

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Deuteronomy - Chapters 23 - 26

Deuteronomy Chapter 23

Deuteronomy 23:1 (NKJV) "He who is emasculated. . . shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.

2 (NLT) "If a person is illegitimate by birth, neither he nor his descendants for ten generations may be admitted to the assembly of the Lord.

3 "No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants for ten generations may be admitted to the assembly of the Lord. **4** These nations did not welcome you with food and water when you came out of Egypt. Instead, they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in distant Aram-naharaim to curse you. **5** But the Lord your God refused to listen to Balaam. He turned the intended curse into a blessing because the Lord your God loves you. **6** As long as you live, you must never promote the welfare and prosperity of the Ammonites or Moabites.

7 "Do not detest the Edomites or the Egyptians, because the Edomites are your relatives and you lived as foreigners among the Egyptians. **8** The third generation of Edomites and Egyptians may enter the assembly of the Lord.

Verse 1 says that any man who is a eunuch cannot enter into the assembly of the Lord. Also, the verses above say that one who is born from prostitution or adultery cannot be a part either. The Ammonites and Moabites were the result of the incestuous union of each of Lot's daughters with their father. This outward perfection that was demanded in Old Testament days is a picture to us of inward perfection through Christ. We must be "born of the water and the Spirit," a truly legitimate birth into the Kingdom of God.

The Ammonites and Moabites were also unmerciful peoples. They would not help Israel, and they even tried to curse them. Hostility toward God's people worked for their own destruction.

Because the Edomites were their relatives, and because Egypt had taken in the family of Jacob during famine, Edom and Egypt could possibly have a future in the assembly of the Lord.

Later in their history - during the kings of Israel - this prohibition relaxed. God said:

Isaiah 56:3 (NIV) Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say,

"The Lord will surely exclude me from his people."

And let no eunuch complain,

"I am only a dry tree."

4 For this is what the Lord says:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant—

5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name
better than sons and daughters;

I will give them an everlasting name
that will endure forever.

Miscellaneous Regulations

Deuteronomy 23:9 (NKJV) "When you go to war against your enemies, be sure to stay away from anything that is impure . . .

The next verses (10-14) speak of the cleanliness of the soldier and the camp - sanitary laws. God is everywhere, and He wants every area of our lives to be holy unto Him.

15 (NLT) "If slaves should escape from their masters and take refuge with you, you must not hand them over to their masters. **16** Let them live among you in any town they choose, and do not oppress them.

For the slave fleeing from a neighboring nation, Israel's soil was a land of liberty! We should note that if an ox or a donkey wandered from its master, a good Hebrew was to return it to him. However, in ancient Israel, fleeing slaves were to be free and to be helped by society.

17 (NKJV) "There shall be no *ritual* harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel. **18** You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both of these *are* an abomination to the Lord your God.

A "*ritual harlot*" was a female prostitute, and a "*perverted one*" was a male prostitute - both of which were common among the pagan religions of the Canaanites. The "*wages of a harlot*" and "*the price of a dog*" were the wages earned by the female and male prostitutes.

Money is not just money. No money gained in a sinful way was to be dedicated to the Lord.

19 (NLT) "Do not charge interest on the loans you make to a fellow Israelite, whether you loan money, or food, or anything else. **20** You may charge interest to foreigners, but you may not charge interest to Israelites, so that the Lord your God may bless you in everything you do in the land you are about to enter and occupy.

Interest was not to be charged to fellow Hebrews. This would keep the Israelite from becoming covetous. The blessing of the Lord was to be interest enough. However, we should note that there was no ban on charging interest to foreigners. In that case, it was all business.

21 "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, be prompt in fulfilling whatever you promised him. For the Lord your God demands that you promptly fulfill all your vows, or you will be guilty of sin. **22** However, it is not a sin to refrain from making a vow. **23** But once you have voluntarily made a vow, be careful to fulfill your promise to the Lord your God.

24 "When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, but you must not carry any away in a basket. **25** And when you enter your neighbor's field of grain, you may pluck the heads of grain with your hand, but you must not harvest it with a sickle.

Someone who is hungry in Israel may eat his fill, however, he may not be covetous and take more than he can eat at the moment (no to-go boxes).

Deuteronomy Chapter 24

Deuteronomy 24:1 (NLT) "Suppose a man marries a woman but she does not please him. Having discovered something wrong with her, he writes a document of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house. **2** When she leaves his house, she is free to marry another man. **3** But if the second husband also turns against her, writes a document of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away, or if he dies, **4** the first husband may not marry her again, for she has been defiled. That would be detestable to the Lord. You must not bring guilt upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as a special possession.

There were two schools of thought in ancient days. One school said a man may divorce his wife for any reason (as the Pharisees said in Matthew 19:3). Another school said that a man may divorce his wife for something disgraceful. The above passage regulates treatment by the first husband of a woman who has been divorced a second time.

When Jesus came on the scene, he exalted marriage. Let's read what Jesus said about it:

Matthew 19:1 (NLT) . . . Jesus. . . left Galilee and went down to the region of Judea east of the Jordan River. **2** Large crowds followed him there, and he healed their sick.

