

Explaining The Chosen: Season 2, Episode 6: Unlawful

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The Chosen is such a well-done series based on the Bible. Its creators aim to depict the lives of Jesus and his disciples in a way that's true to the Bible and their culture.

If you haven't seen The Chosen, [click here to start watching!](#)

Looking for my other articles [Explaining The Chosen? Click here!](#)

Ahimelech and the Showbread

The opening scene of this episode comes from 1 Samuel 21. I love how the creators of The Chosen tie the Old and New Testaments together! That's how the Bible is – not two different parts – just one incredible story!

Ahimelech and his wife, Jafa, discuss the possibility that their oldest child won't be able to be a priest due to what sounds like an injury. A man couldn't serve in the Temple or the Tabernacle if he had any handicap, sore, congenital disability, etc. (Lev. 21). Ahimelech decided to train his other son to serve instead.

While training Abiathar, Ahimelech gets a visit from King David. According to Leviticus 24:9, God said the showbread in the Temple and Tabernacle could only be eaten by the priests, but we see this command being broken to save the lives of David and his men.

There is a concept in Judaism called pikuach nefesh, where saving a life takes higher priority than keeping a Commandment. Because humans are made in God's image, the pikuach nefesh, meaning "watching over a soul," allows for breaking a Law to save someone's life. This principle teaches that, while we're to obey God, we must not follow in an automated fashion but navigate the world and its numerous different situations with common sense and discernment from the Spirit.

Jesus brought this concept up in Matthew 12:11 (and later in this episode) when he talked about rescuing a sheep from a pit on the Sabbath. Usually, sheep-keeping duties would be suspended on Shabbat, but his point was that no one would leave it there to suffer until the Sabbath ended, and you would use common sense and rescue it anyway.

Although this principle isn't mentioned anywhere in the Bible, Jewish rabbis have concluded that this is okay with God because, in the story of David and his men eating

the showbread, for example, God didn't punish Ahimelech or David for them eating the bread.

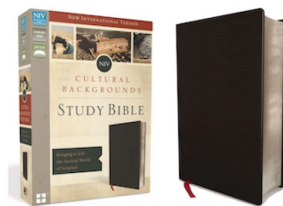
When Rahab hid the spies in her house in the Book of Joshua, she lied to keep them safe. Usually, lying would be wrong, but in this case, she was protecting God's people and helping to further His kingdom. Her actions led to her and her family being rewarded with protection and even being listed in the genealogy of Jesus a couple thousand years later!

God made Laws for us to follow but doesn't want us to become mindless robots in our obedience. He wants us to love the people around us and use the common sense and discernment He has given us in all situations.

The Showbread

I find the showbread an intriguing addition to God's design for the Temple. Each week, the priest was to remove the bread from the previous week and place new, freshly made bread on the table of the showbread. The priests then ate the "old" bread.

We know God doesn't need us to bake bread to sustain Him, so why was fresh bread required, displayed on a table made just for that purpose, in the Temple each week?



[Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, Leather-Bound, NIV](#)

Like other things God has commanded us to do, there are lessons in the showbread. There are probably many more lessons, but the one I see clearly is that of God's eternal provision and faithfulness. There were twelve loaves of showbread displayed each week. The twelve loaves represent the twelve tribes that descended from Jacob (Israel) – Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad, Asher, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh.

God has miraculously cared for and protected His chosen people throughout history, even through the most horrific adversities. When they were wandering in the wilderness, God provided. They remain a nation even though they have been split apart

and scattered all over the earth, and evil people throughout history have tried to extinguish them. The twelve loaves show that God is a faithful God. He can be trusted and knows what's best for His people.

Some trust in chariots

When Mary and Ramah talk about Mary Magdalene being missing, Mary says, "some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in Adonai our God." This is a beautiful reminder from Psalm 20:7.

While the rest of the world is being tossed on waves of emotion and stress of the world, we can be solid and focused because our trust doesn't lie in the things and people around us. We know that, no matter what happens here on earth, God is in control, and He's the ruler of the universe. Even more than that, we're His people; he knows and cares for us personally!

This verse is such wisdom from Mary's character. As Believers, when we see the world's problems begin to affect us, giving us anxiety and depression about our circumstances, we need to check to see if our trust has fallen away from our God and replace our focus where it belongs.

