

Reflections on Morality on the Old Testament

Genesis Chapter 1 and 2
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10/10/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

Genesis 1

In Genesis chapter 1 the moral vision is one of being fruitful and multiplying as an act of obedience to the blessing that God has created His creation for. Additionally, for Humanity there are the added “blessings” of subduing the earth and ruling over it along with the observation of the many types of food which lie before us.

Genesis 2

In this passage the moral vision would be for man and woman to find a life of God’s blessing in the garden through sharing in the work and rule of the garden as they enjoyed the fruit of many trees together.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

Genesis 1

“Duties and obligations” stem from the reception of a command such as the command given in Genesis 1:22. On this the fifth day God blessed (plants and animals) by issuing them a command to be fruitful and multiply. Thus worship and blessing are intertwined in creation’s act of being fruitful. Again in Genesis 1:28, Man and Woman receive the same blessing from God. However, in these words there are two added commands that of subduing the earth and ruling over every creature that resides here as one. Then a second command as God inventories the many types of food that Man and Woman can partake of. Thus the duties and obligations for Humanity are established by God in chapter one of Genesis.

Genesis 2

In Genesis 2:15, God places Man in the garden to “work and watch over it,” therefore one obligation and duty is for us to work and watch over God’s creation. Next God instructed the Man that he could eat from any tree he wished except for one of them, therefore one of man’s duties became preventing consumption from this tree. Man’s next

duty was to find a suitable helper, which he could not. So God created Woman who was intended to share the duties and obligations of the man in equal partnership.

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

Genesis 1

In light of the moral vision in this passage I should in some way strive to be fruitful in my existence as an act of submission to God's blessing and command. Furthermore it is imperative that I lead a life that is disciplined, ordered and that I rule over the creation that I find around me as one who will be accountable to God for its submission to the authority which He has granted me. Finally, and most enjoyably, I am to enjoy being at the table that He has prepared for us! The moral vision of seeing the full blessing of God at every breakfast, dinner and lunchtime and thanking Him for His goodness to us should compel every Christian to always give thanks at every meal.

Genesis 2

In light of this passage I am called to realize that my wife was not designed by God to be secondarily as an add-on to my life, but rather as a primary part of my being. Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh and that I should always treat her accordingly. Likewise we should together seek to preserve God's commands in our home as it is now our garden.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

Genesis 1

The community that is needed here would be one that is growing and thriving (fruitful). This community would also need to be ordered and disciplined in the way it oversees (subdues) the area in which it rules. Finally this community would be one that experiences table fellowship robustly.

Genesis 2

The community here can consist of just two people and God. But the vision would be to live in unity and a clear purpose that follows God's commands.

Reflections on Morality on the Old Testament

Exodus 20:1-21
Christopher J. Kinner
10/10/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

As I spent time reading and reflecting on this passage during the last week, I was struck by the many moral visions that could be drawn from this scripture. The initial command (v2) and the concluding command (v17) seem to create a parenthetical comment on the importance to God of the 'thought life' of every individual He resides in covenant with. With the depth of this insight in mind, one can more fully understand the caution of the people in verses 19-20. While Moses as a mediator could not see their 'inner thoughts,' God could and was clearly setting this covenant with His people and letting them know His vision for how they should live would contain more than just exterior rules and actions but also require a restructuring of their inner thoughts. Thus the end here could be seen as a society that followed God's will not only in action, but also in purity of thought.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

The obligations incumbent upon the hearers here would be to deeply impact the way in which every part of life is lived. From the setting of a weekly work schedule followed by a day of rest (v8), to the way one talks (v7) and lives with his neighbors (v16-17); community life was being radically altered by these commands from God. The duties and obligations would start in the minds of those that were to follow these commands and the changed thinking would show in the absence of theft, murder and adultery within the confines of this society of people that were residing in covenant with God.

