

Exodus 22:1-13 **Loss by theft and liability for negligence**

¹ "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. ² If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. ³ If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double.

⁵ "If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

⁶ "If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution.

⁷ "If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. ⁸ If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor's goods.

⁹ "For any kind of trespass, whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor. ¹⁰ If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven away, no one seeing it, ¹¹ then an oath of the LORD shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept that, and he shall not make it good. ¹² But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it. ¹³ If it is torn to pieces by a beast, then he shall bring it as evidence, and he shall not make good what was torn. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

- ✧ We remember that the Children of Israel were eyewitnesses as God spoke the moral law in the hearing of Israel. We find that the Children of Israel are standing far back from the mountain while Moses is standing near, but the Children of Israel can still hear the words being spoken by God. [\[Exodus 20:21\]](#)
- ✧ The prescribed penalty for a theft is to restore 5 oxen for 1 stolen, or 4 sheep for 1 stolen that was slaughtered or sold.
- ✧ If the thief is killed by a blow as he is in the process of breaking in, there is no penalty against the defender of his property.
 - ◇ If the thief survives the blow until morning, to kill him later is viewed as murder and the penalty is accordingly.
 - ◇ If the thief survives, the prescribed penalty for his actions is that he restore fully what was stolen or damaged.
 - ◇ If he has nothing with which to make restitution, then he himself is to be sold as a slave for his theft.
 - ◇ If what was stolen is found in his custody, he shall restore double.
- ✧ If a man allows his animal to feed in another man's field, he shall make restitution for the damage from the best of his own field or vineyard.

- ✧ If a man starts a fire that spreads to another man's property, he is liable for the damages that result and shall make restitution.
- ✧ If a man is entrusted to safeguard the property of another, and it is stolen, he is responsible to restore double if the thief is found.
 - ✧ If the thief is not found, the case shall be taken before the judges to determine if he has stolen it himself.
 - ✧ Whatever the judges decide will stand, and the offender shall pay double to the other.
 - ✧ If the entrusted item is livestock, and it dies, is hurt, or is driven away with no witnesses, then an oath of Yehowah shall be between the parties that he is innocent of wrongful actions, and the neighbor shall accept his oath, and no liability is required.
 - ✧ However, if in fact it is stolen from him, then the one entrusted with its care shall make restitution to the owner.
 - ✧ If it is killed by an animal, then he shall bring the remains as evidence and he shall be found innocent, no liability is required.
- ✧ All these words were heard by Moses and by the Children of Israel as God spoke from heaven, while His awesome presence was visible on the mountain in the most spectacular display of power. [\[Exodus 19:9-19, 20:18, 20:22\]](#)