

## Deuteronomy Chapter 23

Verses 1-8: We ought to value the privileges of God's people, both for ourselves and for our children, above all other advantages. No personal blemishes, no crimes of our forefathers, no difference of nation, shuts us out under the Christian dispensation. But an unsound heart will deprive us of blessings. And a bad example, or an unsuitable marriage, may shut our children from them.

**Deuteronomy 23:1 "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD."**

“The congregation of the LORD”: From the sanctification of the home and marriage in the previous chapter, Moses proceeds to the sanctification of their union as a congregation and speaks of the right of citizenship, including being gathered before the presence of the Lord to worship Him. Most likely, this law did not exclude one from residence in the area where Israel was to live, but from public offices and honors, intermarriage and participation in the religious rites at the tabernacle plus later at the temple. The emasculated (verse 1), the illegitimate (verse 20), and the Ammonites and Moabites (verses 3-6), were not allowed to worship the Lord. The general rule was that strangers and foreigners, for fear of friendship or marriage connections which would lead Israel into idolatry, were not admissible until their conversion to God and the Jewish faith. This purge however, describes some limitations to the general rule. Eunuchs were forbidden because such willful mutilation (Literally in Hebrew, by crushing, which was the way such an act was generally performed), violated God’s creation of man, was associated with idolatrous practices and was done by pagan parents to their children so that they might serve as eunuchs in the homes of the great (compare 25:11-12). The illegitimate were excluded so as to place an indelible stigma as a discouragement to shameful sexual misconduct.

People from Ammon and Moab were excluded, not because they were born out of incest (compare Gen. 19:30), but on account of their vicious hostility toward God and His people Israel. Many of the Israelites were settled east of the Jordan in the immediate neighborhood of these people, so God raised this wall to prevent the evils of idolatrous influence. Individuals from all 3 of these outcast groups are offered grace and acceptance by Isaiah upon personal faith in the True God (compare Isa. 56:1-8). Ruth the Moabitess serves as a most notable example (compare Ruth 1:4, 16).

This nation was chosen of God to be a holy nation. They were to preserve their bodies in its entire function as men. This is speaking of this as if it is a mutilation of the body. The person with this injury could no longer function in his manhood and therefore was excluded. All of this was done away with in Jesus. This is not the Christian attitude at all.

Verses 2-3: “To the tenth generation”: The use of the words “shall ever” and “never” (in verses 3 and 6), seems to indicate that this phrase is an idiom denoting permanent exclusion from the worshiping community of Israel. In contrast, an Edomite or Egyptian might worship in Israel in

the third generation (see verses 7-8). Though these nations had also been enemies, Edom was a near relative, coming from Jacob's family, while individual Egyptians has shown kindness to the Israelites at the Exodus (compare Exodus 12:36).

**Deuteronomy 23:2 "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD."**

Such a person would not, even now, be circumcised by the Jews, or permitted to marry an Israel woman. Or be buried with his people; therefore, he was excluded from the covenant. It is manifest how efficacious would be the enforcement of this law also in preserving the purity of family life.

"Even unto his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord": Which seems as if he might at the eleventh. But it is generally interpreted never, as is gathered from the following verse, and from the tenth number being an absolute and perfect one. Yet according to the Jewish writers there were ways and means by which their posterity became legitimate. So they say, bastards may be purified (or legitimated), how? If one marries a servant maid, the child is a servant, who if he becomes free, (his) son is a free man.

This somewhat falls into the same category as above. We saw in the last lesson, how the LORD felt about sex aside from the marriage bed. The severity of killing the two participants would have avoided this situation. The Hebrews were strong on family heritage. The bastard would have no family heritage. This again, is done away with in the LORD Jesus.

**Deuteronomy 23:3 "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:"**

Or marry an Israel woman, as Jarchi, and so the Targum of Jonathan, "the male Ammonites and Moabites are not fit to take a wife of the congregation of the Lord;" for the Jews restrain this to men. Because it is, as Aben Ezra observes, an Ammonite, not an Ammonitess, a Moabite, not a Moabitess. They allow that females of those nations might be married to Israelites. That is, provided they were proselytes, as Ruth was.