613 Laws

The Sons of Thunder, James and John, watched Simon the Zealot perform his morning exercises and commented that they couldn't be Zealots because the 613 Laws were already too much for them.

They refer to the 613 commandments because that's how many commandments were given in the Torah. Rabbis studied the Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy), looking for the times God told His people to do something. They found 613 times and concluded that there are 613 total commandments. The 613 includes the Ten Commandments, which summarize the other 603 commandments into ten more general statements.

Many of these commandments cover how to run the Temple. Others say how we're to treat others, such as Leviticus 19:18, which commands us to "love your neighbor as yourself." And still others tell us how our relationship with God should be, as in Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The creators of The Chosen show the disciples bemoaning the commandments they must obey, but the Bible teaches us to have a good attitude about God's Laws instead. Here are some things the Bible says about God's Laws:

They are perfect: Psalms 19:7 (this verse will be quoted later in this episode by Shmuel in his conversation with Dunash), James 1:25

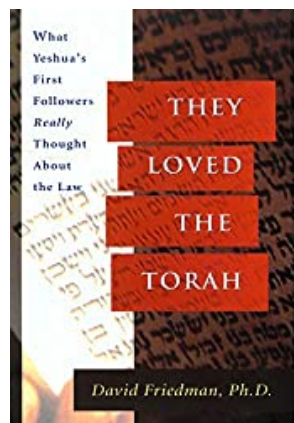
They're not burdensome, and obeying them shows we love God: Deuteronomy 30:11, 1 John 5:1-5

They're not just for Israel but for all people: Numbers 15:15-16

They bring us freedom: Psalms 119:44-45, James 2:12

They are holy and good: Romans 7:12, 1 Timothy 1:8

They should be our delight: Psalms 1:2, 119:35, Proverbs 29:18, Romans 7:22



[They Loved the Torah: What Yeshua's First Followers Really Thought About the Law](#)

This list is just some of the positive things Scripture says about the Law, although there are many more! Now let's look at what Jesus had to say about the Law.

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 5:17-19, (NASB)

Here's another quote from Jesus about the Commandments:

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

John 14:2, (NASB)

And yet another:

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:10, (NASB)

And one last quote from Jesus concerning the Law:

And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is *only* One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Matthew 19:16-17, (NASB)

It may seem like aiming to keep all 613 Laws in the Bible is confining and will bring a life of suffering, but the Bible tells us the opposite. Our God gave us a list of the best ways to live, and, as His people, we should embrace them and the blessings they bring to our lives.

And, while we're on the subject of Laws, I'll make clear that the commandments God gives show us how to live, but they do not save us. As we grow in faith closer to Him, we will continually align our lives with His ways and increase in obedience to Him. As we do this, the Spirit will convict us, and we will further embrace and learn to love the Laws He gave us out of His love for us. Through the process of maturing in faith, we will align our lives more and more with what God has in mind for us.



Holy Spirit Eilat Necklace

Not even half of a beitzah

Thomas surveyed the amount of food the disciples had and lamented that they didn't "even have half a beitzah of flour." The word "beitzah" means "egg" in Hebrew, but the measurement "beitzah" was an amount equivalent to the capacity occupied by one egg. Think about it. How much flour takes up the same amount of space as one egg? Not much! Thomas was right to be concerned – except they happened to be with Jesus, who ensures they're well provided for!

The Son of Man

The two rabbis, Dunash and Shmuel, discussed the "sin" of Jesus, telling the former paralytic to carry his mat on Shabbat. Shmuel pointed out that Jesus had "invoked the title "Son of Man from the prophet Daniel."

Here's the verse Shmuel was referring to.

I kept looking in the night visions,

And behold, with the clouds of heaven

One like a Son of Man was coming,

And He came up to the Ancient of Days

And was presented before Him.

Daniel 7:13, (NASB)

Most Jewish and Christian sources say the Aramaic idiom “Son of Man” in this verse refers to the Messiah. The term “Son of Man” is also used throughout the book of Ezekiel and elsewhere in the Bible, where it’s used to describe humans. Saying they’re “Sons of Man” highlights the contrast between mere mortals and the Almighty God.

