

THE MEANING AND RELEVANCE OF THE MOSAIC LAW

I. THE MEANING OF LAW

A. The Meaning of Law in General

1. The three basic meanings of the term "law"

- a. A law is a rule or norm or standard intended to regulate conduct, established by some authority, and carrying with it certain sanctions

In legal terminology a law is "a rule of conduct or action prescribed by a governing authority and enforced by a penalty."

- b. A law is a principle of uniform, consistent, dependable operation of physical or mental or spiritual relationships or actions

In philosophy and science a law is "a statement of an order or relation of phenomena which, so far as known, is invariable under the given conditions."

Another way of putting it is to say that a law is "a description of the way things invariably operate."

The law of non-contradiction is an example of such a principle, as is the law of gravity and the laws of thermodynamics.

- c. Law is also used to refer to a body of standards or principles

The supreme law of our land is the Constitution together with its Amendments. A collection of the laws of physics or of chemistry or of biology could be referred to as the ruling principles of those particular disciplines.

2. The relationship of these meanings to the realms of being and obligation

The distinction between what "is" and what "ought to be" is one of the most basic in thought and life.

When "law" is used to refer to empirical fact, it means "that which is" (as a description of the way things invariably operate).

When "law" is used to refer to ethical norms, it means "that which ought to be" (as a call, a summons to an ideal or goal toward which human actions should tend; or as a standard to which human actions should conform).

When "law" is used to refer to rational thought, it can mean either "that which is" (in terms of principles which define how concepts and symbols operate), or "that which ought to be" (in terms of principles which define how concepts and symbols ought to operate). For example, in mathematics we attempt to discover and deduce the true laws of the interrelationships of linguistic entities as they are. But we are also concerned with what "ought to be" in terms of manipulating numerical entities according to the true laws of mathematics, and with combining linguistic entities according to the true laws of logic.

(Interestingly, even in the realm of empirical fact, law once established begins to exert pressure in the direction of "that which ought to be," in the sense that a law becomes the standard for the interpretation of all new related phenomena. So much so is this the case that new data which appear