"Even to their tenth generation, shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever": That is, not only to the tenth generation, but for ever. And this law was understood as in force in Nehemiah's time. Which was more than ten generations from the making of it. Though now, as these nations are no more a distinct people, they suppose it is no longer binding.

This is an exclusion of the children of incest. The Ammonites and the Moabites were the descendants of the incestuous affair of Lot and his two daughters. Again, we must emphasize the fact that Jesus paid the price for all of these sins, and there is no such restriction in the church today. "Ammonites" and "Moabites" were permanently prohibited from access to the assembly of the Lord. The masculine forms indicate the prohibition was limited to males. Female proselytes, like Ruth of Moab, were allowed to marry Israelite males and be received into the covenant community of Israel.

**Deuteronomy 23:4 "Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee."**

To supply them therewith, either as a gift, which was a piece of humanity to strangers and travelers, or rather to sell unto them. For on no other terms did the Israelites desire their bread and their water.

"In the way when ye came forth out of Egypt": Not as soon as they came forth from thence, for it was near forty years after. But it was while they were in the way from thence, as they were journeying to the land of Canaan, and so were travelers. And should have had kindness shown them as such. For though they needed not bread and water, God providing both for them. Yet this does not excuse the inhumanity of these people. The words are to be understood by way of distribution. This charge here only belongs to the Ammonites, for it appears that the Moabites did give them bread and water for money (Deut. 2:28). As what follows belongs peculiarly to the Moabites and not the Ammonites.

"And because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee": This the Moabites did in conjunction with the Midianites, but the Ammonites had no concern in it (see Num. 22:7). It was not therefore because the Moabites and Ammonites were born in incest that they were forbidden entrance into the congregation of the Lord. Which might have been thought to have been the reason of it. These instances following upon the former, had not these reasons been assigned.

A more recent sin they had committed, was trying to curse Israel. The Ammonites and the Moabites were enemies of Israel. They wanted to curse Israel, and instead, they were cursed themselves.

**Deuteronomy 23:5 "Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee."**

To his solicitations, and the methods he took to prevail on the Lord to suffer him to curse Israel. Which he gladly would have done for the sake of Balak's reward.

"But the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee": In the very mouth of Balaam, as the Targum of Jonathan; for when he opened his mouth and Balak expected he would have cursed Israel, and he intended it, could he have been permitted. The Lord overruled his tongue, and put such words into his mouth, that instead of cursing Israel, he blessed him (see Num. 23:11).

"Because the Lord thy God loved thee": And therefore would not suffer them to be cursed. For whom the Lord loves they are blessed, and shall be so in time and to eternity.

There is a detailed discussion of this in the book of Numbers. We remember, that an ass spoke to Balaam to keep him from going to curse Israel.

**Deuteronomy 23:6 "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever."**

Not that they were to retain malice towards them, or indulge a spirit of revenge. Or not do them any good offices in a private way, which is contrary to the law of love. Nor does this contradict any offices of kindness and friendship that might be performed in a personal way. So we find that David had a kindness for Hanun the Ammonite, and showed it. Though ill rewarded for it, yet is not blamed for doing it (2 Sam. 10:2). For these words respect not persons in a private capacity, but the people of Israel as a body politic. Who, as such, were not to carry on trade and commerce with those people. Nor intermarry with them, nor make leagues and enter into alliances with them. The reason of which was, because being very near neighbors to them, had there not been such a law, as a wall of partition between them, they might have become very familiar. And so have learnt their evil ways and customs, which this was designed to prevent. The Jews restrain this to overtures and proclamations of peace, which they were not to make with these nations. As they were directed to do when they went out to war with others, (Deut. 20:10).

God did not want Israel making a peace treaty with them ever. They were never friends with Israel. Israel was not to help them in any way. They had angered God.

