

THE COVENANT CODE: PROPERTY RIGHTS, SORCERY EXODUS 22:1-18

As we move through our examination of the laws concerning property rights, in terms of what we consider to be criminal conduct, there is no provision for incarcerating people in Israel under the Mosaic Law. People were either given the death penalty or they were required to provide restitution for their crime. That's not to say they didn't incarcerate people in one way or another at times, but that wasn't according to the Law. For example, Jeremiah was shut up in the court of the guard, *מִטְרָה*, which means a place of confinement, but it was outside, it wasn't a formal prison-like dungeon (Jer. 32:2, 8), and it wasn't as harsh as a prison cell. Later, Jeremiah was placed in a house that had been converted into a prison described as a dungeon with a vaulted cell (Jer. 37:15-16) but the king allowed him to be released back into the courtyard (Jer. 37:21). There are a number of words relating to prison and confinement in the Old Testament and none of them appear as commands to incarcerate people under the Mosaic Law in Israel. Many of them are in the context of pagan nations and their system of incarceration.

Under our system, restitution is rarely made by the offender although that is changing somewhat for the better. The victim may be able to recover losses from an insurance company, but if that avenue isn't open, the victim is usually out the value of his property. In some cases, there are political jurisdictions that do make some provision for victim compensation, but that is taxpayer money

and not the offender's money. Certainly, at the time the law was revealed and recorded, Israel was a nomadic nation and incarcerating people wasn't possible, but this law also looked into the future when they would be permanently installed in the land. Part of the motivation for this system may have been to show how different Israel was, under the leadership of God, from the rest of the nations who were pagan.

There are some advantages to requiring restitution by the thief. It hurts the offender right where he apparently places his priorities and that is in the pocketbook. He also has to directly deal with his victim when providing the restitution which is an embarrassing situation for a person to be in. Leaving him in the tribe among the people he had to face every day may have provided incentive to avoid committing further offenses. Society isn't footing the bill for the restitution in the way it would have to pay for incarceration. However, we have to note in that day and time, societies that incarcerated people required them to provide for themselves. Presumably, if they had no family to provide for them, they would waste away in jail and starve to death. By the time of Christ, prisons of some sort were operating in Israel; the Lord mentioned them including debtor's prisons (Mt. 5:25, 18:30).

The Lord finished providing all the laws concerning murder, manslaughter, and personal injury that He thought necessary, and He moved on to providing some guidance on property rights. This section of the Covenant Code is an expansion of the eighth commandment, "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15), but it isn't

only about theft; it is also about the responsible use of property that does not harm other people. If others are harmed, whether due to criminal conduct or due to negligence, restitution was called for.

Exodus 22:1, 4 1“If a man steals [גָּנַב] an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.... 4“If what he stole is actually found alive in his possession, whether an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

Steal, גָּנַב, means to steal, to be a thief, to sweep away; it refers to taking property without the permission of the owner but usually by stealth and not by force. Our legal system also differentiates between stealing something by stealth and taking property from a person by force. Theft is treated as a lesser offense than robbery which is theft by force. This verse has to do with stealing an ox, a donkey, or a sheep, but one can presume the principle applies to other livestock and the theft of other types of property. If an Israelite stole something, he would have to pay it back in the form of restorative and punitive restitution. This was not reimbursement, it was restitution. Reimbursement refers to repaying something owed or covering the cost of something damaged and no more, but restitution involves recompense which is to make amends for loss or harm suffered and goes beyond the cost of the property in question.

Why the difference in penalty between an ox and a sheep? It was probably due to the value of an ox as a farming implement. A missing ox was a serious liability particularly at planting and harvesting times. It is also a longer and more expensive task to raise an ox to the point it becomes useful than it is to

raise a lamb to maturity. I have no idea why a donkey wasn't listed in verse 1 but was listed in verse 4. Someone could sell a donkey just as easily as they could sell an ox or a sheep. Presumably, they didn't eat a donkey, but they could sell one. They used them to carry loads, they were ridden for transportation, and they could be used as a farming implement. Why the donkey was worth only double restitution if it was sold is not stated. In any event, if any animal was found alive and returned to its owner, the penalty was double. It was greater than double only in the event the animal could not be recovered because it was eaten or sold and no longer available for return to the owner.

