

The Benefits of the Law

The Purpose of the Law

- Remember, the Law could NOT provide:
 - Eternal life
 - True righteousness
- But it was not designed to do those things
- When its purpose is properly understood, it becomes clear that the Law was a benefit to Israel

The Dietary Laws

- Ex.) Leviticus 11:7
- These laws were not arbitrary
- They were protective in nature
- The vast majority of foods prohibited are those that:
 - Are more likely to carry disease in the arid climate of the Sinai desert and/or the land of Canaan
 - Are foolishly uneconomical to raise as food in the particular agrarian context of Sinai or Canaan
 - Are foods favored for religious sacrifice by groups whose practices the Israelites were not to copy
- Likewise, the food laws likely kept Israel away from certain allergies
 - Though that is not explicitly stated

Laws about the Shedding of Blood

- Ex.) Exodus 29:10-12
- Laws like this set an important standard for Israel
- Sin deserves punishment
 - God revealed to his people through the Law that the one who sins against God deserves to death
 - But God also provided a procedure by which the sinner might escape death
 - A substitute's blood could be shed
- These were necessary for Israel to be able to approach God in worship
- They also are the backdrop for the New Testament (Hebrews 9:22)
 - They set the precedent for Christ's substitutionary atonement

Unusual Laws

- Ex.) Deuteronomy 14:21c
- These laws were designed to forbid the Israelites from engaging in the fertility cult practices of the Canaanites
 - The Canaanites believed in sympathetic magic
 - “The idea that symbolic actions can influence the gods and nature”
 - Ex.) Boiling a kid in its mother’s milk was thought to guarantee the fertility of the flock
- Knowing the intention of such laws helps you see that they are not arbitrary but crucial

Laws Giving Blessings to Those That Keep Them

- Ex.) Deuteronomy 14:28-29
- All of Israel’s laws were designed to be a means of blessing for the people of God (Lev. 26:3-13)
- Some of them, however, specifically mention that obedience will provide a blessing
- Ex.) If the people did not care for the needy among them (those without land)- orphans, widows, foreigners, Levites- then God would withhold prosperity
 - The tithe belonged to God, who delegates how it is to be used
 - To fail at that would be to rob God
- This law is neither punitive nor restrictive
 - It is a means of benefit both for the needy and for those who benefit the needy