

Conflict Resolution



Sundry Laws

Conflict and its subsequent resolution is a part of life. Men, women, and even children are accustomed to them. In a case where individuals do not have a righteous judge to bring about a peaceful resolution, those unable to defend themselves become prey to strong, arrogant, and abusive. In a time when there was an absence of a codified system, brute force was often the standard of the day. Even when there is codified system, unless it is properly adhered to people will throw off restraint, and like Israel, during the time of the judges, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

The apostle Paul wrote the evangelist Timothy, saying, “But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust” (1 Timothy 1:8–11). Law was not intended to

shackle the righteous, but it will do that very thing to the wicked. Such being the case, Jehovah gave laws to Israel to restrain the lawless, and protect the righteous, as all law should do. The apostle Peter said, "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well" (1 Peter 2:13-14). When Jehovah gave laws to Israel, Moses said, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as Jehovah my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the midst of the land whither ye go in to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, that shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what great nation is there, that hath a god so nigh unto them, as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that hath statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). What were some of those law, and what actions were taken to bring a resolution to the conflict? Some of these laws may seem barbaric to our tender ears, nevertheless, Jehovah was ahead of any transgression man might imagine.

Domestic laws: "If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he come in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he be married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master give him a wife and she bear him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door, or unto the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever. And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men-servants do. If she please not her master, who hath espoused her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a foreign people he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt

deceitfully with her. And if he espouse her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three things unto her, then shall she go out for nothing, without money.

Assault laws: He that smiteth a man, so that he dieth, shall surely be put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. And if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbor, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die. And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. And he that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death. And if men contend, and one smite the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed; if he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote him be quit: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed. And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall surely be punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money. And if men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart, and yet no harm follow; he shall be surely fined, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, and destroy it; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake. [It is good to note that the eye for eye law was into to save the eyes of both, not a mechanism of revenge.]

Husbandry laws: And if an ox gore a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be surely stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox was wont to gore in time past, and it hath been testified to its

owner, and he hath not kept it in, but it hath killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. If there be laid on him a ransom, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatsoever is laid upon him. Whether it have gored a son, or have gored a daughter, according to this judgment shall it be done unto him. If the ox gore a man-servant or a maid-servant, there shall be given unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

Property laws: And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein, the owner of the pit shall make it good; he shall give money unto the owner thereof, and the dead beast shall be his. Compensation laws: And if one man's ox hurt another's, so that it dieth, then they shall sell the live ox, and divide the price of it: and the dead also they shall divide. Or if it be known that the ox was wont to gore in time past, and its owner hath not kept it in, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his own" (Exodus 21:2-36).