There are found in the Scriptures a couple of examples of how ingrained into Jewish thinking the idea of fourfold restitution became as a result of the Mosaic Law on the issue. When Nathan went to David and related the story of the rich man who stole the poor man's ewe, David declared restitution must be made fourfold. When the Lord was dealing with Zacchaeus he vowed to provide restitution four times the amount he defrauded them.

2 Samuel 12:6 ⁶“He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.”

Luke 19:8 ⁸Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

The pagan nations surrounding Israel put thieves to death if they could not make the appropriate restitution for their theft, but the most that could happen

in Israel is the thief would have to become the owner's indentured servant until the debt was retired (Ex. 22:3).

The next commands addressed the issue of a thief caught in the act.

Exodus 22:2–3 ²"If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. ³"*But* if the sun has risen on him, there will be bloodguiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution; if he owns nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

This is interesting because most thieves break into homes when no one is home. Thieves are cowards and they do not want to have any interaction with their intended victims. In a historical context, thieves may have been more brazen at that time in history because extended families would be living in the same household and there was probably someone present nearly all the time. That's just a guess, but hopefully it is a somewhat educated guess.

The primary thing to keep in mind here is the sanctity of human life; it extends even to those who are committing property crimes. Residents could use lethal force against a nighttime intruder, but they could prevent daytime theft only by means of less than lethal force. Apparently, fears of a nighttime intruder were greater than they were during the day and the life of the homeowner, who had the right to be there, was more important than the intruder if that became an issue. Bloodguilt attached to any death, whether it was a murder or a manslaughter; therefore, the Law specifically said there would be no bloodguilt attached to resisting a theft in the nighttime. The property owner was not guilty

of any infraction if a nighttime thief died in the commission of his crime. This specifically addressed the issue of blood revenge.

Negligence due to poor agricultural practices are the subject of the next verse.

Exodus 22:5 ⁵“If a man lets a field [שָׂדֵה] or vineyard be grazed [בָּעֵר] bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes [בָּעֵר] in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best [מֵיטֵב] of his own field and the best [מֵיטֵב] of his own vineyard.

This verse relates to poor farming practices that lead to damage to a neighbor's property by grazing livestock. Two issues are identified: letting one's herd animals graze their pastures down to bare earth so there is nothing left for them to eat and creating or permitting circumstances to exist that allow one's animals to graze another farmer's pasture. Those circumstances might involve poor supervision of roaming livestock or poorly constructed enclosures that can't keep the livestock confined to their own place. They didn't have effective fencing then as we know it now. They could build fences out of rocks or they could plant some sort of vegetative barrier the animals would not eat such as thorns so they couldn't eat their way through it onto the adjacent property. It was not permissible to allow one's livestock to freely roam about with access to other people's property.

Hedges and hedges of thorns are mentioned in Scripture both as literal fences and as figurative fences.

Proverbs 15:19 ¹⁹The way of the lazy is as a hedge of thorns, But the path of the upright is a highway.

Isaiah 5:5 ⁵“So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

It is puzzling that vineyards are something that could apparently be grazed by livestock. I know nothing about viticulture, but grape vines require pruning which takes skill and many kinds of animals indiscriminately eat everything. If goats were allowed into vineyard, they would destroy it by eating the vines. Animals could be allowed into a vineyard in order to eat the ground vegetation but they would certainly munch on the grape vines at the same time. Fields or pastures may be overgrazed. Field, *הַשָּׂדֶה*, may be pastureland or a cultivated area for growing crops. The purpose of pastures is to graze livestock but fields may also be grazed after harvest depending on the grain crop that was grown in them. In either case, the pasture or field can be overgrazed. Once hungry animals eat all the available feed, they are going to try and go to another place where they can find suitable feed. That would very likely be the fields and pastures of a neighboring farmer. Cattle are prone to go other places all the time anyway; the phrase “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” must have been developed simply by watching cattle grazing a pasture as they roam around. It would have been the farmer's responsibility to keep his livestock under control whether he built fences or kept watch over them and a failure to do so would subject him to liability for the damage they caused. Farmers probably should have brought their cattle back to the farmyard at night and they generally had a sheepfold for the sheep and goats at night.

If they were allowed to roam and they damaged another farmer's crops, restitution was to be made from the best of the negligent farmer's own crops. That presents another issue. Best, מֵיטֵב, means the best; it is that which is superior to all of the same class or kind. If the first farmer was such an incompetent farmer that he allowed his ground to be overgrazed, he may not have had anything worth using for restitution. Whatever it was, it had to be the best he owned. He couldn't game the system and cheat his neighbor by providing an inferior product to replace what his animals had destroyed.

