

RECLAIMING QUEERS

a resource document of support

**RECLAIMING
HOMOSEXUALS
GAYS, LESBIANS,
BISEXUALS, TRANSGENDEREDS
and
ALL PERSONS
WITH ANY TYPE
or
ANY LEVEL OF
QUEERNESS**

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As a self-proclaimed act of obedience to the laws found in the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible / the written Torah (Genesis – Deuteronomy), there are those who supported the military policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (**DADT**) and Proposition 8 (**PROP 8**) in California and who continue to support the Defense of Marriage Act (**DOMA**) and restrictive state legislation such as the proposed **marriage-definition amendment** to the Indiana Constitution. Such support generally includes actual or approved legal and cultural discrimination against and exclusion of those with a non-heterosexual orientation. The specific justification is that such support is an act of obedience to a specific unambiguous prohibition found in the Torah.

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.
Leviticus 18:22

Yet, in spite of the professed obedience, usually there is neither mention of nor advocacy for the specific unambiguous penalty found in the Torah for men who have sex with each other.

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.
Leviticus 20:13

The following extended quote is excerpted from an article by Richard Elliot Friedman and Shawna Dolansky, authors of *The Bible Now*:

We are scholars, not politicians. Our job isn't to score points for a side, push an agenda or to re-size the Bible to fit our personal views.

So here's the text and a summary of the evidence:

"You shall not lay a male the layings of a woman; it is a to'ebah"
(offensive thing)
Leviticus 18:22.

"And a man who will lay a male the layings of a woman: the two of them have done a to'ebah (offensive thing). They shall be put to death. Their blood is on them"
Leviticus 20:13.

We acknowledged that many people have recognized that these two texts pretty clearly do prohibit at least some kinds of male-male sex ... The law really means what pretty much everyone has taken it to mean for centuries. Whatever view one takes, one must address the law fairly in terms of what it says.

So we sought to contribute another perspective that we believe can be helpful on this subject. The text identifies male homosexual acts by the technical term *to'ebah*, translated in English here as "an offensive thing" or in older translations as "an abomination." This is important because most things that are forbidden in biblical law are not identified with this word. In both of the contexts in Leviticus (chapters 18 and 20), male homosexuality is the only act to be called this. (Other acts are included broadly in a line at the end of chapter 18.) So this term, which is an important one in the Bible in general, is particularly important with regard to the law about male homosexual acts.

The question is: Is this term *to'ebah* an absolute, meaning that an act that is a *to'ebah* is wrong in itself and can never be otherwise? Or is the term relative – meaning that something that is a *to'ebah* to one person may not be offensive to another, or something that is a *to'ebah* in one culture may not be offensive in another, or something that is a *to'ebah* in one generation or time period may not be offensive in another – in which case the law may change as people's perceptions change?

When one examines all the occurrences of this technical term in the Hebrew Bible, one finds that elsewhere the term is in fact relative. For example, in the story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis, Joseph tells his brothers that, if the Pharaoh asks them what their occupation is, they should say that they're cowherds. They must not say that they are shepherds. Why? Because, Joseph explains, all shepherds are an offensive thing (*to'ebah*) to the Egyptians. But shepherds are not an offensive thing to the Israelites or Moabites or many other cultures. In another passage in that story, we read that Egyptians don't eat with Israelites because that would be an offensive thing (*to'ebah*) to them. But Arameans and Canaanites eat with Israelites and don't find it offensive. See also the story of the Exodus from Egypt, where Moses tells Pharaoh that the things that Israelites sacrifice would be an offensive thing (*to'ebah*) to the Egyptians. But these things are certainly not an offensive thing to the Israelites.

...

Now, one might respond that the law here is different because it concerns an offensive thing to God – and is therefore not subject to the relativity of human values. But that is actually not the case here. The Bible specifically identifies such laws about things that are divine offenses with the phrase "an offensive thing to the LORD" (*to'ebat yhwah*). That phrase is not used here in the law about male homosexual acts. It is not one of the laws that are identified as a *to'ebah* to God! If this is right, then it is an amazing irony. Calling male homosexual acts a *to'ebah* was precisely what made the biblical text seem so absolutely anti-homosexual and without the possibility of change. But it is precisely the fact of *to'ebah* that opens the possibility of the law's change. So, (1) whatever position one takes on this matter, left or right, conservative or liberal, one should acknowledge that the law really does forbid homosexual sex between males but not between females. And (2) one should recognize that the biblical prohibition is not one that is eternal and unchanging. The prohibition in the Bible applies only so long as male homosexual acts are perceived to be offensive. This could involve arguments and evidence from specialists in biology, psychology and culture. They are beyond our range of expertise as Bible scholars. Our task here has been to make the biblical evidence known.

Are Biblical Laws About Homosexuality Eternal?

Richard Elliot Friedman, Shawna Dolansky

(authors of The Bible Now)

Huffington Post

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Using this understanding of the text; people who are offended by homosexuality, as an act of obedience to the Leviticus texts, should demand their state legislature classify the act of men having sex with each other as a capital offense. Of course, to be fully compliant with the Torah, the prosecution of this crime would require at least two (2) witnesses of the illegal act.

If anyone kills another, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses; but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of a single witness.

Numbers 35:30

On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness.

Deuteronomy 17:6

A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained.

Deuteronomy 19:15

The execution has to be by stoning because the penalty must be imposed by the community and the witnesses. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first raised against the person to execute the death penalty, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 17:7

To be perfectly obedient to the Torah, such legislation would prohibit only sex between men. In the Torah, there is no legal prohibition of sex between women – lesbians are allowed. This lack of attention to women having sex with each other is understandable because in that ancient time it was thought that only men initiated new life, only men carried the seed for new life. To the people of that ancient time, a woman only provided a womb which is a "nest" or "fertile ground" or "incubator" – a place where the seed of a man could grow. Women carried life and nurtured life, but they contributed nothing to its inception. The understanding was that the seed of a man, once "planted" in the woman, only grew (not developed) until the woman was "delivered of her burden." If a woman could not have a baby, it was never a problem with the man's seed. Always, it was because her "nest" was "barren" – unsuitable for the growth of new life. In an extension of the same self-serving logic, if a woman did not give birth to sons, it was her fault and never the fault of the man even though he was the only source of "seed", the only source of new life. Such a hegemonic understanding contributed to and sustained the self-serving patriarchal importance and power that any man could lord over any woman.



One of the hallmarks of the seriousness and importance of this prohibition of sex between men is that the punishment is death – a public execution – a punishment that the Torah requires only in 19 other situations.

1. MURDER

Whoever strikes a person mortally shall be put to death. If it was not premeditated, but came about by an act of God, then I will appoint for you a place to which the killer may flee. But if someone willfully attacks and kills another by treachery, you shall take the killer from my altar for execution.

Exodus 21:12-32

2. KIDNAPPING

Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is still held in possession, shall be put to death.

Exodus 21:16

If someone is caught kidnapping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnapper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 24:7-8

MISTREATMENT OF A PARENT BY A CHILD

3. Physical abuse

Whoever strikes father or mother shall be put to death.

Exodus 21:15

4. Verbal abuse

Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.

Exodus 21:17

All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them.

Leviticus 20:9

TROUBLESOME CHILDREN

5. Prostitution by a daughter of a priest

When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.

Leviticus 21:9

6. Stubborn, rebellious, disobedient son

If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. They shall say to the elders of his town, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.”

Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

ASSAULT

7. Assault with a weapon or intent

But anyone who strikes another with an iron object, and death ensues, is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. Or anyone who strikes another with a stone in hand that could cause death, and death ensues, is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. Or anyone who strikes another with a weapon of wood in hand that could cause death, and death ensues, is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. The avenger of blood is the one who shall put the murderer to death; when they meet, the avenger of blood shall execute the sentence. Likewise, if someone pushes another from hatred, or hurls something at another, lying in wait, and death ensues, or in enmity strikes another with the hand, and death ensues, then the one who struck the blow shall be put to death; that person is a murderer; the avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death, when they meet. But if someone pushes another suddenly without enmity, or hurls any object without lying in wait, or, while handling any stone that could cause death, unintentionally drops it on another and death ensues, though they were not enemies, and no harm was intended, then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these ordinances; and the congregation shall rescue the slayer from the avenger of blood. Then the congregation shall send the slayer back to the original city of refuge. The slayer shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. But if the slayer shall at any time go outside the bounds of the original city of refuge, and is found by the avenger of blood outside the bounds of the city of refuge, and is killed by the avenger, no bloodguilt shall be incurred. For the slayer must remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest; but after the death of the high priest the slayer may return home. These things shall be a statute and ordinance for you throughout your generations wherever you live.