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

When reflecting on this passage I was struck with how God calls His people to worship Him through the simple actions of everyday life. I should always place God first in my thoughts and resist confining Him to a stereotype or image but rather seek a constant living relationship with Him as He actively leads me and directs my paths. Honoring God with my speech, my time and even my heritage are all ways I worship Him in my everyday life. This 'quiet witness' causes me not to murder, commit adultery, steal or lie, but to honor God through a life of thought and action within my community. This makes me a 'good neighbor,' and one who lives in a constant state of worship by honoring God's leadership as my King.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

Clearly a community of believers is needed in order to follow these directives and move in the direction that will result in its moral vision. The community would be one committed not only to the importance of exterior actions but one that takes great care to encourage development of the inner person and provide the mentoring and spiritual disciplines needed to shape the thought life of the individuals within its care. This community at its center would need to be committed to worshipping God continually by realizing that He can be lifted up continually in the way that we live our daily lives.

Reflections on Morality in Leviticus 25

Christopher J. Kinner

10/23/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

Clearly in this passage the end or moral vision revolves around the appropriate utilization of "God's land" by His people as they inhabit it. The Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee were ways in which God's people could both celebrate their love and care for each other in community as well as trusting God for His continued provision and care for those He had provided this land for. One gets a sense especially in verses 35-55 that the need to honor the poor and the needy in 'God's land' has a direct correlation to the productivity of the land and God's joy as He resides with His people in this theocracy.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

The duties and obligations placed on the hearers were first to observe a 'Sabbath year' as they entered the land (reminiscent of the scene in the garden). Then in following years, the year of Jubilee was intended to be a time that the nation both displayed its trust in God as well as in each other as a 'family' through forgiving debts, setting slaves free, observing God's care for them and the land and allowing those who had gone away to return home. The obligations were clearly meant to be more than simply rules, but also acts of faith and trust in God to restore, protect and provide for His people in God's land.

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

This passage calls us to be a people that trust God for His provision. Verse 21 expresses God's desire to produce a crop in the sixth year that will produce a crop that will last for three years. This provision is above and beyond what we could simply expect from our own efforts. Further, God encourages His people to reexamine their view of land ownership as God reminds them that He owns the land and they are not to "permanently sell it" because it is His (Vs. 23). Finally, we are encouraged through this passage to be a people that "allow redemption" (vs. 24). Whether it is for those who are slaves, poor or without land, God's people are called to engage in the regular practice and celebration of forgiveness and restoration in God's community and land.

In short, we are being called to be a people that tithe faithfully fully trusting God for His provision; a people that are not storing material wealth for security and those that forgive the debts of others and celebrate those that find redemption and freedom in God's kingdom.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

The kind of community needed to move toward this passage's moral vision is a community that is one of a mature trust in the power and provision of God for His people. This community must also seek to love and value each other as occupants of God's land. This community must realize that God owns this land and has the right to define its use by its inhabitants. This community must also realize God can be trusted to have the best interest of this community in mind and His rules are not meant to limit freedom, but rather promote freedom, peace and joy in the lives of the people that make up this community.

Reflections on Morality in Isaiah 58

Christopher J. Kinner

10/30/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

In this passage there is a clear discussion of how fasting and observance of the Sabbath have been misunderstood and mistreated by the people of God. The empty rituals that people are following are clearly discussed in this passage and a clear call (trumpet call) by the prophet are being given in an attempt to ‘bring them back’ from the disconnect of these ‘right actions’ that are accompanied by ‘wrong inner motives’ have created in their community life. Clearly the intention of God is to strengthen His people as they draw close to Him, to be more like Him; not to provide an excuse for them to become hostile with each other.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

The duties and obligations incumbent on the hearers of these words are to cease their greed and view the opportunity to be humbled by God as one that enables them to share grace and love with their neighbors and the least among them (v8). Through a right heart God’s glory will burst out among this humility and minister to others in the community and God Himself will become available to those that trust God and honor His requests; not simply in actions, but in spirit as well.

God will satisfy the needs of those that follow Him and make them like a well watered garden (v11) if they would care for the hungry and give to the oppressed (v10). These designs should remind God’s people again of His desire to return them to their rightful place under the authority of God and also in community in ‘the garden’ with one another.

