

March 15, 2020 - Deut. 22:6 – 23:9 - Humility Before God's Creation; Mixed vs. Pure

Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 22:6 – 23:9 - Humility Before God's Creation; Mixed vs. Pure

Psalm 129-132 (repeat)

Haftarah: Isaiah 31:5-9 + 32:14-18

A Multitude of Commandments

This section of the readings contains 71 positive and negative commandments. Although some rabbis said the commandments were to be obeyed and not analyzed, other rabbis wondered what was the purpose and aim of God's commandments. They noted that for every human activity there is a corresponding command.

In every endeavor, "the precepts accompany you": building a house, putting on a garment, shaving, plowing a field, sowing grain, reaping a harvest. "God said: Even if you are not engaged in any particular work but are merely journeying on a road, the precepts accompany you. Whence is this? For it is said: 'If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way' etc." (Devarim Rabbah 6,3)

One Midrash goes further and compares all these commandments as a lifeline God throws to us to insure that in every activity we don't succumb to self-seeking and the evil inclination. "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go; keep her for she is your life" (**Proverbs 4:13**)

Interestingly, the midrash also compares God's giving Israel the Law to the sowing of seed. "The Holy One blessed be He, sowed the Torah and the commandments (the giving of the mitzvot is compared to the act of sowing a seed, which bears fruit many times greater than what was sown) in order to give them as an inheritance to Israel in the Hereafter. He left not a thing in the world in connection with which He did not charge Israel with some commandment." (Midrash Rabbah 17,7)

Christ - the Seed that falls into the ground, bringing forth much fruit - fulfilled this type.

Humility Before God's Creation

Deuteronomy 22:6-7 - "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."

Note the similarity between this and Jacob's concern that Esau would "smite me, the mother with the children" (**Genesis 32:11**).

The Mishnah adds "not even to cleanse a leper; and whoever does take her is to be beaten." This law could partly be to preserve the species of birds, and prevent their

decrease, for a dam let go might breed again.

This particular commandment puzzled the rabbis - why pity the bird when you are still allowed to kill and eat it?

Nachmanides believed it was not so much compassion for the bird, but to "inculcate humanity in us" i.e. compassion for other humans and the avoidance of cruelty.

Others went further - Joseph ibn Kaspi, a medieval philosopher, in his *Sefer ha-Mashal*, Commentary on the Prophetic books, says this law as well as others - like not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk - are meant to teach us humility before God's creation.

"In our pride we foolishly imagine that there is not kinship between us and the rest of the animal world, much less with the plants and vegetation." He we are bidden to show compassion toward other humans, "love thy neighbor as thyself." Regarding even plants, we are forbidden to cut down fruit trees. Even inert matter is included: "Thus the land itself must be rested every seven years. ... The Torah inculcates in us a sense of our modesty and lowliness, that we should be ever cognizant of the fact that we are of the same stuff as the ass and mule, the cabbage and pomegranate and even the lifeless stone."

An example of someone who learned this well was Abraham Lincoln, who was well versed in the Bible. At age 10 he preached a "sermon" to his family on the right to life of ants. Once when traveling with a group of lawyers, he saw two little birds the wind had blown from their nest. He turned back on the road to help them. "He finally found the nest and placed the birds, to use his own words, 'in the home provided for them by their mother.' The others laughed at him, but he responded earnestly, 'I could not have slept tonight if I had not given those two little birds to their mother.'" (*Lincoln's Virtues* by William Lee Miller)

Jesus might have had this commandment in mind:

- **Luke 12:6** - "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?"

- **Matthew 10:29** - "...and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."

Finally - it comes with a blessing:

"that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."

- The Mishnah notes "the same blessing that is promised to observers of the fifth commandment - 'Honor thy father and thy mother' - which is one of the weightier matters of the law." Respect for the mother bird points us toward respect for our own parents, and to our Heavenly Father.