Numbers 35:16-29

8. Assault of a pregnant woman

When people who are fighting injure a pregnant woman so that there is a miscarriage, and yet no further harm follows, the one responsible shall be fined what the woman's husband demands, paying as much as the judges determine. If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Exodus 21:22-24

MAGICIANS

9. Female sorcerer

You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live.

Exodus 22:18

10. Medium or wizard

A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.

Leviticus 20:27

11. DEATH BY OX GORING

When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. If the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not restrained it, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. If a ransom is imposed on the owner, then the owner shall pay whatever is imposed for the redemption of the victim's life. If it gores a boy or a girl, the owner shall be dealt with according to this same rule. If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slave owner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

Exodus 21:28-32

12. ADULTERY

If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.

Leviticus 20:10

If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.

Deuteronomy 22:22

If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. But if the man meets the engaged woman in the open country, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. You shall do nothing to the young woman; the young woman has not committed an offense punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. Since he found her in the open country, the engaged woman may have cried for help, but there was no one to rescue her.

Deuteronomy 22:23-27

13. MARITAL FRAUD BY A WOMAN

Suppose a man marries a woman, but after going in to her, he dislikes her and makes up charges against her, slandering her by saying, "I married this woman; but when I lay with her, I did not find evidence of her virginity." The father of the young woman and her mother shall then submit the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. The father of the young woman shall say to the elders: "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man but he dislikes her; now he has made up charges against her, saying, 'I did not find evidence of your daughter's virginity.' But here is the evidence of my daughter's virginity." Then they shall spread out the cloth before the elders of the town. The elders of that town shall take the man and punish him; they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver (which they shall give to the young woman's father) because he has slandered a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife; he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives. If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 22:13-19

14. INCEST

The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed perversion, their blood is upon them. . . . If a man takes a wife and her mother also, it is depravity; they shall be burned to death, both he and they, that there may be no depravity among you.

Leviticus 20:11-12, 14

15. BESTIALITY

Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

Exodus 22:19

If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and has sexual relations with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them.

Leviticus 20:15-16

16. WORK ON THE SABBATH

The LORD said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: “You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Exodus 31:12-17

17. GIVING OFFSPRING TO MOLECH

Say further to the people of Israel: Any of the people of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who give any of their offspring to Molech shall be put to death; the people of the land shall stone them to death. I myself will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people, because they have given of their offspring to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name. And if the people of the land should ever close their eyes to them, when they give of their offspring to Molech, and do not put them to death, I myself will set my face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people, them and all who follow them in prostituting themselves to Molech.

Leviticus 20:2-5

18. WORSHIPING OTHER GODS

If there is found among you, in one of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and transgresses his covenant by going to serve other gods and worshiping them—whether the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden—and if it is reported to you or you hear of it, and you make a thorough inquiry, and the charge is proved true that such an abhorrent thing has occurred in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or that woman who has committed this crime and you shall stone the man or woman to death. On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first raised against the person to execute the death penalty, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 17:2-9

19. DISOBEYING A PRIEST

If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another—any such matters of dispute in your towns—then you shall immediately go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose, where you shall consult with the levitical priests and the judge who is in office in those days; they shall announce to you the decision in the case. Carry out exactly the decision that they announce to you from the place that the LORD will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you. You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you; do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left. As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to the LORD your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

Deuteronomy 17:8-13

By the metric of the punishment required, the other capital crimes should be taken as seriously as the prohibition of men having sex with each other. Of the two executions recorded in the Torah (*Leviticus 24:10-23, Numbers 15:32-36*), the first was a man who "blasphemed the Name in a curse" and the second was for working on the Sabbath. To be consistently and continually obedient to the Torah, we must demand legislation that will prohibit work on the Sabbath (*Shabbat* in Hebrew) with the penalty being death by stoning. This would apply to all people regardless of their religion or citizenship.

Sabbath is from sunset on Friday to Saturday nightfall when three stars are visible, approximately 40 minutes after sunset. Preparation for the Sabbath usually begins by 3 PM on Friday afternoon. On the Sabbath, there must be no driving, no shopping, no professional or amateur or personal sports, no using the Internet, no activity that causes the closing or the use of an electrical circuit, and no moving of any object outside the home.

The Torah does not prohibit "work" in the 20th century English sense of the word. The Torah prohibits "*melachah*" (Mem-Lamed-Alef-Kaf-Hei), which is usually translated as "work," but does not mean precisely the same thing as the English word.

Melachah generally refers to the kind of work that is creative, or that exercises control or dominion over your environment. The quintessential example of *melachah* is the work of creating the universe, which G-d ceased from on the seventh day. Note that G-d's work did not require a great physical effort: he spoke, and it was done.

The word *melachah* is rarely used in scripture outside of the context of Shabbat and holiday restrictions. The only other repeated use of the word is in the discussion of the building of the sanctuary and its vessels in the wilderness. Exodus Ch. 31, 35-38. Notably, the Shabbat restrictions are reiterated during this discussion (Ex. 31:13), thus we can infer that the work of creating the sanctuary had to be stopped for Shabbat. From this, the rabbis concluded that the work prohibited on Shabbat is the same as the work of creating the sanctuary. They found 39 categories of forbidden acts, all of which are types of work that were needed to build the sanctuary:

- 01 Sowing
- 02 Plowing
- 03 Reaping
- 04 Binding sheaves
- 05 Threshing
- 06 Winnowing
- 07 Selecting
- 08 Grinding
- 09 Sifting
- 10 Kneading
- 11 Baking
- 12 Shearing wool
- 13 Washing wool
- 14 Beating wool
- 15 Dyeing wool
- 16 Spinning
- 17 Weaving
- 18 Making two loops
- 19 Weaving two threads
- 20 Separating two threads
- 21 Tying
- 22 Untying
- 23 Sewing two stitches
- 24 Tearing
- 25 Trapping
- 26 Slaughtering
- 27 Flaying
- 28 Salting meat
- 29 Curing hide
- 30 Scraping hide
- 31 Cutting hide up
- 32 Writing two letters
- 33 Erasing two letters
- 34 Building
- 35 Tearing a building down
- 36 Extinguishing a fire
- 37 Kindling a fire

38. Hitting with a hammer
39. Taking an object from the private domain to the public, or transporting an object in the public domain.

Mishnah Shabbat, 7:2

All of these tasks are prohibited, as well as any task that operates by the same principle or has the same purpose. In addition, the rabbis have prohibited handling any implement that is intended to perform one of the above purposes (for example, a hammer, a pencil or a match) unless the tool is needed for a permitted purpose (using a hammer to crack nuts when nothing else is available) or needs to be moved to do something permitted (moving a pencil that is sitting on a prayer book), or in certain other limited circumstances. Objects that may not be handled on Shabbat are referred to as "muktzeh," which means, "that which is set aside," because you set it aside (and don't use it unnecessarily) on Shabbat.

The rabbis have also prohibited travel, buying and selling, and other weekday tasks that would interfere with the spirit of Shabbat. The use of electricity is prohibited because it serves the same function as fire or some of the other prohibitions, or because it is technically considered to be "fire."

The issue of the use of an automobile on Shabbat, so often argued by non-observant Jews, is not really an issue at all for observant Jews. The automobile is powered by an internal combustion engine, which operates by burning gasoline and oil, a clear violation of the Torah prohibition against kindling a fire. In addition, the movement of the car would constitute transporting an object in the public domain, another violation of a Torah prohibition, and in all likelihood the car would be used to travel a distance greater than that permitted by rabbinical prohibitions. For all these reasons, and many more, the use of an automobile on Shabbat is clearly not permitted.

As with almost all of the commandments, all of these Shabbat restrictions can be violated if necessary to save a life.

Judaism 101 - Shabbat

*also see: **English!Info - Shabbat***

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 your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.

Exodus 20:8-10

The LORD said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: "You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death.

Exodus 31:12-17

You shall kindle no fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day.

Exodus 35:3

It is a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall deny yourselves; it is a statute forever.

Leviticus 16:31

But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you.

Deuteronomy 5:14

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day. Those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses, Aaron, and to the whole congregation. They put him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him outside the camp.” The whole congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Numbers 15:32-36

The biblical concept of work melakha [work] applies to work involving the production, creation, or transformation of an object.

Rabbi Abraham Chill, The Mitzvot, p. 37

as quoted by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, Jewish Literacy, p. 599

In the defense of modern Sabbath practices, we are directed to the Gospels telling of Jesus "working" on the Sabbath.

