

# A little bit about the Old Testament Law

You may know that God's people were slaves in Egypt and God freed them, leading them out of Egypt, into a wilderness/desert, and on to a really great land God had promised them. As simple as that is to say, living it out was a long process. The people needed to get to know God again, because their time in Egypt had been so long and so hard, they sort of forgot. And God was, of course, ready to help them not just get to know God, but also learn what it would mean to live together as God's people.

See, being God's people doesn't mean you have a cool special title, it means you have a really important job. The job of living together in a way that matches who God is, so others can know what God is like. The Hebrews in the Bible were figuring this out in their time and place. One way they did that? They had laws.

*What do you know about laws nowadays? What are they meant to do?*

Laws in the time of the Bible's Old Testament were similar in some ways to laws today, but definitely were not exactly identical. They were meant to help the community live together. They were meant to protect people at risk and help rich and powerful people to be generous and unselfish. They were one way, in their time and place, to live in a way that matched who God is.

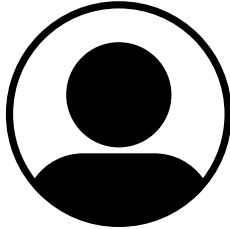
But because their time and place was very different from our time and place, reading the laws in the Bible can be confusing. They might seem strange, or make no sense to us! Still, like always, every Bible story tells us something about who God is and what God is like, even the confusing, strange, sometimes makes no sense story of the Law. (The Law is one way to sum up the whole big group of laws that the people were meant to follow.)

So we're going to take just 2 laws-- there are hundreds!--and see if we can discover 2 big things:

- How would this law help people live in a way that matched who God is?
- What does this law help us know about who God is?

*Exodus 23:4 When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.*

Does this law protect someone or something? Who or what?



people



animals

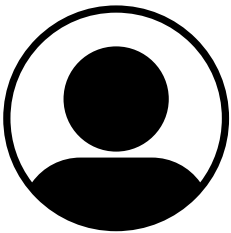


the land

What might happen if this law were totally ignored?

OR

What might happen if everyone agreed and participated in this law?



*Exodus 23:4 When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.*

What do you notice about who God is or what God is like because of this law?

What is a new version of this kind of idea that would fit and make sense in our world today?  
Write your own version of this law:

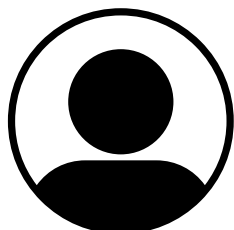
Exodus 23:4 (*sort of*) When you come upon your enemy's

(*what*) \_\_\_\_\_,

you shall (*action*) \_\_\_\_\_.

*Exodus 23: 10-11 Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow so that the poor of your people may eat, and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard and with your olive orchard.*

Does this law protect someone or something? Who or what?



people



animals

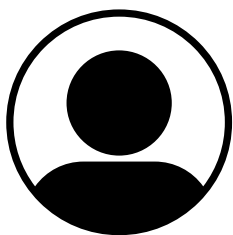


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*Exodus 23: 10-11 Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow so that the poor of your people may eat, and what they leave the wild animals may eat. You shall do the same with your vineyard and with your olive orchard.*

What do you notice about who God is or what God is like because of this law?

What is a new version of this kind of idea that would fit and make sense in our world today?  
Write your own version of this law:

Exodus 23:10-11 (*sort of*)

When you grow food, do/don't do this so the poor have food too:

And do/don't do this so the animals have food too:

# One last thought...

These laws in the Old Testament were, well, the laws for the people at that time.

Today, we live in a county and culture where our laws are meant to be fair and good, but they are not meant to tell everyone how to live in ways that match who God is. That's not a bad thing at all--we have friends and neighbors who believe different things and live different ways.

For folks who trust God, what we get to do is get to know God and then live together in ways that match what God's like--we don't need official laws to do that! In fact, we don't even need to all agree about how we do it! We get to figure it out together along the way, talking it out as we go.

At home, have each person in your family try this:

1. Pick one attribute of God.
2. Pick a place you go to regularly, a person or group you're with sometimes, or an issue in the world you care about
3. Answer this: Is there a way for you to also be that attribute in that place, with that person/group, or as you respond to that issue?

Here's an example:

1. God is caring.
2. We get tacos every Tuesday.
3. Maybe I can take a minute to chat with the staff as a small way to care about them. Then I can leave a tip for them before I go.

Your own ideas could be simple or take some time to do. Or maybe you know what you want to say about #1 and #2, but need time to think about #3. That's ok! You can even ask God: *Is there something you'd like me to notice about how I get to live in a way that matches who you are?* and see what comes up over the days and weeks ahead.