

## LESSON 2

# THE ETHICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Introduction

In a study of Christian ethics, why should space be dedicated to a consideration of the ethical teachings of the Old Testament? Is the New Testament not adequate for this purpose? We need to examine the Old Testament revelation because it forms the basis for the teachings of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament. This principle is true in the field of ethics as well as in theology, biblical interpretation, and the other fields of religious knowledge. The Old Testament is a part of the Word of God, inspired by God for man's benefit, and the message which it contains is of value to us today. Many of the laws have more historical value than contemporary application. Nevertheless, we can come to appreciate more fully our religious heritage as set forth in the Old Testament.

As we study the Old Testament in search of the ethical teachings and moral practices of the people of that day, we shall be impressed to see how clearly the message speaks to us. We shall find principles that are still relevant. For example, although the passages concerning the cities of refuge will not present a practical solution to our problems today, a lesson concerning justice can be learned from them (see Num. 35). Moses' laws concerning slavery have little meaning for us today, but we find interesting examples of humanitarian and merciful acts in the Israelites' dealings with others (Exod. 21). In the historical narratives of the Old Testament, we can see the seed which later came to complete fruition in the teachings of the New Testament.

The statement has been made that there is little that is new in the ethical teachings of Jesus, because all that He taught is recorded somewhere in the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, we search the Old Testament for the roots of His teachings.

### The Ethical God of the Old Testament

The central focal point of any religion is its god. The ethical character of that god determines the fervour with which his adherents follow his teachings. The moral life of a people centres in the worship of their god and in obedience to his will. The God of the Old Testament is different from the pagan gods that other contemporary nations worshipped.

### Jehovah contrasted with other gods

We are surprised at the lack of information about the ethical nature of gods worshipped by others. Molech, god of the Ammonites, was worshipped by means of human sacrifices in which the victim was burnt completely, just as animals were sacrificed in the levitical system. An image of the god was made with arms outstretched. The victim was placed upon his

<sup>1</sup>Georgia Harkness, *The Sources of Western Morality* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 223.

### TRUE OR FALSE?

Study of the Old Testament is not important for a study of ethics since the Old Testament has been fulfilled by the New. \_\_\_\_\_

(False)

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### FILL IN THE BLANK.

An example of justice in the Old Testament can be found in the laws concerning s\_\_\_\_\_.

(slavery)

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Where do we find the roots of Jesus' teachings?

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(the Old Testament)

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### FILL IN THE BLANK.

The worship of the Ammonites included \_\_\_\_\_ sacrifices.

(human)

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arms, and the flames leaped up to consume the human sacrifice while the people chanted incantations as they danced around the fire.

The Israelites were familiar with these practices. They surely must have asked if God required such of them. And there were times when these practices crept into their activities. Jephthah was so anxious to win the victory over the Ammonites that he made a hasty vow to offer as a sacrifice the first person who came out of the door of his house to welcome him when he returned from victory. His daughter, his only child, was the first to greet him. When she learned about the vow he had made, she was submissive to having it carried out. Some scholars say that she was not actually sacrificed (Judges 11:29-40).<sup>2</sup>

Another case which can be cited is that of the sacrifice of Manasseh's son (2 Kings 21:1-9). God was displeased because Manasseh did that which was evil in His eyes. He participated in all kinds of activities which showed his trust in the false gods of other nations. 'And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger' (2 Kings 21:6).

Another false god about whose ethical nature we know nothing is Dagon. He was the god of the Philistines and had the physical form of a fish with a human head. When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant from the Israelites, they placed it in the same room where the image of Dagon was hanging. On the following morning, Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark. They set him in his place again, but on the following morning he had fallen again, and his head and both the palms of his hands were cut off. Events went so badly for the Philistines in Ashdod that they finally decided to return the Ark to the Israelites (see 1 Sam. 5:3-6:18).

The worship of Baal and his female consort, Ashtoreth, included some of the most lustful activities that one could imagine. Baalism was a constant threat to the worship of Jehovah among the Israelites as they established themselves in the Promised Land. Followers of Baal practised fertility worship, and the Israelites decided that, to guarantee good harvests, they needed to assimilate some of the practices of the worship of Baal into their own religion. Thus we see the tendency towards syncretism during the history of Israel. (*Syncretism* means the combining of elements of two religions into one system of worship.) The worshippers of Baal placed special emphasis upon the rain because it guaranteed a good harvest. Sexual intercourse was a part of this pagan worship because it, too, was an act of reproduction. In the days of Amos, it was common for a father and his son to go in 'unto the same maid' (Amos 2:7). These biblical examples help us to see that the moral nature of the God of the Old Testament was a great contrast to that of the other gods that non-Israelites worshipped.

### The personality of Jehovah

The ethical nature of God is based upon His personality. Some theologians debate the question of the personality of God. But God is presented to us in the Bible as one who has

<sup>2</sup>Carroll Owens Gillis, *Historia y Literatura de la Biblia*, 5 vols. (El Paso: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1956), 2:127.

What Israelite was influenced by the Ammonite practice of offering human sacrifices? \_\_\_\_\_

(*Jephthah*)

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Name another Israelite guilty of offering human sacrifices.

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(*Manasseh*)

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What incident revealed that Israel's God was superior to that of the Philistines?

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(*Compare your answer with the text.*)

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### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

S \_\_\_\_\_ is the c \_\_\_\_\_ of elements of two r \_\_\_\_\_ into one system of w \_\_\_\_\_. An example of syncretism is the I \_\_\_\_\_ assimilating B \_\_\_\_\_ and f \_\_\_\_\_ worship into their own religion.