One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?” And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.” Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man who had the withered hand, “Come forward.” Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-5

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

He left that place and entered their synagogue; a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other.

Matthew 12:1-13

One sabbath while Jesus was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?" Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath." On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored.

Luke 6:1-10

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Woman, you are set free from your ailment.” When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.” But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Luke 13:10-17

On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, “Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?” But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. Then he said to them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?” And they could not reply to this.

Luke 14:1-6

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.” At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, “It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” But he answered them, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk’?” Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath.

John 5:1-16

“Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?” The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?” Jesus answered them, “I performed one work, and all of you are astonished. Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses, but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man’s whole body on the sabbath? Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

John 7:19-24

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.” They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.

John 9:1-14

So, with the simplest of methods for gathering the simplest of nourishment and with a few acts of healing, we have sufficient justification for abandoning: one of the ten commandments, a substantial body of religious law, a defining cultural activity and for setting aside all the spiritual and secular reasoning for honoring and holding sacred a day of rest and reflection – and replace it with professional sports, athletic competitions for children, travel and recreation, cultural activities and being open for business 24/7. If it is so easy to ignore a major and substantial religious practice repeatedly uplifted, enshrined and required by the Torah and by all the scripture that follows, why is it so hard to let go of two verses that have substantially less biblical mention and support and no contemporary justification?



To be obedient to the Torah, we must demand that death penalty sentencing laws be amended to allow for the execution of any child who is rebellious, violent with a parent or verbally abusive to a parent, or a church leader's daughter who becomes a prostitute or any daughter who is not a virgin when she marries the first time.

If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. They shall say to the elders of his town, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

Whoever strikes father or mother shall be put to death.

Exodus 21:15

Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death.

Exodus 21:17

When the daughter of a priest profanes herself through prostitution, she profanes her father; she shall be burned to death.

Leviticus 21:9

Suppose a man marries a woman, but after going in to her, he dislikes her and makes up charges against her, slandering her by saying, "I married this woman; but when I lay with her, I did not find evidence of her virginity." The father of the young woman and her mother shall then submit the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. The father of the young woman shall say to the elders: "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man but he dislikes her; now he has made up charges against her, saying, 'I did not find evidence of your daughter's virginity.' But here is the evidence of my daughter's virginity." Then they shall spread out the cloth before the elders of the town. The elders of that town shall take the man and punish him; they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver (which they shall give to the young woman's father) because he has slandered a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife; he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives. If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman's virginity was not found, then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father's house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 22:13-19



To be obedient to the Torah and in compliance with the rest of the Bible, the legalization of slavery must be reinstated. The Bible has neither a prohibition nor a condemnation of slavery. In the Bible, slavery is an unquestioned and normal part of life as reflected in the 279 mentions – from Genesis to Revelation – in the history, narrative, poetry, psalms, proverbs, prophecies, parables and letters of the Bible:

Genesis 9:25-27; 12:16; 15:3; 16:1-8; 17:9-13; 20:14-17; 21:10-13; 24:35; 25:12; 30:43; 32:5; 43:18; 44:9-10, 16-17, 33; 47:19-25; 49:15; 50:18

Exodus 2:23; 6:5-9; 9:20-21; 11:5; 12:44; 13:3, 14; 20:2, 10, 17; 21:5, 7, 20-21, 26-27, 32; 23:12

Leviticus 19:20; 25:6, 39, 42, 44, 46; 26:13

Deuteronomy 5:6, 14-15, 21; 6:12, 21; 7:8, 8:14, 12:12, 18; 13:5, 10, 13, 15, 17; 16:11-12, 14; 21:14; 23:15; 24:18, 22; 28:68

Joshua 9:23; 24:17

Judges 9:18

1 Samuel 2:27; 4:9; 8:16-17; 25:41

1 Kings 2:39-40; 9:21-22

2 Kings 4:1; 5:26

1 Chronicles 2:34-35

2 Chronicles 8:9; 28:10

Ezra 9:8-9

Nehemiah 5:5; 7:67; 9:17, 36;

Esther 7:4

Job 3:19; 7:2; 31:13

Psalms 105:17

Proverbs 17:2; 19:10; 22:7; 29:21; 30:22

Ecclesiastes 2:7; 10:7

Isaiah 14:2; 24:2; 49:7

Jeremiah 2:14; 25:14; 27:7; 34:9-16

Lamentations 5:8

Ezekiel 34:27

Joel 2:29

Micah 6:4

Nahum 2:7; 3:4

Zechariah 2:9

Matthew 6:24; 8:9; 10:24-25; 13:27-28; 18:23-33; 20:27; 21:34-36; 22:3-10; 24:45-50; 25:14-30; 26:51

Mark 10:44; 12:2-4; 13:34; 14:47

Luke 7:2-10; 12:37-47; 14:17-23; 15:22-29; 16:13; 17:7-10; 19:13-22; 20:10-11; 22:50

John 4:51; 8:33-35; 18:10, 18, 26

Acts 2:18; 7:6; 10:7; 16:16-17

Romans 6:6, 16-22; 7:6, 14, 25; 8:15

1 Corinthians 7:21-23; 9:19, 27; 12:13

2 Corinthians 4:5, 11:20

Galatians 3:28; 4:1, 3, 7-9, 22-25, 30-31; 5:1, 13; 6:5-6, 8

Philippians 2:7

Colossians 3:11, 22; 4:1

1 Timothy 6:1
Titus 2:3, 9; 3:3
Philemon 1:16
Hebrews 2:15
1 Peter 2:18
2 Peter 2:19
Revelation 6:15; 13:16; 18:13; 19:18

The importance and acceptance of ancient slavery is demonstrated by the laws of the Torah that govern or prohibit certain types of slavery as well as how slaves are to be acquired and treated.

If someone is caught kidnaping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnapper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy 24:7

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.

Exodus 21:20-21

When a slaveowner strikes the eye of a male or female slave, destroying it, the owner shall let the slave go, a free person, to compensate for the eye. If the owner knocks out a tooth of a male or female slave, the slave shall be let go, a free person, to compensate for the tooth. ... If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slaveowner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

Exodus 21:26-27,32

These are the ordinances that you shall set before them: 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, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he 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 the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life. When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

Exodus 21:1-7

If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold. You shall not rule over them with harshness, but shall fear your God. As for the male and female slaves whom you may have, it is from the nations around you that you may acquire male and female slaves. You may also acquire them from among the aliens residing with you, and from their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. You may keep them as a possession for your children after you, for them to inherit as property. These you may treat as slaves, but as for your fellow Israelites, no one shall rule over the other with harshness. If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien's family, after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, or their uncle or their uncle's son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; or if they prosper they may redeem themselves. They shall compute with the purchaser the total from the year when they sold themselves to the alien until the jubilee year; the price of the sale shall be applied to the number of years: the time they were with the owner shall be rated as the time of a hired laborer. If many years remain, they shall pay for their redemption in proportion to the purchase price; and if few years remain until the jubilee year, they shall compute thus: according to the years involved they shall make payment for their redemption. As a laborer hired by the year they shall be under the alien's authority, who shall not, however, rule with harshness over them in your sight. And if they have not been redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children with them shall go free in the jubilee year. For to me the people of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 25:39-55

If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and works for you six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free. And when you send a male slave out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the Lord your God has blessed you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today. But if he says to you, "I will not go out from you," because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your slave forever. You shall do the same with regard to your female slave. Do not consider it a hardship when you send them out from you free persons, because for six years they have given you services worth the wages of hired laborers; and the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do.

Deuteronomy 15:12-18

When you go out to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God hands them over to you and you take them captive, suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman whom you desire and want to marry, and so you bring her home to your house: she shall shave her head, pare her nails, discard her captive's garb, and shall remain in your house a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. But if you are not satisfied with her, you shall let her go free and not sell her for money. You must not treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

Slaves who have escaped to you from their owners shall not be given back to them. They shall reside with you, in your midst, in any place they choose in any one of your towns, wherever they please; you shall not oppress them.

Deuteronomy 23:15-16

Yet, with this unambiguous scriptural support for a ban on work on Sunday punishable by death and for the execution of troublesome children and for the death penalty as punishment for incest and adultery and non-virgin first-time brides and for the reinstatement of slavery, there are no national movements, no referendums, no court challenges, no legislation and not even one proponent on FOX news.

