

Deuteronomy

Lesson 14

Chapter 22

A. Laws for the Care of Property

1. A Person's Animals

Continuing under Moses's summary of the law of the administration of justice for when the nation enters the Promised Land, we see his law for the care of property. First, a person's animals. Chapter 22, verse 1. *"You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman. ² If your countryman is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall remain with you until your countryman looks for it; then you shall restore it to him. ³ Thus you shall do with his donkey, and you shall do the same with his garment, and you shall do likewise with anything lost by your countryman, which he has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to neglect them. ⁴ You shall not see your countryman's donkey or his ox fallen down on the way, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly help him to raise them up."* (22:1-4).

In the Promised Land, any misplaced property is the responsibility of everyone in the nation to return it to its place, even if it means you must go out of your way to care for that property until it is returned to its owner.

2. A Person's Clothing

Then Moses addresses the care of a person's clothing. Verse 5. *"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God."* (22:5).

The LORD created men and women with divine and distinct differences, and the mixing of things associated with the differences is an abomination. The two sexes were to be sanctified in the differences. Men were to wear men's clothing; women were to wear women's clothing. In the whole pagan world around Israel, men would put on women's clothing to engage men in homosexual relationships, another abomination. Women would put on men's clothing to engage women in homosexual relationships. These actions were taught in pagan worship. These actions were normal in Canaanite life. It is another reason the LORD wanted all Canaanites destroyed in the land.

3. A Person's Food

The care of a person's food is next. Verse 6. *"If you happen to come upon a bird's nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; ⁷ you shall certainly let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, in order that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days."* (22:6-7).

It is only prudent not to take the mother from the young. How would the young survive? But the young may be taken for food, leaving the mother to produce another brood.

4. A Person's House

Then we come to the care of a person's house. Verse 8. *"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it."* (22:8).

The roof of the house would be used for many different things. For example, in the hot of the summers, the families would sleep at night on the roof. A "parapet" is a wall built around the edges of the roof about breast-high. Its purpose is safety to keep people from falling off the roof.

5. A Person's Vineyard

A Jew is to care for a person's vineyard. Verse 9. *"You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, or all the produce of the seed which you have sown and the increase of the vineyard will become defiled."* (22:9).

Different plants mature at different times. The planting of two different kinds of seeds in the same plot causes a significant problem at harvest time. When taking the harvest of the first to mature, the fruit of the second is damaged. As a result, neither crop produces to its fullest.

6. A Person's Plow

Moses speaks of the care of a person's plow. Verse 10. "*You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.*" (22:10).

For the Israelites, the LORD declared the ox as a clean animal and the donkey as an unclean animal. From a spiritual perspective, mixing the clean with the unclean might be the reason for this law. However, a better explanation might be seen in the difference in the strength and stride of the two. As such, the two would constantly be working against each other rather than in unison, as would be the case of two animals of the same kind.

7. A Person's Garments

Now we come to the care of the person's garments. Verse 11. "*You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together.*" (22:11).

The matching law is found in Leviticus 19:19. Much speculation about this law in Leviticus and Deuteronomy can be found in most commentaries; however, little modern-day reasoning can be associated between the two. We must leave this verse as a law to be followed without modern-day understanding. Be that as it may, the Jews would have understood the law and the reason.

8. A Person's Covering

Finally, Moses speaks of the care of a person's covering. Verse 12. "*You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself.*" (22:12).

The importance of this instruction is not given here. However, we find the significance in the book of Numbers.

The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying,³⁸ "Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue.³⁹ It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,⁴⁰ so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God.⁴¹ I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD your God." (Numbers 15:37-41).

The tassels are a reminder of the laws of the LORD. The eyes often turn the heart. Therefore, the tassels are at the edge of the covering, where the eyes must look past them before they see anything else. The tassels are a warning sign to cause the Jews to keep from straying where the LORD forbids.

B. Laws of Morality

1. A Man's Sin

a) A False Charge

From the laws of the care of the property, Moses moves to a summary of the laws of morality. First, we look at a man's sin coupled with a false charge. Verse 13. "*If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then turns against her,⁴⁴ and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, 'I took this woman, but when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin,'⁴⁵ then the girl's father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.⁴⁶ The girl's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her;⁴⁷ and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, "I did not find your daughter a virgin." But this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity.⁴⁸ And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city.*" "So the elders of that city shall take the man and

chastise him,¹⁹ and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give it to the girl's father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.” (22:13-19).