**Deuteronomy 23:7 "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he [is] thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land."**

Or an Idumean, the descendants of Esau, whose name was Edom (Gen. 25:30). The Targum of Jonathan adds, "that comes to be made a proselyte"; he was not to be rejected with abhorrence. Because of the old grudge between Jacob and Esau, and which was become national in their posterity.

"For he is thy brother": The Israelites and the Edomites were nearest akin to each other of all the nations. For Jacob and Esau were brothers by their father's and mother's side. Yea, were twin brothers; the relation was very near.

"Thou shall not abhor an Egyptian": That comes to be made a proselyte also, as the same Targum. Though the Israelites were so ill used by them, their lives made bitter with hard bondage, and their male infants slain by them. And they for a long time refused their liberty to depart.

"Because thou wast a stranger in his land": And at first received many favors and kindnesses from them. Being supported and supplied with provisions during a long famine. And had one of the richest and most fruitful parts of the country assigned them to dwell in. And old favors were not to be forgotten, though they had been followed with great unkindness and cruelty.

The Edomites descended from Esau, who was the brother of Jacob (Israel). "Abhor" means loathe, or detest. The Egyptians had befriended Joseph and, in turn, Jacob and his family during the famine. They took Jacob's family in, and they lived there about 400 years. They were not

treated as slaves, until the later part of their stay. Egypt is a place of refuge. God will not forget them for that.

**Deuteronomy 23:8 "The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation."**

Of such as became proselytes.

"Shall enter into the congregation of the Lord in their third generation": Not in the third generation from the time that this law was made, but from the time that any of them should embrace the true religion. Their sons were the second generation, and their grandchildren the third. And such might be admitted into the congregation, and be reckoned as of them, both in their civil and church state. And be capable of serving even offices among them, and of marriage with them, as the Targum of Jonathan. Which some of the Jews interpret of males only. For females, according to them, might be married immediately as soon as made proselytes. In which way they account for the lawfulness of Solomon's marriage of Pharaoh's daughter.

There were many marriages between the Egyptians and the Israelites. It appears after the third generation; they were considered as Israelites.

Verses 9-14: Because the camp of Israelite soldiers was a place of God's presence (verse 14), the camp was to be kept clean. Instruction was given concerning nocturnal emission (verses 10-11), and defecation (verses 12-13). Such instruction for external cleanness illustrated what God wanted in the heart.

Laws of purity for soldiers in Israel showed that even in warfare, the individual soldier was to view himself as more than a fighting man. He was a warrior in the army of the Lord.

The camp of the Lord must have nothing offensive in it. If there must be this care taken to preserve the body clean, much more should we be careful to keep the mind pure.

**Deuteronomy 23:9 "When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing."**

An army of soldiers march in order to meet the enemy and fight him.

"Then keep thee from every wicked thing": The Targum of Jonathan adds, by way of explanation, "from strange worship, uncovering of nakedness, and from shedding innocent blood". That is, from idolatry, uncleanness of every sort, and murder. And all other wickedness sought to be abstained from at all times by all persons. But especially by soldiers in such a circumstance, just going to battle. Since sin committed weakens natural courage, as it loads the conscience with guilt. And since victory and success, which depend upon the blessing of God on arms, cannot be reasonably expected, where vices of all sorts are indulged and abound. And especially seeing such are about to expose their lives to the utmost danger, and know not but that

in a few hours they must exchange this life for another. And appear before God, the Judge of all, against whom they sin. And yet how little are these things thought of by such in common! It was the wisdom of the Jewish legislature, which was of God, to inculcate such things into the minds of their soldiers.

The wars that Israel fought were not for carnal reasons. They were thought of as holy wars, directed of God. They must remember this, and not do things contrary to God's will, even in battle.

**Deuteronomy 23:10 "If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp:"**

Any unclean person in the army, that was even ceremonially unclean in any of the instances the law makes so, one of which put for the rest is mentioned.

"By reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night": Through pollution by a nocturnal flux, as the Septuagint version (the same case as in Lev. 15:16).

"Then shall he go abroad out of the camp": Out of the army, lest others should be defiled by such. They not having houses to retire to, and chambers to keep themselves in separate from others, as when at home.