"Rabbi Akiba says, You will not find a single duty prescribed in the Law with a promise of

reward attached to it, which has not also the resurrection of the dead hanging thereby. In the command to honor thy father and mother, it is written (**Deuteronomy 5**) 'that thy days may be prolonged and that it may go well with thee.' In the liberty of the nest it is written (here), 'that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.' Suppose a man's father says to him, Climb up the tower and bring me the young birds. He ascends the tower, lets the dam go, and takes the young. But on his way back, he falls and is killed. Where is the 'going well' in his case, and where is the prolonging of his days? Aye, but that it may go well with thee in the world where all goes well, and that thy days may be prolonged in that world where all is abiding." (Talmud Kiddushin, p. 39b)

Deuteronomy 22:8 - "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence."

It was to be, according to the rabbis, at least two cubits high (about 3 ft.).

Similar to **Exodus 21:33** - "And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein, the owner of the pit shall make restitution; he must pay its owner, and the dead animal will be his"

The Jews say, that by the equity of this law, they are obliged, and so are we, to fence or remove every thing whereby life may be endangered, as wells, or bridges, lest if any perish through the omission, their blood be required at the hands of those who have neglected to perform so plain a duty. (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kama, fol. 15. 2.) - *Benson Commentary*

Spiritually, this concerns encouraging or allowing someone to fall into sin without a warning.

- **Proverbs 28:10** - "Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession."

Mixing vs. Purity

Similar precepts are recorded in **Leviticus 19:19**

Deuteronomy 22:9-11 - "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together."

The Targum of Jonathan: "lest it be condemned to burning"

An ox and an ass — Because the one was a clean beast, the other unclean. Also, they are of such different size and strength, it would be cruel to the latter to yoke them together

Linen and wool have opposite characteristics.

Linen is the strongest of all the vegetable fibers, with 2 to 3 times the strength of cotton. It is lint free and gets softer the more it is washed. It can gain up to 20% moisture without feeling damp. It resists dirt and stains and is strong and durable.

Wool symbolizes labor and sacrifice, it makes the wearer sweat and irritates the skin.

There is a spiritual application to all these:

- **2 Corinthians 6:14** - "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

- **Ephesians 5:11** - "Have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."

- **1 John 1:6** - "If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

Tares Among the Wheat —

- **Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43** - "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

(Ancient Hittite laws also forbade the sowing of different kinds of seed in the same field).

...Except for Priests

The tabernacle where He abode, was of fine linen. "The fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (**Revelation 19:8**). The outer tent and coverings were separate and made of hair and skin and wool.

We discussed mixed material in garments in **Leviticus 19:19**. Although purity and unmixed righteousness were the standard, Josephus notes (*Antiqu. l. 4. c. 8. sect. 11.*) that priests alone were commanded to wear ephods made with both linen and dyed thread (**Exodus 28:6–8; 39:4–5**). The dyed thread would have been made of wool. The wearing of the Ephod, with its mixed fabric of linen and wool, might be seen as depicting their bearing "the iniquity of the congregation" (**Leviticus 10:17**) - the sinfulness of the human condition as well as its remedy. In fact the tassles of the prayer shawl worn by every Israelite included this mixture of wool and linen, perhaps to remind Israel they were a "nation of priests" (**Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9**) when they were at prayer.

Although it must be noted that in **Ezekiel 44:17-18**, the priests in the future Temple are altogether forbidden the use of woollen garments during their ministry, because it makes them sweat, and it would express toil and effort rather than spiritual rest.

The fringes of the prayer shawl are the subject of the next verse:

Deuteronomy 22:12 - "Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself."

Gedilîm, lit. twisted threads on the four corners of the uppermost garment, called the *Talith* (this later became the traditional prayer shawl).

The statute was given after the stoning of a man gathering sticks on the sabbath.

- **Numbers 15:37-40** - "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God."

The tassles or fringes of Jesus' garment were a touchstone of healing:

- **Matthew 9:20** - "And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole."

