

Is the Bible a message from a God I can't see?

— A law ahead of its time (part 2)

A civil law ahead of its time

There are many problems in our modern world which could have been prevented or reduced if we had used the law of Moses to regulate our world. When we look at the principles, we can see just how wise the law was.

a) Equal division of wealth

Land was wealth in Moses' time. When the land of Israel was to be divided, Moses was told:

And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance.

Numbers 33 v 54

The wealth of the nation was to be shared out equally. But that did not prevent individual families from becoming poor when, for various reasons, they got into debt. They would then have to borrow money or sell parts of their land to keep going.

The law of the Year of Jubilee (every fiftieth year) ensured that eventually they got their land back again:



In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession.

Leviticus 25 v 13

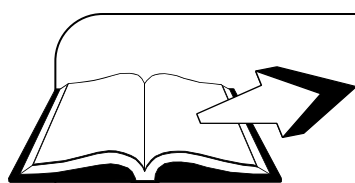
This law very wisely prevented families from permanently losing their land.

Large estates were not allowed

The amount of money they could raise by selling their land was controlled by the number of years to the next Jubilee, when they would get their land back again and have a fresh start:

According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbour, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you. According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to you according to the number of the years of the crops.
Leviticus 25 v 15 and 16

We can see the wisdom of this law, which would prevent rich, fortunate, families having large estates and poor, unfortunate, families having no land and so no means of getting out of debt.



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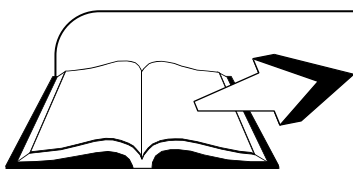
- Wealth was equally distributed
- Transfer of land ownership was restricted
- Extremes of wealth and poverty were prevented

b) A day of rest

The law of Moses introduced a compulsory day of rest once a week:

Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.
Exodus 20 v 9 and 10

We now know that a regular day of rest is beneficial to both people and animals. When this idea is ignored, people cannot work efficiently.



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- Work was to be restricted to six days a week

c) Treatment of criminals

The law of Moses was radically different from modern ideas of treating criminals, in that there were no prisons. Criminals were responsible for their actions:

If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.

Exodus 22 v 1

The thief had to recompense his victim. Provision was made for the case when he could not repay:

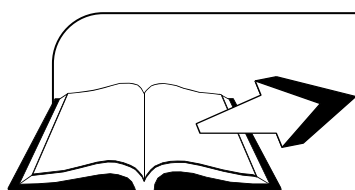
...if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

Exodus 22 v 3

The thief was sold as a servant so that the victim could be repaid. The thief would have to work to pay back what he had stolen. This is much wiser than locking the thief up in prison, where he is a burden on society, and the poor victim has to suffer the loss!



Prisons did not exist under the law of Moses



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- Criminals were to be responsible for their deeds
- The victim must be recompensed
- Criminals were not a burden on society

d) Consideration for others

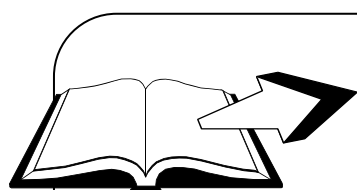
... you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

Leviticus 19 v 18

This statement in the law of Moses makes it different from all other systems of law. People were to show consideration for others. Other systems of law just stop people harming each other. This creates a society where people bend and break the rules and laws and see if they can get away with it. More often than not they can.

If the ideas in Exodus 23 verses 1 to 9 were followed, our world would be a much more pleasant place:

<i>Exodus 23 v 1 You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.</i>	Slander and perjury would be things of the past.
<i>2 You shall not follow a crowd to do evil.</i>	Mob violence would not occur. Trouble often arises when lots of people get together in gangs.
<i>3 You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.</i> <i>6 You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.</i>	Everyone would be treated equally. Many modern laws tend to favour the rich who can afford expensive "legal action".
<i>4 If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.</i> <i>5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.</i>	People would help those they disliked.
<i>8 And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.</i>	Bribery would not be allowed. A lot of wrong can be covered up by bribery.
<i>9 Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.</i>	Hatred of people of other nations would stop. Much trouble in our world is a result of racial hatred.



A law ahead of its time

- Deceit and lying are forbidden
- Mob violence is prohibited
- There is equal justice for poor and rich
- Consideration for other people must be shown at all times
- Bribery is not allowed
- Racial hatred is not allowed

Summary

We have now seen that the law of Moses given 3,500 years ago was in many ways wiser than our modern civil laws. Our world would be a far better place if the law of Moses governed it. We can only conclude that the intelligence behind the law given to Moses belonged to a more knowledgeable being than ourselves.

The challenges to *you*

You now have to consider the challenges posed by this evidence of a power greater than ourselves.

- How did the Bible writers produce such a remarkable civil law?
- This civil law was thousandss of years ahead of its time
- Where else can you find similar evidence of a power greater and wiser than ourselves?

Our aim is to help *you* see the Bible message for *yourself* – not just accept what we or anyone else says about it.

