

Deut. 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.

“wounded” = mutilated

This chapter begins with instruction regarding three groups of people who are not allowed to “enter into the congregation of the LORD.” My first thought was that this was in reference to being allowed to enter the temple complex. I did a “phrase search” in the KJV and found this phrase used 14 times in 12 verses; in each instance the phrase was making reference to the body of people that were recognized as part of Israel.

I was surprised in my study of Isaiah to find that there were three types of eunuch; following is a quote from that journal

In doing some research on the word *eunuch*, I found a verse I hadn’t noticed before.

Matt. 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

Of the three types of eunuchs, the first one, those that were born that way, would be the ones to be most pitied among the Jewish people. I would assume you could also include those who had been mutilated by men, whether willingly or not, who wanted to become proselytes to the faith (whether by association with the Jews in the OT or the church in the NT), such as the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8.

This verse is specific in its reference to men who, for whatever reason, had been castrated. This would seem to apply to men who were seeking Israeli citizenship since that was not an accepted practice among the Jews. Point is made that they were not to be given full citizenship; their rights and privileges were limited. A valid comparison would be to the rights and privileges of women and blacks in our nation’s past.

Deut. 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.

Well, the Hebrew definition for *bastard* is certainly not the same as how it is used today—“ a mongrel, i.e. born of a Jewish father and a heathen mother.” Again, I think the reference is to the rights and privileges of full citizenship.

Deut. 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:

Deut. 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.

Deut. 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.

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

This section of verses is interesting in that the prohibition is specifically directed to the descendants of Lot, the Ammonites and Moabites. It's especially interesting in light of the fact that King David and ultimately the Lord Jesus were descended through a Moabite woman through marriage. Obviously, they are not prohibited from dwelling in the land since their progeny will finally be eligible for full citizenship in the 10th generation. This judgment is so severe because of national accountability in two things:

- They would not provide passage for the children of Israel in route to the Promised Land.
- They conspired to have Balaam curse the people of Israel.

The Israelites were never in the future to establish peace with or contribute to the prosperity of either of these nations. I think it is important to note that these nations were on the eastern border of Israel and were, therefore, more dangerous as posing a possible temptation to turn the people to idol worship.

In searching through internet resources I found documentation stating that some Rabbis declare that this prohibition only applied to women marrying males, but it seems they are trying to make justification for Boaz marrying Ruth. Personally, I think this instruction is another safeguard against the temptation to idolatry that was posed from such close proximity to these particular nations considering their history of hatred against Israel.

I think the story of Ruth is a result of the spiritual condition of the people at that time as declared in the opening verse of Ruth.

Ruth 1:1 "Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled...."

Judges 17:6 "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

They weren't necessarily intent on keeping all aspects of the law as instructed by God. They were more intent on acting in obedience as determined by their own personal desires. Isn't that the method of interpreting God's word that is most prevalent in the "church" today? We know through the prophet Isaiah that God's intent is to bring all nations into fellowship with Israel through the Messiah.

Isaiah 56:6-8 "Also the sons of the stranger, **that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants**, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."

I think Ruth was blessed by God for that very reason and is a type of that truth.

Deut. 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.

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

These verses state that the Israelites are not to despise their cousins, the Edomites, those descended from Esau. Neither are they to despise the Egyptians. Though their later years in Egypt were spent in slavery, they had initially provided the Jewish people refuge and sustenance for a long period of time—at least until a leader came on the scene that had no knowledge of Joseph.

Exodus 1:8-9 “Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:”

Though positioned as slaves, when they left Egypt, the children of Israel left with great riches.

Exodus 3:21-22 “And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.”

Those who descended from Edom or Egypt were to be allowed to attain full citizenship in the third generation.

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

Deut. 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:

Deut. 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*.

Everywhere in scripture is emphasized the holiness of God and the importance of cleanliness before Him. God is very specific in giving guidelines as to maintaining cleanliness before Him.

The military forces were to be extra careful to maintain cleanliness before God since He in effect went with them. It seems evident in reading through scripture that bodily secretions of different types made one unclean. Leviticus 15 is pretty specific regarding maintaining cleanliness as pertaining to bodily secretions. Singled out here is a man who experiences a nocturnal emission. He is to go outside the camp until evening (the start of a new day). At that time he is to wash himself and then he is allowed to rejoin the rest of the troops.

Deut. 23:12 Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:

Deut. 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:

Deut. 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.

In context, the address continues to a man in combat forces. They didn't have port-o-potties in those days. When they had to relieve themselves, they were to go outside the camp; and they were to carry a shovel to use in covering up their urine and excrement. This would also contribute to controlling the stench and to prevent the spread of germs that might result in disease.

Point is made that YHWH is with them, and they are to maintain cleanliness before a holy, righteous God. If they disobeyed, it would result in His turning away from them; and this would result in sure defeat.

Deut. 23:15 ¶ Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee:

Deut. 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.

These verses established Israel as a safe haven for runaway slaves from heathen lands. There were other laws governing slavery practiced among the people as discussed in chapter 15. Leviticus gives further explanation.

Leviticus 19:33-34 "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; **for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.**"

God's people knew what it was to suffer under the hands of cruel slavemasters.

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

It was interesting to me that the Hebrew for both *whore* and *sodomite* made reference to the practice as part of idolatry; in fact, the word for *whore* states that it is the feminine version of the word *sodomite*. It would seem that this instruction is specifically directed toward sexual practices associated with idol worship. There are many other places that forbid fornication and adultery in general, the primary one being one of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:14 "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Deut. 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.

This verse prohibits the use of profit from unclean sources to be used to pay any vow you might have made to God. The principle is clear: Profit made from disobedience to God's law is not acceptable for use in hypocritical service to the Lord.

This principle was significant to the reason that Jesus overthrew the tables of the moneychangers in the temple. The priests were not operating according to God's will; they were operating to make a profit toward their own purposes—no matter how they tried to justify them before the Lord. I am afraid that many churches are using the same hypocritical justification for some of the methods they employ to accomplish their own purposes that are presented to the people as a means of bringing glory and honor to God.

Deut. 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:

Deut. 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.

These verses forbid the people from charging one another interest when making loans of any type to one another. They are, however, allowed to charge interest to foreigners. Again, Leviticus is a bit more specific:

Leviticus 25:35-36 "And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee."

Point is made that generosity to your brother will result in blessing from God to you.

Deut. 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.

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

Deut. 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.

I think it is from these verses that the phrase--"A man's word should be his promise"--finds its roots. Just as God does not make His promises to us lightly, God does not take the promises we make to Him lightly. These are certainly words to give one pause. I am sure that I have made rash promises to the Lord that I have failed to follow through on in years past. This is just not a principle of God that was emphasized in my formative years. I mean, I was taught that one should keep one's word as a matter of honesty and good character, but I never truly realized the importance that God places on the promises we make to Him. That was a truth that hit home to me much later in my spiritual journey. I try to be very careful now regarding the way I phrase things to God in my conversations with Him.

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

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

These verses establish permission for travelers to take nourishment from the gardens and crops that they encounter on their journey. The intent is to provide necessary sustenance for the moment. You are not allowed to bag it up and take it with you for future use. You are only allowed to pick what you are going to eat.

The produce of the land is again a result of the blessings of God. Without God's blessing you would have no crops. God's character is one of love and compassion, and He wants His people to exhibit the same.