"He shall not come within the camp": That is, not till he has done what is prescribed him in the next verse. Jarchi says, he might not come into the camp of the Levites, and much less into the camp of God.

This is in connection with the previous verse on going to war. This is speaking of not bringing uncleanness into the camp. There were a number of things that would make them unclean, like coming into contact with a dead body.

**Deuteronomy 23:11 "But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash [himself] with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp [again]."**

When the day declines, and it is near sun setting.

"He shall wash himself with water": Dip himself all over in water, not only wash his garments but his flesh.

"And when the sun is down he shall come into the camp again": And take his place and rank in the army. Now if all this was necessary on account of ceremonial uncleanness, which as much as possible was to be avoided. How much more careful were they to be of moral uncleanness, as fornication, adultery, and all sorts of debauchery and lewdness? And yet nothing more frequent among those that are of the military order. It would be well if there was no occasion for the reproach Maimonides casts upon the camps of the Heathens. Among whom, no doubt, he means Christians, if not principally. When he observes that these orders were given, that this might be

deeply fixed in the mind of every one, that their camp ought to be holy as the sanctuary of God. And not like the camps of the Gentiles, in which abound corruptions of all kinds, transgressions, rapines, thefts, and other sins.

The washing was both literal and ceremonial. They must not enter the camp, until they are cleansed. The camp of the LORD was holy. No unclean thing was to enter.

**Deuteronomy 23:12 "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:"**

A place prepared, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan. Provided on purpose for the use hereafter suggested; so Ben Melech.

"Whither thou shalt go forth abroad": To do the necessities of nature, which they were to do without the camp. Not in any place they thought fit and most convenient, but what was appointed for that purpose.

**Deuteronomy 23:13 "And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:"**

A nail or spike, some kind of instrument to make a hole in the ground with, which was fastened to the sword upon their loins. Which was to be instead of a spade or mattock to dig with.

"And it shall be, when thou shalt ease thyself abroad": Without the camp, in the place appointed for that use, whenever nature required such an action to be performed.

"Thou shalt dig therewith": With, the paddle, a hole in the earth. The Essenes used, according to Josephus, to make it a foot deep with a spade or mattock. And to everyone that was newly admitted among them, a little pickaxe was given for that purpose.

"And shalt turn back": Having eased nature.

"And cover that which cometh from thee": Their dung, with the earth they dug out of the hole they made. This law was made to preserve modesty and decency becoming men, and not act like brute beasts. As well as cleanliness in the camp, and, the health of themselves and their fellow soldiers. And that, they might not be offensive to the smell, as well as pernicious to the health of one another. And especially for a reason that follows in (Deut. 23:14). So Maimonides says, the intention of this law is especially cleanliness, and to avoid nastiness, filthiness, and impurities of every kind.

This is speaking of going to the bathroom. They must dig a hole in the ground to be used as their bathroom, and then cover it with dirt to keep down contamination.

**Deuteronomy 23:14 "For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."**

Either because the ark was commonly present with them, or at least some of the holy instruments, which were pledges of God's presence. Or because God had promised to go forth with them when they engaged in a just and necessary war.

"To deliver thee, and give up thine enemies before thee": To save them from falling into the hands of their enemies, and to deliver their enemies into their hands. Which depended not upon their numbers, strength, and skill, but on the Presence, providence, and power of God with them. Wherefore, as the above writer observes, by these actions (of purity and cleanliness), God meant to confirm the faith of those that engaged in war. That the divine Majesty dwelt among them; for which reason such orders were strictly to be observed by them.

"Therefore shall thy camp be holy": Both in a moral and ceremonial sense.

"That he see no unclean thing in thee": Literally, nakedness, shamefulness of a thing, i.e. anything that one would be ashamed of.

"And turn away from thee": And so they fall into the hands of their enemies, and become an easy prey to them, their God having forsaken them. And that this might not be their case, care should be taken not to offend him, and cause him to depart from them.

