Lecture # 1 Part 2





The Ten Commandments, The Laws Governing Man's Duty To Others (Part 6):

Commandment Six Concerns Man's Life—Never Murder, **Exodus 20:13**

The Sixth Commandment Sanctity of Human Life

"Lo Tirtzah" (Exodus 20:13) "Thou shalt not murder"

Exodus 20:13 (BHS)

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To fully grasp the implications of this commandment, a consideration of the biblical abhorrence of bloodshed may be helpful, and for this we must return to the story of the **Deluge** or as we know it **THE FLOOD** and its aftermath as related in the **book of Genesis**. 412

Having survived the great flood in an ark, Noah and his family were faced by the problem of surviving in an environment in which virtually everything was destroyed. To persevere, mankind would have to modify its relationship with the creatures of the earth that had similarly survived. **The antediluvian (before the flood)** harmony that had existed between man and the animal world would have to be altered. Man, who had before been herbivorous would have to become a carnivore in order to survive.

Unlike Adam, who was nurtured in the Garden of Eden, which abounded with fruits, Noah and his sons found themselves in a place where virtually all edible vegetation had been wiped out, at least temporarily. There was little doubt that their need for food would rapidly outstrip the limited supply available from the earth, for which they would be competing with so many other creatures. Only by becoming meat-eaters, only by consuming their competitors, could they survive.

Accordingly, they were informed "that every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you" (Genesis 9:3).

Genesis 9:3 (NASB)

Genesis 9:3 (BHS)

³ "Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as *I gave* the green plant."

[&]quot;כָּל־רֶמֶשׂ אֲשֶׁר הוּא־חִַׁי לָכֶם יִהְיָה לְאָכְלֵה כְּיֶרֶק עֵׁשֶׂב ׁ נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת־כְּל:" "

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By so instructing the Noahides (Noah's family and descendents), God precluded the other option open to them, which was to kill as many of the creatures of the earth and sky as possible in order to reduce the competition for whatever food might be garnered from the earth.

This represented a radical change from the original divine charge to man, which was to conquer the natural world and subdue it (Genesis 1:28), not to destroy it.

Genesis 1:28 (NASB)

²⁸ "God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:28 (BHS)

יִנְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֶלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהָם אֶלֹהִים פְּרִוּ וּרְבֶּוּ וּמִלְאָוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְּשֵׁהָ וּרְדוּ יי יִרְבָּדְגַת הַיַּם וּבְעוֹף הַשְּׁמִיִם וּבְכַל־תַיָּה הַרֹּמִשׁת עַל־הַאֵּר:"

Now, by force of circumstances, man is given permission to destroy as much of it as necessary to provide sufficient food to assure his physical survival. But he was not to become a scavenger feeding on "carrion" (dead or decaying flesh) such as buzzards.

He was placed under the constraint that only "the moving thing that liveth shall be food for you. All the beasts of the earth, every fowl of the air, and the fish in the sea, into your hand are they delivered" (Genesis 9:2).

Genesis 9:2 (NASB)

² "The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given." Genesis 9:2 (BHS)

ימוֹרַאָּבֶם וְחִתְּכֶם ֹיִהְנֶּה עַל כָּל־חַיֵּת הָאָׁרֶץ וְעַל כָּל־עִוֹף הַשְּׁמֵיִם בְּכֹל ּאֲשֶׁר תִּרְמְשׁ "² "האַדַמֵּה וְבְכַל־דָּגִּי הַיִּם בְּּנִדְכֵם נַתְּנוּ:

In this way the problem of an enduring food supply would be resolved. Killing animals for food had become a practical necessity.

However, because man was intended to be above the rest of created nature, and was charged to care for it, even when out of necessity he is compelled to destroy certain elements of it. He is to be wary that his shedding of animal blood does not become an end in itself, a thirst after bloodshed. Though he may kill for food like the animal, he must still not be animal-like in his demeanor.

He must not, like the wild beast, tear his prey apart and eat its flesh while its heart is still pumping blood through its vessels.

