

The Law #2 Statutes & Ordinances

Michael Heiss—September 21, 2024

Well, today is part two, and we are going to look at statutes and ordinances. So, let's start out with a definition. There are two definitions, one that you find for statute and one that you find for ordinance. But this is English, not Hebrew, and you'll see why I emphasize that.

Here is a good definition for statute in English. Before I give you this definition, though, I should mention the name of one of the most colorful, flamboyant billionaire Texans the United States has ever produced. Many of you may well remember his name: H. Ross Perot who was truly a colorful individual. He was running for the presidency back in 1992 against Bill Clinton and Mr. Bush.

This is how he would describe Democrats and Republicans: *'Not a dime's worth the difference between them.'*

Well believe it or not, we're going to see that when it comes to statutes and judgments *there's not a dime's worth of difference between them*, because they come from the same root word. Now with that as a backdrop, let's begin our definition:

- statute—a formable enactment by a legislature; a document setting forth such an enactment
- ordinance—an authoritative rule or law

What's the difference?

I did think it was cute that they added something in the dictionary about city ordinance, 'a city ordinance against excessive horn-blowing. Now that's that kind of stuff by funny bone, I must admit. That's what an ordinance really is:

- sidewalk shall be of a certain nature
- a sign shall be a certain size
- 15 mile an hour speed limit driving in a school zone

or whatever it may be; that's an ordinance!

But we're going to see that they all come from one Hebrew word, not two or more derivatives. But I always like to start out when I talk about laws to one Scripture. You all know what that is if you know me.

We read where God is talking to Isaac, telling him, don't go to Egypt, stay in the land and 'I'll bless you:

Genesis 26:5: **"Because Abraham obeyed**

My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My Laws.'

Now, this word for statute that we have here (inaudible) under the heading of 'choq.' There are really two Hebrew words, but was a derivative of the other.

- 'choq'
- 'huqqah'

But you can see the similarity; they're the same letters.

Now, let's take a look at how we see them in Exo. 18. Here is the time frame where Israelites have crossed the Red Sea and before the Ten Commandments are given. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, has come to meet him. There's a happy family reunion, and then Jethro gets to see Moses doing what he does.

Exodus 18:13. "And on the next day it came to pass that Moses sat to judge the people. And the people stood by Moses from the morning to the evening.

In essence, Jethro says, Moses, 'What are you doing? What is all this?'" (v 14)

Verse 15: "And Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a matter, they come to me. And I judge between one and another, **and I make known the statutes of God and His Laws**'" (vs 15-16).

Statute—'choq'—that is a definition of a Hebrew word for *statute*. 'laws' is indeed 'torah.' So, that makes sense.

Exodus 12:14: "And this day shall be a memorial to you. And you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast **as a law** forever"—the word is 'choq,' not 'torah,' which we translate as statute or ordinance. Why? *Because they're all Laws of God!*

Statutes and ordinances are all under 'torah'; all rules and regulations. So, you can translate that any way you want to; or as my leading Hebrew professor says, 'Translators license.'

What's the mood of the day? If you feel like translating an ordinance, translate it *an ordinance!* If you feel like translating it a statute; *translate it a statute!* It's all the same thing, *rule and regulation!*

Exo. 15—Here we have a time when the Israelites were murmuring, waters were bitter, things were bad.

Exodus 15:25: “And he cried to the LORD. And the LORD showed him a tree. And when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made **a decree and a law...**”

What is this decree? ‘choq.’ It’s called *law, decree, proclamation*, it’s all the same. *And there’s not a dime worth of is the difference!*

So we need not be confused. You’re wondering, what’s a statute? What’s an ordinance? *They’re the same, no difference between them!*

Then we have *decree* is ‘choq.’

Now the law, interestingly, is ‘mishpat,’ which means judgment. I have a theory here; I think I understand it. But we’ll go through this whole thing before we understand it.

Why ‘mishpat’? Exo. 21, 22, 23, the judgments of God, ‘mishpat.’ That’s what they are. Why it says that, in my opinion, in my opinion. See, I’ve written that. ‘Open your eyes that you may see,’ because God’s passing a judgment upon them; they were rebelling against him.