The camp had to be physically and ceremonially clean, because the presence of God with them made the camp holy.

Verses 23:15 – 25:19: Moses selected 21 sample laws to further illustrate the nature of the requirements of living under the Sinaitic Covenant.

Verses 15-25: It is honorable to shelter and protect the weak, provided they are not wicked. Proselytes and converts to the truth, should be treated with particular tenderness, that they may have no temptation to return to the world. We cannot honor God with our substance, unless it be honestly and honorably come by. It must not only be considered what we give, but how we got it. Where the borrower gets, or hopes to get, it is just that the lender should share the gain. But to him that borrows for necessary food, pity must be showed. That which is gone out of thy lips, as a solemn and deliberate vow, must not be recalled, but thou shalt keep and perform it punctually and fully. They were allowed to pluck and eat of the corn or grapes that grew by the road side; only they must not carry any away. This law intimated what great plenty of corn and wine they should have in Canaan. It provided for the support of poor travelers, and teaches us to be kind to such. Teaches us to be ready to distribute, and not to think everything lost that is given away. Yet it forbids us to abuse the kindness of friends, or to take advantage of what is allowed. Faithfulness to their engagements should mark the people of God; and they should never encroach upon others.



Verses 15-16: A fugitive slave was not to be turned over to his master. Evidently this has in mind a slave from the Canaanites or other neighboring nations who was driven out by oppression or with a desire to know Israel's God.

The type of "servant" here refers to people from other countries who had come to seek refuge in Israel (Exodus 22:21). The command "shalt not deliver unto his master" went against normal practice in the ancient Near East and was even included in treaties. Because of Israel's slavery in Egypt, the people were expected to have a greater sensitivity to the plight of slaves than they might have otherwise.

**Deuteronomy 23:15 "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee:"**

It seems, from the connection, that this has a particular relation to times of war. When heathen soldiers or servants might desert and come over to the Israelites with intent to turn proselytes to the true religion. In which case, they were neither to send them back, and expose them to the severity of their heathen masters, nor use them hardly themselves. But permit them to live peaceably, and with full enjoyment of all the liberties and privileges of a proselyte in Israel (Lev. 19:33; 19:35). It may be understood, likewise, of such foreign servants as, upon inquiry, appeared to be unjustly oppressed by their masters. For it is not strange if the great God, who hates all tyranny, and styles himself the refuge of the oppressed, should interpose his authority to rescue such persons from their cruel masters.

A slave that had escaped and run to them for safety, should not be turned over to the master he escaped from. Sometimes these foreign masters were so cruel to their slaves, they would rather die than go back. If the slave has taken such a drastic step, he should be allowed to stay.

**Deuteronomy 23:16 "He shall dwell with thee, [even] among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him."**

This seems to confirm the sense of it, being a stranger. A proselyte servant that is here spoken of, since the law provides for his dwelling among the Israelites.

"In that place he shall choose, in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best": He was not to be detained by the person that took him up in his own house, or be obliged to dwell in any certain place under, a restraint. But he might take up his abode in any of the cities of Israel, which would be most for his good, profit, and advantage.

"Thou shalt not oppress him": By words, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, "calling him a fugitive servant, or by any opprobrious name."

The Israelites should be able to relate to this escaped slave. They had been slaves in Egypt, and God had freed them. He should be able to choose a place to live among them, without them oppressing him.

Verses 17-18: The seventh subsection: laws about cult prostitutes. The first law prohibited Israelite men and women from becoming cult prostitutes. The second law prohibited the payment of a vow to God with “dirty money”. The “price of a dog” refers to the wages acquired from male prostitution. Since the activities that provided these funds were an “abomination”, the money could not be brought into the house of God.

Prostitution as a form of worship was forbidden. “Dog” was a reference to male prostitutes (compare Rev. 22:15).

The Hebrew word for “whore” describes a type of cultic prostitute, associated with the immoral worship systems of the neighbors of Israel (Exodus 32:6, 8; Num. chapter 25).