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

This passage calls us to be a people that “remain in Him” with our hearts in love and not simply in right religious actions. As I read this passage I was reminded of Jesus’ words to us in John 15:1-8. The fruit this passage from Isaiah asks us to bear is a true love for our neighbor even when we are tired, hungry or being self-centered to assure our own comfort. These are times in our society when we can find excuses to become ‘snappy’ and mean spirited. However, God asks us to allow Him to tend to His garden and make it grow rich with His kindness. As we love Him and truly trust Him we will bear the fruit of loving others for His sake.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

The kind of community needed to move toward this passage's moral vision is a community that is one not based on outward religious actions, but rather fully committed to loving God and serving Him out of love for Him. In Matthew 6:16-18, Jesus encouraged this same behavior for those that fast and it is imperative for Christians to know that God as the vine alone brings health and vitality to our lives. Jesus was tempted with bread but chose to trust only God (and His word) and as believers we need to fully trust our God with the ability to preserve us (as He has promised to) and allow us to love others in spite of the limitations this world may try to place in our path each day. Caring for the needs of others and seeking justice for the oppressed needs to be done without excuse by the Christian community in our world today.

Reflections on Morality in Genesis 34 and Leviticus 18

Christopher J. Kinner 10/23/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

Genesis 34

There are two moral visions evident in this passage. The first is the importance to the sons of Jacob of the fidelity of their family. This was clearly important enough to them that they would not exchange the wealth and comfort of this land for it. The second is that there is clearly more to joining into the promises of Abraham than simply being circumcised.

Leviticus 18

There are also two moral visions evident in this passage. The first is found in verses 3, 24 and 30. It is stated here that God's people are to live differently than any other people or nations that surround them. Secondly they are to observe a difference in the way they conduct themselves sexually. Both in terms of the community and family members; restraint is to be used and God's laws followed.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

Genesis 34

The duties and obligations based on the hearers of these words are to be fully committed to the family of God and not willing to exchange its benefits for anything the world may offer. Additionally, it is important to note that those who simply appear to be a part of God's family only leave themselves more open to judgment rather than finding any favor or safety in God's kingdom.

Leviticus 18

The duties and obligations based on the hearers of these words are to live lives that stand in stark contrast to those in the nations around them. Being sexually 'pure' as God has commanded them to live will not only bring them "life" (v. 5), but will also prevent them from being expelled from the land (v. 28).

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

Genesis 34

This passage calls me to become a Christian that does not bend or give in to the lucrative security of the world to overlook an injustice. Once in ministry I was tempted to receive a higher salary if I would overlook an injustice and I resigned. I did so in order to bring the entire situation into the open. God honored this tough situation and I know I can be the type of man this passage calls me to be.

Leviticus 18

This passage reminds all believers that God detests sexual sins. What we do with our bodies is important to God. Even though we are surrounded by a culture that does not respect, honor or support these beliefs, we are still called to live differently as God's people.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

Genesis 34

The community needed to move toward this moral vision; one that has an unwavering commitment to God and trusts Him fully. Unlike Jacob (v. 30) who became fearful after the fact, the community sought here would trust God and also seek to keep itself from being co-opted by non-believers. This community would not be able to stand for injustice and would react harshly to those that might seek to harm its members.

Leviticus 18

The community needed to move toward this moral vision would be one that takes sexual purity and sexual infidelity seriously. This community of believers also must bond together and support each other in living differently than the nations or people that live around them or have come before them. This community must seek to follow God's statutes in whatever place God brings them to and in doing so become a people that does not defile this land.

Reflections on Morality in Proverbs 1

Christopher J. Kinner 11/15/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

The moral vision evident in this passage is one that directs the hearer to "fear God" (v 7) and to turn from despising wisdom and discipline in order to "live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm" (v33) . The wise are encouraged to "listen" (v5) and the discerning to get "guidance", which suggests to this reader that the chief end to this passage is to show us that there is a greater wisdom to be followed than our own.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

The duties and obligations based on the hearers of these words are to be fully committed to hearing and pursuing the (mind) wisdom of God and not willing to exchange its benefits for anything the world may offer. Several passages reflect differing ways in which one may be discouraged from this pursuit. Vs. 8 through 19 highlight those who will try to dissuade you from pursuing God and seek "ill gotten gain instead". While vs. 20 through 32 highlight those who reject wisdom because they are mockers who are wayward, ignorant and simple. Complacency is shown here as intolerable and as leading to destruction (v 32).