(*Syncretism, combining, religions, worship, Israelites, Baalism, fertility*)

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the qualities of a person. The God who is at work in the first chapters of Genesis is referred to as *Elohim*, God of power and creation. *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh*) was the personal name of the God who called to Moses from the burning bush. His name is related to the idea of existence and eternity. He called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees and spoke to him in a personal manner. The God of the nations blessed the kings in their rulership. The men of the Old Testament seemed to hear the voice of God and related to Him in a personal way.

Some have cited the anthropomorphic references in the Old Testament as testimony to God's personhood. *Anthropomorphism* refers to the use of human attributes to describe God. There are frequent references to the eyes, hands, face, and voice of God. But these statements do not mean that God's form is equal to the physical body of man. Apparently men used this terminology to explain what they felt was happening between them and God. These terms were the best way they could communicate what they were experiencing. Even though we do not limit God to this physical human form, we do understand something of His personhood through these terms.

There are some characteristics which help us to understand God's person. His intelligence illustrates His personhood. God exercises His will in many places in Old Testament revelation. We can see moral discernment in God's person as He points out what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Davidson calls God's personhood the distinctive characteristic within the ethical character of God.<sup>3</sup>

The personal God of the Old Testament is manifested as He moves in the affairs of men. He makes an impact upon individuals, groups of people, and nations. He manifests His love and mercy, but He also manifests judgement and wrath. God's revelation of His will and relation to man are recorded as the history of the Old Testament.

### The ethical implications in God's names

The names given to an individual in Old Testament times had special significance. A name might indicate a special quality which was seen in the person or a special hope which the parents and others had in the person. Thus *Seth* means *substitution* because he took the place of Abel. *Abraham* means *multitudes*, *Jacob* means *trickster*, or *supplanter*, and *Sarai* means *fussy one*. Later Jacob's name was changed to *Israel* which means *prince*. Scholars also see ethical significance in the different names that were used to refer to God.

**Elohim.**—This term for God appears some 2,500 times in the Old Testament. The significance of this word is *power* or *strength*, and the Bible uses it to refer to the creative acts of God in the first chapters of Genesis. The psalmist (91:2) trusts in Elohim because He is the God of power without limits. Thus He is the God of confidence. Elohim is used predominantly in the plural form, although there are some references to *El*, the singular form, which is also combined with other terms to give compound names for God.

**Jehovah.**—This name for God is used most frequently in the Old Testament, both independently and in combination with other terms. The origin of the word is obscure, but the

<sup>3</sup>A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904), pp. 106-10

### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The name used in the first chapters of Genesis to refer to God as the creator is \_\_\_\_\_. The name used in Exodus when God called Moses from the burning bush is \_\_\_\_\_. His name is related to the idea of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

A \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the use of h \_\_\_\_\_ attributes to describe God. Four common anthropomorphic ways of referring to God are to speak of His, e \_\_\_\_\_, h \_\_\_\_\_, f \_\_\_\_\_, and v \_\_\_\_\_.

(Anthropomorphism, human, eyes, hands, face, voice)

Three aspects of God's person are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(intelligence, will, moral discernment)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

- Names given to individuals in the Old Testament had special significance. \_\_\_\_\_
- Scholars see no ethical significance in the different names that were used to refer to God. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

AS YOU READ ABOUT THE DIFFERENT NAMES THAT WERE USED TO REFER TO GOD, WRITE THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH NAME.

Elohim: \_\_\_\_\_

(He is the God of power and creation.)

\_\_\_\_\_

most widely accepted opinion is that it comes from the verb *haya*, which means *to be* or *existence*. Gesenius indicates that the term identifies God as being eternal and immutable. He can never change to something else.<sup>4</sup> When reference is made to God's dealings with man, the term *Jehovah* (or *Yahweh* as found in many modern translations) is used.

What is the difference between *Elohim* and *Jehovah*? *Elohim* shows God's love towards His creation and the creatures of His hands in a general way, while *Jehovah* emphasizes His moral and spiritual attributes as He relates to man in love. (*Attribute* refers to a quality or characteristic of God which distinguishes Him from all created beings and without which He would not be worthy of the worship and service of man.) *Jehovah* is the God who has a personal interest in man. When the Bible speaks of man's duty towards God, the term *Jehovah* is usually used.

*Jehovah* is righteous and demands righteousness in man. 'For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright' (Ps. 11:7). When man fell, *Jehovah* was the one who led him out of the Garden of Eden. It was *Jehovah* who destroyed the world by means of the flood (Gen. 7:17-23) and made fire rain over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:13-24). *Jehovah* is the one who loves His people and is saddened by their sin. 'And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel' (Judg. 10:16).

In the first seven chapters of *Leviticus* where instructions are given concerning sacrifices, the word *Jehovah* appears eighty-six times, and *Elohim* appears only once. The explanation for the difference in the use of the terms for God is believed by some to be a plurality of authors of the Pentateuch. However, the majority of conservative scholars consider the Pentateuch to be Moses' work, and they find the various terms to be an emphasis upon the different aspects of God, who is the same person regardless of the names which are ascribed to Him.

**Adonai.**—This word for *Lord* carries the meaning that man should be in absolute submission to His will. The term was used by slaves to refer to their masters. The slave was the exclusive property of his lord, and he had the responsibility to obey, to serve, and to protect his master. Thus man relates to God as the slave to the master, who is the absolute owner, and man has the assurance that his master will protect him and take care of his needs.

**El Shaddai.**—This name emphasizes the all powerful nature of God who is completely capable of supplying all man's needs (Gen. 35:11; Josh. 7:8; Isa. 8:7; 13:6). He is the God who manifested His power in multiplying the descendants of Abraham and in making the nation great. When God appeared to Jacob at Bethel during his return to the land of his forefathers, He said, 'I am God Almighty (*El Shaddai*): be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins' (Gen. 35:11). *El Shaddai* was the name for God used when the nation went forth to battle with the assurance that the omnipotent God would be with them and give them victory.