**Deuteronomy 23:17 "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel."**

The word for "whore" is "kedeshah", which properly signifies an "holy" one. And here, by an antiphrasis (meaning opposite), an unholy, an impure person, one that is defiled by man (see notes on Gen. 38:18). Jarchi interprets the word, one that makes herself common, that is sanctified, or set apart. That is, one that separates herself for such service, and prostitutes herself to everyone that passes by. But some understand this not of common harlots in the streets, but of sacred whores, or such as were consecrated to Heathen deities, as such there were to Venus. Strabo tells us that the temple of Venus at Corinth was so rich, that more than a thousand of those sacred harlots were kept, whom men and women had devoted to that goddess. Now these of all harlots being the most abominable are forbidden to be among the daughters of Israel.

"Nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel": By the same rule that "kedeshah" is rendered "a whore" in the preceding clause. Though Aben Ezra interprets it passively, one that is lain with, and Jarchi one that is prepared to lie with a male, that prostitutes his body in this unnatural way. And it looks as if there were such sort of persons sacred to idols, since we read of the houses of the sodomites, which were by, or rather in the house of the Lord (2 Kings 23:7).

There would be none, because they stoned them to death if they were found out, to keep the race pure and holy before the LORD. A sodomite is the same as a homosexual. They were named sodomites, because the sin of homosexuality was the reason Sodom was destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven.

**Deuteronomy 23:18 "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these [are] abomination unto the LORD thy God."**

Which was given to her as a reward for the use of her body.

"Or the price of a dog": Not of the firstborn of a dog, the price for the redemption of it, as some. Nor for the loan of a hunting dog, or a shepherd's dog for breed, as Josephus interprets this law. Abarbinel understands it figuratively of a sodomite, comparable to a dog, for his uncleanness and

impudence (see Rev. 22:15). And the price of such a one the gain he got by the prostitution of his body to unnatural lusts. And so as the hire of a whore answers to one in (Deut. 23:17).

"Into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow": That is, when a man vowed to offer any sacrifice to the Lord, it was not to be anything that was given to a whore as her hire. As, for instance, as Jarchi, if he gave her for her hire a lamb, it was not fit to be offered. Which agrees with the Jewish canons, "what is the hire of a whore? If one says to a whore, take this lamb for thy hire, though a hundred, they are all forbidden. And so if one says to his neighbor, lo, this lamb is thine, that thine handmaid may lie with my servant. Rabbi says it is not the hire of a whore. But the wise men say it is, if he gives her money. But the commentators say, wheat, olives, and grapes, out of which fine flour, oil, and wine are made, are free. If he gives her consecrated things, lo, these are free, birds, they are forbidden.

"For even both these are an abomination to the Lord thy God": Both the hire of the whore and the price of the dog, when brought as a sacrifice to him. The one being a breach of the moral law, and the other tending to bring into contempt the sacrifices of the ceremonial law. If not a favoring idolatry, then which nothing is more abominable to God, who cannot endure anything evil, base, and impure.

The offerings were to be wholesome as well. It appears, that prostitution by both sexes was a form of idolatrous worship. The Hebrews were not to associate themselves in any of these practices. The money received from whoredom of either male or female, was not money to be used in service to God. It was unholy. The dog, in the Scripture above, is speaking of a male prostitute.

Verses 19-20: This prohibition of lending money at interest to a fellow Israelite is qualified by (Exodus 22:25 and Lev. 25:35-36), which indicates that it restricts its application to the poor and prevents further impoverishment, but it was allowed for foreigners who were engaged in trade and commerce to enlarge their wealth. According to (Deut. 15:1-2), it is also clear that money could be legitimately lent in the normal course of business, subject to forgiveness of all unpaid debt in the sabbatical year (compare 24:10).

Verses 19-25: This portion deals with matters related to the eighth commandment. Both stealing and withholding another's property are condemned. Other commands in this section prohibit usury (moneylending) and define the reasonable limits of hospitality.