Why is the biblical concern for honoring the Sabbath and maintaining the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship so unimportant and inconsequential? Why is the biblical acceptance of slavery not embraced? Why are we so squeamish about executing children when the Torah has no such reluctance? Why are the two verses prohibiting sex between men so important that it justifies huge expenditures of money, time, effort, emotion, creative energy and political capital to maintain a last-ditch tangential enforcement of those two verses in a way that will inevitably be deemed unconstitutional? Whatever caused the deathly fear of sorcerers and wizards and mediums and Molech either does not exist or we have replaced the irrational fear with understanding and knowledge. It is not that we have realized only for ourselves that slavery is wrong; it is that we have realized that slavery has always been wrong. It is not that we have realized only for ourselves that infanticide and the execution of children is wrong; it is that we have realized that such killings have always been wrong. As well-illustrated by these two immoral situations – slavery and the killing of children – our understanding of right and wrong and worship and faithfulness has matured and moved beyond the understanding held by our faith ancestors. As the scripture encourages us to do, we are moving from the tribal justice of Genesis 34 through the individual responsibility legalism of the written Torah to the Good News of love and grace, hospitality and generosity, compassion and service, and forgiveness and justice as taught by Jesus.

We are not citizens of the ancient nation of Israel or any ancient nation; we are not members of an ancient culture or people – and it is impossible for us to be them – it is impossible for us to live like them, to think like them, to believe like them and to perceive like them. And it was impossible for them to be us, a people of their unseen and unforeseeable future – thus it was impossible for them to live like us, to think like us, to believe like us and to perceive like us. Since that ancient time, we have discovered and constantly live with: Chaos Theory – and Quantum Theory – and the Theory of Relativity with its $E=mc^2$ and time as a pliable dimension – and the accelerating expansion of a universe of dark matter and dark energy and black holes and trillions of stars and trillions of light-years – and nano-technology – and nascent space travel – and solid state programmable devices – and electricity – and mass communication via print, wire and electro-magnetic radiation – and global travel by land, water and air. We calculate and catalogue and understand ourselves and the world and the universe using DNA-based and cellular-based medical science that includes detailed macro- and micro-knowledge of our anatomy and biological functions – and the physics of the Newtonian laws concerning motion and gravity – and calculus – and parallel-processing super-computers – and the Internet and the Web – and decimal and binary and hexadecimal and octal numbering systems that include a zero digit and use positional notation -- all of which are knowledge and technologies and methods and processes that so pervasively inform our existence and are so intrinsically woven into the fabric of each individual paradigm – it imbues us with an inescapable world view and an inescapable way of perceiving and an inescapable way of thinking. It is a world view and way of perceiving and way of thinking that was unknown and incomprehensible to our ancient ancestors – and the lack of such knowledge and technologies and methods and processes gave our ancient ancestors a world view and a way of perceiving and a way of thinking that, in too many important indiscernible ways, is unknowable and unverifiable. To a large extent, ancient people and contemporary people are mutually incomprehensible.

Wizards and sorcerers and witches and warlocks and mediums and magic and Molech and other gods do not exist – and so it is that many ancient feared intangibles do not exist. In December 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) voted to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*. The American Medical Association (AMA) has adopted the APA position and all AMA professional policies include a prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation. In the well-researched and well-considered professional opinion of American psychiatrists and physicians, in and of itself, homosexuality is neither pathological nor abnormal. This means that, in and of itself, as a sexual orientation, homosexuality is both normal and healthy. Every AMA psychiatrist and physician has a professional and ethical obligation to conduct their practice in accordance with these policies. While a layperson may hold a differing personal opinion, that opinion does not qualify as either a valid or rational argument – that would require a mountain of contrary peer-reviewed published research. Minus such evidence, no argument can be made against the normalcy and healthiness of homosexuality as a sexual orientation.

In its June 26, 2003 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of **Lawrence v. Texas** made several important decisions.

- 1) Because it was a violation of the Due Process Clause, the Court overturned the Texas statute that made it a crime for two people “to engage in certain intimate sexual conduct”.

- 2) It overturned the Supreme Court decision made and the legal reasoning used in the 1986 **Bowers v. Hardwick** case that had upheld state sodomy laws.
- 3) “The Bowers Court was, of course, making the broader point that for centuries there have been powerful voices to condemn homosexual conduct as immoral, but this Court’s obligation is to define the liberty of all, not to mandate its own moral code.”
- 4) It is unconstitutional to ban or restrict the rights of homosexuals because they are homosexual. The Court affirmed “The liberty protected by the Constitution allows homosexual persons the right to choose to enter upon relationships in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons.”

In the suit to have Proposition 8 declared unconstitutional (**Perry v. Schwarzenegger transcripts**) (**Perry v. Schwarzenegger decision**), the defendants faced and did not meet their difficult legal challenge. The defense did not provide a rational basis for Proposition 8 and did not provide any evidence that Proposition 8 would harm opposite-sex marriages. “Instead the evidence shows beyond debate that allowing same-sex couples to marry has at least a neutral, if not a positive, effect on the institution of marriage and that same-sex couples’ marriages would benefit the state. Moreover the evidence shows that the rights of those opposed to homosexuality or same-sex couples will remain unaffected if the state ceases to enforce Proposition 8” (*Perry v. Schwarzenegger decision*, pp. 125-126). “But proponents, amici and the court, despite ample opportunity and a full trial, have failed to identify any rational basis Proposition 8 could advance. Proponents, represented by able and energetic counsel, developed a full trial record in support of Proposition 8. The resulting evidence shows that Proposition 8 simply conflicts with the guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment. Many of the purported interests identified by proponents are nothing more than a fear of unarticulated dislike of same-sex couples” (*Perry v. Schwarzenegger decision*, pp. 131-132).

Opponents of homosexuals freely exercising their constitutional rights sometimes choose to remove themselves from organizations that will not support or embrace their opposition. Opponents do so to avoid associating with homosexuals fully participating in the roles and opportunities of the organization. What the opponents do not realize is – it is too late, it is already unavoidable. It is not that homosexuals have appeared or arrived. Homosexuals have always been here and always participated. It is not that homosexuals are more visible on television and in movies and plays and musicals. It is that homosexuals are unavoidably visible in everyday life and many organizations allow or accommodate, if not encourage, their participation and contributions. Every doctor – every general physician, obstetrician, pediatrician, urologist, gynecologist, oncologist, ophthalmologist, every medical specialist you can think of – has a professional responsibility and obligation to accept homosexual patients and to extend professional courtesies and cooperation to homosexual physicians and medical technicians and to treat their homosexual orientation as healthy and normal. Businesses need people with productive and problem-solving skills as well as people who are creative and innovative. Businesses have found that it is an unacceptable, even counter-productive, expense in terms of monetary and talent cost and in terms of the potential contributions to a competitor to discriminate against potential valuable employees because of their race, sex, religion or sexual orientation. Trying to avoid association with homosexuals or organizations who welcome homosexuals is a guaranteed losing strategy. It is choosing to be left behind.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matthew 18:1-6

Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

Matthew 19:13-15

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

Luke 18:15-17

*Jesus loves the little children
All the children of the world
Black and yellow, red and white
They're all precious in His sight
Jesus loves the little children of the world*

Music: George Frederick Root (1820-1895)

Lyrics: Clare Herbert Woolston (1856-1927)

The song came to the forefront of popularity in 1970 as the opening lyrics for “*Everything is Beautiful*” composed and performed by Ray Stevens. The song was a #1 hit single in the United States, Canada and Australia. Either or both songs became staples of children’s music in many Sunday Schools. Guess what – our children got it. Our children accepted it and ran with it and extended it. Inter-racial couples? No problem, no big deal, it is a normal part of life. Same-sex couples? No problem, no big deal, it is a normal part of life. Our children know and live the truth of “*Jesus loves the little children of the world.*” As our children gain their maturity and independence – at school, in college, on the job, in relationships – they will see for themselves that love has no boundaries. Love is not restrained by abilities or appearance or race or sex. Homosexuals are a normal healthy 1% - 2% of the population. That is 1% - 2% of our children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews – and the children of our cousins, friends, neighbors, co-workers and fellow church members. It will be a sad day for opponents of homosexual participation when they realize that their children have chosen inclusion over exclusion and that in this area of life, they – the opponents of homosexual participation – have been, as were the opponents of racial integration, left behind by their own children.