<sup>4</sup>Gesenius' *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, trans. Samuel P. Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 384.

CONTINUE WRITING THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAMES USED TO REFER TO GOD.

*Jehovah*: \_\_\_\_\_

(*God is eternal and immutable.*)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

God is immutable means that he can never \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ else.

(*Compare your answers with the text.*)

MATCH TO CONTRAST THESE TWO NAMES OF GOD.

- |                   |                                                                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Elohim</i>  | a. emphasizes God's moral and spiritual attributes as He relates to man in love. |
| 2. <i>Jehovah</i> | b. shows God's love towards His creation in a general way.                       |

(*Compare your answers with the text.*)

CONTINUE WRITING THE ETHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAMES USED TO REFER TO GOD.

*Adonai*: \_\_\_\_\_

(*God is Lord and man should be in absolute submission to Him.*)

*El Shaddai*: \_\_\_\_\_

(*God is completely capable of supplying man's every need.*)

## The ethical attributes of Jehovah

To refer to God's attributes does not mean that His nature can be divided into various component parts. These divisions in His attributes are made for the purpose of study, but it should be emphasized from the beginning that God is one. At times one attribute is emphasized over another, and many Old Testament scholars see development in the meaning of specific attributes, especially the holiness of God.<sup>5</sup> The concept of progressive revelation helps in seeing that God was at work in each particular stage of history, giving to man as much as he could assimilate.

**Justice.**—The Old Testament emphasizes the justice of God as one of His moral attributes. Early in the history of the nation, God said, 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin' (Deut. 24:16). Ezekiel later emphasized the same fact in one of his prophecies (Ezek. 18:21-32). The Old Testament speaks of the seriousness of sin because its consequences are visited upon the children as far as the third and fourth generations (Exod. 34:7). The prophets Amos, Micah, Joel, and Isaiah speak of God's justice which metes out punishment to those who sin.

**Righteousness.**—This attribute is presented in various passages in the Old Testament. The righteousness of God means that He works correctly and justly with each man. When Abraham learned about God's plan to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he asked, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' (Gen. 18:25). God in His righteousness is willing to pardon the repentant sinner. 'Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness' (Ps. 51:13-14).

The concept of the righteousness of God presented a problem for the Israelites. They assumed that a righteous God would punish unrighteous people by sending suffering upon them because of their sin, but the suffering of innocent people created a problem that could not easily be explained. The psalmist struggled with the problem of the evil who prosper while the innocent suffer (Ps. 37; 94:3). The Book of Job also deals with this problem. Job's friends could explain his sufferings only in terms of secret sins which he was unwilling to admit. The Old Testament does not give a complete solution to the problem of suffering. It does seem to call for patience to see how God's justice and righteousness cause everything to turn out in the end. Ultimately, the unjust receive punishment for their sins (Ps. 37:2).

**Holiness.**—God is holy. His holiness is revealed through the reverence which the people showed in relating to Him. In the Old Testament, perhaps the idea of God's transcendence is more prominent than His immanence. *Transcendence* means that God is superior to the created universe. God is holy, but at the same time He is active in the world. *Immanence* refers to the reality of God's presence in the world. The difficulty comes in understanding the meaning of the word *holy*. Scholars who have emphasized development in the Old

<sup>5</sup>Robert C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp. 16-9

### TRUE OR FALSE?

1. To refer to God's attributes means that His nature can be divided into various component parts. \_\_\_\_\_
2. To refer to God's attributes does not mean that His nature can be divided into various component parts. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

AS YOU READ **THE ETHICAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD**, LIST AND DESCRIBE EACH BRIEFLY AND GIVE A SCRIPTURE REFERENCE TO ILLUSTRATE EACH.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

### TRUE OR FALSE?

The suffering of innocent people never seemed to be a problem that the Israelites tried to explain. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

CONTINUE WITH THE LIST AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND THE CORRESPONDING SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

T \_\_\_\_\_ means that God is s \_\_\_\_\_ to the created universe. God is h \_\_\_\_\_, but at the same time He is a \_\_\_\_\_ in the world. I \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the reality of God's presence in the world.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Testament doctrines and teachings insist that the most primitive concept of holiness had more to do with separation from man than with the moral element of holiness.<sup>6</sup>

Without doubt, the meaning of the Hebrew word *kodesh* is *separation* and emphasizes that God's moral nature is so different from that of man that He is separated quite extensively from him. 'I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city' (Hos. 11:9b). God's holiness is the basis for insisting that man be holy, 'For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth' (Lev. 11:44).

**Mercy.**—Although we see God's justice and severity at times in the Old Testament, we also see manifestations of His mercy. When Moses was descending from the mountain, he saw that the people were worshipping the golden calf. He became so angry that he broke the tables of stone which he was carrying. Later he prayed to God to forgive the people of their sin. God did so, and Moses gave testimony to God's mercy.

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

(Exod. 34:6-7)

During the time of the wandering in the wilderness, God showed His mercy to the Israelites many times. When they found themselves in difficulty, they complained to God. He did not destroy them; rather He showed them mercy by providing for them in supernatural ways. The prophets announced judgement, but they also included the promise of mercy from God in their messages. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said:

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

(Isa. 54:7-8)

The psalmist also testified to God's mercy in the words, 'The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy' (Ps. 145:8).

**Love.**—The love of God is another moral attribute that is reflected in the Old Testament. God's love may be seen in the covenant which He made with the children of Israel. In Deuteronomy 7, Moses tried to explain the reason for God's choice of Israel. He finally declared, 'But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt' (Deut. 7:8). Hosea presented God's love in a very dramatic manner by paralleling it to the love which he had for Gomer, his wife, who proved

<sup>6</sup>Dentan, *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 16-9. (This book has a full discussion of the history of Old Testament theological development).