In response to Shmuel’s comment, Dunash says, “yes, many have.” What does he mean that “many” have invoked the title “Son of Man”?

Josephus records the lives of other messiah-type figures that lived around the same time Jesus was on earth. These other messiah figures may have been what the character Dunash was referring to. He may have also been referring to Ezekiel and others that called themselves “Son of man” in a non-messianic way.

Second witness

Further on in the conversation between Dunash and Shmuel, Dunash asked Shmuel about a second witness to confirm what happened at the Pool of Bethesda when Jesus told the paralytic to carry his mat.



[What Does it Mean to Be Chosen?: An Interactive Bible Study by Amanda and Dallas Jenkins](#)

A second witness wasn’t just a good way to confirm the validity of a testimony. It’s required in the Bible to convict someone. Leviticus 19:15 says that two witnesses must be present to convict someone. While a second witness could obviously still lie, this was to prevent most cases where a person could falsely accuse someone of a crime.

An Abandoned Woman

Shmuel brings up a devastating situation. When a woman was the sole witness to her husband's death, she not only carried the grief of witnessing his death but had her life completely ruined afterward.

The law of the abandoned woman, the agunah, was another fence drawn around the Law by the Pharisees of the time. Because of the two-witness Law, they created this set of circumstances for a woman who was the only witness to her husband's death. They tried their best to ensure that the Law was obeyed, but this situation would have put widows in a desperate situation, which is contrary to the Spirit of the Law.

Law Reform

Dunash says, "These are the Laws that Shimon, like his father Hillel, is seeking to reform." I discussed the differences between the houses of Shammai and Hillel in my article on [Episode 5 of Season 2](#). These different viewpoints are why Yanni suggested they go to the house of Shammai with their case against Jesus. The house of Shammai was more rigid in adherence to the Law, and Hillel was known for adhering more to the spirit of the Law - a more liberal view.

You can easily see which side of these Pharisaical arguments Jesus was on. He deeply respected God's Law but didn't hold the fences around the Law above God's actual Law. He also seemed to have a more liberal perspective on the Law when it conflicted with preserving life, as in the example of David's men eating the showbread.

Shabbat Shalom

In the synagogue in the Wadi Kelt, Madai, the priest greets Lamech, the rabbi, with the words "Shabbat Shalom." This is a standard greeting on the Sabbath. Saying "Shabbat Shalom" is wishing another person a "peaceful Sabbath."

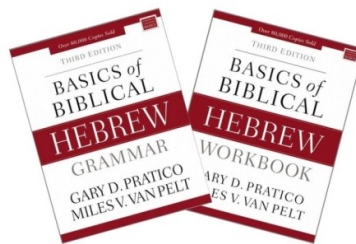
I covered this greeting in [my article on Episode 2 of Season 1](#) as well. The word Shalom encompasses even more than just peace. It's a beautiful word that means peace, wholeness, completion, and more. Read [9 Hebrew Words to Bring You Closer to God](#) for more on the word Shalom.

Picking grain on Shabbat

The rabbi and priest were upset that Jesus and his disciples were picking grain on Shabbat. This story comes from the Books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are accused of breaking the law, but it doesn't say in the Law (Torah) not to pick grain on

the Sabbath. When Jesus was accused of breaking the law by picking grain on the Sabbath, he was accused of breaking a law made by people, not God.

As I wrote in my articles on [Episode 3 of this Season](#) and [Episode 8 of Season 1](#), not picking grain on the Sabbath was another “fence” built around the Law by the rabbis to prevent people from coming close to breaking one of God’s commands. While the fences may seem extreme, it’s a similar practice to when Christians abstain from alcohol. No command says not to drink alcohol. They don’t drink so that they and others aren’t led into the sin that could result from drinking.



[Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar Bundle](#)

Jotapota

The priest, Madai, suggests they bring their complaints about Jesus to the protestors at Jotapota since there will be important people there.

Jotapota (Jotbathah) is listed in Numbers and Deuteronomy as one of the places the Israelites camped while wandering the wilderness. At the time of Jesus, it was an area where the Jewish people eventually fought the Romans and lost under devastating circumstances. Josephus recorded that over 40,000 Jewish people died, and over 1,000 women and children were taken into slavery!

And that brings us to the end of yet another great episode! Stay tuned for my article on Episode 7!