Opponents of homosexual participation, in attempting to segregate themselves from homosexuals and those who associate with homosexuals, ignore the diversity and creativity it takes to make professions and businesses succeed. The following incomplete list names and links to corporations that have diversity policies that explicitly forbid discrimination based on sexual orientation or support GLBT employee resource groups or have earned awards for supporting GLBT inclusion:

AFLAC
Alcoa
American Electric Power
Anheuser-Busch
AT&T
Caterpillar
Chrysler
CISCO
ConAgra Foods
Disney
DOW
Duke Energy
Dupont
ESPN
Ford
Gannett
General Electric
General Mills
General Motors
Google
Harley-Davidson
Hersheys
Hewlett Packard
Honeywell
IBM
John Deere
JP Morgan Chase
Lilly
Mahle
Marriott
Microsoft
MillerCoors
NBA
Oracle
Progressive
Prudential
Sears Holdings (Sears / Kmart / Craftsman / Kenmore / Lands End)
Shell
Sprint
State Farm
SuperValu (Jewel-OSCO)
3M
US Steel
WellPoint

There has been a drive to ask presidential candidates to sign a pledge that they will oppose legal recognition of Sharia law. The problem with the pledge is that it is inadequate; it is neither strong enough nor wide enough. There is no room and no justification for the civil recognition of the law of any religion or to give the law of any religion any legislative or enforcement weight or influence or power regardless of whether that religion be Islam, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, etc. Why? There are two reasons? 1) Those ancient religious laws were not written by us, for us, to us or about us. Those ancient laws neither compel us not control us and do not and should not have any legal standing. Specifically, in regards to the Torah, we are not citizens of the ancient nation of Israel – a nation which is long gone and will never return to exist as it did in the Hebrew Bible. 2) It is neither the age nor the irrelevance that nulls the "clobber" verses, it is the hypocrisy by which they are proclaimed and honored. To lift up those two verses – above all others – is to commit idolatry and trivialize the Good News message and the entire Bible.

The time has come, when we are confronted with the clobber verses, to reply,
"SO WHAT?!"

The time has come, when we are confronted with the clobber verses, to ask:

“If the law of *Leviticus 18:22* and *Leviticus 20:13* is the word of God, what about the other 600 laws?”

"Why are these two verses so much more important than all the other laws and all the other scripture?"

"Why are these two verses so authoritative and powerful that they can be used to exclude and control and limit other people in a way that is illegal, unconstitutional and has no medical basis?"

"The scripture about love and grace and compassion and service and hospitality and generosity and forgiveness of sins and debts and justice as restoration – why are these laws and verses of lesser or no importance?"

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:17-19

"But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped."

Luke 16:17

When Jesus proclaims that not a letter of the law will be dropped, he is not talking about the punitive legalism of the Torah, he is talking about the justice of the Torah – justice as compassion and restoration and forgiveness and love – and administered by judges who are fair and even-handed and independent – and due process is administered with integrity and truth – and available to all and applied to all without exception. (*in the following verses, italic emphasis has been added*)

Then God spoke all these words:

- I.** 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.
- II.** 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 them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
- III.** 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.
- IV.** 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 your daughter, your male or female slave, 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.
- V.** Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- VI.** You shall not murder.
- VII.** You shall not commit adultery.
- VIII.** You shall not steal.
- IX.** You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- X.** 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.

Exodus 20:1-17

- I. 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.
- II. 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 them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of 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.
- III. 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.
- IV. Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 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, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.
- V. Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
- VI. You shall not murder.
- VII. Neither shall you commit adultery.
- VIII. Neither shall you steal.
- IX. Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.
- X. Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife. Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Deuteronomy 5:1-21

There shall be one law for the native and for the *alien* who resides among you.

Exodus 12:49

You shall not wrong or oppress a resident *alien*, for you were *aliens* in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any *widow* or *orphan*. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry;

Exodus 22:21-23

If you lend money to my people, to the *poor* among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. If you take your neighbor's cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down; for it may be your neighbor's only clothing to use as cover; in what else shall that person sleep? And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am *compassionate*.

Exodus 22:25-27

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert *justice*; nor shall you be partial to the *poor* in a lawsuit. When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back. When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free. You shall not pervert the *justice* due to your *poor* in their lawsuits. Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the *innocent* and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. You shall not oppress a resident *alien*; you know the heart of an *alien*, for you were *aliens* in the land of Egypt. For 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.

Exodus 23:1-11

The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast *love* and faithfulness, keeping steadfast *love* for the thousandth generation, *forgiving* iniquity and transgression and sin

Exodus 34:6-7a

He shall do with the bull just as is done with the bull of sin offering; he shall do the same with this. The priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. ... All its fat he shall turn into smoke on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of well-being. Thus the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin, and he shall be *forgiven*. ... He shall remove all its fat, as the fat is removed from the offering of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar for a pleasing odor to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf, and you shall be *forgiven*. ... You shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the sheep is removed from the sacrifice of well-being, and the priest shall turn it into smoke on the altar, with the offerings by fire to the Lord. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be *forgiven*. ... And the second he shall offer for a burnt offering according to the regulation. Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the sin that you have committed, and you shall be *forgiven*. ... Thus the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for whichever of these sins you have committed, and you shall be *forgiven*. Like the grain offering, the rest shall be for the priest. ... And you shall make restitution for the holy thing in which you were remiss, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. The priest shall make atonement on your behalf with the ram of the guilt offering, and you shall be *forgiven*. ... You shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, or the equivalent, as a guilt offering; and the priest shall make atonement on your behalf for the error that you committed unintentionally, and you shall be *forgiven*. ... The priest shall make atonement on your behalf before the Lord, and you shall be *forgiven* for any of the things that one may do and incur guilt thereby. ... And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of guilt offering before the Lord for his sin that he committed; and the sin he committed shall be *forgiven* him. ...

Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7, 22

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the *poor* and the *alien*: I am the Lord your God. You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord. You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. You shall not revile the *deaf* or put a stumbling block before the *blind*; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. You shall not render an *unjust* judgment; you shall not be partial to the *poor* or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the Lord. You shall not *hate* in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take *vengeance* or bear a *grudge* against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 19:9-18

When an *alien* resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the *alien*. The *alien* who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the *alien* as yourself, for you were *aliens* in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. You shall not cheat in measuring length, weight, or quantity. You shall have honest balances, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin : I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:33-36

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the *poor* and for the *alien*: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 23:22

You shall have one law for the *alien* and for the citizen: for I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 24:22

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but *aliens* and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land. If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, the years since its sale shall be computed and the difference shall be refunded to the person to whom it was sold, and the property shall be returned. But if there is not sufficient means to recover it, what was sold shall remain with the purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned. If anyone sells a dwelling house in a walled city, it may be redeemed until a year has elapsed since its sale; the right of redemption shall be one year. If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a house that is in a walled city shall pass in perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout the generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. But houses in villages that have no walls around them shall be classed as open country; they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the jubilee. As for the cities of the Levites, the Levites shall forever have the right of redemption of the houses in the cities belonging to them. Such property as may be redeemed from the Levites—houses sold in a city belonging to them—shall be released in the jubilee; because the houses in the cities of the Levites are their possession among the people of Israel. But the open land around their cities may not be sold; for that is their possession for all time. If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall support them; they shall live with you as though resident *aliens*. Do not take interest in advance or otherwise make a profit from them, but fear your God; let them live with you. You shall not lend them your money at interest taken in advance, or provide them food at a profit. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your God.

Leviticus 25:23-38

Any *alien* residing among you who wishes to keep the passover to the Lord shall do so according to the statute of the passover and according to its regulation; you shall have one statute for both the resident *alien* and the native.

Numbers 9:14

“ ‘The Lord is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast *love*, *forgiving* iniquity and transgression’ ”

Numbers 14:18a

“*Forgive* the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast *love*, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt even until now.” Then the Lord said, “I do *forgive*, just as you have asked”

Numbers 14:19-20

An *alien* who lives with you, or who takes up permanent residence among you, and wishes to offer an offering by fire, a pleasing odor to the Lord, shall do as you do. As for the assembly, there shall be for both you and the resident *alien* a single statute, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you and the *alien* shall be alike before the Lord. You and the *alien* who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance.

Numbers 15:14-16

The priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the Israelites, and they shall be *forgiven*; it was unintentional, and they have brought their offering, an offering by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their error. All the congregation of the Israelites shall be *forgiven*, as well as the *aliens* residing among them, because the whole people was involved in the error. ... And the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the one who commits an error, when it is unintentional, to make atonement for the person, who then shall be *forgiven*. For both the native among the Israelites and the *alien* residing among them – you shall have the same law for anyone who acts in error.

Numbers 15:25-26, 28-29

This shall be a perpetual statute for the Israelites and for the *alien* residing among them.