The word translated graze, בָּעָר, actually means to burn or to consume. This word is indicating the trespassing livestock ruined the pasture or field by eating the plants down to the ground and leaving it barren. In the first use of the word in this verse, the NASB added the word "bare" to suggest the destruction of the pasture.

The next command involves negligence concerning the use of fire.

Exodus 22:6 "If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field *itself* is consumed [אָכַל], he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.

We may not be able to comprehend how serious an issue fire was prior to the widespread use of electricity. People had to use fire in order to warm themselves and to see in low light or nighttime conditions. Where there is fire, there is a very real possibility of the fire spreading in any number of ways to places where it is not contained and can cause considerable damage. Every building used fire for lighting and for heat; therefore, the danger was ever present and

very real. People were very concerned and frightened about the possibility of fire. They didn't have professional fire fighters and they didn't have water pumps that were capable of putting thousands of gallons of water per minute on a blaze. Even with all our modern advantages, we know how long it can take and how difficult it can be to put out a fire. I do not know whether or not in that time period they burned off the stubble in harvested fields or not, but those fires can get out of hand in a hurry. Some theologians assume that to be the case, but the text doesn't say that. Someone could build a campfire that gets out of hand.

This command does not specify how the fire started or was being used; any fire started by a person for whatever reason had to be contained so it would not cause damage to other people. The thorn bushes were most likely used as hedges to protect the grain against animals that would eat it if they could gain access to the field. Once the thorn bushes were burned up, they could no longer protect that grain from animals eating it, assuming it wasn't burned up in the fire too. Consume, אָכַל, can refer to eating and it can refer to destruction and ruin; it also means to cause the destruction of something. All of these meanings may be part of this command. The one who caused the destruction must be held liable for the damage. The grain could either be consumed by fire, or, if it wasn't burnt, eaten by animals because its protective thorn bush barrier was destroyed allowing entry. In any case, the owner of the animals was liable for damages.

Whatever was destroyed had to be replaced by the person who started the fire. This verse does not specify the amount of grain that had to be replaced, whether or not it had to be replaced with the best grain, or whether or not there was some sort of punitive damages of more grain than was destroyed. Presumably, if the fire was started by someone other than a neighboring farmer, then restitution would take the form of money.

The next command deals with the issue of caring for property other people have entrusted to the care of someone else.

Exodus 22:7–9 7“*If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him and it is stolen from the man’s house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double.* 8“*If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges [אֲלֹהִים], to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor’s property.* 9“*For every breach of trust, whether it is for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any lost thing about which one says, ‘This is it,’ the case of both parties shall come before the judges [אֲלֹהִים]; he whom the judges [אֲלֹהִים] condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.*

This is the sort of issue that can divide people forever. Who was entrusted with what, who was responsible for its loss or damage, who should stand the loss, and so on are issues that can be difficult in terms of determining truth. Blood feuds can erupt between families over these issues that can last for decades or longer. This was something that could not be allowed to fester or explode into hostilities in the covenant community.

If the property is stolen from the person entrusted to it and the thief is apprehended, he must pay double in restitution.

This became a major problem when the loss of the property was unexplainable. Was it lost due to the negligence of the custodian? Was it stolen by someone whose identity is unknown? Was it stolen by the custodian and he was covering up his theft by claiming someone else stole it? Was it damaged or ruined somehow and that fact was being covered up? The person who owned the property had no way of knowing what happened to it.

Most translators have decided to interpret אֱלֹהִים, as “judges” rather than as God. This is a situation that pits one man's word against another and unless some sort of physical evidence is discovered, mere men have no way of discerning the truth. More likely, the men were to appear before God, take an oath, and allow the decision to be rendered by Him probably through the men who were assigned to be judges. The implication is the judges were not doing the deciding, God was doing the deciding, but His decision would be made known through them as Yahweh's representative before the people. The ASV and the RSV translations do interpret the word to be “God” rather than “judges.”

If the decision was the custodian was liable for the missing property whether due to theft or to negligence, he was to pay the property owner double in restitution. However, if the decision was made that the property owner was making a false charge against his neighbor, the custodian of his property, then he was to pay double in restitution to the falsely accused custodian.