So, the Hebrew thought would be he made a decree. And then he’s passing a judgment on how they’re reacting to that decree. We’re going to see that later in both Joshua and in Exo. 2 with Moses. Otherwise, you would think it would be another word for just *law*. But it isn’t; it’s not!

Psalms 99:7: “He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept His **testimonies** and **the statute** that He gave them.”

We know what testimony is, *a declaration!* But the *statute* is what we would expect it to be: ‘choq’ *But look at what we have in*

Jeremiah 31:35: “Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day and the **ordinances** of the moon...”

What is this word for ordinances? ‘choq’ It’s all the same; it’s just that:

- in some cases we have masculine
- in some cases we have feminine
- in some cases we have singular
- in some cases we have plural

But it’s all the same root letter! ‘choq’

- in Jeremiah, ‘choq’ means *ordinance*
- in the Psalm, ‘choq’ means *statute*

Once again, there is no real difference between them! It is fascinating; it really is!

Jos. 24—we will see something interesting here. This is at the very end when Joshua was dismissing the people and they’re going to go to their homes, their inheritances.

Joshua 24:25: “And Joshua made a covenant with the people that day...”

Oh, a lot of covenants; it’s amazing how many covenants God made. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David.

“...He made a covenant with the people that day and set them a statute and an ordinance” (v 25). Here we have again, statute and ordinance. What is statute? ‘choq’

We’re familiar with that. But what is the ordinance? ‘mishpat’—judgment!

Why this judgment? Because Joshua is giving them the statute. We’re going to have to go back to Deut., ‘God spoke to Moses’ to bring us up today. And then He’s giving a ‘mishpat,’ a judgment, *meaning God is going to judge the people based on how well they obey the statute, the ‘choq’.*

It’s all going to be rolled into one. And we’re going to see before we’re through, we’re going to see ‘torah,’ the word *for statutes, judgments, commandments, precepts*, all of them, and words all rolled into one ‘meat ball of wax,’ so to speak, attached to ***the Word! In the beginning was the Word! And the Word was God and with God!***

Because ***all statutes, ordinances, judgments, laws, testimony all came from Him*** and formed a composite whole. But we’re going to have to wait a week or two before we fully see that.

Numbers 18:8: “And the LORD spoke to Aaron, ‘Behold, I have also given you the charge of My heave offerings of all the Holy things of the children of Israel. I have given them to you by reason of the anointing, and to your sons, **by an ordinance forever**’”—‘choq’—they are truly all the same.

Deut. 5—we have the Ten Commandments given, and then God speaks to Moses.:

Deuteronomy 5:31: “But as for you, you stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the **commandments** and **the statutes and the judgments...**”—*that is correct!*

Oh, that is the word for command—‘tsavah’—when God says do it, you do it; no ifs, ands, or buts! That’s an order, like in the military. Orders is orders.

‘ So I’ll speak to you all the orders I have for Israel.

- statutes—‘choq’
- judgment—‘mishpat’

“...which you shall teach them that they may do them... [v 32] ...And you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you...” (vs 31-32).

Now we begin to get the hint here that the orders, the statutes, all the laws and regulations, and then the judgments that you are to do, depending upon how well they obey those statutes and laws.

Deuteronomy 6:1: **“Now, these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God commanded to teach you...”**

They’re going to be judged by how well they do those statutes/ordinances—one thing.

Numbers 9:14—*second Passover*: “And if a stranger shall live among you, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, he shall do according to the law of the Passover, and according to its ordinance. You shall have *only* one law, both for the stranger and for him that was born in the land.”

What is the word for law here? ‘choq’ or ‘choqqah’—not even talking about torah.

And then the ordinance that we have is ordinance—‘mishpat,’

Again, we’re going to have the judgment in there. And let me just give you one or two quotes here. Whenever I stray from *A Faithful Version* when it comes to the Old Testament, I really do enjoy Dr. Edward Fox’s translation: *The Schocken Bible!*

Oftentimes he calls them *rules and regulation*. What happened to statutes and ordinances? Dr. Fox says *rules and regulations*. Why? *He knows that a statute and ordinance is a rule or regulation. So, why bother with statutes and ordinances!*

Once again, it’s translators’ privilege. I remember I used to love to integrate baseball. I remember that years and years, they used to have an individual come on describing how you root for the team and so forth. And as he would put it in his colloquial language: ‘ya pays ya money, ya takes ya choice.’