Numbers 19:10b

Speak to the Israelites, and say to them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of *refuge* for you, so that a slayer who kills a person without intent may flee there. The cities shall be for you a *refuge* from the avenger, so that the slayer may not die until there is a trial before the congregation. The cities that you designate shall be six cities of *refuge* for you: you shall designate three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of *refuge*. These six cities shall serve as *refuge* for the Israelites, for the resident or transient *alien* among them, so that anyone who kills a person without intent may flee there.

Numbers 35:10-15

But if someone pushes another suddenly without enmity, or hurls any object without lying in wait, or, while handling any stone that could cause death, unintentionally drops it on another and death ensues, though they were not enemies, and no harm was intended, then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these ordinances; and the congregation shall rescue the slayer from the avenger of blood. Then the congregation shall send the slayer back to the original city of *refuge*. The slayer shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. But if the slayer shall at any time go outside the bounds of the original city of *refuge*, and is found by the avenger of blood outside the bounds of the city of refuge, and is killed by the avenger, no bloodguilt shall be incurred. For the slayer must remain in the city of *refuge* until the death of the high priest; but after the death of the high priest the slayer may return home. ... Nor shall you accept ransom for one who has fled to a city of *refuge*, enabling the fugitive to return to live in the land before the death of the high priest.

Numbers 35:22-28, 32

“I charged your judges at that time: “Give the members of your community a *fair* hearing, and judge *rightly* between one person and another, whether citizen or resident *alien*. You must not be partial in judging: hear out the *small* and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.”

Deuteronomy 1:16-17

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes *justice* for the *orphan* and the *widow*, and who loves the *strangers*, providing them *food* and *clothing*. You shall also *love* the *stranger*, for you were *strangers* in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19

You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to *aliens* residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a *foreigner*.

Deuteronomy 14:21a

As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you. Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident *aliens*, the *orphans*, and the *widows* in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake. Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed. Of a *foreigner* you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you. There will, however, be no one in *need* among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, if only you will obey the Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today. When the Lord your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you. If there is among you anyone in *need*, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your *needy* neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the *need*, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your *needy* neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in *need* on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the *poor* and *needy* neighbor in your land."

Deuteronomy 14:27-29, 15:1-11

If there is among you anyone in *need*, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your *needy* neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the *need*, whatever it may be. Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your *needy* neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in *need* on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the *poor* and *needy* neighbor in your land."

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall render *just* decisions for the people. You must not distort *justice*; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. *Justice*, and only *justice*, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an *alien* residing in their land.

Deuteronomy 23:7

When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. If the person is *poor*, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the Lord your God. You shall not withhold the wages of *poor* and *needy* laborers, whether other Israelites or *aliens* who reside in your land in one of your towns. You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are *poor* and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death. You shall not deprive a resident *alien* or an *orphan* of *justice*; you shall not take a *widow's* garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the *alien*, the *orphan*, and the *widow*, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the *alien*, the *orphan*, and the *widow*. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the *alien*, the *orphan*, and the *widow*. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

Deuteronomy 24:10-22

So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.” You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. Then you, together with the Levites and the *aliens* who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house. When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the *aliens*, the *orphans*, and the *widows*, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, then you shall say before the Lord your God: “I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites, the resident *aliens*, the *orphans*, and the *widows*, in accordance with your entire commandment that you commanded me; I have neither transgressed nor forgotten any of your commandments”

Deuteronomy 26:10-13

“Cursed be anyone who misleads a *blind person* on the road.” All the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed be anyone who deprives the *alien*, the *orphan*, and the *widow of justice*.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

Deuteronomy 27:18-19

These are the verses concerning and advocating and demanding and requiring inclusion, justice, forgiveness and compassion – just from the Torah. These are not the only verses – the entire Bible speaks of the same concerns, avocations, demands and requirements.

And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.” ... Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred thirty years; and he died.

Genesis 2:16-17; 5:5

Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” And the Lord said, “What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” Cain said to the Lord, “My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.” Then the Lord said to him, “Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.” And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.

Genesis 4:8-15

For the *needy* shall not always be forgotten,
nor the hope of the *poor* perish forever.

Psalms 9:18

In arrogance the wicked persecute the *poor* –
let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.
For the wicked boast of the desires of their heart,
those greedy for gain curse and renounce the Lord. ...
Their mouths are filled with cursing and deceit and oppression;
under their tongues are mischief and iniquity.
They sit in ambush in the villages;
in hiding places they murder the *innocent*.
Their eyes stealthily watch for the *helpless*;
they lurk in secret like a lion in its covert;
they lurk that they may seize the *poor*;
they seize the *poor* and drag them off in their net.
They stoop, they crouch, and the *helpless* fall by their might.
They think in their heart,
“God has forgotten,
he has hidden his face, he will never see it.” ...
O Lord, you will hear the desire of the *meek*;
you will strengthen their heart,
you will incline your ear to do *justice*
for the *orphan* and the *oppressed*,
so that those from earth may strike terror no more.
Psalm 10:2-3, 7-11, 17-18

“Because the *poor* are despoiled,
because the *needy* groan,
I will now rise up,” says the Lord;
“I will place them in the safety for which they long.”
Psalm 12:5

You would confound the plans of the *poor*,
but the Lord is their *refuge*
Psalm 14:6

But the *meek* shall inherit the land,
and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.
The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows
to bring down the *poor* and *needy*,
to kill those who walk uprightly;
Psalm 37:11, 14

Happy are those who consider the *poor*;
the Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.
Psalm 41:1

Father of *orphans* and protector of *widows*
is God in his holy habitation.

God gives the *desolate* a home to live in;
he leads out the *prisoners* to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

Psalm 68:5-6

May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your *poor* with *justice*. ...

May he defend the cause of the *poor* of the people,
give deliverance to the *needy*,
and crush the oppressor. ...

For he delivers the *needy* when they call,
the *poor* and those who have no helper.

He has pity on the *weak* and the *needy*,
and saves the lives of the *needy*.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.

Psalm 72:2, 4, 12-14

Give *justice* to the *weak* and the *orphan*;
maintain the right of the *lowly* and the *destitute*.

Rescue the *weak* and the *needy*;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

Psalm 82:3-4

O Lord,

how long shall the wicked,
how long shall the wicked exult?

They pour out their arrogant words;
all the evildoers boast.

They crush your people, O Lord,
and afflict your heritage.

They kill the *widow* and the *stranger*,
they murder the *orphan*

Psalm 94:3-6

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits –

The Lord works vindication and *justice*
for all who are *oppressed*.

The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast *love*.

He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast *love* toward those who fear him;

Psalm 103:1-2, 6, 8, 10-11

They have distributed freely,
they have given to the *poor*;
their righteousness endures forever;
their horn is exalted in honor.

Psalm 112:9

He raises the *poor* from the dust,
and lifts the *needy* from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.

Psalm 113:7-8

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the *needy*,
and executes *justice* for the poor.

Psalm 140:12

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals,
in whom there is no help.

When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth, the sea,
and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes *justice* for the *oppressed*;
who gives food to the *hungry*.

The Lord sets the *prisoners* free;
the Lord opens the eyes of the *blind*.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the *strangers*;
he upholds the *orphan* and the *widow*,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion,
for all generations.

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 146

The field of the *poor* may yield much food,
but it is swept away through injustice.

Proverbs 13:23

Those who despise their neighbors are sinners,
but happy are those who are kind to the *poor*.

A truthful witness saves lives,
but one who utters lies is a betrayer.

Those who oppress the *poor* insult their Maker,
but those who are kind to the *needy* honor him.