A Man who Slanders His Wife - Deuteronomy 22:13-21

Deuteronomy 22:13-14 - "If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:"

The procedure, according to Maimonides, was "a man comes to the sanhedrim, and says, this young woman I married, and I did not find her virginities; and when I inquired into the matter, it appeared to me that she had played the whore under me, after I had betrothed her; and these are my witnesses that she played the whore before them."

The "token of her virginity" the sheet she lay in when she first bedded with her husband, which would be stained with blood by the breaking of the hymen, in her parents' possession, and kept by them as a witness of her purity, should there ever be any occasion for doubting it.

At a Jewish wedding, before the ceremony, two persons, called "the friends" of the bride and bridegroom, went first into their bedchamber, and thoroughly examined the bed, whether there was anything relating to the sign of virginity, by which one might impose upon another; and they stood all night keeping watch with great joy and cheerfulness, as if they had been the guards of a king and queen; (to which is thought the allusion is in **John 3:29**) their business was, when the bridegroom and bride came out, to rush in immediately, and examine all things again; and knowing and owning the former linen

sheets in which they had lain, took them and delivered them to the mother.

- **John 3:29** - "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

This court was the court of twenty three judges; for this was a capital crime accused of, a cause relating to life and death, which could not be heard and tried in a lesser court. (Maimonides, Hilchot Naarah Betulah, c. 3. sect. 3.)

If it is determined the man is lying, the elders of that city shall take the man, and chastise him with a scourging of forty stripes, save one. (Babylonian Talmud, Cetubot, fol. 46. 1.)

Then they will fine him 100 shekels of silver - twice the dowry he would have had to give by simply divorcing her. She would remain his wife, and he would not be able to bring a divorce against her again.

But if they find the charge is true, the wife is stoned - at her father's door (because he failed to raise her right), -"because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you."

Adultery, Rape and Fornication - Deuteronomy 22:22-29 (Also Leviticus 20:10)

Both parties to adultery were to be put to death "with the strangling of a napkin." according to the Targum of Jonathan.

Even someone only betrothed could be guilty of adultery, because a betrothal was a serious legal status and she was still considered his "wife."

Betrothal was the first step towards marriage, even if it was not a solemn act attested by witnesses. Written agreements of marriage were not introduced till a later period (Tobit 7:14; Tr. Ketuboth i.2)

If the act took place in a city and she did not protest and cry out, her doom was sealed along with his. She ought to have abode in her father's house till her husband fetched her home, and not to have gadded abroad in the city, where she was exposed to temptation. Both were to be stoned.

Notice though how Jesus handles this situation:

- **John 8:7** - "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And then, when no one speaks to condemn her, he told her, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Rape

Deuteronomy 22:25-27 - "But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her."

from this passage Maimonides concludes that impurities, incests and adulteries are equal to murder, to capital cases relating to life and death.

Fornication

Deuteronomy 22:28-29 - "If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days."

"and they be found" - in the act, or accused by witnesses later, or they confessed it, or perhaps because her pregnancy betrays them.

She shall be his wife, if her father and she agree to it (**Exodus 22:17**), and he must pay 50 shekels plus a dowry of another 50 shekels.

Deuteronomy 22:30 - "A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt."

See **Leviticus 18:8; Leviticus 20:11**

"skirt" = *kanaph* - wing, corners of a garment - someone who had been under the protection of his father's garment, like Ruth with Boaz

- **Ruth 3:9** - "And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt (*kanaph*) over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman."

Excluded from the Assembly - Deuteronomy 23:1-9

Eunuchs

Castrated men were excluded from the assembly and banned from the priesthood (Leviticus 21:20), and even castrated animals could not be offered as sacrifice (**Leviticus 22:24**).

- **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 rabbis said this prohibition applied only to those made eunuchs by the hand of man, and not by the hand of God - through an accident or being a eunuch from birth.