Exodus 22:10–13 ¹⁰“If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep *for him*, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, ¹¹an oath [שְׁבוּעָה] before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that

he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept *it*, and he shall not make restitution. ¹²"But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. ¹³"If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.

Both parties were to make an oath before Yahweh proclaiming their innocence. The custodian swore that he did not steal or damage the animal entrusted to him. Presumably, the property owner was taking an oath to tell the truth about the property. Oath taking was serious business in that time and place especially among those who belonged to Yahweh. Lying would have invoked God's judicial wrath and they wouldn't have wanted that to happen. The owner was obligated to accept the oath made by the custodian of his property before the Lord. The presumption seems to be the oath would not have been taken if he was culpable.

If the custodian had not stolen or been negligent in his care of the property, he need not make restitution. If he failed to safeguard it from theft, then he would have to pay damages. If the animal died for some reason, was attacked by another animal, or was driven away escaping a predator or running from thieves, and no one saw what happened, the custodian was not liable for damages. This doesn't apply to theft; he would have been liable for theft. This dealt with unforeseen circumstances. If a predator had, in fact, attacked the animal, the custodian could take the carcass in for verification and he would not be liable for damages.

Leaving such a matter in God's hands was a situation revealed to Solomon when he dedicated the Temple.

1 Kings 8:31–32 ³¹“If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and he comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this house, ³²then hear in heaven and act and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.

The next command deals with borrowing something from a neighbor.

Exodus 22:14–15 ¹⁴“If a man borrows ~~anything~~ [an animal] from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. ¹⁵“If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire.

This command involved borrowing an animal to perform some type of labor. The word “anything” was added by the NASB translators and it is confusing because animals are in view and not “anything.” If the owner was not present, the borrower must make full restitution which presumably referred to the value of that particular animal at that time. If the owner was present, he shared in the responsibility for the animal and the borrower did not have to make restitution.

If a man hired an animal to do some work and it was injured or died while performing its work, the price that was paid to hire the animal in the first place was sufficient remuneration. The one hiring out his animals must calculate into his price the risk factor inherently present when dealing with animals that can get injured and die.

Next, the Lord presented some commands covering a variety of topics. The first command concerns a premarital sexual relationship outside the customary bounds of societal approval concerning betrothal and marriage.

Exodus 22:16–17 16“If a man seduces [פְּתָהּ] a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a dowry [מִהָר] for her to be his wife. 17“If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry [מִהָר] for virgins.

This was an important aspect of Jewish society involving a covenantal relationship between a man, his prospective wife, and her family in the context of marriage. To avoid this procedure was a serious breach of societal etiquette, but it was more than a simple matter of good manners; it was also about maintaining a stable Jewish covenant community. The sign of the marriage covenant was sexual relations; therefore, to engage in that activity prior to a formal covenant relationship made the bride price payable to her father whether they were allowed to get married or not. The bride price was an absolute financial requirement on the part of the man. He couldn't get out of paying it by circumventing the system and having relations with her prior to formally entering into a marriage covenant with her and her family.

I'm not qualified to comment on the philosophy of ancient Jewish marriage customs, so I'm going to read what an expert on the culture of the people during that time had to say about this situation.

“Paying a price for a bride can seem a practice degrading to women, one that treats them as mere property. This was not the way it was understood in

ancient Israel. In fact, it honored the value of a woman. Consider that the system does not allow one to think of price paid as an indicator of worth since the bride pays zero for her husband [there was no provision in the marriage system of Israel for a bride to pay the husband], yet there is no doubt of the husband's worth. Part of the utility of a bride price was the way it forced a man to make a full and formal arrangement for marriage that properly involved both his interests and those of his bride-to-be, as well as the interests of his family and hers. The bride price requirement necessarily involved the families in substantial formal negotiations, and the price showed that something serious and important was at stake. Taking a woman to oneself and taking away her virginity were honorable if the proper negotiations had been completed, and a proper indication of her worth had been paid to her family, and the couple were legally married. Simply having sexual relations with her, with or without her permission, devalued her and showed blatant disregard for her worth. It also showed that a person (or when the premarital sex was consensual, that the couple) viewed marriage or its covenant sign (sexual intercourse) as less than a formal, legal, lifelong contractual commitment. The betrothal/bride price system was designed to make marriage harder to come by than what could be achieved on whim or quick decision, and it elevated marriage accordingly because people instinctively value what is hard and costly to get. Thus when a couple failed to go properly through the marriage negotiation process and had sexual relations anyway, the law required the man to pay the bride price. The father of the bride remained in the