We find the key to understanding this law in the words, “*then the girl's father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate ... And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city.*” How in the world would a father and mother be able to prove the virginity of their daughter? Depending on the area of the world where you live and your surrounding culture and tradition, the proof that the parents bring forward is either totally absurd or totally understandable. For instance, it seems ridiculous in most of America to even consider the virginity or lack of virginity of a daughter on her wedding night. Such a dismissive attitude toward the holiness of marriage for a woman's virginity shows the degradation of sin in our country. However, in pockets of our country as well as in cultures around the world, and as was in Israel, the proof that a woman is a virgin on her wedding night is extremely important and an event that includes the whole family. Before the marriage, the woman's private parts are carefully examined to ensure all is intact to prove she is still a virgin. The marriage bed is prepared with a white sheet by the woman's family. The morning after the physical union in marriage, the woman's family collects and stores the sheet unwashed to prove her. Supposedly, if the woman is a virgin, bloodstains will be present on the bedsheet.

If the man chooses to divorce the wife with the accusation that she is not a virgin, the man will go to the magistrates at the gate and make his claim. The magistrates will call the father and mother to prove the woman's virginity with the bedsheet. Once verified, the man is charged one-hundred shekels of silver which goes to the father because of the false testimony that defames the family. Further, the woman remains his wife and cannot be divorced by him.

b) A True Charge

But if the woman is not a virgin and the man's claim is a true charge, what is the penalty? Verse 20. “*But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin,²¹ then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you.*” (22:20-21).

With the charge before the magistrates, the parents are called to prove the virginity of the woman. Suppose the parents cannot prove the virginity, the woman is stoned at the door of the father's house. The father and mother failed to prove the case or protect the woman's virginity before the marriage. The parents are shamed because of the lack of parenting of their daughter.

2. A Couple's Sin

a) The Man and a Married Woman

Under the laws of morality, we come to a couple's sin associated with the man and a married woman. Verse 22. “*If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.*” (22:22).

The word for this sin is adultery, and both are to die.

b) The Man and A Willing Engaged Woman

Next, the LORD addresses a man and a willing engaged woman. Verse 23. “*If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her,²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.*” (22:23-24).

Because both people are willing partners, and because the woman was not faithful to her engaged fiancé, the willing couple is stoned. The engaged fiancé is not judged at all in the process.

c) The Man and an Unwilling Engaged Woman

Then comes the possibility of the man and an unwilling engaged woman. Verse 25. “*But if in the field the man finds the girl who is engaged, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lies with*

her shall die.²⁶ But you shall do nothing to the girl; there is no sin in the girl worthy of death, for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case.²⁷ When he found her in the field, the engaged girl cried out, but there was no one to save her.” (22:25-27).

In this case, no guilt is found in the woman because the man forced himself on her. She was still faithful to her engaged fiancé, even though she had been violated. The forceful man is to die by stoning.

d) The Man and an Unengaged Woman

Continuing with the laws of morality, we come to the man and an unengaged woman. Verse 28. *“If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days.”* (22:28-29).

Obviously, because the passage does not say that the man forced himself on the woman as it does in the previous example, these two are willing partners. Because they have completed the process of becoming one-flesh, the two are legally married in the LORD’s thinking. The man must give fifty shekels to the father, and the two are married without the possibility of divorce.

e) A Man and a Mother

Lastly, there is the sin of a man and a mother. Verse 30. *“A man shall not take his father’s wife so that he will not uncover his father’s skirt.”* (22:30). This law has been directly given multiply times in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The LORD is clear. Family relatives are off-limits to sexual encounters. The penalty is death (Leviticus 20:10).

Chapter 23

C. Laws for the People in the Assembly

1. The Emasculation of a Man

Moses turns to summarize the laws for the people in the assembly and begins with the emasculation of a man. Chapter 23, verse 1. *“No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.”* (23:1).

In the world at that time, it was common for men to be castrated and placed into the duty of caring for the harems of the royals and the wealthy. As such, males could not father children. Later, in the Bible, these men will be called “eunuchs.” Harems are strictly forbidden in Israel’s nation; therefore, the need for eunuchs is strictly prohibited. In addition, this law bans the alteration of the body. If it is done, the man cannot bring an offering to the LORD.

2. The Pollution of a Man

The pollution of a man is next. Verse 2. *“No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.”* (23:2).

The “illegitimate birth” will be a child born in a forbidden relationship. Children could come from incest, prostitution, and mixed marriages where the foreign spouse did not convert to the religion of the Nation of Israel. Because this law affected the child’s future and his heirs past the tenth generation, such sexual unions were deterred. Children born under these circumstances were not allowed to enter the holy area and bring offerings.

3. The Cursing of a Man

The cursing of a man follows. Verse 3. *“No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,⁴ because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.⁵ Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you.⁶ You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days.”* (23:3-6).

The Ammonite and the Moabite tribes were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. The story mentioned in this law takes us to the record found in Numbers 22:2-6.

Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.³ So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel.⁴ Moab said to the elders of Midian, ‘Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field.’ And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.⁵ So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, ‘Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me.⁶ Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.’ (Numbers 22:2-6).

In the rest of the story, we find Balaam deterred by his donkey, who saved him from the sword of the LORD. Nevertheless, the Moabite and Ammonite cousins of Israel hired Balaam to curse the nation instead of welcoming them with open arms. The penalty for this hiring would affect the descendants of those tribes for generations to come. Those two cousin tribes would not be welcome in the Nation of Israel.