CONTINUE WITH THE LIST AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AND THE CORRESPONDING SCRIPTURE REFERENCES.

4.

5.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

unfaithful to him. He presented a dramatic description of how God's love works, 'I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them' (Hos. 11:4).

There are other attributes of God which give a more complete picture of His nature. However, the purpose here has been to deal with the moral attributes. It is evident that the ethical character of God is such that He demands the same qualities in man. Thus man has the challenge of a perfect example after which he can pattern his life.

### The Moral Nature of Man

Next the moral nature of man and his potential before God should be examined. During the last one hundred years, we have seen several different concepts expressed and promoted about man's nature. Is man more than matter? Does he have a soul? Is he autonomous or must he be submissive to the sovereign God? We will attempt to answer these questions with the Old Testament message.

#### It is based on the image of God

The biblical account indicates clearly that man is the creation of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; Ps. 8; 100:3; 139:13; Job 10:8-11). This record contradicts what evolutionists teach and what others, who deny that man is more than the material aspect of his being, believe. The image of God in man distinguishes him from animals.<sup>7</sup>

Of what does this image consist? Does it include a physical likeness? As has been said previously, God cannot be reduced to man's physical appearance. Nor can man be elevated to a plane that is equal with God. The image of God in man consists of the God-like qualities which man possesses. God's image may include the moral perfection of man before the fall. This likeness may also include man's dominion over creation and his capacity to enter into communion with God. If the image consisted in man's moral perfection before the fall, then what is man's situation since the fall? Did he lose that image completely? Probably not. Certainly man was affected because of his sin of disobedience. But he still has the capacity to respond to God's calling to him just as Adam still had this capacity after his disobedience. God still yearns to have communion with man and makes this possible through the initiative which He takes with man.

The Old Testament communicates the message that God was active and involved in the affairs of man. It is impressive to read about this involvement through man's experiences of waywardness, rebellion, and indifference as much as through those of service and rejoicing in faithfulness to the Lord God. Man's actions give credence to the fact that he has that divine spark which we call 'God's image'.

#### It is affected by sin

We have already mentioned the experience of disobedience, as recorded in Genesis 3, and its effects upon man and his relationship to God. Traditionally the Christian Church has tended to lay the blame for all that has gone wrong in the world at the

<sup>7</sup>David E. Roberts, *Psychotherapy and a Christian View of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 85, 89.

AFTER READING THE SCRIPTURES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT, LIST TWO FACTS ABOUT MAN THAT ARE FOUND IN THEM.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

To have been created in the image of God means that man has \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ qualities.

(God-like)

The Old Testament teaches that God is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in human affairs.

(active, involved)

feet of Adam and Eve. Subsequent biblical material seems to indicate that Adam's sin tipped the scales in such a way that all other human beings in all the course of history are predestined to be sinners. This message creates some hopelessness.

Perhaps we have over-emphasized the role of Adam and Eve in man's plight instead of making man more responsible to God for his acts of transgression. In the Old Testament, it seems that sin is represented as missing the mark of God's ideal for man and that each man lives his life without much feeling of remorse for what Adam and Eve did. This concept is more helpful than man's defensiveness which says, 'I do wrong because Adam and Eve made the wrong decision and got us all started down the wrong road.'

The Old Testament teaches that sin is personal rebellion against God, but the prophets and sages also emphasize the evils and consequences of social sins. Economic injustice, political corruption, and religious insincerity were looked upon as being as detrimental to the people as their personal sins of pride, sexual immorality, and other indulgences.

The Old Testament certainly offers the hope of pardon for sins. Many times leading Old Testament characters prayed for and received forgiveness for themselves, and they made intercession for others. Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and most all the literary prophets make this clear in their messages. Experiencing a restoration to a right relationship with God came to these people as a result of their repenting and turning away from sin to a sincere search for God. 'Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek. 33:11b). The prophet Isaiah presented the idea of a servant whose sufferings atoned for the sins of man (Isa. 53). This message had been presented dramatically through the years by means of the sacrificial system instituted by Moses and presented in detail in the Book of Leviticus.

### The Relationship Between Religion and Ethics

The religion of the Old Testament presents the relationship with God as basic to all aspects of life. To have this relationship, man needs to respond freely out of his own inner being to God's initiative in revealing Himself to man. Tied closely to this religious experience was a sense of man's ethical and moral responsibility towards God and his fellow-man. Man's religious experience was expressed in an institutional manner when the Tabernacle and the Temple were constructed. But man's ethical and moral perception was communicated daily not only in acts of religious devotion but also in his dealings with others. Thus there was a union of religious experience and ethical living which may be illustrated in several different ways.

#### Lessons from Adam and Cain

The close connection between a right relation to God and one's fellow-man may be seen in the first questions recorded in the Bible. When God saw that Adam had sinned and had hidden himself in the garden of Eden, He asked the question, 'Where art thou?' (Gen. 3:9). God was aware that communion between Himself and man had been interrupted because of man's shame and fear, causing him to try to hide from God. Adam realized that his own disobedience to God had affected the close ties which had existed between them.

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Man is personally responsible for his acts of transgression because sin is missing the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's ideal for \_\_\_\_\_.

(mark, man)

Man is also responsible for his sin because sin is personal \_\_\_\_\_ against \_\_\_\_\_.

(rebellion, God)

The Old Testament offers hope for sinners:

1. Old Testament characters prayed for \_\_\_\_\_ and also interceded for others.
2. When they repented, they received \_\_\_\_\_.