"The congregation" can sometimes refer to elders and officers. It may very well be that these exclusions from the assembly of the LORD are exclusions not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political leadership of the nation as magistrate or judges.

The same prohibition was made for priests:

Leviticus 21:17-23 gives a series of conditions that disqualifies someone to be a priest: "Speak to Aaron, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.'"

The reason there was that the "perfection" of both the priests and the offerings pointed to the moral perfection demanded by God, and indeed to his demand that we "be ye perfect, as I am perfect" (**Matthew 5:48**) quoting **Leviticus 11:44** - "ye shall be holy; for I am holy." ... Because the Messiah, the Lamb, would be without blemish as a perfect sacrifice, and as our High Priest He would be perfect in His service.

(Compare the priests of Baal and those of Babylon and elsewhere, who lashed themselves, marred their faces and cut themselves to prove their devotion to their god (**1 Kings 18:26, 28**).

The Seed

Similarly, the prohibition against eunuchs pointed to the importance of the "seed" - the offspring, not only to God's promise to increase Israel like the stars or the sands of the sea, but to the "one seed" Christ, who was to come through the lineage of Israel.

- **Galatians 3:16** - "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."

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 producing fruit in offspring. (This could also be part of the reason for the condemnation of homosexuality).

As an example, the Roman Emperor Domitian forbade creating eunuchs because of the fears of a declining birth rate among Roman citizens.

The Deuteronomy passage goes on to also prohibit those of illegitimate birth, Ammonites and Moabites. (Egyptians and Edomites could be included after three generations).

The pure lineage, unmixed with by intermarrying with Gentiles, was needed to secure the legitimacy of the Messiah, the Prophet arising "from among you."

What Exactly is a Eunuch?

The Hebrew term is *saris* = eunuch. It is not certain which definition came first, a chief administrator in a king's court, or being "unable to procreate, castrated."

[The word *saris* in rabbinical literature also denotes a person of indeterminate gender, who appears as male at birth, but later takes on more typically female biology.]

These were called a "eunuch by the hands of heaven" or "a eunuch of the sun" because they were eunuchs from the moment they were born under the sun, as opposed to eunuchs "by the hand of man."

By the hand of Man - Castration in Pagan Fertility Cults

Castration was part of some of the ancient fertility religions, and this association with idolatry probably was the original reason for excluding eunuchs.

In Egypt, Set castrates his brother Osiris. The Hurrian-Hittite myth in which Anu is castrated by his son Kumarbi is the basis for the Greek myth of the sky-god Ouranos castrated by his son Kronos. In Babylon, Ishtar's cult involved what appear to be androgynous, hermaphroditic, and/or homosexual priests, though not necessarily castrated ones. Attis (originally Tammuz) was said to be a human who "was a eunuch from birth" - possibly an androgyn - and such a faithful devotee of The mother goddess Cybele that she elevates him to be worshipped alongside her. After his death she commanded all her priests henceforth become castrated eunuchs in his honor, and to lead mourning for him annually through the celebration of orgiastic rites.

On the Day of Blood on March 24, commemorating Attis' death, anyone wishing to join the priests of Cybele would celebrate with ecstatic dancing, self-flagellation and self-cutting. Finally,

"He takes [a sword] and castrates himself and then runs wild through the city, bearing in his hands what he has cut off. He casts it into any house at will, and from this house he receives women's raiment and ornaments. Thus they act during their ceremonies of castration." (Lucian, *De Syria Dea*, 50–51)

By the Hand of Man - Officials

Castration was often performed to ensure a king's advisers did not have children or romantic or family interests that might distract them or tempt them towards betrayal.

Sometimes testicles were tied off on young boys to make them a eunuch. In China and Vietnam, castration included removal of the penis as well as the testicles. Both organs were cut off with a knife at the same time.

The word "eunuch" was occasionally employed to denote persons in such a position,

without indicating castration. "Eunuch" can thus refer to any one who has an important position in a king's service.