3 Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'" **5** And he said, "'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' **6** Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."

7 "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?" they asked.

8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended.

The Law considered the hardness of man's heart. However, the age of grace offered a cure for it.

Back to Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 24:5 "A newly married man must not be drafted into the army or be given any other official responsibilities. He must be free to spend one year at home, bringing happiness to the wife he has married.

God honored and blessed marriage - so much that he allowed men who were newly married to be exempt from military or state service for one year.

6 "It is wrong to take a set of millstones, or even just the upper millstone, as security for a loan, for the owner uses it to make a living.

Something that was essential for a person's livelihood was not allowed to be taken as a guarantee for a loan - only non-essential items.

Deuteronomy 24:7 "If anyone kidnaps a fellow Israelite and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. In this way, you will purge the evil from among you.

Kidnapping was associated with the slave trade, and it was forbidden in ancient Israel. However, slavery did exist. A person could even sell himself into slavery to pay off debt. Also, slaves were taken in victory in battle with a foreign nation. God had strict laws regarding slavery in ancient times.

8 "In all cases involving serious skin diseases, be careful to follow the instructions of the Levitical priests; obey all the commands I have given them. **9** Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam as you were coming from Egypt.

Leprosy was a terrible disease, and lepers were to be quarantined. Even Miriam (Moses' sister) had to be quarantined for seven days.

10 "If you lend anything to your neighbor, do not enter his house to pick up the item he is giving as security. **11** You must wait outside while he goes in and brings it out to you. **12** If your neighbor is poor and gives you his cloak as security for a loan, do not keep the cloak overnight. **13** Return the cloak to its owner by sunset so he can stay warm through the night and bless you, and the Lord your God will count you as righteous.

Once again, God warns the Israelite, "Don't take a necessary item as a guarantee for a loan." Show care and concern for your neighbor.

14 "Never take advantage of poor and destitute laborers, whether they are fellow Israelites or foreigners living in your towns. **15** You must pay them their wages each day before sunset because they are poor and are counting on it. If you don't, they might cry out to the Lord against you, and it would be counted against you as sin.

The poor need help now. Therefore, they are to be paid daily.

16 "Parents must not be put to death for the sins of their children, nor children for the sins of their parents. Those deserving to die must be put to death for their own crimes.

Each individual is responsible for his own sins. The above Scripture is referring to adult children.

17 "True justice must be given to foreigners living among you and to orphans, and you must never accept a widow's garment as security for her debt. **18** Always remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from your slavery. That is why I have given you this command.

Israel was to never forget how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Because God was good to them when they were suffering, they should be good to others - including foreigners and those in need.

19 "When you are harvesting your crops and forget to bring in a bundle of grain from your field, don't go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. Then the Lord your God will bless you in all you do. **20** When you beat the olives from your olive trees, don't go over the boughs twice. Leave the remaining olives for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. **21** When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, don't glean the vines after they are picked. Leave the remaining grapes for the foreigners, orphans, and widows. **22** Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt. That is why I am giving you this command.

This method provided for the poor while helping them to retain their dignity by working for their food. God's plan is always best!

Deuteronomy Chapter 25

Deuteronomy 25:1 (NLT) "Suppose two people take a dispute to court, and the judges declare that one is right and the other is wrong. **2** If the person in the wrong is sentenced to be flogged, the judge must command him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes appropriate to the crime. **3** But never give more than forty lashes; more than forty lashes would publicly humiliate your neighbor.

This type of sentence was typical in that day and age. When a criminal comes under the sentence of the law, it is a sad time, indeed. There is no need to dishonor him further. Humanity, in spite of the crime, has dignity.

4 "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain.

The Apostle Paul referred to this verse:

1 Corinthians 9:7 What soldier has to pay his own expenses? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn't have the right to eat some of its fruit? What shepherd cares for a flock of sheep and isn't allowed to drink some of the milk? **8** Am I expressing merely a human opinion, or does the law say the same thing? **9** For the law of Moses says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." Was God thinking only about oxen when he said this? **10** Wasn't he actually speaking to us? Yes, it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest.

11 Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink? **12** If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ.

13 Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. **14** In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it.

Deuteronomy 25:5 "If two brothers are living together on the same property and one of them dies without a son, his widow may not be married to anyone from outside the family. Instead, her husband's brother should marry her. . .to fulfill the duties of a brother-in-law. **6** The first son she bears to him will be considered the son of the dead brother, so that his name will not be forgotten in Israel.

7 "But if the man refuses to marry his brother's widow, she must go to the town gate and say to the elders assembled there, 'My husband's brother refuses to preserve his brother's name in Israel—he refuses to fulfill the duties of a brother-in-law by marrying me.' **8** The elders of the town will then summon him and talk with him. If he still refuses and says, 'I don't want to marry her,' **9** the widow must walk over to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal from his foot, and spit in his face. Then she must declare, 'This is what happens to a man who refuses to provide his brother with children.' **10** Ever afterward in Israel his family will be referred to as 'the family of the man whose sandal was pulled off!' . . .

The state of society back then does not exist today. This law was especially important in Israel since the land stayed in families. Childlessness was a disgrace, since the family name would not go on.

