

Reflection on Exodus 22:20-23
and The Story of the Samaritan Woman
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This passage in Exodus is echoed in Christ's conversation with the rich young man. "The first is this, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

This passage and the story of the Samaritan Woman enlarge on these commandments. We must not sacrifice to any other God. In our day we don't often think of supernatural gods made from material products but that does not keep us from worshipping material gods.

Every word in the Exodus passage can reflect our time and age. It behooves us to listen carefully to what is being said.

"Do not molest or oppress an alien." People of goodwill in our political left are on firm ground here.

You shall not wrong any widow or orphan and do not use extortion of the poor. People of good will in both political parties can agree to this one.

These are interesting: "You shall not revile God, nor curse a prince of your people." All of us who follow Facebook can testify to how these laws are disobeyed.

"You shall not repeat a false report. Do not join the wicked in putting your hand, as an unjust witness, upon anyone." This is another law that is repeatedly broken. How quickly each one of us can hear a juicy story about someone - or a leader we dislike - and repeat this story, knowing it is a lie, wishing it were not a lie, not caring if it is a lie and certainly not taking to time to know the whole story.

"Neither shall you allege the example of the many as an excuse for doing wrong." It is possible that we will find this one the easiest trap to fall into. The terms to watch out for is this.

"Everyone says that...", "It is the consensus opinion of", "the majority is always right" or "he, she or they are being rude, mean, cruel or dishonest with me"; therefore, it is okay for me to retaliate in kind.

The following passage of scripture acknowledges that we do have enemies. However, there are laws about how we treat our enemies. "When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, see to it that it is returned to him. When you notice the donkey of one who hates you lying prostrate under its burden, by no means desert him; help him, rather, to raise it up."

Even though someone hates us, we are to return to him or her what belongs to them. We must respect the rights and lives of those we oppose - whether they are in our personal lives or in our political affiliations.

Whether we are discussing political or personal issues between ourselves or on media mediums such as Facebook, we are less apt to disobey these laws if we can learn how to discuss ideas rather than resort to hatred and vile language about each other.