negotiator's position of being able to refuse to give his bride to her suitor (because if he loved his daughter, he would hardly want to see her married permanently to someone wrong for her just because she had been 'seduced'). Since it would be much harder to marry her to someone else once she had been sexually compromised, he was still owed the bride price for her, lest no bride price ever be paid in the case that she was never, in fact, married thereafter. If he did allow her to marry the man she had already compromised herself with, whatever bride price was negotiated for the marriage prevailed."¹

This situation involves a young woman who is neither betrothed nor married and living with her husband. Seduce, פָּתָה, means to entice, to deceive, to persuade, to be gullible; there is an element to this word that suggests an openness of mind to external influences and a kind of self-deception about the situation. It allows for the understanding the relations were consensual and somewhat apart from a forcible sexual assault.

The word translated dowry by the NASB would more accurately be translated "bride price" or "wedding money." In English, a dowry consists of money, goods, or estate that a wife brings to her husband at marriage. I suspect most of us think it is the other way around and that may be why the word is used in the NASB which is a revision of the American Standard Version 1901 which also uses "dowry." The NKJV and the HCSB use "bride price" and the RSV uses "marriage present." "Endow" is used in the KJV and the NET Bible. Bride price, בְּתוּלָה, means to

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scriptures: Exodus* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 510.

pay the purchase for a bride as a necessary gift or present to the bride's father to complete the social arrangements of a marriage, hence, bride price.

The bride's father was supposed to keep the money although he could use it by means of generating interest income. It was to be kept for the daughter in the event she was widowed and/or turned over to her upon her father's death. This custom explains the comment made by Leah and Rachel when Jacob told them they were leaving their homeland and going back to his home.

Genesis 31:15 ¹⁵“Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price.

The father was supposed to give some of the bride price to his daughter. Laban did not use the labor he received from Jacob for the fourteen years he labored for Leah and Rebecca to establish an element of financial security for his daughters.

The next command concerns sorcery which is the first of three commands the violation of which would result in the death penalty.

Exodus 22:18 ¹⁸“You shall not allow a sorceress [כַּשְׁפָּא] to live.

Despite the brevity of the command, this is a very serious, important issue. The Israelites were God's specially created people and they were to serve Him and Him alone; therefore, to allow followers of Satan to practice their occult skills in the land was a serious issue of polluting the land and the influence this could have on the Israelites cannot be discounted. Sorcerer, כַּשְׁפָּא, is one who engages in witchcraft by means of practicing the black magic arts. Earlier in our study of

Exodus, we noted the presence of Egyptian sorcerers and magicians who could, to the extent allowed by God, practice these magic arts in order to mimic the work of God through His prophets, Moses and Aaron. The sorcerers were able to turn their staffs into serpents (Ex. 7:8-13), they were able to turn water into blood (Ex. 7:17-25), and they were able to make frogs come into the land of Egypt (Ex. 8:1-7). At that point, the sorcerers were rendered impotent, their black magic was no longer effective, and they knew God was at work.

Exodus 8:18–19 ¹⁸The magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not; so there were gnats on man and beast. ¹⁹Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

We need to understand that those who practice black magic in the power of Satan can perform miraculous feats just as those Egyptians did. Whether or not everyone who claims to be a sorcerer or a witch can actually call demonic spirits up is another issue, some may be empowered to do so and some not, and whether or not God is allowing any of them to do that in this dispensation is also another issue. They can do it, they have done it in the past, and they will do it again in the future.

The issue of sorcery and witchcraft are satanic, pagan issues and God did not want that influence to be in the land of Israel. He elaborated on this command in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 18:9–14 ⁹“When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. ¹⁰“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination [מְקַדְּשֵׁי], one who practices

witchcraft, or one who interprets omens [נְהַשׁ], or a sorcerer [כַּשֵּׁף], ¹¹or one who casts a spell [קָבַר], or a medium [שָׂאֵל אוֹב], or a spiritist [יִדְעוֹנִי], or one who calls up the dead. ¹²“For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. ¹³“You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. ¹⁴“For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you to do so.