**Deuteronomy 23:19 "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:"**

One of the same nation and religion, and who is in poor and necessitous circumstances. And wants either food for himself and family, or money to carry on his husbandry. Till such times as the fruits of his ground will bring him in a sufficiency for his support, and the payment of what he borrows. And which is to be lent him without any interest. As the Jews were chiefly employed in husbandry, and not merchandise, they had but little occasion to borrow. And when they did

could not afford to pay interest, as persons concerned in merchandise, whose gains are great and are able to do. And it is but reasonable that such persons should. But that the Israelites, when poor and in distress, might not be bowed down under their burdens, this law is made for their relief.

"Usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury": This takes in all sorts of usury, whether what is lent be money or food. Or anything else, no interest was to be taken for it (see notes on Lev. 25:36; and 25:37).

"Usury" is unfair interest on anything. The Hebrews were to help each other, not to charge them interest.

**Deuteronomy 23:20 "Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it."**

To any Gentile, though some Jewish writers except the Edomites and Ishmaelites, as being brethren. And restrain it to the seven nations of Canaan. But it seems to design one that was not an Israelite, or a proselyte of righteousness. And especially to regard such that traded and merchandised, as the Gentiles very much did. And especially their neighbors the Phoenicians. And of such it was lawful to take interest, as it was but reasonable. When they gained much by the money they lent them, and as it is but reasonable should be the case among Christians in such circumstances. This is to be regarded not as a precept, but as a permission.

"But unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury": Which is repeated, that it might be taken notice of, and carefully observed.

"That the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand unto, in the land whither thou goest to possess it": For their charity, humanity, and the kind usage of their poor brethren in distress, would not pass unnoticed by the Lord. But he would make the land they tilled fruitful, and their vineyards and oliveyards to produce abundance, and their flocks and their herds to increase greatly. Which would be sufficient and more than a recompence for all that they had freely lent unto their brethren, without taking any usury of them.

The Hebrew was under no obligation to the stranger, and could charge him interest on anything he loaned him.

Verses 21-23: Though vows were made voluntarily they were to be promptly kept once made (compare Num. 30:2).

While it was all right to "forbear" from making "a vow", keeping it was an obligation in the Lord's eyes once it was made, and breaking it was an offense (Num. 30:1-2; Job 22:27; Psalm 61:8; Eccl. 5:4-5).

**Deuteronomy 23:21 "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."**

Which must be of things in a man's power to perform, and of what are lawful to be done, and according to the mind and will of God revealed in his word. And agreeably to the manner of worship prescribed by him. As that he will offer such a sacrifice, a freewill offering to him, and the like. Besides what he was bound to do, or give such and such things for the repair of the sanctuary, or for the relief of the poor (see notes on Num. 30:2). This law is thought by Aben Ezra to be repeated on the mention of the hire of a whore, etc. Being forbidden to be brought for a vow (Deut. 23:18).

"Thou shalt not slack to pay it": Or delay the payment of it, but do it immediately. Since zeal and affection might abate, and there might not be hereafter an ability to perform, or death might come and prevent it. The Targum of Jonathan adds, at the three feasts, that is, of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. And the Jewish writers say, that no man transgresses this precept respecting the delay of paying a vow, until the three feasts have passed.

"For the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee": Exact the payment of it, and expect it, insist upon the performance of it, and punish for neglect.

"And it would be sin in thee": Guilt of sin would be contracted, and punishment inflicted. Aben Ezra interprets it of the latter.

We saw an example of this very thing in Ananias and Sapphira. The story is (in chapter 5 of Acts). They had promised to give all the money to God, and they held back a portion for themselves. God killed each of them.

**Deuteronomy 23:22 "But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee."**

That a man might do, though there was ability. It was expected indeed that men should vow and bring freewill offerings in proportion to their ability. Whether they were of the greater sort, of the herd and flock, or of fowls, or even of fine flour, these were acceptable to the Lord. But if they were not vowed and brought:

"It shall be no sin in thee": No charge of guilt be brought or punishment laid. It should not be reckoned a crime. Nor be punishable in any respect, and especially where there was a willing mind and no ability. Otherwise negligence, niggardliness, and ingratitude, are not well pleasing in the sight of God.