(1. forgiveness, 2. forgiveness)

AS YOU READ THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND ETHICS, LOOK FOR EXAMPLES OF THE UNION OF RELIGION AND ETHICS. (THE QUESTIONS POINT THEM OUT.)

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Religion is man's r\_\_\_\_\_ with G\_\_\_\_\_ and e\_\_\_\_\_ has to do with man's daily conduct. They were merged in Israel's religious faith.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Genesis 3:9 indicates Adam's sin caused him to avoid \_\_\_\_\_.

(God)

After Cain had killed his brother, God asked him, 'Where is Abel thy brother?' (Gen. 4:9). This question illustrates God's concern for each person that He has created and implies that each man ought to be interested in his fellow-man as the object of God's interest. Cain's response indicates man's tendency to want to escape from his guilt and shame. It also shows how some people would like to evade all responsibility for others.

### Emphases in the Ten Commandments

More space will be dedicated later to a consideration of the emphases of the Ten Commandments, but here we see in the two broad areas of responsibility to God and to our fellow-man an illustration of the relationship between religion and ethics. The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with man's responsibility and relationship with God, and the last six have to do with man's responsibility to his fellow-man. The two tables are summarized in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, and Jesus brought them together in a unified statement of all that the Law required in Matthew 22:37-39.

### Revelation of God and service to man

When men experience the presence of God in special revelations, the ultimate consequence is a command to go forth in service to their fellow-man. For example, God's call to Moses out of the burning bush was His commission for Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exod. 3:1-12). When God called young Samuel into His service, He wanted Samuel to become a prophet, priest, and judge over His people. Thus Samuel lived his life by serving God through service to others (1 Sam. 3:1-14). When the nation faced a great crisis because of the death of the king, Isaiah went into the Temple to meditate and pray for divine guidance. God spoke to him in an impressive vision and called him to go forth in service to his fellow-man (Isa. 6:1-9). In these illustrations, it is clear that a genuine religious experience leads to a search for ways to serve one's fellow-man.

### Moral requirements of God's servants

It is interesting to note the detailed moral requirements given in the Old Testament for those men dedicated to God's service as priests. Priests were not to defile themselves in any of several different ways, such as shaving their heads, shaving the corner of the beard, making cuttings on their flesh, touching a corpse, marrying a prostitute, marrying someone other than a virgin, or marrying a foreigner (Lev. 21:1-24).

The Old Testament records the requirements for the Nazarite vow. At first, it was to be a lifelong, spontaneous commitment of service to God; later legislation permitted a temporary commitment. Among the requirements for Nazarites were a personal separation or consecration to God, letting the hair grow long, and a vow to abstain from wine and strong drink. Also, they were prohibited from touching a corpse (Num. 6:1-8).

One of the distinctions between the true and false prophets was that the false prophets used their positions in an unrighteous way to get personal gain (Mic. 3:11). The religious leaders in Old Testament times distinguished themselves by their high standards of morality and their sincere devotion to God and others.

### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

God's question in Genesis 4:9 indicates God's concern for each man and implies that each man ought to be interested in his fellow-man.

(concern, interested)

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### UNDERLINE THE CORRECT WORDS.

The first four commandments deal primarily with (religion, ethics) and the last six with (religion, ethics).

(religion, ethics)

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### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The religious experiences of Moses, Samuel and Isaiah led to their searching for \_\_\_\_\_.

(ways to serve their fellow-man)

A genuine religious experience leads to a search for ways to \_\_\_\_\_ one's \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Priests, who led in worship of God, were to have high ethical requirements, such as not marrying \_\_\_\_\_.

(prostitutes)

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### The relation of sin against man to sin against God

The close relationship between religion and ethics is also illustrated in the fact that sins against one's fellow-man were also considered to be sins against God. The prophet Nathan went to the royal house to deal with David because he had sinned by taking Bathsheba and causing the death of her husband Uriah. The man of God firmly denounced David's actions, and David responded, 'I have sinned against the LORD' (2 Sam. 12:13). He was not passing over lightly the violation of the rights of a husband whose wife was considered his personal possession. David was admitting that his sin was grave because it was not only against his fellow-man but also against God.

### The worthlessness of ceremony without morality

The prophets emphasized that religious ceremonies were useless if they were not accompanied by sincere devotion and clean moral living.

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

(Amos 5:21-24)

Hosea made the same appeal in the words, 'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings' (Hos. 6:6). Micah also gave a graphic description of the contradiction between ceremonial acts and moral living and summarized God's requirements in three actions: 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?' (Mic. 6:8).

The prophets have been called social reformers. This they were, but their means of achieving reform was by encouraging a genuine religious experience. They knew that if man could become sincere in his religious devotion then he would want to do right. This experience would bring reform to the social order. The prophets were not trying to do away with the sacrificial system, rather they wanted to eliminate insincerity. The prophets exhorted the people to repent in order to avert destruction, but they were not heard. Jeremiah pointed the nation to a new day when there would be a new covenant between man and God. The new covenant would be internal, written upon the hearts of men instead of upon external tables of stone. It would be universal in its outreach and not limited to the nation. And it would be perpetual and not temporary (Jer. 31:31ff.).

These illustrations serve to show that the religion of the Old Testament was not isolated or separated from moral living. This union of religion and ethics was a distinctive characteristic of Israel's faith.

### The Supreme Good

When the term 'the supreme good' is used, it refers to the all-encompassing goal that one has throughout life. This goal becomes, in a sense, a quest that is challenging and relevant to each individual during the course of his life. What are the

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

David's response in 2 Samuel 12:13 implied that his wrongs against Uriah and Bathsheba were also sins against \_\_\_\_\_.

(God)

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What did the prophets emphasize in the relation of religion and ethics?

