

March 17: Deut. 23:1-25

Purity in public worship (verses 1-8)

Purity in personal hygiene (verses 9-14)

Purity in the treatment of the nonprivileged (verses 15-16)

Purity in Cultic Personnel (verses 17-18)

Respect for other's property (verses 19-25)

I. Purity in public worship (verses 1-8)

"No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the Lord. 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. 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.

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.

- a. Reminder that this is still Moses' second speech.
- b. The ESV Study Bible shares: Protecting Sexual Morality, *Many of the laws in this section address protecting the sexual integrity of God's people, corresponding to the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (5:18).*
- c. Remember in Gal. 5:12 Paul addressed people emasculating themselves and he could be referring to pagan worship.
- d. In Acts 8:25 and following we have Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch.
- e. When verse 1 says "assembly" it is likely meaning the people of Israel gathered for worship.
- f. When it talks about testicles that are crushed it likely refers to men made eunuchs in the context of pagan worship.
- g. In Isaiah 56:1-8 we see that in the New Covenant this all changes. In the new Covenant the eunuch has an opened relationship with God and the foreigners as well.
 - a. This is a really awesome passage of how God restores relationships and sins are forgiven.
 - b. If God gives us grace, how much grace do we give others?

- h. Verse 2 a person of illegitimate birth may not enter the assembly of the Lord
- i. This is until the tenth generation which may be an idiom meaning forever.
- j. The Moody Bible Commentary shares: *Another person who was excluded is one of illegitimate birth (v. 2). The word illegitimate is rare, and so it may refer to all who are illegitimate. But that is unlikely since unmarried individuals who had sexual intercourse were either put to death (22:20-22), or required to get married (22:28-29). It more likely refers to children of forbidden cross-cultural marriages or to children born to cult prostitutes who had been associated with pagan rituals. The prohibition of not being able to enter, even to the tenth generation, is an idiom meaning forever; it probably does not mean that a person of the eleventh generation could be included.*¹
- k. Remember that God is protecting His people.
- l. Verses 3-6 give specifics.
- m. The NET Bible shares: *These descendants of Lot by his two daughters (cf. Gen 19:30–38) were thereby the products of incest and therefore excluded from the worshiping community. However, these two nations also failed to show proper hospitality to Israel on their way to Canaan (v. 4).*²
- n. No Ammonite, no Moabite, again until the 10th generation. The story of Ruth shows an exception.
- o. Verse 4 gives the why (Numbers 22 and 23 go over this)
- p. They did not help with food and water and they hired Balaam to curse them.
- q. Still, verse 5 reminds us that God did not let them be cursed.
- r. Verse 6, they shall not seek peace or prosperity.
- s. Verses 7-8: they are not to detest
- t. Cross reference: Gen 25:24–26; Obad 10, 12
- u. The ESV Study Bible shares: *Israel's kinship with Edom is closer than that with Moab and Ammon (cf. v. 3). Edom is descended from Esau, Jacob's twin (Gen. 25:19–26). third generation. The possibility of foreigners becoming worshiping Israelites shows that, with God, faith is the issue more than race.*

Map and notes from the ESV Study Bible This comes from Jeremiah:

Jeremiah Prophecies against Moab

¹ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11492-11496). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

² Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Dt 23:3.

In a series of prophetic condemnations of nations surrounding Judah, Jeremiah foretold of the doom of Moab and its cities. Moab had often acted as an enemy of Judah, from the time God's people



were preparing to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 22–24) to the time the Moabites formed a coalition with the Ammonites and the Meunites against Judah (2 Chron. 20:1–29). Along with the Ammonites, Moabites were also specifically forbidden from entering the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3).

The Moody Bible Commentary shares:

While these are the stated standards, what about obvious exceptions such as David, who descended from Ruth the Moabitess? The exclusion may be focused more on Moabite men than Israelites taking Moabite wives. However Ezra later interpreted it in an absolute way as forbidding all such intermarriage (Ezr 9:1-2). This also may be a statement that no unbelieving foreigner may participate in the ceremonial worship at the assembly, fitting the theme of purity. The simplest view is that we have here an example of “faith” trumping “law.” Ruth demonstrated great faith in the God of Israel, especially during the dark period of the judges, and was graciously allowed to be included into the Israelite community as well as the messianic line.³

II. Purity in personal hygiene (verses 9-14)

9 “When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing.

³ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11508-11511). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

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.*

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.*

- a. Israel’s army fighting against the enemy was a religious gathering in which God was present. Religious laws applied.
- b. They must remain clean.
- c. Verse 10 give an example of uncleanness (Lev 15:16ff gets into this)
 - a. Nocturnal emission...
 - b. Go outside the camp
 - c. He may not reenter is specified.
 - d. Bathe after sundown and then reenter.
- d. The Moody Bible Commentary shares: *Nothing is morally wrong here, but since he was ceremonially unclean (because his semen was not spilt in the “normative” way—that is in conjunction with sexual intercourse with one’s wife) and since war was seen as something theological (since God was a warrior in their midst), this was not just a military event. The same goes for the command to bury one’s excrement outside the camp (vv. 12-14). Since God is a warrior along with the Israelite troops, no impurity was to be anywhere in the camp. The camp was to be holy.*⁴
- e. Verses 12-14 get into detail about another case of personal hygiene.
- f. This section deals with restroom facilities.
- g. Verse 14 explains why.
- h. The camp must be holy to reflect the Lord.
- i. As a side note, last year I finished to audio books about the Revolutionary War period. One was “Killing England” by Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard and the other was “Washington, A Life” by Chernow. In those books there were many pages devoted to the disease outbreaks in the military camps. They had to dig and re-dig and change the location of the latrines because of illness.

