

## **Laws of the Israelites**

(from the Oxford English translation of the Bible, 1973)

### **The Ten Commandments: Exodus, 20: 1-17**

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to worship them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of their parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses His name.

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work - you, your son or daughter, your male or female slaves, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and mother so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

### **Laws about slavery and criminality: Exodus 21 - excerpted**

These are the ordinances that you shall set before the people:

When you buy a male Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, but in the seventh he shall go out a free person without debt. If he comes in single, he shall go out single. If he comes in married, his wife shall go out with him. If the master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, then the wife and the children shall belong to the master, and the slave shall go out alone. But if the slave declares: "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out a free person," then his master shall bring him before God. He shall be brought to the door or doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him for life.

When a man sells his daughter into slavery, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who claims her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly with her. If he designates her for his son, he shall treat her as a daughter. If a man takes another wife, he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife. And if he does not do these things for her, she may go out free without debt.

**(12-14 excerpted)**

Whoever strikes his father or mother shall be put to death.

Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is free, shall be put to death.

Whoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death.

**(18-19 excerpted)**

When a slaveowner strikes a male or female slave with a rod, and the slave dies immediately, the owner shall be punished. But if the slave survives a day or two, there is no punishment; for the slave is the owner's property.

**Rules about Offering a Sacrifice to God: Leviticus 2**

When any one shall offer a sacrifice to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour: and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense, and shall bring it to the sons of Aaron the priests.

And one of them shall take a handful of the flour and oil, and all the frankincense; and shall put it a memorial upon the altar for a most sweet savour to the Lord.

And the remnant of the sacrifice shall be Aaron's, and his sons', holy of holies of the offerings of the Lord.

But when you offer a sacrifice baked in the oven, loaves without leaven, tempered with oil, and unleavened wafers, anointed with oil: If your offering is from the frying pan, of flour tempered with oil, and without leaven: then you shall divide it into little pieces, and shall pour oil upon it.

And if the sacrifice be from the gridiron, in like manner the flour shall be tempered with oil.

And when you offer it to the Lord, you shall deliver it to the hands of the priest.

And when he has offered it, he shall take a memorial out of the sacrifice, and burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour to the Lord.

And whatever is left, shall be Aaron's, and his sons': holy of holies of the offerings of the Lord.

Every sacrifice that is offered to the Lord shall be made without leaven: nor shall any leaven or honey be burnt in the sacrifice to the Lord.

Whatever sacrifice you offer, you shall season it with salt. You must never take away the salt of the covenant of God from thy sacrifice. In all your sacrifices you must offer salt.

But if you offer a gift of the firstfruits of your crops to the Lord, of the plants still green, you shall dry it at the fire, and break it small like meal; and thus offer your firstfruits to the Lord:

**Rules about Food: Leviticus 11**

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Say to the Israelites: 'Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.

'There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. The coney, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. You must not

eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

'Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales. But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales—whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water—you are to detest. And since you are to detest them, you must not eat their meat and you must detest their carcasses. Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be detestable to you.

'These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat." 'All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.

" 'You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

'Every animal that has a split hoof not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. They are unclean for you.

'Of the animals that move about on the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. Any food that could be eaten but has water on it from such a pot is unclean, and any liquid that could be drunk from it is unclean. Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean. A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean. If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

'If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches the carcass will be unclean till evening. Anyone who eats some of the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

'Every creature that moves about on the ground is detestable; it is not to be eaten. You are not to eat any creature that moves about on the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is detestable. Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the Lord who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

'These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.' "

### **Rules about Childbirth: Leviticus 12**

The Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.

If she gives birth to a daughter, the woman will be unclean for fourteen days, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the Lord to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood. "These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'

### **Rules about Sexuality and Purity: Leviticus 15: (excerpted)**

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

When a man has a discharge from his member, his discharge makes him ceremonially unclean. Every bed on which he lies shall be unclean, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. Anyone who touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and will be unclean until the evening. All who touch anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening. Any earthen vessel that this one touches must be broken, and every vessel of wood must be rinsed in water.

When the one with the discharge is cleansed of his discharge, he shall count seven days for his cleansing; he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in fresh water, and he shall be clean. On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons and come before the Lord to the entrance of the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. The priest shall offer them, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his discharge.

When a woman has a discharge of blood that is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. Everything upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean. If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.