When you read the Torah, when you read the Hebrew, whatever your mood is of the day, you take your choice. It sounds stupid, but it’s real.

We have all these English words to cover just one or two Hebrew words, and it all depends upon how you feel.

Numbers 9:14—*Schocken Bible*: “Now when a sojourner and sojourns with you and sacrifices a Passover offering to Adonai, according to the Law of the Passover, and according to its regulation...”

Many times he will translate his ordinances as laws. *Because they’re all laws, rulings, regulations, statutes, ordinances*; they all come under the same category, the same heading.

But in English, we have so many different words, we want to have variety. We want to spice things up, so that’s how we spice them up.

Deuteronomy 4:1: “And now, O Israel, hearken to the statutes and to the judgments, which I teach you, in order to do them, so that you may live and go in and possess the land...”

Verse 5—*Moses saying*: “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me ...”—‘mishpat’—the command and order.

Don’t mess with an order. When God says to do something, *we do it! We don’t think twice, we do it!*

“...even as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you should do so in the land where you go to possess it” (v 5).

- statutes—‘choq’
- judgments—‘mishpat’

So, what we have for our ball of wax today is that God issues His Law, be you thinking of a statute for ordinance.

Then He’s attaching ‘mishpat’ to ‘choq’. Because ‘mishpat’ is the judgment that God will render, ***depending on how you do them or how we don’t do them.***

So, these laws, these statutes, these ordinances, all of them are there to guide us, to direct us. As I mentioned before, I think once or twice, I remember Dr. Herman Hoeh; I got to work for him. He was very cryptic and enigmatic. He really was! And he would say something, and then you’d have to say: What did he really say?

Because you could take it two or three different ways. But there was one thing he said I remember very well. He said, “If you want to understand directions and God’s mind, read the Torah, read the Law, and you will see how God’s mind works and how he attaches words.

Because God has a reason for every word that's in here. He doesn't make mistakes. He doesn't mess around. ***He says what He means and He means what He says!***

We have to learn to be in tune with the words He puts in here. He means something by them. So when He uses statutes and judgments combined, or sometimes another English word that is also judgment, He's saying that ***here are the statutes, and now I expect you to obey them! You will be judged by how well you obey them.***

We have them here to teach us what to do and how to do it. Or other times, how not to do, what not to do.

But all those come under the heading of 'torah' and here we have today statutes and ordinances. So once again, I sum up: Statutes, ordinances, 'not a dimes worth of difference between them.' All come from one basic Hebrew word, 'choq' and it's derivative.

So, when you read the Scripture, when you read Deuteronomy, Exodus, Numbers—it doesn't matter--and God says, 'This is a statute, I am giving you an ordinance.' Just think *a rule, a regulation, a procedure.*

It's not something esoteric. You don't have to think, this is a statute but this is an ordinance. No, they're all the same!

When we go into *precepts* and we're going to see that 'precept' is similar to what we call statute and ordinance. But ***it's more personal and has more to do with morality!***

It's used, not very often, it's used mostly in Psa. 119, but you could also find a smattering of them throughout the Old Testament.

So, there we have statutes and ordinances virtually one the same, and ***not a dime's worth the difference between them!***

So, hopefully this will help us get a better feel for statutes and ordinances as they appear in English.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Genesis 26:5
- 2) Exodus 18:13, 15-16
- 3) Exodus 12:14
- 4) Exodus 15:25
- 5) Psalm 99:7
- 6) Jeremiah 31:35
- 7) Joshua 24:25
- 8) Numbers 18:8
- 9) Deuteronomy 5:31-32

- 10) Deuteronomy 6:1
- 11) Numbers 9:14
- 12) Deuteronomy 4:1, 5

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Exodus 18:14; 21-23; 2
- Psalm 119

MH:bo/po
Transcribed: 9/27/24

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