

Lessons from Torah 73 – Exodus 20:12

Authority

1. The fifth commandment – “Honor your father and mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”
2. This begins the commandments that describe how we are to love our neighbor
3. Authority is given by God to protect us from being deceived by our own limited knowledge or selfish inclinations
4. Our society says “follow your heart”, but God disagrees (Proverb 12:15, 16:25, 28:26; Jeremiah 16:12, 17:9-10), as does Jesus (Matthew 12:34, Mark 7:21-23)
5. The highest authority is God Himself
 - a. Romans 13:1 – God establishes authorities
 - b. All other authorities are secondary to Him
6. We are to “honor”, not necessarily “obey”
 - a. “Honor comes from the same Hebrew root as “glory”, meaning “weight” or “heavy”
 - b. Degrees of honor
 - i. Acknowledge
 - ii. Respect
 - iii. Yield
 - iv. Obey
 - c. How we do this depends on:
 - i. Who the authority is
 - ii. The authority’s relation to me
 - iii. How faithful the authority is to those over it (especially God)
7. Some difficult cases
 - a. Parents who let children be their own authority
 - b. Parents who sin against their children
 - c. Parents who do not allow children to mature
 - d. Non-human authorities that serve pre-set ideas (Pseudo-Science, propaganda)
 - e. Rulers that transgress the limits set by God
8. Honoring God’s authority sometimes requires that we “respectfully disobey” earthly authorities
 - a. Biblical examples - Moses, Daniel, Jesus, Peter, John, Paul
 - b. Luther: God’s authority supersedes all others
 - c. Jesus: Luke 14:26 - Obeying God may lead us to disobey his appointed authorities
9. This commandment also speaks to those IN authority
 - a. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 – Authority is a stewardship for which we must give an account
 - b. Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21 - Parents are admonished to exercise authority with care and love, not sternness
 - c. Mark 10:42-45 – Jesus taught his disciples the importance of being “servant-leaders”
10. Those in authority have a “heavy” responsibility because how they exercise that authority, even in non-spiritual matters, affects the spiritual development of those under them
 - a. Matthew 23:2-3
 - b. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 – we must hold those in authority accountable and not blindly accept everything they say
11. God’s Word guides both those in and under authority:
 - a. Jesus’ blood offers forgiveness when we err
 - b. The Holy Spirit can use even deliberately sinful abuse of authority to achieve the purposes of our God and Father
12. Civilization itself rests on a proper respect for authority (“That your days may be long . . .”)