To practice divination, קָסַם קָסָם, is to be one who engages in the process of stating or determining the future or hidden knowledge through signs, omens, and supernatural powers. An interpreter of omens, נְהַשׁ, is another way of identifying one who practices divination. One who casts a spell, קָבַר, is one who cast spells and enchants i.e., to practice magic to manipulate one's environment or future. A medium, שָׂאֵל אוֹב, is one who asks of, inquires of, questions, or consults by making an informational inquiry usually in the form of a question directed to a spirit of the dead called forth from the underworld of the dead who can communicate with those human mediums who called them up. A spiritist, יִדְעוֹנִי, is essentially the same thing as a medium. It refers to one who contacts and gains information from a dead spirit. These practices were mainstays of idolatrous paganism and they were practiced throughout Canaan. Is it any wonder God wanted the Israelites to remove all the pagans from the land after they entered it? Their failure to do so kept these practices right in their face and they succumbed to the temptation to embrace them. Until the Lord finally removed all of them from the land at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, they continued to engage in these prohibited satanic activities.

The prophets warned the people many times God was going to judge them for their proclivity to engage in pagan worship and its attendant sorceries, but they did not listen and the end result was expulsion from the land.

The Bible reveals that the Israelites did not drive the Canaanites from the land as ordered and they did not tear down the idols and pagan places of worship but instead rejected God and embraced paganism.

Judges 2:11–13 ¹¹Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals, ¹²and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from *among* the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtaroath.

At the end of Israel's history immediately prior to the Babylonian captivity, Manasseh, the king whose rebellion seems to have been the final nail in Judah's coffin, was engaged in these types of satanic activities.

2 Chronicles 33:2–7, 9 ²He did evil in the sight of the LORD according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel. ³For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; he also erected altars for the Baals and made Asherim, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. ⁴He built altars in the house of the LORD of which the LORD had said, "My name shall be in Jerusalem forever." ⁵For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶He made his sons pass through the fire in the valley of Ben-hinnom; and he practiced witchcraft, used divination, practiced sorcery and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to *anger*. ⁷Then he put the carved image of the idol which he had made in the house of God ... ⁹Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel.

The problem with sorcery is it is based in Satan and it leads people away from God and into activities sanctioned by the evil one and that is true not only

then but it is still true today. We can be seduced by many seemingly harmless activities permeating our society today and slowly but surely be led away from God.

That's why yoga is something that we should avoid. Every position in yoga has been developed to get the practitioner in contact with demonic forces whether they know it or not. The ultimate goal of yoga is to achieve the Kundalini spirit and energy represented by the serpent and it is depicted lying coiled at the base of the practitioner's spine. Just what in the world is that snake supposed to represent? It represents Satan. If that's the goal of yoga, then Christians don't have any business doing it. Here's what one woman who came out of New Age religion wrote in a book about yoga. "Yoga's aim is to separate its practitioner's from God spiritually and bring physical death. All types of yoga have latent abilities to arouse the Kundalini (serpent power) and these poses can kill both spiritually and physically."²

Many Christians are involved in fraternal organizations that are ecumenical in nature and they combine Christianity with Islam and other pagan religions which is an alliance with the god of those false religions. Because they do good works in the sight of the world, these Christians think they are joined to something worthwhile, but they are not; they are joined to Satan's scheme to subvert Christianity.

² Judy L. White, *The Heart of Yoga Revealed* (Kingsland, TX: Truth Cross Publishing, 2010), 142.

Television's embrace of witchcraft started out years ago with Bewitched and went to Buffy the Vampire Slayer to some completely demonic television shows promoting witchcraft today. Much of television and the movie industry have become advocates of demonic activity portraying evil, demonic people and beings as heroes. Who knows how many children have been drawn into practicing witchcraft as a result of this influence?

Years ago, in the 1960s, there was a very popular song entitled "Hotel California" by the Eagles. You can still hear it played. A famous ESPN sports announcer referenced it all the time. The Hotel California was the nickname of the Satanic worship temple established by Anton LaVey in San Francisco. One of its famous lines is "You can check out any time you like [a reference to suicide] but you can never leave." They deny the song is a reference to LaVey and the Hotel California and was instead their interpretation of the high life in Los Angeles, but that doesn't sound plausible to me when you read the lyrics. Perhaps under the influence of the occult, they didn't even understand what they were writing and singing. All of these things have become mainstream and they are occult in nature and we should avoid them.