Proverbs 14:21, 25, 31

The Lord tears down the house of the proud,
but maintains the *widow's* boundaries.
Evil plans are an abomination to the Lord,
but gracious words are pure.
Those who are greedy for unjust gain
make trouble for their households,
but those who hate bribes will live.
The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer,
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.
Proverbs 15:25-28

Better is a little with righteousness
than large income with *injustice*.
Honest balances and scales are the Lord's;
all the weights in the bag are his work.
Proverbs 16:8, 11

Those who mock the *poor* insult their Maker;
those who are glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
One who *forgives* an affront fosters friendship,
but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend.
The wicked accept a concealed bribe
to pervert the ways of *justice*.
To impose a fine on the *innocent* is not right,
or to flog the noble for their *integrity*.
Proverbs 17:5, 9, 23, 26

A false witness will not go unpunished,
and a liar will not escape.
A false witness will not go unpunished,
and the liar will perish.
Whoever is kind to the *poor* lends to the Lord,
and will be repaid in full.
What is desirable in a person is loyalty,
and it is better to be *poor* than a liar.
A worthless witness mocks at *justice*,
and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.
Proverbs 19:5, 9, 17, 22

To do righteousness and *justice*
is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.
If you close your ear to the cry of the *poor*,
you will cry out and not be heard.
When *justice* is done, it is a joy to the righteous,
but dismay to evildoers.
Whoever pursues righteousness and *kindness*
will find life and honor.
All day long the wicked covet,
but the righteous give and do not hold back.
A false witness will perish,
but a good listener will testify successfully.
Proverbs 21:3, 13, 15, 21, 26, 28

The rich and the *poor* have this in common:
the Lord is the maker of them all.
Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.
Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the *poor*.
Oppressing the *poor* in order to enrich oneself,
and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.
Do not rob the *poor* because they are *poor*,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;
for the Lord pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who despoil them.
Proverbs 22:2, 8-9, 16, 22-23

A ruler who oppresses the *poor*
is a beating rain that leaves no food.
Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
but those who keep the law struggle against them.
The evil do not understand *justice*,
but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.
Better to be *poor* and walk in *integrity*
than to be crooked in one's ways even though rich.
One who augments wealth by exorbitant interest
gathers it for another who is kind to the *poor*.
The rich is wise in self-esteem,
but an intelligent *poor* person sees through the pose.
When the righteous triumph, there is great glory,
but when the wicked prevail, people go into hiding
Like a roaring lion or a charging bear
is a wicked ruler over a *poor* people.
A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel *oppressor*;
but one who hates *unjust* gain will enjoy a long life.
Whoever gives to the *poor* will lack nothing,
but one who turns a blind eye will get many a curse.
Proverbs 28:3-6, 11-12, 15-16, 27

The *poor* and the *oppressor* have this in common:
the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.
If a king judges the *poor* with equity,
his throne will be established forever.
Proverbs 29:13-14

There are those whose teeth are swords,
whose teeth are knives,
to devour the *poor* from off the earth,
the *needy* from among mortals.
Proverbs 30:14

Speak out for those who cannot speak,
for the *rights* of all the *destitute*.
Speak out, judge righteously,
defend the *rights* of the *poor* and *needy*.
Proverbs 31:8-9

Wash yourselves;
make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek *justice*,
rescue the *oppressed*,
defend the *orphan*,
plead for the *widow*.
Isaiah 1:16-17

Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.
They do not defend the *orphan*,
and the *widow's* cause does not come before them.
Isaiah 1:23

Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees,
who write oppressive statutes,
to turn aside the *needy* from *justice*
and to rob the *poor* of my people of their right,
that *widows* may be your spoil,
and that you may make the *orphans* your prey!
Isaiah 10:1-2

For you have been a *refuge* to the *poor*,
a refuge to the *needy* in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm
and a shade from the heat.
Isaiah 25:4a

The *meek* shall obtain fresh joy in the Lord,
and the *neediest* people shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.
For the tyrant shall be no more,
and the scoffer shall cease to be;
all those alert to do evil shall be cut off –
those who cause a person to lose a lawsuit,
who set a trap for the arbiter in the gate,
and without grounds deny *justice* to the one in the right.
Isaiah 29:19-21

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show mercy to you.
For the Lord is a God of *justice*;
blessed are all those who wait for him.
Isaiah 30:18

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth *justice* to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth *justice*.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established *justice* in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the Lord,
I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are *blind*,
to bring out the *prisoners* from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:1-7

Thus says the Lord:
Maintain *justice*,
and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

Isaiah 56:1

Shout out, do not hold back!
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.
Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgements,
they delight to draw near to God.
'Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?'
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day,
and oppress all your *workers*.
Look, you fast only to quarrel
and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.
Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?
Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of *injustice*,
to undo the thongs of the *yoke*,
to let the *oppressed* go free,
and to break every *yoke*?
Is it not to share your bread with the *hungry*,
and bring the *homeless poor* into your house;
when you see the *naked*, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the *yoke* from among you,
the pointing of the finger,
the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the *hungry*
and satisfy the *needs* of the *afflicted*,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

Isaiah 58:1-12

For I the Lord love *justice*,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing

Isaiah 61:8

But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
they have turned aside and gone away.

They do not say in their hearts,

‘Let us fear the Lord our God,

who gives the rain in its season,

the autumn rain and the spring rain,

and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.’

Your iniquities have turned these away,

and your sins have deprived you of good.

For scoundrels are found among my people;

they take over the goods of others.

Like fowlers they set a trap;

they catch human beings.

Like a cage full of birds,

their houses are full of treachery;

therefore they have become great and rich,

they have grown fat and sleek.

They know no limits in deeds of wickedness;

they do not judge with *justice* the cause of the *orphan*,

to make it prosper,

and they do not defend the *rights* of the *needy*.

Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord,

and shall I not bring retribution on a nation such as this?

Jeremiah 5.23-29

For if you truly amend your ways and your doings,
if you truly act *justly* one with another,
if you do not oppress the *alien*, the *orphan*, and the *widow*,
or shed *innocent* blood in this place,
and if you do not
go after other gods to your own hurt,
then I will dwell with you in this place,
in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors
forever and ever.

Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail.
Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely,
make offerings to Baal,
and go after other gods that you have not known,
and then come and stand before me in this house,
which is called by my name, and say, “We are safe!” –
only to go on doing all these abominations?

Has this house, which is called by my name,
become a den of robbers in your sight?
You know, I too am watching, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 7:5-11

For the hurt of my *poor* people
I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me.
Is there no balm in Gilead?
Is there no physician there?
Why then has the health of my *poor* people
not been restored?

Jeremiah 8:21-22

Thus says the Lord:
Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom,
do not let the mighty boast in their might,
do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth;
but let those who boast boast in this,
that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord;
I act with steadfast *love*, *justice*,
and righteousness in the earth,
for in these things I delight, says the Lord.

Jeremiah 9:23-24

To the house of the king of Judah say:
Hear the word of the Lord, O house of David!
Thus says the Lord:

Execute *justice* in the morning,
and deliver from the hand of the oppressor
anyone who has been robbed,
or else my wrath will go forth like fire,
and burn, with no one to quench it,
because of your evil doings.

Thus says the Lord:
Go down to the house of the king of Judah,
and speak there this word, and say:
Hear the word of the Lord,
O King of Judah sitting on the throne of David –
you, and your servants,
and your people who enter these gates.

Thus says the Lord:
Act with *justice* and righteousness,
and deliver from the hand of the oppressor
anyone who has been robbed.

And do no wrong or violence
to the *alien*, the *orphan*, and the *widow*,
nor shed *innocent* blood in this place.
Jeremiah 21:8; 22:1-3

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice;
who makes his neighbors work for nothing,
and does not give them their wages;
Jeremiah 22:13

Are you a king because you compete in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink
and do *justice* and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.
He judged the cause of the *poor* and *needy*;
then it was well.
Is not this to know me? says the Lord.
But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain,
for shedding innocent blood,
and for practicing oppression and violence.
Jeremiah 22:15-17

The days are surely coming, says the Lord,
when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
and he shall reign as king and deal wisely,
and shall execute *justice* and righteousness in the land.
Jeremiah 23:5

In those days and at that time
I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David;
and he shall execute *justice* and righteousness in the land.

Jeremiah 33:15

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom:
she and her daughters had pride, excess of food,
and prosperous ease,
but did not aid the *poor* and *needy*.

Ezekiel 16:49

If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right – ...
does not oppress anyone,
but restores to the debtor his pledge,
commits no robbery,
gives his bread to the *hungry*
and covers the *naked* with a garment,
does not take advance or accrued interest,
withholds his hand from iniquity,
executes true *justice* between contending parties,
follows my statutes,
and is careful to observe my ordinances,
acting faithfully –
such a one is righteous;
he shall surely live, says the Lord God.

Ezekiel 18:5, 7-9

The princes of Israel in you,
everyone according to his power,
have been bent on shedding blood.

Father and mother are treated with contempt in you;
the *alien* residing within you suffers extortion;
the *orphan* and the *widow* are wronged in you. ...

In you, they take bribes to shed blood;
you take both advance interest and accrued interest,
and make gain of your neighbors by extortion;
and you have forgotten me, says the Lord God. ...

The people of the land
have practiced extortion and committed robbery;
they have oppressed the *poor* and *needy*,
and have extorted from the *alien* without redress.

Ezekiel 22:6, 12, 29

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,
and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God.

I will seek the *lost*,
and I will bring back the *strayed*,
and I will bind up the *injured*,
and I will strengthen the *weak*,
but the fat and the strong I will destroy.

I will feed them with *justice*.