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

This passage calls me to become a Christian that seeks the mind of God constantly and actively. I am instructed here not to be the person that is found in v 28 and to seek God at all times, not simply when I am in need. This passage calls me to listen, fear (respect) and to be at ease as I sit in the counsel of the Lord. As the God of the ages we are mere young sons to Him, no matter how old or wise we think we are and this passage reminds us of this.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

The community needed to move toward this moral vision; one that fears God and seeks to attain His guidance and wise counsel at all times. This community would not entice its members to run off after ill-gotten gain or listen to mockers who despise the Lord. This community instead would desire to listen to God and watch for Him to 'stretch out His hand' (v 24). When God spoke to this community His words would be heeded and His advice followed (v 24-25). This community would be known for its humility, discipline and knowledge and also for its safety, easy going nature and lack of fear and worry. I would like to live in such a community.

Reflections on Morality in Deut 30

Christopher J. Kinner 12/06/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

The moral vision evident in this passage is God’s people entering into the Promised Land and remembering to follow God’s laws once there. This will allow God to bless them and prosper them in this place that He has provided for them. There are additional encouragements, should they fall away from the Lord that they will be able to return to Him if they will again obey the Lord and follow His commands (v8).

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

The duties and obligations based on the hearers of these words are to “love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess” (v. 16).

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

This passage calls me to become a Christian that “love(s) the LORD your (my) God, listen(s) to his voice, and hold(s) fast to him. For the LORD is your (my) life” (V.20). As I commit to listening to the voice of God, I also commit to reading and understanding scripture as His instruction for my life. Much like those that entered the Promised Land, I know that following God’s instruction for my life can bring His protection and prosperity. But, even if I face hardship or despair, I can always maintain the blessed hope that one day I will be able to go home.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

The community needed to move toward this moral vision is one that loves the Lord and walks in His ways and keeps His demands, decrees and laws (v 16). This community would need to be one that is focused on daily worship of the Lord and one that thoroughly embraces the study of His word so that His demands, decrees and laws would be kept. Each individual in this community would also take seriously their daily time with the Lord and each individual would need to seek the Lord to walk with Him personally. The level of commitment required here would be intense from everyone in the community, but the benefits would well be worth it.

Reflections on Morality in Exodus 18:13-26

Christopher J. Kinner 12/14/05

1. What are the “ends” or moral vision(s) in the passage?

There are two moral visions evident in this passage. One regards the importance of a leader to delegate responsibilities appropriately and to train others in the community to be responsible for community life. The second moral vision is for community members to step up and look for ways that they can support the efforts of their leader.

2. What are the duties and obligations incumbent upon the hearers of these words necessary for achieving this moral vision?

The duties and obligations based on the hearers of these words are to listen not only to God, but also to others (in this case a father-in-law), that have our best interest at heart (and God's and the communities). Also it is important that we look at verse 19 and take note of the important work that only Moses could do for his people. The hearer of these words needs to realize that the strength of a leader relies on his reliance on others in the community and clear focus on the tasks he has been called to fulfill. Likewise, the strength of the community relies on its ability to provide people who are qualified to support the leader.

3. What kind of person does this passage call you to become in light of its moral vision?

This passage calls me to become a Christian that listens to God and also others humbly. This passage also calls me to take time to examine the specific goals and tasks that God has shaped me for and those that He desires to utilize others to accomplish. Most significantly for this class I have found that we must take time to teach the qualified leaders around us the ethical use of God's word so that they may assist others in making the appropriate judgments regarding how life in God's Kingdom is to be lived. It is not anyone's place to make all the decisions.

4. What kind of community is needed in order to perform this passage of Scripture and move toward its moral vision?

The community needed to move toward this moral vision is one that honors God and each other in many facets of daily life. It is also a community that is intent on finding out what God's word (law) has to say regarding much of our daily lives. This community must have a leader that fully supports God's wisdom and promotes God's ethical judgments and also raise up a qualified support system to carry out the task of training community members in the proper execution of daily kingdom life.