

THE PENTATEUCH III: LEVITICUS-NUMBERS

WEEK 3

Patrick Reeder

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OUTLINE

SEPARATION AND PURITY

Ritual States

The Ritual and Moral

THE LAW

Types of Law

New Testament Constraints

Key Cultural Features

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KEY QUESTION

How must we live when God dwells among us?

Many of these depend on your position within society. The standards rise in increasing order from the alien/sojourner through to the High Priest; these correspond to how close you get to God.

THREE RITUAL STATES

	Impure	Pure	Holy
People	Gentile < Sojourner	Israelites	Priests
<	Temporary (e.g. Sex)	Levites	High Priest (HP)
Space	Sheol < Outside	Camp	Holy Place
<	Temporary (e.g. Mold)	Courtyard	Most Holy
Time	Birth?	Sabbath	Holy Festivals
<	Menstruation?	<u>Pass</u> Over	Jubilees
Food	Temporary (Yeast)	Clean	Holy Sacrifices
<	Swine	PO Food	Most Holy Sacrifices
Clothing	Prostitute's Outfits	Wool	Priestly Garments
<	Mixed Fabric	Linen	HP Garments
⇐	Natural Life Processes, Ritual & Moral Failure		
⇒	Washings, Atonement, Legal Obedience		

THREE RITUAL STATES

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- ▶ Royalty: Would you appear before a royal in this state?
- ▶ Separation/Holiness: Clear demarcation of separation from neighbors. (Cf. Tragically ironic findings concerning swine bones.) [Lev 20:26]
- ▶ Health: poorly cooked shellfish, blood, etc. can cause illness; Fully roasted, safe meats constitute the “kosher” foods

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RITUAL STATES, MORAL STATES

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Why?

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Why?

- ▶ Aaron is not somehow more godly than any of the people. He was elected by God to serve in that role.
- ▶ Cf. Num 11:29—But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!”
- ▶ When someone becomes ritually impure, he/she does not become sinful. (E.g., sexual intercourse makes one unclean but God commands us to be fruitful and multiply!)
- ▶ These divisions imply that impurity is fine when so confined. It becomes a sin if you violate the law.

A violation of one’s place in the ritual system constitutes moral failure, but ritual impurity itself is not sin.

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VARIOUS FORMS OF LAW

1. Moral Law-the portions of the law that concern fundamental ethical matters, independent of the nation of Israel (e.g. Much of Decalogue)
2. Dietary Law-the portions of the law concerning what one eats (e.g. clean foods, calf in milk restrictions)
3. Civil Law-the portions of the law special to the theocratic arrangement God has established.
4. Case Law- This is a form of civil law that is linked to very specific cases. (E.g. Daughters of Zelophehad)
5. Ceremonial Law-the portions of the law concerning the cultus.

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JESUS ON LAW

In the *Sermon on the Mount*:

Matt 5:17-20— “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

What may we infer from this?

JESUS ON LAW

What may we infer from this?

1. Jesus is not anti-law; indeed, he's the fulfillment of it!
 - ▶ By following it perfectly (II Cor 5:21)
 - ▶ By typifying the ceremonial law (Hebrews 8-10)
 - ▶ By typifying episodes in Pentateuch (Matt 1-4)
 - ▶ By loving others (Romans 13:10)
2. Somehow, living *in accordance with* the Law is valuable even in a NT economy (under New Covenant).
3. In order to enter the Kingdom of heaven, you must either follow the Law perfectly or get your righteousness somewhere else (Plan A vs. Plan B)

JESUS ON LAW

We also have the following statement from Christ on the dietary law:

Mark 7:18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

See also Acts 10:9-16.

In Pent II, “Could Jesus have violated the dietary law?”—I say no:

- ▶ Circumstantially, it would be very difficult. Indeed, not obvious in light of Peter’s stubbornness in Acts 10.
- ▶ Suppose the disciples were permitted (pre-cross) to set aside the dietary law. For Jesus to fulfill the law requires total obedience.

JAMES ON THE LAW

We examined Acts 15 in *Exodus*. What do we learn there?

Luther unfavorably calls *James* the "epistle of straw." Here are some puzzling remarks:

JAMES 1:25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

JAMES 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

JAMES 2:12,13 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

How might we make sense of these passages?

JAMES ON THE LAW

How might we make sense of these passages?

1. Context!

- ▶ The audience of *James* comprises pious Jewish Christians.
- ▶ James 2:10—For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all
- ▶ James 1:17,18—Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

2. Compare!

- ▶ John 13:17—If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. (Similar to James 1:25)
- ▶ Much of *James* reads like the *Sermon on the Mount*.
- ▶ Paul speaks of “law of the Spirit of life” (Rom 8:2) and “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2)

PAUL ON THE LAW

We could go all night with Paul. Here are some key passages:

ROM 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

ROM 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

GAL 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.

GAL 4:4-5 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a general rule, the law stands out among its ANE counterparts in being extraordinarily gracious.

There is unusual amount of attention to paid to taking care of anyone who is at some disadvantage:

- ▶ slaves
- ▶ poor
- ▶ foreigners
- ▶ blind/deaf
- ▶ women (general)
- ▶ women (taken in battle)

WOMEN

Some key pieces for understanding laws regarding women:

- ▶ Women are (generally) physically weaker than men which makes a big difference in agricultural societies
- ▶ Childbirth and pregnancy (let alone rearing) was a far more continuous process in the ancient world
- ▶ Women were often spared in battle, rather than slaughtered among the men.
- ▶ Women were also vulnerable in the fields: men could take advantage of them.
- ▶ Unattached women (unmarried? divorce? widowed?) are likely to be destitute

These won't explain everything but having these in mind soften the blow some.

SLAVES

Some key pieces for understanding laws regarding slaves:

- ▶ Slavery in Israel was nothing like antebellum slavery in the US (chattel slavery).
- ▶ Closer to indentured servitude: provide food, shelter, care, but no not necessarily paid.
- ▶ Fatal beatings were punishable by death (Cf. 21:18 and 20)
- ▶ “I love my master” (21:5) implies that slavery might be a decent way to go
- ▶ They are freed every seven years (21:2)

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