

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

Your concern for the poor and powerless is clearly seen in today's reading. This teaches me that you are a God of compassion and kindness. How wonderful to serve a God who watches over the widow and the orphan. David said, "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling" (Ps 68:5 NIV). I praise you today and glorify your name!

Today in Your Word

Today you told me the rest of your covenant with Israel. The laws you gave emphasized your desire for them to treat one another fairly and justly. Those who were less fortunate were never to be taken advantage of; instead, they were to be treated with respect. You were so concerned about this that you warned them you would kill anyone who afflicted an orphan or widow. This teaches me that I should always treat the poor and helpless with kindness and compassion. You went on to say that this responsibility to love others applied not only to those who were friends or family, but also to those who were enemies! The thought of being kind to your enemy was definitely counter-cultural for the Israelites. For them, revenge was a common form of justice. You made it very clear that you expected them to do good to those who hated them, even to the point of inconveniencing themselves by returning an enemy's lost property (cf. Exod 23:4–5). Jesus later reminded the Jews of this requirement when He told them, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27–28). He was *not* telling them something new; rather, He was calling them back to a proper understanding of your law. These covenant laws teach me how to put the command, "Love your neighbor," into practice. They show me that I need to be reaching out to others in kindness, especially those who dislike and resent me.

Reflection

I usually think of justice as favoring the rich, but you warned Israel not to be partial to a poor man in his dispute (Exod 23:3). This teaches me that justice should be impartial, treating the rich and poor alike. Do I treat people differently based on how wealthy they are? (Jam 2:1–13).

Request

Father, help me to be kind and loving to those who are less fortunate. Remind me that you were gracious and merciful to me, even when I was your enemy (Jam 4:4).

Thanksgiving

Thank you for the practical applications you have given me in your covenant with Israel. They show me how to love you with all my heart and how to love others as myself!

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: [*"A Beautiful Life"*](#) – William M. Golden.

Meditation Verse: Exodus 24:8.