

SESSION #45 (15 February 2011) Deut. 21:1-9; Protocols for Dealing with the Destruction & Execution of Life

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God’s spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6-4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation</u> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) <u>sovereign destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1-26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul
5:1-11:32	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>
12:1-26:19	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)
12:1-13:18	Theological unity of Israel’s tribes and its Enforcement (esp 1 st , 2 nd , and by implication the corresponding 9 th , 10 th commandments)
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (a witness consistent with Yahweh’s name, see 3rd commandment)
14:22-16:17	A Distinct Culture of Theocentric Faith in God’s Economic Order (with emphasis upon the 4 th and by implication the corresponding 8 th commandment)
16:18-18:22	A Distinct Culture of Human Authority Under God’s Justice (emphasis upon human authority starting in the home—the 5 th commandment and by implication the 7 th commandment)
16:18-17:13	Authority & Function of Israel’s Judges
17:14-20	Authority & Nature of Israel’s King
18:1-8	Authority & Nature of Israel’s Priests
18:9-22	Authority & Nature of Israel’s Prophets
19:1-21:23	Protocols for Implementing True “Social Justice” (emphasis upon dealing with deployment of civil authority’s lethal force—6 th commandment)
19:1-21	Protocols for Judicial Proceedings
20:1-20	Military Policy
21:1-23 Protocols for Protecting Social Life	

We’re in a 3-chapter section of protocols to what real “social justice” looks like: common denominator seems to be civil authority’s use of lethal force.

Divine Institution #4: Civil government

EITHER you have limited use of lethal force against evil OR you have anarchy.

“Social sentimentalists” eschew all violence and then support violent street demonstrations and personally engage in domestic violence = hypocrisy that exposes the inevitability of [personal violence] in a [fallen] civilization

Jesus authorized lethal force in legitimate self-defense (**Luke 22:36**)

PROBLEM: How do we control the use of lethal force such that true justice is served? True justice = obedience to the 6th commandment.

Superficial critics -- including liberal Protestant ministers and liberal Roman Catholics -- laugh at what they say is a contradiction between 6th commandment and the use of lethal force. Their argument:

- (1) All [life] must be protected
- (2) Any use of lethal force is thereby [prohibited]

Fallacy: Proposition (1) itself must be protected in a real world [of sin] with lethal force!!

Missing truth: **Deut 1:17** “*the judgment [Heb: mishpat] is God’s*”

“Life” is a divine creation

“Human life” is a divine creation in God’s image so that its destruction is a crime in His sight that must be judged appropriately by civil government; He [owns] each human life so when one is destroyed, He has the [right] to demand payment.

All arguments against legitimate use of lethal force are based upon a denial of God’s creation which alone establishes true [transcendent] justice (neither provincial nor transient).

All such arguments in the end wind up stripping away protection of social life. So, in Yahweh’s Kingdom social life is protected by lethal force.

Deut 19: protections on the judicial processes that apply lethal force

Deut 20: just war and holy war

Deut 21: specific procedures to honor and protect life

“Sandwich” discourse structure in Deuteronomy

21:1-9, 22-23 procedures or “operating doctrine” involving lethal destruction of life and lethal execution of life

21:10-21 procedures concerning the family structure (reminding us about the dynamics of society that center upon the family)

II. DESTRUCTION & EXECUTION OF LIFE (21:1-9, 22-23)

A. What Needs to be Done When Life is Destroyed (21:1-9)

21:1 slain. . .land which Yahweh your God is giving you to possess

Key: the land is God’s; the life is God’s, and He is the supreme authority

21:2-3 city nearest

Fixing responsibility for dominion of the land—“dominion” includes all actions that happen there.

Every community in the theocracy was responsible for sins unacknowledged by its inhabitants.

heifer. . .not worked. . .

Point 1: higher value = sacrificing all future profits from his animal’s labors

21:4 valley flowing with water

Point 2: a wadi which had water in it to wash away the blood—a physical picture of cleansing from sin (wadis are dry most of the time).

neither plowed nor sown. . .

Point 3: wadi area not to be cultivated so blood wouldn’t seep into the ground

break the heifer’s neck

Principle:

Contemporary hatred for the Bible centers upon the “intellectual and ethical tyranny” of the self-revealing God. One of the core friction points is the ordering of the man-nature relationship. Paganism always centers in worship of creature more than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). So here animals are to be sacrificed for man, but it is for man under God’s direction. Such a practice would be violently opposed by most environmentalists.

21:5 then the priests

Again note the [dual role] of ecclesiastical and civil authorities (contrast with Gentile-pagan nation-states where civil authority usurps the ecclesiastical).

Review of the office of priest:

- Stand between sinful man and God’s “sacred space”
- Central role was to “bear the iniquity” of their office (**Num 18:1-7**), i.e., perform atonement protocols for the sins of all.
- Custodians of Scripture (kept original copies for others to copy--**Deut 17:18**)

In pagan Hittite Empire (Turkey), the commander of the garrison was the on-scene representative of the civil king—secular state example.

“Now the commander of the garrison, the mayor, and the elders shall administer justice fairly, and the people shall bring their cases. . . . If anyone brings a case. . . too involved, he shall refer it to the king.”

O. R. Gurney, The Hittites, p. 93

bless in the name of Yahweh. . . by their word every controversy[Heb: riv = lawsuit]**and every assault** [blow of punishment] **shall be settled**

If the judgment of civil government is God’s, then there must be an [ecclesiastical] component.

21:6-7 wash hands. . . not shed. . . nor eyes seen. . .

Civil authorities saying this → speaking for everyone in their community.

21:8 provide atonement [Heb: cover] for your people

Here is Old Testament concept of salvation: a [covering], but not a [removal] (cf. **Rom 3:25-26**)—unrelieved tension in the OT.

21:9 purge innocent blood. . . in eyes of Yahweh

Unlike a secular civil nation-state where the ultimate authority is [man], the ultimate authority of the theocracy is [God].

Also, “environmental pollution” was primarily [ethical religious choices], not injuring nature, per se.

B. What Needs to be Done When Execution Occurs (21:22-23)

Operating doctrine continues using the “case law” approach.

21:22 deserving of death. . . hang on a tree

Why? Public demonstration of God’s judgment. A body of one killed by stoning or decapitation was not a pretty sight.

See **Josh 8:28-29; 10:24-27**.

21:23 shall not defile the land. .

Theme of **21:1**

hanged one is accursed of God

Deut 1:17 “*the judgment is God’s*”

Use of lethal force is a delegated function from God to reveal to us something of His [absolute justice] .

Paul refers to this protocol in Galatians: **Gal 3:13-14**

became a curse for us

Here is the source of Paul’s emphasis upon imputed sin (also Abrahamic contract). Not like liberal higher critics who try to persuade us that imputation is Paul’s speculative use of economics to expound salvation, i.e., it started with Paul.

III. CONCLUSION

Fallen communities in a fallen civilization require protocols for protecting social life.

“Life” is a divine creation & “human life” is a divine creation in God’s image so that its destruction is a crime in His sight.

He owns each human life so when one is destroyed, He has the right to demand payment.

All arguments against legitimate use of lethal force are based upon a denial of God’s creation which alone establishes true transcendent justice (neither provincial nor transient)—it’s not about vengeance, not about victim closure; it’s about God’s valuation of life destroyed and revelation of His justice.

This view of “justice” is far from what passes today from socialist sentimentalists as “social justice.”