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(Religious ceremony is useless without moral living.)

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WHEN YOU FINISH READING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND ETHICS, LIST FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS SHOWING THAT OLD TESTAMENT RELIGION WAS NOT SEPARATED FROM MORAL LIVING.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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possibilities for supreme good as we look at man's pilgrimage in the Old Testament?

### The covenant

There are strong arguments that the covenant most clearly summarizes and unifies the ideal relationship between God and man. The first chapters of Genesis indicate that God entered into a covenant relationship with His people. This covenant is evident in the promise which He made after the flood (Gen. 8:21). God called Abraham and promised to bless him, to make his name great, and to multiply his seed upon the face of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3). This covenant was renewed with Isaac and Jacob. But the covenant idea came into complete fruition with the Mosaic Law.

Eichrodt gave such importance to this covenant that he developed his theology of the Old Testament around this concept. He states that, in the covenant, a clear divine will becomes discernible. In this covenant, an atmosphere of trust and security is created because men know where they stand with God.<sup>8</sup> There are many details laid out in this covenant, and the people understood what was involved in obeying them. God revealed His will to the people through this covenant, and the people became more conscious of their role as a nation before God.

The sacrificial system was a constant reminder of God's instructions to the people. As they participated in the ceremonies, they were renewing their vows to God to be His people. In the sacrificial system, the people became more aware of their sin and the meaning of atonement and forgiveness.

### The Kingdom of God

Another Old Testament scholar has created quite a following by unifying the message of the Old Testament and God's goal for man in the theme of the Kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup> Bright traces this concept from the time of the entrance of the *Habiru* (Hebrews) into Canaan through the time of the judges, the united and the divided kingdoms, the disintegration in the destruction of Israel and later Judah, and the captivity and restoration. The concept of the kingdom went through phases, from an idea to a visible, tangible nation and then to an invisible and universal concept of all people who accept God's sovereignty for their lives.

With the emphasis upon Israel as the people of God, a deeply moral note was injected into the fibre of the nation. They were reminded frequently of God's promise to be their God on the condition that they obey His laws, 'Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine' (Exod. 19:5). That the people did not always obey these laws is a record of history, but God's grace was made evident in His willingness to receive the people, even in their disregard for His laws. The people did come to learn from the lessons of history what God expected of them.

### The Limitations of Old Testament Ethics

It has been stated that the ethical principles of the Old

<sup>8</sup>Walther Eichrodt, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., trans. John Baker (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), 1:39.

<sup>9</sup>John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953).

GIVE TWO REASONS WHY GOD ENTERED INTO COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ISRAELITES.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

(1. He revealed His will to them through the covenant.  
2. The people became more conscious of their role as a nation before God.)

FILL IN THE BLANKS.

The sacrificial system reminded the people of God's i \_\_\_\_\_ and made them aware of their s \_\_\_\_\_ and the meaning of a \_\_\_\_\_ and f \_\_\_\_\_.

(instructions, sin, atonement, forgiveness)

The moral emphasis upon Israel as the people of God was that God's promise to be their God was conditional. They must \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_.

(obey, laws)

Testament, and thus the moral ideals of the people of Israel, were much higher than those of the surrounding nations. The early stages of the history of the Israelites can be likened to the first steps taken by a child. Their moral sensitivity had to be developed, and this development took place during the course of their history. The ethical teachings in the Old Testament helped these people to develop a greater likeness to God's ideal for them. We must recognize, however, that, though the ethical concepts were high for that day, they have some limitations as we look at them from our perspective.

### The legalistic quality

As one reads through the detailed laws which are recorded in Exodus and Leviticus, he is impressed with the attention given to so many details and the minute variations in the application of many of the laws. The Israelites were not always faithful in their fulfilment of the requirements of the Law, but the environment of legalism did seem to characterize this stage of their development. Towards the end of Old Testament history, after the return from the Exile, there seems to have been a new emphasis upon rigidity in following the teachings which had come from God.

Doubtless there is a place and a time for legalistic interpretation and application of God's revelation. In the formative stages of a person's character, there is a greater place for emphasizing obedience to the letter of the law than when one has reached a level of maturity in which his basic character is already formed. Jesus built upon the basis established by the Law in the Old Testament and gave a more flexible spirit to what had been written previously.

### The incomplete characteristic

God revealed Himself and made His will known to the people according to their ability to understand and respond. At no point in the Old Testament is the idea presented that the principles given at that time were final and to be relevant for man throughout history. God had to adapt His ideal to the level of the people in each stage of their history. This concept will be dealt with more thoroughly when the moral difficulties in the Old Testament are discussed. The principle of 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth', although a step forward over what had been practised previously, later gave way to Jesus' challenge of forgiveness without retaliation. The laws regulating divorce were later replaced by teachings which did away with the need for divorce, except in certain extreme cases.

The covenant, under which the nation lived through the centuries, was to give way to a new covenant, which would be more spiritual in nature because it dealt with man's inner nature (Jer. 31:31). Just as the Old Testament did not contain the last word concerning the problem of evil and the doctrine of immortality, neither did it contain the last word concerning ethical ideals and moral practices.

### The lack of universality

Much of the Old Testament was spoken for a particular group or nation and did not become universally applicable. The Israelites had a different attitude towards the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Edomites, and other nations that were their enemies. The Old Testament law made provision for the foreigner in the land and tried to encourage a humanitarian

### TRUE OR FALSE?

1. The Israelites' moral ideals were higher than those of the surrounding nations. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The Israelites' moral sensitivity was inherited from Abraham. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The Old Testament ethical teachings helped them to develop a greater likeness to God's ideal. \_\_\_\_\_

(1. True, 2. False, 3. True)

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### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Old Testament ethics was limited because it was \_\_\_\_\_.