Potiphar was an officer (*saris*) to Pharaoh (**Genesis 37:36**). But no physical condition of castration or impotence is mentioned (although his wife seemed to be a little sex-starved trying to seduce Joseph) - **Genesis 39**).

By the Hand of Man - Prisoners of War

Isaiah tells Hezekiah, king of Judah, that his sons will be taken away captive to Babylon and made eunuchs, probably in order to emphasize the end to his royal dynasty.

Isaiah 39:7 - "And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (also **2 Kings 20:18**)

There are lots of eunuchs mentioned in the book of Esther, most of whom were probably castrated since they served in the King's harem. "Bagoas" is an old Persian word meaning "eunuch."

A Spiritual 'Eunuch' - Voluntarily Committing to a Chaste Life of Singleness

Jesus had told his disciples that Moses' allowance of divorce was because of the "hardness of their hearts." So they asked him, if that's the case, it must be not good to marry, right?

- **Matthew 19:11-12** - "But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 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."

According to this definition, a "eunuch" can be someone who chooses to be single, and lives a life of chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."

The early Christian theologian Origen took this a little too seriously. According to Eusebius, Origen is said to have had himself castrated by a physician. Later he denounced this literal reading of the text.

Promise of Inclusion in the New Covenant

- **Isaiah 56:3-5** - "...neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Prominently fulfilled by the example of the Ethiopian Eunuch, a high court official of Candace the Queen of Ethiopia, in **Acts 8:26-39** when the eunuch told Philip "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." and was baptized.

Interestingly, neither Jesus nor the apostles ever "healed" a eunuch. Nor are they said to be in need of healing.

For more info see:

The Castrated Gods and their Castration Cults

<https://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=advance-archive>

The Congenital Eunuch: A Medical-Halachic Study

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Eunuch.pdf>

Deuteronomy 23:42 - "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."

To "enter into the congregation" meant to marry an Israelite woman, according to Rashi.

The Talmud and the rabbis represent the word as denoting one begotten in fornication, adultery, whoredom or incest. "To his tenth generation" i.e. forever, ten being the number of indefiniteness.

However, bastards may be purified (or legitimated) if one marries a servant maid. The child is a servant, who if he becomes free, (his) son is a free man (Misn. Kiddushin, c. 3. sect. 13.).

Some interpreted this as only an exclusion from government office or leadership. But Pharez and Jephthah were both bastards, yet advanced to great honor and authority.

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:"

Not, however, because their forefathers were begotten in incest (**Genesis 19:30**), but because of the hostility they had manifested toward Israel. This was a national policy, but did not prohibit personal relations: David had a kindness for Hanun the Ammonite, and showed it, though ill rewarded for it, yet is not blamed for doing so (**2 Samuel 10:2**).

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 proselytesses, as Ruth was.

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."

Targum of Jonathan adds, an Edomite who "comes to be made a proselyte"

Rashi - "You shall not despise an Edomite": Completely, [but only the first two generations,] even though it is appropriate for you to despise him, because he went forth against you with the sword (see **Numbers 20:18-21**).

"You shall not despise an Egyptian": Absolutely, [but only the first two generations,] even though they cast your male [infants] into the Nile. What is the reason [that you may not despise them]? Because they hosted you in a time of dire need.

Why the difference with Edomites and Egyptians?

Rashi - Someone who causes a person to sin does worse to him than one who kills him, for one who kills him, kills him [only] in this world, whereas one who leads him to sin removes him from [both] this world and from the world-to-come. Therefore, Edom, who came forth against them with the sword was not [completely] despised. Similarly, Egypt, who drowned them. These, however, who caused them to sin, were [completely] despised. — [Sifrei 23:117]

"The third generation" from the time that any of them should embrace the true religion.

Females 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 (Vid. Kimchi in 1 Reg. 3. 1. or 1 Kings 3. 1. & Misn. Yebamot, c. 8. sect. 3.).