Genesis 9:4 (NASB)

⁴ "Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

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Genesis 9:4 (BHS) ⁴ "יָאַדְּ־בָּשָּׂי דָּמָוֹ לְזֹא תֹאַכֵּלוי"

Man, who is capable of killing for the sake of killing, must learn to abhor blood, particularly the taste of fresh blood. He must differentiate himself from the animal as much as possible. Nonetheless, might not brutality to animals breed brutality to humans as well?

Once having permitted the killing of animals, it became necessary to place clear and appropriate restraints on man's behavior. He might kill only for food. However, man is not food for man. Man is not to be considered in the same category as the creatures of the world, and he must learn to make a basic distinction between his fellow humans and the rest of animate nature. Accordingly, he is warned:

Genesis 9:5 (NASB)

⁵ "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man."

Genesis 9:5 (BHS)

יו ואַך אַת־דָמַכָם לְנַפְשִׁתַיכָם אַדְרֹשׁ מַיָּד כַּל־חַיָּה אַדְרְשֵׁנוּ וּמַיֵּד הַאַדָּם מִיַּד אָישׁ אַחֹי "אדרש את־נפש האדם:

Whosoever might dare to shed the blood of another human will have to answer for it to God. Indeed, even the person who would take his own life will have to answer for it. So sacred is human life, that even the perpetrator of an unintentional killing of a human, let alone an intentional killing, will be called to account; at the hand of man, understood to refer to the judicial system, even at the hand of every man's brother, understood to be referring to the ancient "avenger of blood," will I require the life of man.

Even the beast that kills a human will be called to account. Not that the animal has volition and is capable of a deliberate act, but because man is the central concern of the universe and all of nature is for his benefit. Therefore, anything within nature that acts against man is to be considered dysfunctional, serving no valid purpose and its existence is therefore to be considered forfeit.

Moreover, with regard to those with the "temerity" (confident and unafraid of danger or punishment) to consciously violate the divine injunction and deliberately take a human life, society must not await divine punishment of the perpetrator but must itself take retributive action.

Genesis 9:6 (NASB)

⁶ "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."

Genesis 9:6 (BHS)

יֹיָם הָאָדָׁם בָּאָדֶם דָמִוֹ יִשָּׁפֶּךְ כֵּי בָּצֵלֶם אֶלהִׁים עַשֵּׁה אַת־הַאַדַם: שׂפּרְ^{יִ,, 6}

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Man must rationally order his universe and protect its viability and capacity for perseverance. Society must root out that which would endanger it from within. As the God's viceroy on earth, man is charged with the responsibility for meting out justice in human society. Human life is sacrosanct, for in the image of **Elohim** made He man. Thus, the sages taught, "If one sheds blood it is accounted to him as though he had diminished the divine image." A transgression against man is thus also a transgression against God.

The prohibition against felonious homicide is given in the **Decalogue** (**Ten Commandments**), and the penalty is made clear in the demand, the murderer shall surely be put to death (Numbers 35:16-18).

Numbers 35:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶ "But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

¹⁷ If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he will die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

¹⁸ Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he might die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death."

Numbers 35:15-18 (BHS)

לבני ישראל ולגר ולתושב בתוכם תקנינה שש-הערים האלה למקלט לנוּס שמה "ב" ַּל־מַבֵּה־נֶבֶּשׁ בִּשְׁגֵּגָה: בָּל־מַבֵּה־נֶבֶּשׁ בִּשְׁגָגָה: בּבּ 16 ב. ב

הוּ וַיָּמָת רֹצֵחַ הָוּא מָוֹת יוּמָת הָרֹצֵחַ: וְאָם־בִּכְלִּי בַרְזֶלוֹ הָבָּ

וְאָם בְּאָבֶן יָד אֲשֶׁר־יָמוּת בָּה הָכֶּהוּ וַיָּמְת רֹצֵחָ הָוּא מְוֹת יוּמַת הָרֹצֵחַ:

"וּמֵת הָרצַחַ:אוֹ בָּכְלִי עִץ־יָד אֲשֶׁר־יַמוֹת בִּוֹ הַכָּהוּ וַיִּמֹת רצַחַ הוּא מוֹת י