(legalistic)

Old Testament ethics was limited because it was \_\_\_\_\_.

(incomplete)

Old Testament ethics was limited because it was not \_\_\_\_\_.

(universal)

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attitude towards him. The Israelite was prohibited from charging interest on loans to a fellow countryman but was permitted to charge interest to others (Deut. 23:19-20). The norms which governed the conduct of women differed from those regulating men, but in general the condition of women in Israel was better than in other nations (Deut. 12:12; 2 Chron. 34:22). The slaves certainly were treated worse than free men, but their treatment in Israel was more humanitarian than in other nations (Gen. 17:12; Num. 31:11; Exod, 21:7ff.; Amos 2:6; Exod. 21:2; Lev. 25:6).

### The Moral Difficulties in Old Testament Ethics

A consideration of the ethical teachings of the Old Testament would not be complete without some reference to the moral difficulties which are found. When most students begin a serious study of the Old Testament, they are surprised to find some attitudes attributed to God and some practices of men that fall short of what they have been taught was God's real nature and ideal for mankind.

#### Difficulties related to God

We get the impression from a study of the Old Testament that God was opposed to the offering of human sacrifices. Yet, in Genesis 22 we have the record of God's telling Abraham to go up to Mount Moriah and offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Although this commandment seemed to contradict all that God had said and done previously, Abraham was obedient to the point of being ready to slay his only son. When God saw Abraham's unquestioned obedience to His commandment, He made other provisions for the sacrifice.

In this example, it is recognized that the purpose of the commandment was to test Abraham's faithfulness to God—a test of priorities. Since he had waited so long for the realization of the promise made to him, surely he would question a commandment which if followed literally, would make impossible the realization of this promise.

Something else may be said about God's intent in this experience. Many have seen in Isaac a symbol of Christ, who was offered up years later as a vicarious sacrifice for our sins. God's providing the ram made it possible for Abraham not to sacrifice his only son. And Jesus' death makes it possible for us to enjoy the blessings of eternal salvation without suffering the effects of the second or spiritual death. Thus, although this experience has presented some problems in the minds of some people about God's nature, it is clear that God had a purpose for mankind which went beyond the immediate experience of the offering of Isaac.

The commandment of God for the Israelites to exterminate the Canaanites presents a more serious problem. God promised that He would drive them, along with the Hittites, Amorites, Jebusites, Perizzites and Hivites, out of the land before the Israelites (Exod. 23:28; 33:2; 34:11).

Several explanations have been given in defence of these instructions from God. Some say that these inhabitants had intruded and seized the lands which God had promised to Abraham's seed. Others claim that God's commandment was based upon their degeneracy. They had reached such low levels of degradation that it was for the moral interests of the rest of mankind that they should be swept off the face of the

THERE ARE APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN GOD'S NATURE AND HIS ACTIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. LIST ILLUSTRATIONS OF THESE AS THEY ARE DISCUSSED IN THIS SECTION.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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(Compare your answers with the text.)

earth. Others claim that the reason was more the fear of spiritual corruption of the Israelites. Since these inhabitants were pagan and idolatrous people, God's intent was to prevent the mixture of pagan practices with the worship of Jehovah. Bruce explains that there were only two alternatives, 'Either the Canaanites were to be spared to contaminate Israel with their abominations, until the latter became wholly unfit to be the instruments of revelation, or they must be swept off the face of the earth.'<sup>10</sup>

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart as an act of God is another illustration of moral difficulties. Exodus 8:15 says, 'But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.' Five plagues had already visited the Pharaoh, and he had refused to let the children go. He had resisted so many warnings and penalties that he had become completely unresponsive to God's voice. Thus this was not so much an act of God as the natural consequences of man's rebellion. The difficulty lies more in the Oriental's way of expressing an idea and the western mind's way of interpreting it. For the Oriental in that day, God's sovereignty made Him ultimately responsible for every event of history. Today a greater degree of freedom and responsibility for man's actions is attributed to him.

#### Difficulties related to man

A second group of moral difficulties involves the evidences of imperfect character among some of the most outstanding men of the Old Testament whom God used in dramatic ways. Abraham lied, saying that Sarah was his sister and not his wife, in order to save himself (Gen. 20:1-7). Noah got drunk after the flood (Gen. 9:20-24). Jacob deceived his father and thereby stole the birthright from Esau (Gen. 27:24-34). Moses killed an Egyptian (Exod. 2:12-21). David committed adultery (2 Sam. 11:2-4). Solomon had many wives and concubines (1 Kings 11:3). There are many more examples that could be mentioned.

Two or three things can be said about this matter. First, God does not require that a man be perfect in order to use his gifts. Second, the Bible pictures life in a realistic manner, without trying to cover up man's imperfections. And third, God probably used the men who were most dedicated and capable of serving Him.

Particularly disturbing to some are the atrocities committed by the people of God in the Old Testament. Special references have been made to some of the barbarous acts during the time of the judges as recorded in that book. However, can it be said that these individual acts of destruction and immorality are worse than some of the mass killings that take place today with atomic and hydrogen bombs and nuclear warfare? It is possible that more people are victims of man's sins against man today than in the Old Testament days.

The Bible contains references to acts and attitudes of saints which surprise some and create moral difficulties. Such is the case of the imprecatory psalms, in which people of God rejoice in the destruction of the enemy. They call upon God to help them destroy their enemies. Clyde T. Francisco gives four

#### CONTINUE LISTING THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE APPARENT INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN GOD'S NATURE AND HIS ACTIONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

#### FILL IN THE BLANKS.

Another moral difficulty in studying Old Testament ethics has to do with the imperfect c\_\_\_\_\_ of some of the most outstanding m\_\_\_\_\_ of the Old testament—men whom God used in dramatic ways.

