

# Exodus 22:5-6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-22/exodus-225-6/>

*These are judgements for damage done to someone's grazing fields and vineyards. Such damage could adversely affect or ruin the livelihood of the owner.*

Verses 5 – 6 describe another aspect of the loss of personal property. Here, *if a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare* (i.e., to the point where the animal has nothing to eat) *and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field* (making it unavailable to that owner's animals), *he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.*

Here, the owner of an animal *lets* his animal graze on the property of another. The phrase *lets* makes it clear that there is an affirmative responsibility placed on the animal's owner as to the animal's whereabouts. There is no provision to claim "I didn't know."

Letting his animal graze on another man's pasture was in effect theft because it robbed food from the animal(s) owned by the other owner. This created a disincentive for any property owner to allow his own fields to *be grazed bare* by his livestock. If every man tends his own pasture and provides grass for his own animals, there will be no temptation to let his animals eat from his neighbor's land. Nor would it be profitable to do so; once a man's animals were caught grazing another man's pasture, the offending owner had to repay his neighbor. The requirement is to make restitution from the *best of the field or vineyard* of the one who is irresponsible. That means the irresponsible landowner puts at risk his *best* land (most productive) when he allows his animals to stray from his worst lands. It would be far easier for every man to keep his animals from overeating his own fields, thus having a constant feed supply for his livestock.

In v. 6, the problem addressed is when *a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field itself is consumed.* This apparently involved one person starting a *fire*, perhaps to clear brush in order to plant more crops. But the *fire* got out of control and burned his neighbor's valuable grain or grazing pasture. The penalty was that *he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.* If someone caused the loss of property of another, there must be repayment so as to prevent the

victim's hardship. As with animals and grazing, each person is responsible for protecting the welfare of their neighbor.

**Biblical Text:**

<sup>5</sup>“If a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed *bare* and lets his animal loose so that it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. <sup>6</sup>“If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain or the standing grain or the field *itself* is consumed, he who started the fire shall surely make restitution.