

## Chapter 21

### 21:1-6

Two months after the Exodus and on the first of two 40 day/night trips up Mt Sinai...<sup>1</sup>“**Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: 2 If** one of many “case laws” which are not intended to name every scenario and these case laws are used as precedence by the judges heretofore mentioned (chapter 18).

**you buy a Hebrew servant**, This passage is very specific case and is later addressed in Leviticus 25:39. Incidentally, if this were not talking about owning a fellow **Hebrew**, maybe we should note the irony of those who have issues with genocide in Canaan<sup>2</sup> yet also have issues with

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<sup>1</sup>Leviticus was written on this same trip (prior to Exodus 32).

<sup>2</sup>“Please don’t kill the sex-crazed, idol-worshiping Canaanites that will certainly kill you if they can.” That seems to be the cry of the bleeding hearts that have a problem with the God Who is a “Man of War” (Exodus 15:3) leading His people through a world where mass extinction and genocide was almost the rule; a sort of “kill or be killed”.

“After all,” the argument goes “we exist among godless folks like this today, why would God require counter-extinction of them then, but not now?”

In Joshua 6:17, the reader finds Joshua commanding the people killing anything that moves: the elderly, babies, women, animals, etc...., In Joshua 6:21, we find the people carrying it out. This was a sort of “devotion to the Lord”—a sort of first-fruits sacrifice (Joshua 6:17 in just about every modern translation).

Was Joshua acting rightly? Or was this like a king taking many wives in disobedience to God’s pre-existing law (Deuteronomy 17:17)? He was acting in accordance with Moses’ instructions. So if Joshua was acting against God’s will, so also was Moses (Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:17). Samuel later not only commanded Saul to do the same, but he quoted Jehovah as the source of the instruction. So Samuel, at the very least, was mistaken (if not outright deceitful) if God did not say to do this genocide (1 Samuel 15:1-3).

So, assuming that neither Moses nor Samuel were wrong in their instruction and that Joshua was not duped by his mentor, let’s consider a possibility here:

*Besides, as Jericho seems to have been defended by reinforcements from all the country (Jos 24:11), its destruction would paralyze all the rest of the devoted people, and thus tend to facilitate the conquest of the land; showing, as so astounding a military miracle did, that it was done, not by man, but by the power and through the anger, of God. (Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 147.)*

This commentary basically says that this Jericho death was about military strategy and was well within the norm and expectation of that time and warfare: for a well-fortified city that was so greatly entrenched in the defense of surrounding peoples..able to, at a moment’s notice, call for reinforcements and rebuilding.

Why would God allow Israel to act in a way that was not distinctive from the nations around them when it came to their warfare?

1. Well, first of all, we don’t know that Israel did everything exactly as those nations around them when it came to warfare (it could have been quite merciful, comparatively speaking).
2. This was not done but to strategically significant places (Deuteronomy 20:10-17).
3. We don’t know if Israel would have made it a month if they allowed Jericho to call for those reinforcements.
4. Israel is an ethnic entity (not like the church of God), and therefore had necessity to exist somewhere--requiring land (unlike the church of God).
5. The character of the inhabitants of that land was foreknown (see Genesis 15:13-14) to be unaccommodating to God’s people. Therefore, diplomacy and cohabitation would have been, quite presumably, impossible anyway. In other words...Israel’s lives would have been in danger; subject to the very genocide for which they are called into question to this very day.

### **Now, two sober observations:**

Rahab’s salvation would not be so magnificent if all others in the city were not killed. Her family and she were saved from destruction. Grace is therefore magnified; God is glorified; and Jesus’ great, great, great...grandmother was a woman from Jericho, spared by God’s unconditional election.

Do you think God is harsh? You should have been there when the rain dropped in Noah’s Day. Hang around for the lightening round when King Jesus returns to spatter the blood (Matthew 24:37; Revelation 14:19-20). By the way, that introduces another issue: What if God was seeking to kill those in the line of Ham that had the “giant” problem genetically dormant—thus inhibiting another Genesis 6:1-3 issue?

owning slaves from the preceding conquests. Which is more humane...killing them or owning them. I guess perspective matters.

**a Hebrew servant** So this is a another opportunity for the people of God to “love their neighbors.”

“Why didn’t God abolish slavery?”

God abolished any relationship that wasn’t loving, and this relationship was meant to be one more way to “love neighbors.”

God nowhere allows His people to treat any person without love (Leviticus 25:39-43). Six times this word **servant** is used in Exodus and all of them are found in this chapter. So much for this “angry, pro-slavery, bigoted Jehovah” of the O.T. See verses 2-3 for more.

By the way, **servant** has broad meaning from bond-slaves to advisers of Pharaoh (Exodus 10:7). So to say God had an idea of “slavehood” often translated **servant** in most translations just like what we had in the 1800’s here in America; and then to use that as an argument for why God would now be pro-homosexual because “since you can’t believe the pro-slavery passages in the O.T. you also can’t believe the anti-homosexual passages” is a gross misrepresentation of the overall usage of any of these words (usually proliferated by people who have never none in-depth Bible study but rather repeat the rantings of their favorite skeptics).

**he shall serve six years;** Is this austere? It seems so, but maybe we should consider endorsement deals with professional athletes, enlistment contracts, and mortgage loans as a type of ownership and a measure of servitude. So contrary to public opinion...other than the Proverbs<sup>3</sup> it is hard to locate anything that says “thou shalt not own somebody.” **and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.** This is a term with some “light at the end of the tunnel.” **3 If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself;** She has been working for the master for a long while and now the man is free to go and he is going to take another worker with him? No. Of course, verse 5 says, he can stay. Culturally different? Yes. Just? It seems so.

**if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. 5 But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ 6 then his master shall bring him to the judges.** Referencing Genesis 19 and Ruth 4 we know this is at the city gate more than likely. **He shall also bring him to the door,** the only other time this word is used in Exodus is in Exodus 12 where the blood of the Lamb was spread. In a picture, God the master takes people to the place they were “redeemed”. In other words, He has earned the right to have us forever in our commitments.

**or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl;** a wooden peg would mark that this man would be permanently indentured to a **master** for the sake of “love.” His

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<sup>3</sup>Here it is disparaged in the context of indebtedness to a “lender.”

room and board were cared for, and he had a wife now, and children (verse 5). But who would stay out of “love for [his] master” in an inhumane situation?

Incidentally, Psalm 40:6-8 (Hebrews 10) is Jesus’ own words that God marked Jesus with eternal ownership by becoming a man...and will always be a man (“forever” here and also, 1 Timothy 2:5). He took upon Himself reality of a slave (Philippians 2:7-8). Meanwhile, Jesus received a bride and stayed with her forever (Ephesians 5:26-27).

**and he shall serve him forever.** Which means that the master also had an obligation to provide for a family. This, like the original term—although by definition called “slavery”—is an act of mercy rather than letting a family die of hunger. Furthermore, one of these magnificent “rights” is that you get the Sabbath day off each week (Exodus 20:11) in joint worship!<sup>4</sup> So much for an oppressive system. I say this again and again to make sure the reader knows that God was not pro-slavery in the normal understanding of “slavery.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>That’s more than what we do when we obligate employees to work for their restaurants or lose their job because they won’t work on Sundays. That’s a sort of slavery too, isn’t it?

<sup>5</sup>And then you can notice that the “slave” is supposed to “rejoice” in God with His master at feasts (Deuteronomy 16:14). Any chance an oppressive God would pull this out of some unwilling servants/slaves? No.