

Mishpatim Exodus -- Shemoth 21:1-24:18

The Israelites had trembled upon hearing God's Ten Commandments. They asked Moses to listen to God and tell them later. Moses is with God on Mt. Sinai. God said to Moses. Here are the rules you must tell the Israelites: If a Hebrew is your servant, he shall serve for 6 years, then be released, unless he wishes to stay. • If murders are intentional, then the murderer shall be murdered. If the death was unintentional and God caused it to happen, there will be refuge in a safe place. • Kidnappers shall be put to death • Neither strike nor curse your parents. • If you or your animals hurt someone or their property, you must compensate the victim for the losses. • You are responsible for what you borrow. • You shall not oppress nor do wrong to strangers for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. • Do not mistreat a widow or an orphan. • If you lend money to a poor Hebrew, do not press him for repayment nor charge them to borrow your money. If a coat is put as a deposit, return it before sundown for it is his warm covering. • Do not curse God. • Make no false reports. • Do not become a corrupt witness. • Do not follow the majority to do evil. • Do not favor the poor in a lawsuit. • Help all animals even if they are the animal of your enemy. • Never accept a bribe for it causes good people to tell lies. • Do not delay in your offerings to God. • Be a holy people to Me. • Six years shall you plant and reap the harvest but on the seventh year your land and animals shall rest and your servants shall go free. • Make no mention of any other god. • Three times a year, Hebrew males must appear before God, Master of the Universe. You shall have a feast for God: The Feast of Unleavened Bread to remember how God freed you from slavery in Egypt, the Feast of Shavuot to honor God with the first and choicest of fruits and the Feast of Sukkot when you thank God for all that you reap. • Bring your first fruits to the God's Temple. • You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk."

Now I will send an angel before you to guard you on your way to My promised land. If you follow My commandments, I will be an enemy to your enemies. When you come in contact with other peoples, you shall not bow down to their gods, nor follow their ways, lest you become like one of them. You shall serve the Lord your God and God will bless you and set your land borders." Moses came and told the people all of God's Words and the laws. They responded with a single voice. "We will keep every Word that God has spoken." Moses wrote down all of God's words in the Book of the Covenant and sealed it.

Then God said to Moses "Come up to the mountain again. I will give you the tablets of stone with My commandments so that you can teach them to the people. Leave Aaron and Hur in charge of the Israelites." Soon, before the eyes of all the sons of Israel, the glory of God rested upon Mount Sinai and the appearance of God was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain. Moses entered into the midst of the cloud and remained on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Questions: 1) Why is it important not to favor a poor person in a lawsuit? 2) Have you ever been asked to lie? What did you do? 3) How do you serve God? **Illustration Ideas:** Helping a stranger...being kind to animals...offerings to God...planting and reaping...letting the land and animals rest in the Sabbath year...Moses going up to Mt. Sinai with stone tablets