(character, men)

<sup>10</sup>W.S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament* (Edinburg: T.&T. Clark, 1907), p. 288.

explanations of these psalms. First, hyperboles were used to express the people's intentions against their enemies, but they would not have carried out these intentions if they had had the opportunity. Second, the Hebrews were not able to distinguish between the sinner and the sin. This distinction should be made. Third, they had not developed the concept of loving one's enemies; this teaching came from Jesus later. Fourth, the lack of a clear doctrine of immortality caused them to look for retribution for evil in this life.<sup>11</sup>

**Difficulties related to defects in the moral law**

Some of the teachings in the Law present substandard levels, according to our standards of morality. In general, the legislation concerning divorce, slaves, women, and justice seems to be below today's requirements. This may be true, but these laws represent steps forward in the course of Israel's moral development. The laws concerning divorce, as set forth in Deuteronomy 24, gave greater protection to the wife. The laws concerning slaves were characterized by clemency and protection of the slave. The cities of refuge provided protection for the man who had killed by accident but who might otherwise be killed because of the 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth' level of justice that prevailed in that day.

**The solution to the moral difficulties**

By our standards of morality, the laws and practices in the Old Testament were in many cases deficient. However, the conditions of that day were probably more advanced as a result of the religion of Jehovah and His teachings than those in any other nation. God's laws were an accommodation to the level of comprehension and living of the people of that day. Also, the group or nation was considered of greater significance than the individual. This view is true in some cases today. But the most adequate solution to the moral difficulties lies in the principle of progressive revelation whereby God revealed Himself and His will to man gradually, step by step according to man's ability to assimilate it and to live by its standards. This means that God's requirements today may be higher than during Old Testament times. The emphases may be in areas that are different from that age. But each generation must take the teachings of the Bible and seek to apply their principles to its own age.

**Conclusion**

The Old Testament contains a challenging record of the norms for man's conduct throughout a period of approximately 1,500 to 2,000 years, from the time of Moses onward. It is a record of the struggle of the people of God to understand God's revelation, attempt to interpret it, and then apply it in their own lives. At times they stumbled, but then they experienced the God of forgiveness and restoration. They moved forward to a greater degree of faithfulness to God and to a greater sense of responsibility to their fellow-man. Thus the Old Testament ethical principles are of both historic and practical value for today. Although not all of these teachings are relevant today, many are. Others contain principles which can be applied to contemporary life.

<sup>11</sup>(Clyde T. Francisco, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1950), p. 217.

**LIST FRANCISCO'S FOUR EXPLANATIONS FOR THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

**GIVE SOME EXAMPLES OF THE MORAL DIFFICULTIES FOUND IN STUDYING OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS AS COMPARED TO OUR STANDARDS OF MORALITY.**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

**GIVE THREE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE APPARENT DEFICIENCIES IN OLD TESTAMENT MORALITY.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

**FILL IN THE BLANKS.**

P\_\_\_\_\_r\_\_\_\_\_ refers to God's gradual process of making Himself and His will known to men as they were able to comprehend it. P\_\_\_\_\_r\_\_\_\_\_ is the key to an adequate explanation of the m\_\_\_\_\_ differences between Old Testament times and ours.

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

## Home Study Exercise

**Basic assignment** (*Levels 1, 2, and 3*). Do the following exercise.

1. Why is a study of the Old Testament useful in understanding Christian ethics?

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2. What do the following names for God reveal about His character?

Elohim \_\_\_\_\_

Jehovah \_\_\_\_\_

Adonai \_\_\_\_\_

EI Shaddai \_\_\_\_\_

3. List and briefly describe the ethical attributes of God. Include with each a Bible passage which illustrates it.

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4. What does the study guide say is the image of God in man?

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5. Name two teachings about sin which make man responsible to God for his acts.

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6. Describe the hope the Old Testament offers for the pardon of sin.

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7. Explain the following verses:

Genesis 3:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_

8. How do the Ten Commandments illustrate the relationship between religion and ethics?

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9. What is the natural outcome of a genuine religious experience?

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10. List four examples from the Old Testament which show that the union of religion and ethics was a distinctive characteristic of Israel's faith.

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11. Explain the purpose of the covenant relationship.

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12. What did the sacrificial system do for the people of God in the Old Testament?

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13. What was the moral emphasis of the Israelites' being the people of God?

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14. List the limitations of Old Testament ethical teachings.

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15. Describe the moral difficulties encountered when examining the Old Testament from the ethical point of view.

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16. How can these difficulties be reconciled with our own ethical understanding?

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17. Explain how the principle of progressive revelation helps solve the moral difficulties in the Old Testament.

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**Supplementary assignment** (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 12-8 in *Introducing Christian Ethics* by Barnette, and do the following exercise.

1. Describe how Hebrew ethics is grounded in the nature of God.
2. Explain the role of fellowship with God in Hebrew ethics.
3. Why is obedience to God's will the basic principle of Old Testament ethics?
4. Describe two things involved in God's covenant and election-love.

**Advanced assignment** (*Level 3*). Do the following additional exercise based on the above reading assignment.

1. What was the role of God's will in Hebrew ethics?
2. What was the Hebrew ethic of sin?
3. Describe the social goal of Old Testament ethics.

## Seminar Discussion

1. Is it possible to judge fairly the ancient Hebrews by our Christian standards? Why?
2. What is the relationship of Old Testament and New Testament ethics?
3. What does the Old Testament teach about sin?
4. Relate the covenant relationship and the concept of the Kingdom of God to Hebrew ethics.
5. What lessons can we learn from Old Testament teachings that will help us in our own moral living?