

Guiding Principles for Interpreting the Mosaic Laws Included in the Pentateuch

God inspired samples of the Mosaic covenant laws for us, and included them in the Pentateuch. These samples tell us everything we need to know to learn what God wants us to learn through the Pentateuch.

1. The laws in the Pentateuch are not exhaustive: they are not all of the laws in the Mosaic Covenant. Frequently, the laws that are included clearly suggest that there are other laws that were not included. But because the NT tells us that we are not under the Mosaic Covenant, there is no pressure to figure out every detail (especially the ones God did not choose to reveal!) so that we can obey them. The apparent randomness of the law is easier to understand when we remember that the parts of the Mosaic covenant included in the Pentateuch were not given to teach us how to obey the Mosaic covenant.
2. The laws are connected to the 10 commandments, applying and illustrating those basic principles.
3. The laws are connected to principles, based on God's character, which are reflected elsewhere in Scripture.
4. The laws show us God's holiness, our unholiness (illustrated through Israel's miserable failure to obey the Law), and thus the glory of Christ.
5. The law embeds illustrations of gospel principles. (from the obvious, like redemption, to the subtle, like the loyal love of the slave in Ex. 21)
6. The extreme detail of some of the laws shows us that there is no area of life excluded from God's care and scrutiny. God is deeply concerned about every detail of life. The law of love really must be applied in the minutest and most mundane areas of life.
7. The laws are designed to illustrate the great need for faith (see Abraham): Israel did not seek to obey the law by faith, but by self.
8. The laws teach us what the law of love looks like in everyday life. It especially gives us a heart for justice. It helps us to see God's perspective on the stuff of everyday life. As one author put it, it gives us "insight into the way God sees our tangled lives." (Sailhamer)