

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
9-21-22

Deuteronomy 23

Eunuchs Are Excluded From The Congregation Of Israel – Verse 1

¹ No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD.

23:1 By crushing or mutilation: This refers to those emasculated by either birth defect, accident, or by deliberate emasculation. Eunuchs were excluded because God's covenant with Israel was vitally connected with the idea of the seed, and emasculation is a "crime" against the seed of man. Additionally, most eunuchs were made to be so in pagan ceremonies where they were dedicated to pagan gods. Isaiah 56:3-5 shows that even eunuchs and foreigners could be accepted before the LORD if they would obey Him, and they would be accepted before the "normal" people who disobeyed God.

23:1 Shall not enter the assembly of the LORD: When we read this term, it usually refers to the nation gathered before the LORD in worship, such as when they were gathered at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:22, 9:10, 10:4, and 18:16).

Those Of Unknown Parentage Are Excluded From The Assembly Of Israel (Civil Leadership In Israel) – Verse 2

² No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation.

23:2 One of illegitimate birth: It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term of illegitimate birth. Some later Jewish writers defined this as someone who was born of an incestuous relationship between Jews; others said it refers to those born of mixed marriages between the people of Israel and their pagan neighbors (as in Nehemiah 13:23).

Ammonites And Moabites Are Excluded From The Congregation Of Israel (Civil Leadership In Israel) – Verses 3-6

³ No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. ⁴ For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. ⁵ However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.

23:3-6 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD: The Moabites and the Ammonites not only treated Israel cruelly on their way to the Promised Land, but they also were a people with a disgraceful beginning. Moab and Ammon were the two sons born to the daughters of Lot through their incest with their father (Genesis 19:30-38).

Edomites And Egyptians (Of The Third Generation) Are Permitted To Be Among The Congregation Of Israel (Civil Leadership In Israel) – Verses 7-8

⁷ Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. ⁸ The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

23:7 You shall not abhor an Edomite: The Edomites were ethnically related to Israel, because Israel's brother Esau was the father of the Edomite peoples. Therefore, Israel was commanded to not abhor an Edomite. Interestingly, one of the most famous Edomites in history was abhorred by Israel — Herod the Great. Many of his spectacular building projects in Judea were intended to not only glorify his own name, but to win the favor of the Jews who despised him as an Edomite.

23:7-8 You shall not abhor an Egyptian: The Egyptians were also to receive more favor than the Moabites or Ammonites, because Israel was a guest in Egypt for almost 400 years. Though the years Israel spent in Egypt were hard, God had a great purpose for them. Egypt was like a mother's womb for Israel; they went in as a large family and came out as a distinct nation.

Uncleanness In The Camp – Verses 9-14

⁹ When you are encamped against your enemies, keep away from everything impure. ¹⁰ If one of your men is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, he is to go outside the camp and stay there. ¹¹ But as evening approaches he is to wash himself, and at sunset he may return to the camp. ¹² Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. ¹³ As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. ¹⁴ For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.

23:9 When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing: God commanded ceremonial cleanliness among the army of Israel. Some occurrence in the night probably refers to nocturnal emissions, and the cleansing ceremony for this is described in Leviticus 15:16-18. After observing the ceremonial washing, he may come into the camp again.

23:10-13 And you shall have an implement among your equipment: God commanded sanitary cleanliness among the army of Israel; each soldier was to carry some type of shovel, with which he could cover [his] refuse.

23:14 Some ancient rabbis taught that the holy city of Jerusalem should be considered "the camp of the LORD." Under this reasoning, one had to go outside the camp to relieve one's self. However, for many people, the trip outside the large "camp" of Israel (the city of Jerusalem) was longer than what would be permitted on the Sabbath. Therefore, as a practical matter, the rabbis prohibited a Jew from relieving themselves on the Sabbath day.

Israel To Provide Asylum For The Foreign Escaped Slave – Verses 15-16

¹⁵ If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their master. ¹⁶ Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town they choose. Do not oppress them.

23:15-16 You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you: “The refugee slave referred to had evidently come from a foreign land. Otherwise there would have been legal complications, since slaves were a valued possession.”

Sacred prostitution banned – Verses 17-18

17 No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. 18 You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God to pay any vow, because the LORD your God detests them both.

23:17-18 Prostitution was not overlooked in God’s law—it was strictly forbidden. To forbid this practice may seem obvious to us, but it may not have been so obvious to the Israelites. Almost every other religion known to them included prostitution as an integral part of its worship services. Prostitution makes a mockery of God’s original idea for sex, treating sex as an isolated physical act rather than an act of commitment to another. Outside of marriage, sex destroys relationships. Within marriage, if approached with the right attitude, it can be a relationship builder. God frequently had to warn the people against the practice of extramarital sex. Today we still need to hear his warnings.

No Interest To Be Charged To The Family Of Israel – Verses 19-20

19 Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. 20 You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.

23:19 You shall not charge interest to your brother; interest on money or food: The mention of food, and the similar command in [Exodus 22:25](#), leads most to understand that interest was prohibited on loans made to the poor for their basic needs, and did not prohibit the taking of interest on loans that were not for relief of the poor.

23:20 To a foreigner you may charge interest: “But since merchants from other nations might come for business reasons to Israel, or make loans on interest to Israelites, foreigners could be charged interest.”

The Importance Of Keeping Our Vows – Verses 21-23

21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. 22 But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. 23 Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.

23:21 You shall not delay to pay it: A vow before God is no small thing. God expressly commanded that Israel should be careful to keep its vows and to fulfill every oath made, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. In many circles today, the breaking of an oath is just standard business practice — but before God, it is simply sin.

23:22 But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you: God never requires vows; many times, it is better not to make a vow.

23:23 That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform: This shows how important it is to keep a vow once made. As it says in [Ecclesiastes 5:4-5](#), When you make a vow to God, do not

delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

Of course, there is a vow we all can and should make — a vow to praise God: Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises unto You (Psalm 56:12). So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows (Psalm 61:8).

The Right To Glean Is Given To Travelers – Verses 24-25

²⁴ If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. ²⁵ If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain.

23:24-25 This commandment guarded against selfishly holding on to one's possessions. It also ensured that no one had to go hungry. It was not, however, an excuse for taking advantage of one's neighbor. The Pharisees did not interpret this appropriately when they accused Jesus and the disciples of harvesting on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-2).