III. Purity in the treatment of the nonprivileged (verses 15-16)

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.*

- a. We now begin a section relating to personal property. This is related to the commandment, you shall not seal. That is the 7th commandment.

⁴ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11515-11518). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- b. However, verse 15 deals with taking care of a slave. They do not return the slave.
- c. The ESV Study Bible: *The refugee slave is most likely a foreigner, not an Israelite slave.*
- d. Verse 16, allow him to live where he wishes, do not mistreat him.
- e. There are many applications here related to how we treat people. How we treat others is very important.

The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the Old Testament:

Although debt slavery occurred in ancient Israel, it had a term limit of six years and then the slave was freed. Perpetual slavery did exist as well, but that involved foreign captives and Israelites who had made the decision to accept that condition (Ex 21:2–11; Deut 15:12–18). It is most likely this latter class of persons that is mentioned in this law, since debt slaves could expect to be released eventually. Israel’s fugitive slave law is unusual in the context of ancient Near Eastern law. However it is tied to Israel’s former condition as slaves in Egypt and thus is based on a national hatred of the institution (see Ex 22:21). The Code of Hammurabi makes hiding a runaway slave a capital crime and sets a bounty of two shekels of silver for the return of a slave. Similarly, the international treaty between Pharaoh Rameses II and the Hittite king Hattusilis III (c. 1280 B.C.) includes an extradition clause requiring the return of fugitive slaves.⁵

IV. Purity in Cultic Personnel (verses 17-18)

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.

- A. This is somewhat self explanatory. The people of Israel are not to be involved in these other religious practices. The ESV Study Bible shares: *Cultic prostitution was practiced by Canaanite religion as a fertility rite. It was strictly prohibited for ancient Israel.*
- B. Verse 18: do not bring these things into the Lord’s house.
- C. They are an abomination.
- D. IT is easy for us to be in shock that they would think of anything like this, but remember this was common in that land. About this term translated “dog” the IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the Old Testament shares: *The translation “male prostitute” in Deuteronomy 23:18 is based on the use of the Hebrew word that usually means “dog.” In the fourth-century B.C. Kition inscription, this term is used to describe a group that receives temple rations. It is possible, but not certain, that this refers to a temple official or priest. Recent study has shown that, at least by the Persian period (sixth-fifth century), dogs had some significant role in Phoenician cultic practice. Kalbu*

⁵ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 23:15–16.

(dog) has a more positive meaning of “faithful one,” as can be seen in its use in personal names (like the biblical Caleb). (See Ex 34:16.)⁶

V. Respect for other’s property (verses 19-25)

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.

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 vowing, 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.

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.

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.

- a. Verses 19-20 are review. They can charge interest on the foreigner but not their own people.
- b. Remember that God is setting them up as a Jewish Nation state. Verse 20 gives the purpose. The purpose is so that the Lord will bless them.
- c. Cross reference: Ex 22:25; Lev 25:35–37; Neh 5:2–7; Ps 15:5⁷
- d. Verses 21-23 are about vows: if you agree to a vow, which are voluntary commitments to paying something to the Lord. The ESV Study Bible shares: *Vows were voluntary but, once made, were binding (see Numbers 30; Eccles. 5:2–6; for the problem of Jephthah’s vow, see note on Judg. 11:35). Vows must be kept because God keeps his promises and desires that his people imitate his moral character.*
- e. The Lord requires for you to pay what you commit to.
- f. Verse 22: if you don’t vow it, you are not required to pay it.
- g. Verse 23: be careful what you say... what you vow you are responsible for.
- h. Cross reference: Num 30:1, 2; Job 22:27; Ps 61:8; Eccl 5:4, 5; Matt 5:33⁸
- i. The Moody Bible Commentary shares: *This could be seen as an exposition of the third commandment not to take the Lord’s name in vain. It was better not to vow at all than to make a promise and not be able to follow through on it.*⁹
- j. Verse 24 still deals with not stealing and neighbor relations.

A. ⁶ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 23:17–18.

⁷ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁹ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 11533-11534). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- k. Verse 24: you may eat off your neighbors vineyard but do not fill your basket.
- l. You may even eat until satisfied.
- m. Verse 25: same principle: you may eat by plucking the heads of the grain, but if you bring the sickly that is a bigger harvest.
- n. Mt 12:1 *At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on a Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pick heads of wheat and eat them.*
- o. Mk 2:23 *Jesus was going through the grain fields on a Sabbath, and his disciples began to pick some heads of wheat as they made their way.*
- p. Lk 6:1 *Jesus was going through the grain fields on a Sabbath, and his disciples picked some heads of wheat, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them.*

The IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary shares: *Just as widows may glean in a ripe field or orchard to sustain themselves from the harvest provided by God, it is permissible for a traveler to refresh himself with a handful of fruit or grain, taken in passing from a field (see Deut 24:19–21). However, it is theft if a person purposefully harvests from a neighbor’s field. The hospitality rights of travelers are also discussed in the Egyptian Tale of the Eloquent Peasant (c. 2100 B.C.).*¹⁰

¹⁰ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 23:24–25.