Had they not vowed to God they would do this and had held out the money, it would not have been sin. It was lying to God that was sin.

**Deuteronomy 23:23 "That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; [even] a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth."**

Which were in their power to perform and lawful to do. And this is observed to make them watchful and cautious, and not be rash in making vows. Since, when once they were made, an exact and rigid performance of them was expected (see Eccl. 5:4).

"Even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth": Be it what it will, as to the matter of it, it was to be paid, and in the manner as it was vowed and promised. Aben Ezra observes, that every vow is a freewill offering, but not every freewill offering a vow. The Targum of Jonathan enumerates the several things to be performed, sin offerings, trespass offerings, burnt offerings, and oblations of holy things, and drink offerings, and gifts of the house of the sanctuary, and alms to the poor.

Our word should be our bond. We should not say anything that we will not do. When we say something, it should be just as binding as if we had written it down and had it notarized. Whatsoever we promise, that we must do. The 30th chapter of Numbers goes into detail on vows we make.

Verses 24-25: Farmers were to share their produce with the people in the Land, but the people were not to profit from the farmers' generosity.

**Deuteronomy 23:24 "When thou comest into thy neighbor's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put [any] in thy vessel."**

To take a walk in it for recreation, and to see how the vines flourish, and what sort of fruit and what quantity of it they bear. Being invited thither by the owner, or occasionally passing that way stepped in, and even it may be on purpose to taste the fruits of the vine and quench thirst and satisfy appetite.

"Then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill, at thine own pleasure": As many as they would, till nature was satisfied.

"But thou shalt not put any in thy vessel": To carry away, to be eaten by them or theirs at another time and place. They were to put none into their pockets or into their baskets, as the Targum of Jonathan. Or whatsoever vessel they might have with them in the vineyard. Jarchi says, the Scripture speaks of a workman, and only at the time of gathering the grapes. When he was putting into his master's vessels, and might not put any into his own, and carry away. So the Jewish writers generally interpret it of a workman only, and of his eating those things in which he works, and not of such as pass by the way.

We see that it was not stealing to eat grapes, while you were in the neighbor's vineyard. There were always the gleanings left for this very thing. It is wrong however, to harvest the neighbor's crop to store away for yourself.

**Deuteronomy 23:25 "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn."**

This is the same message as the grapes. It is alright to eat some to quench your hunger. Their crop should not be used for you to make a living, however. The crop is your neighbor's to harvest and sell, or do whatever he wants to with it. To take more than you could eat while standing there, would be stealing from your neighbor.

### **Deuteronomy Chapter 23 Questions**

1. What is meant by verse 1?
2. When was this restriction done away with?
3. A bastard child should not enter the congregation for \_\_\_\_\_ generations.
4. The Hebrews were strong on \_\_\_\_\_ heritage.
5. Who are the Ammonites and Moabites?
6. What were the reasons given, in verse 4, for them not entering the congregation?
7. They wanted to curse Israel, but instead, were \_\_\_\_\_ themselves.
8. Where do we read more about Balaam?
9. What must Israel not do for them forever?
10. The Edomites descended from \_\_\_\_\_.
11. What does "abhor" mean?
12. What had Egypt done for Israel?
13. When could an Egyptian join the congregation?
14. What kind of wars did Israel wage?
15. What should they do, if they are unclean?
16. The washing was both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
17. What should they do, when they went to the bathroom?
18. Why did the camp have to be physically and ceremonially clean?

19. What should they do with a slave, that had run to them for safety?
20. What is a sodomite?
21. \_\_\_\_\_ by both sexes was a form of idolatrous worship.
22. The dog, in verse 18, is speaking of what?
23. What is "usury"?
24. Who could the Hebrew charge usury?
25. Who are two, who lied to God, and were killed for it?
26. Our word should be our \_\_\_\_\_.
27. Can you eat of your neighbor's vineyard? Explain.
28. Does this apply to other crops?
29. What are they forbidden to do to their neighbor's crop?