4. The Siblings of a Man

We come to the siblings of a man. Verse 7. *‘You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land.⁸ The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.’* (23:7-8).

The Edomites are the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau. The descendants are cousins. In the journey to the Plains of Moab, where the nation is camped, and this instruction is given, the Edomites had hindered Israel from crossing their land. Therefore, the Edomites alive at the time of this law were forbidden from entering Israel's assembly. However, three generations later, after the taking of the Promised Land, when the time had passed, and the possibility of all the Edomites who were alive and hindered Israel had passed, the new Edomites, three generations down in the time, could be part of the assembly.

5. The Fighting of a Man

Then Moses addresses the fighting of a man. Verse 9. *‘When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing.’* (23:9).

Fighting pagan nations would, by necessity, put Israelites in contact with pagan worship and pagan things. This was a warning. It will be only a few months before Achan breaks this law after the Battle at Ai. We will hear about that in the Book of Joshua.

6. The Uncleanness of a Man

The uncleanness of man. Verse 10. *‘If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he may not reenter the camp.¹¹ But it shall be when evening approaches, he shall bathe himself with water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp.’* (23:10-11).

Nothing is morally wrong with the nocturnal emission of a man. However, it does make the man unclean. Even in a sexual relationship between a man and his wife in a legal marriage, the two are ceremonially unclean until they take a bath in the afternoon outside the camp and return home after sunset.

7. The Excrement of a Man

The excrement of a man. When nature calls. Verse 12. *‘You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there,¹³ and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement.¹⁴ Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to*

deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.” (23:12-14).

This instruction is obviously for females too. The LORD made all animals to have excrement, and that includes humans. The routine duty was not to be done in the camp but outside the camp and covered with dirt. If the function was performed inside the camp, it would defile its holiness. Neither is morally wrong. It still causes uncleanness.

8. The Slave of a Man

The slave of a man. Verse 15. *“You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶ He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.” (23:15-16).*

All the pagan world practiced slavery. If a pagan slave came into the Nation of Israel, and that pagan turned to worship the LORD of Israel, that slave was to be accepted and treated as if he as a natural-born Israelite. He was not to be sent back to the pagan master.

9. The Children of a Man

The children of a man. Verse 17. *“None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. ¹⁸ You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.” (23:17-18).*

A “cult” is a group that worships any god except the true LORD God. The world was filled with them. Most cults worshiped pagan gods known to us in mythology. Almost all cults have a religious sexual component. Professional male and female prostitutes performed those sexual components in the temple. Its purpose was staged as religious obedience to the god being worshiped. In reality, it was a fundraising project for the temple of that god. The required sexual encounters with the professional cult prostitutes were not free; it cost a great deal of money to participate. Therefore, any offering in Israel from the salaries these prostitutes earned in the sinful practices was never accepted by the LORD. He detested it.

What was the “wages of a dog” as related to the “hire of a harlot?” The two are mentioned on purpose in verse 18. If we remember, the LORD forbids sexual acts with animals. In cult religious requirements, sex with dogs and other animals of all kinds was normal. Any portion of the money used to have sex with a dog or other animal was strictly forbidden from being accepted in the LORD’s holy work.

10. The Help of a Man

The help of a man. Verse 19. *“You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. ²⁰ You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.” (23:19-20).*

If a Jew sells a basket of food for one shekel to another Jew, the cost is one shekel even if the person must make payments over time. No interest can be added. But if the Jew is selling that same basket to a pagan for one shekel over time, the Jew can charge that pagan interest on the loan.

11. The Vow of a Man

The vow of a man. Verse 21. *“When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. ²² However, if you refrain from vowed, it would not be sin in you. ²³ You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.” (23:21-23).*

First, what does the verse imply but does not directly say? The failure to pay a vow made to the LORD is a sin. Second, the verse clearly states that delaying to pay a vow is a sin. Third, it implies that it is better not to make a vow than to make a vow and be slow in paying. Why? Vows are not

required by the LORD; they are entirely voluntary. But once a vow is made, the LORD requires it to be paid.

12. The Vineyard of a Man

The vineyard of a man. Verse 24. *"When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket."* (23:24).

The law for the owners of the vineyards has already been covered. The owners were to always leave the corners unharvested for the poor, sojourners and strangers to eat. Here is the instruction for those who need food from those corners. They can eat at the corners, but they cannot take food home.

13. The Grain of a Man

The grain of a man. Verse 25. *"When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain."* (23:25).

The LORD has already covered the laws for the owners of the grain fields just as He did for the owners of the vineyards, the corners were to be left for the poor, sojourners and strangers to eat. In that same thinking, when the poor, sojourners and strangers came to eat, this was their law. They could eat what they could carry in their hands but they could not harvest the corners and take bushel baskets home.

Next, we come to the laws for the marriage of a wife, the laws for business, and the laws for first offerings.