13 "You must use accurate scales when you weigh out merchandise, **14** and you must use full and honest measures. **15** Yes, always use honest weights and measures, so that you may enjoy a long life

in the land the Lord your God is giving you. **16** All who cheat with dishonest weights and measures are detestable to the Lord your God.

God commanded honesty in trade and business.

Deuteronomy 25:17 “Never forget what the Amalekites did to you as you came from Egypt. **18** They attacked you when you were exhausted and weary, and they struck down those who were straggling behind. They had no fear of God. **19** Therefore, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies in the land he is giving you as a special possession, you must destroy the Amalekites and erase their memory from under heaven. Never forget this!

God remembers injuries done to His people. Repentance will reverse the sin, but where there is no repentance, God will take action. God will not forgive the unforgiving. Along with the Canaanites, Israel was commissioned to destroy the Amalekites.

James 2:13 There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.

Deuteronomy Chapter 26

Deuteronomy 26:1 (NLT) “When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you as a special possession and you have conquered it and settled there, **2** put some of the first produce from each crop you harvest into a basket and bring it to the designated place of worship—the place the Lord your God chooses for his name to be honored. **3** Go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, ‘With this gift I acknowledge to the Lord your God that I have entered the land he swore to our ancestors he would give us.’ **4** The priest will then take the basket from your hand and set it before the altar of the Lord your God.

The mercies of God are to be gratefully remembered. The Israelite was to obey the ceremony detailed above. This ceremony reminded him that the land and its fruit were God’s. He acknowledged this with a gift of the first fruits of each of his crops. He was supposed to say aloud that he was living in the land God swore to give to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

5 “You must then say in the presence of the Lord your God, ‘My ancestor. . . was a wandering Aramean who went to live as a foreigner in Egypt. His family arrived few in number, but in Egypt they became a large and mighty nation. **6** When the Egyptians oppressed and humiliated us by making us their slaves, **7** we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors. He heard our cries and saw our hardship, toil, and oppression. **8** So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and powerful arm, with overwhelming terror, and with miraculous signs and wonders. **9** He brought us to this place and gave us this land flowing with milk and honey! **10** And now, O Lord, I have brought you the first portion of the harvest you have given me from the ground.’ Then place the produce before the Lord your God, and bow to the ground in worship before him. **11** Afterward you may go and celebrate because of all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household. Remember to include the Levites and the foreigners living among you in the celebration.

The “*wandering Aramean*” mentioned above was Jacob - the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. He lived a long while in Padam Aram (where his grandfather once lived) where he married Leah and Rachel and worked for his father-in-law, Laban. It was in Padam Aram that his children were born.

Jacob and his family “*went to live as a foreigner in Egypt*” to survive the great famine - at Joseph’s invitation. Jacob’s descendants grew in number almost

miraculously until they outnumbered the Egyptians. Finally, a pharaoh who “*knew not Joseph*” made them slaves and oppressed them. When the Israelites cried out to the Lord, God heard them and sent Moses to them to bring them out of Egypt to the land of Canaan which God was giving to them for their own special land.

The Israelite was to remember what God had done by bringing the first fruits to the “*designated place of worship*.” Following this, there was to be a celebration of thanksgiving and feasting.

Deuteronomy 26:12 “Every third year you must offer a special tithe of your crops. In this year of the special tithe you must give your tithes to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that they will have enough to eat in your towns. **13** Then you must declare in the presence of the Lord your God, ‘I have taken the sacred gift from my house and have given it to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, just as you commanded me. I have not violated or forgotten any of your commands. **14** I have not eaten any of it while in mourning; I have not handled it while I was ceremonially unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the Lord my God and have done everything you commanded me. **15** Now look down from your holy dwelling place in heaven and bless your people Israel and the land you swore to our ancestors to give us—a land flowing with milk and honey.’

For the ancient Israelite, obedience brought blessing. Every third year, the ancient Israelite was to set apart a special tithe to bless the Levites (who depended on the offerings brought to the Tabernacle), foreigners, orphans, and widows. This care for the poor and needy is mentioned throughout God’s Word. As we enjoy God’s blessings, we must not forget to bless those who need our help.

After the Israelite had obeyed God’s Word to do all that He commanded, he could then ask for God’s blessing upon his nation.

A Call to Obey the Lord’s Commands

16 “Today the Lord your God has commanded you to obey all these decrees and regulations. So be careful to obey them wholeheartedly. **17** You have declared today that the Lord is your God. And you have promised to walk in his ways, and to obey his decrees, commands, and regulations, and to do everything he tells you. **18** The Lord has declared today that you are his people, his own special treasure, just as he promised, and that you must obey all his commands. **19** And if you do, he will set you high above all the other nations he has made. Then you will receive praise, honor, and renown. You will be a nation that is holy to the Lord your God, just as he promised.”

The Israelites declared that the Lord was their God. Then God declared that the people of Israel are His - a special treasure. Once again, obedience is commanded, for Israel is a holy nation (a nation set apart) unto God.

The apostle Peter uses similar language.

1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV) But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; **10** who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

The Psalmist wrote:

Psalms 135:4 (NKJV) For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.