Ezekiel 34:15-16

Ah, you that turn *justice* to wormwood,
and bring righteousness to the ground! ...

Therefore because you trample on the *poor*
and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.

For I know how many are your transgressions,
and how great are your sins –
you who afflict the righteous,
who take a bribe,
and push aside the *needy* in the gate. ...

Seek good and not evil,
that you may live;
and so the Lord, the God of hosts,
will be with you,
just as you have said.

Hate evil and love good,
and establish *justice* in the gate;
it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. ...

I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

Even though you offer me
your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.

Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

But let *justice* roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an everflowing stream.

Amos 5:7, 11-12, 14-15, 21-24

Hear this, you that trample on the *needy*,
and bring to ruin the *poor* of the land, saying,
“When will the new moon be over so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath, so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,
buying the *poor* for silver
and the *needy* for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”
Amos 8:4-6

With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”
He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do *justice*,
and to love *kindness*,
and to walk humbly with your God?
Micah 6:6-8

The faithful have disappeared from the land,
and there is no one left who is upright;
they all lie in wait for blood,
and they hunt each other with nets.
Their hands are skilled to do evil;
the official and the judge ask for a bribe,
and the powerful dictate what they desire;
thus they pervert *justice*.
The best of them is like a brier,
the most upright of them a thorn hedge.
Micah 7:2-4

So the law becomes slack and *justice* never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous –
therefore judgment comes forth perverted.
Habakkuk 1:4

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying:

Thus says the Lord of hosts:

Render true judgments,

show *kindness* and mercy to one another;

do not oppress the *widow*, the *orphan*, the *alien*, or the *poor*;

and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

Zechariah 7:8-10

Then I will draw near to you for judgment;

I will be swift to bear witness

against the sorcerers,

against the adulterers,

against those who swear falsely,

against those who oppress the *hired workers* in their wages,

the *widow* and the *orphan*,

against those who thrust aside the *alien*,

and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:5

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain;

and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the *poor* in spirit,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who *mourn*,

for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the *meek*,

for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who *hunger* and *thirst* for righteousness,

for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the *merciful*,

for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the *pure* in heart,

for they will see God.

“Blessed are the *peacemakers*,

for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those

who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you

when people revile you

and persecute you

and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Matthew 5:1-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the *blind* receive their sight, the *lame* walk, the *lepers* are cleansed, the *deaf* hear, the *dead* are raised, and the *poor* have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

Matthew 11:2-6

For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.”

Matthew 19:12

Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the *poor*, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?” But Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible.”

Matthew 19:16-26

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: *justice* and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel! “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside look beautiful, but inside they are full of the bones of the dead and of all kinds of filth. So you also on the outside look righteous to others, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Matthew 23:23-28

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the *poor*, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Mark 10:17-22

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the *poor*. He has sent me to proclaim release to the *captives* and recovery of sight to the *blind*, to let the *oppressed* go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:16-21

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are *poor*,

for yours is the kingdom of God.

“Blessed are you who are *hungry* now,

for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who *weep* now,

for you will laugh.

“Blessed are you when people hate you,

and when they exclude you, revile you,

and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

Luke 6:20-22

The disciples of John reported all these things to him. So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” When the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?’” Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were *blind*. And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the *blind* receive their sight, the *lame* walk, the *lepers* are cleansed, the *deaf* hear, the *dead* are raised, the *poor* have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

Luke 7:18-23

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar, but on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.” While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so he went in and took his place at the table. The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you. “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect *justice* and the *love* of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others.

Luke 11:33-42

He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the *poor*, the *crippled*, the *lame*, and the *blind*. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Luke 14:12-14

Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a *widow* who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Grant me *justice* against my opponent.’ For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, ‘Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this *widow* keeps bothering me, I will grant her *justice*, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant *justice* to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant *justice* to them.

Luke 18:1-8a

A certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.’” He replied, “I have kept all these since my youth.” When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the *poor*, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.

Luke 18:18-23

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the *poor*; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Luke 19:1-10

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a *poor* person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is *poor* you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the *poor* in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who *love* him? But you have dishonored the *poor*. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall *love your neighbor as yourself.*" But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ... If a brother or sister is *naked* and lacks *daily food*, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?

James 2:1-9, 15-16

It is important to remember that the purpose of the law is not itself. The law is not the final response or the final answer or the final act or the final word of justice and compassion. The law is not the last stop in the development of our morals or our relationship with God. The law is only a single step in our faith journey – a journey that extends beyond and away from the law.

The first purpose of the law was to serve as a call to ancient Israel to leave behind the tribal justice practices of that ancient time.

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force. And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this girl to be my wife.” Now Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came.

And Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him, just as the sons of Jacob came in from the field. When they heard of it, the men were indignant and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The heart of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. Make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. You shall live with us; and the land shall be open to you; live and trade in it, and get property in it.” Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, “Let me find favor with you, and whatever you say to me I will give. Put the marriage present and gift as high as you like, and I will give whatever you ask me; only give me the girl to be my wife.” The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah. They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. Only on this condition will we consent to you: that you will become as we are and every male among you be circumcised. Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live among you and become one people. But if you will not listen to us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.”

Their words pleased Hamor and Hamor’s son Shechem. And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter. Now he was the most honored of all his family. So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying, “These people are friendly with us; let them live in the land and trade in it, for the land is large enough for them; let us take their daughters in marriage, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this condition will they agree to live among us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their livestock, their property, and all their animals be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will live among us.” And all who went out of the city gate heeded Hamor and his son Shechem; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

On the third day, when they were still in pain, two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and came against the city unawares, and killed all the males. They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away. And the other sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys, and whatever was in the city and in the field. All their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses, they captured and made their prey. Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household." But they said, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?"

Genesis 34

The law of the Torah is a radical response to and a revocation of tribal justice and calls Israel away from those practices and points to a different way of living and to a future of justice and compassion. The law is less about how and when to be punitive and more about how to live with each other, at least as mutually respectful citizens and preferably as members of a compassionate God-loving community. Through the entire law, there is a consistent and repeated admonition that the law is to be used to provide fair and even-handed justice through the inclusion of aliens and strangers and widows and orphans, through due process imbued with integrity and truth as administered by fair even-handed independent judges, through forgiveness of sins and debts, and through compassion for those without property or food or self-sufficiency. This is the law that Jesus wanted upheld. This is the law that Jesus did not want to go away. Providing universal justice and compassion is true faithfulness to the law. Used in this way, the law can still inform, inspire and guide us.

What if prisons were places of refuge and restoration and life instead of places of vengeance and retribution and death?

What if shelters for the homeless, food banks, soup kitchens, Habitat for Humanity and mission trips to disaster areas were sacred inward and outward journeys, the means by which we become the hands and arms and legs and sweat and exertion of the body and presence of Christ, an outward manifestation of an inner truth and light, the bringing and building and living the Kingdom of God here and now instead of an actionless worthless meaningless hope for a future occurrence and existence, instead of being a burden or being an obligatory but pious sacrifice of our time and resources?

Clearly, there is more to the written law of the Torah than two verses about men having sex with each other. There is more to *Leviticus 18:22* and *Leviticus 20:13* than their literal prohibition. The immediate context is that they are a very small part of a collection of over 600 laws that governed an ancient nation that existed 2000 years ago and those laws do not and should not govern us. The next larger context is: how do we live in relationship with each other as a natural extension of our loving relationship with God? The largest context is: what is the nature of God?

We criminalize murder and assault and kidnapping because we have determined for ourselves in our time that it is wrong – and not because it says so in the Bible. We choose to criminalize adult prostitution as a health and abuse issue – and not as a religious or moral issue. We have determined that infanticide and the execution of children and the use of children for sex is immoral – an immorality that is universal and timeless. We have determined that slavery is immoral – an immorality that is universal and timeless. We have determined that witches and warlocks and sorcerers and wizards and magicians and magic do not exist and never did. We have determined that as a sexual orientation, homosexuality is healthy and normal. We have determined that any two consenting people, regardless of race or sex, have the right to a private intimate relationship. It would be a good and faithful small step to determine that any two consenting people, regardless of race or sex, have the right to establish a legal monogamous family relationship. There is no rational or medical or legal or biblical reason to discriminate against non-heterosexual people or to deny them any of their constitutional rights. Recognition and affirmation of those constitutional rights would be true obedience to the law of the Torah – true obedience to the spirit and direction and purpose and message of the law – true obedience to all the covenants with God – and true obedience to the intent and will and passion of God.

These are the previous [D]emergent articles by Doug Sloan listed in order of publication:

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