) God has the power to bless them with plenty of food and water and to keep them and the livestock healthy and fruitful.
- 3) Their enemies will recognize the awesome power of their God and be fearful when they see the Israelites coming. He will provide them victory.
- 4) It appears that God is even going to use the insects/hornets to send their enemies running.
- 5) God is going to control the timing of their possession of the land to ensure that the land doesn't become desolate and that the beasts of the field don't become too many for them to control. Little by little he will allow them to take over the land and multiply and occupy the land as their own.
- 6) Emphasis is made that it will be God's power and strength that will accomplish their victories.

Ex. 23:31 And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

The boundaries of the land will be from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and from the desert (the Negev) to the Euphrates. Again, it is God that will drive out those who are living in the land. (3/10) David Guzik made an important observation: "God may grant, but we must possess. He withholds our possession of many things until we partner with Him in bold faith and obedience."

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

Ex. 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.

Again, they are warned not to make a treaty or pact with the people of the land or with their gods. The people are to be destroyed/driven out completely. Why? Because they will lead you into sin if you don't. They will snare/lure you into serving their gods—which is sin against the Lord God. Another word in the Hebrew for snare is trap. You usually trap something to destroy it or to utilize it for service in some way for yourself.

This principle is very applicable to Christians today. We need to be diligent to get rid of sin and things that tempt us to sin. We need to avoid fellowship (close communion) with the unsaved—with anyone or anything that would negatively impact our relationship with God.

Could God have been more specific and emphatic in His instructions or more inspiring and awesome in His acts on behalf of the Israelis. Still we know that the people will turn from Him. It just emphasizes to me how powerful the working of the "prince of this world" is and how clever he is at getting us to fall for his deceptions by appealing to our sinful nature.