
DEUTERONOMY 23:1 He who is emasculated by crushing or cutting shall not enter into the LORD's assembly.

Neither eunuchs, bastards, Ammonites, nor Moabites, shall be incorporated with the genuine Israelites, Deu 23:1-3. The reason why the Ammonites and Moabites were excluded, Deu 23:4-6. Edomites and Egyptians to be respected, Deu 23:7. Their descendants in the third generation may be incorporated with the Israelites, Deu 23:8. Cautions against wickedness when they go forth against their enemies, Deu 23:9. To keep the camp free from every defilement, and the reason why, Deu 23:10-14. The slave who had taken refuge among them is not to be delivered up to his former master, Deu 23:15, Deu 23:16. There shall be no prostitutes nor sodomites in the land, Deu 23:17. The hire of a prostitute or the price of a dog is not to be brought into the house of God, Deu 23:18. The Israelites shall not lend on usury to each other, Deu 23:19; but they may take usury from strangers, Deu 23:20. Vows must be diligently paid, Deu 23:21-23. In passing through a vine yard or field a man may eat of the grapes or corn, but must carry away none with him, Deu 23:24, Deu 23:25.

Verse 1

Shall not enter into the congregation, etc. - If by entering the congregation be meant the bearing a civil office among the people, such as magistrate, judge, etc., then the reason of the law is very plain; no man with any such personal defect as might render him contemptible in the sight of others should bear rule among the people, lest the contempt felt for his personal defects might be transferred to his important office, and thus his authority be disregarded. The general meaning of these words is, simply, that the persons here designated should not be so incorporated with the Jews as to partake of their civil privileges.

DEUTERONOMY 23:2 A person born of a forbidden union shall not enter into the LORD's assembly; even to the tenth generation shall no one of his enter into the LORD's assembly.

Verse 2

A bastard shall not enter - מַמְזֵר mamzer, which is here rendered bastard, should be understood as implying the offspring of an illegitimate or incestuous mixture.

DEUTERONOMY 23:3 An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the LORD's assembly; even to the tenth generation shall no one belonging to them enter into the LORD's assembly forever;

Verse 3

An Ammonite or Moabite - These nations were subjected for their impiety and wickedness, (see Deu 23:4 and Deu 23:5), to peculiar disgrace, and on this account were not permitted to hold any office

among the Israelites. But this did not disqualify them from being proselytes: Ruth, who was a Moabitess, was married to Boaz, and she became one of the progenitors of our Lord.

Even to their tenth generation - That is, for ever, as the next clause explains; see Neh 13:1.

DEUTERONOMY 23:4 because they didn't meet you with bread and with 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.

DEUTERONOMY 23:5 Nevertheless the LORD your God wouldn't listen to Balaam; but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing to you, because the LORD your God loved you.

DEUTERONOMY 23:6 You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

DEUTERONOMY 23:7 You shall not abhor an Edomite; for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as a foreigner in his land.

DEUTERONOMY 23:8 The children of the third generation who are born to them may enter into the LORD's assembly.

DEUTERONOMY 23:9 When you go out and camp against your enemies, then you shall keep yourselves from every evil thing.

DEUTERONOMY 23:10 If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of that which happens him by night, then shall he go outside of the camp. He shall not come within the camp;

DEUTERONOMY 23:11 but it shall be, when evening comes, he shall bathe himself in water. When the sun is down, he shall come within the camp.

DEUTERONOMY 23:12 You shall have a place also outside of the camp where you go relieve yourself.

Verse 12

These directions may appear trifling to some, but they were essentially necessary to this people in their present circumstances. Decency and cleanliness promote health, and prevent many diseases.

DEUTERONOMY 23:13 You shall have a trowel among your weapons. It shall be, when you relieve yourself, you shall dig with it, and shall turn back and cover your excrement;

DEUTERONOMY 23:14 for the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you, and to give up your enemies before you. Therefore your camp shall be holy, that he may not see an unclean thing in you, and turn away from you.

DEUTERONOMY 23:15 You shall not deliver to his master a servant who has escaped from his master to you.

Verse 15

Thou shalt not deliver - the servant which is escaped - unto thee - That is, a servant who left an idolatrous master that he might join himself to God and to his people. In any other case, it would have been injustice to have harboured the runaway.

DEUTERONOMY 23:16 He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place which he shall choose within one of your gates, where it pleases him best. You shall not oppress him.

DEUTERONOMY 23:17 There shall be no prostitute of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel.

Verse 17

There shall be no whore - See on Gen 38:15-21 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 23:18 You shall not bring the hire of a prostitute, or the wages of a male prostitute, into the house of the LORD your God for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Verse 18

The hire of a whore, or the price of a dog - Many public prostitutes dedicated to their gods a part of their impure earnings; and some of these prostitutes were publicly kept in the temple of Venus Melytta, whose gains were applied to the support of her abominable worship.

DEUTERONOMY 23:19 You shall not lend on interest to your brother; interest of money, interest of food, interest of anything that is lent on interest.

Verse 19

Usury - See on Lev 25:36 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 23:20 You may lend on interest to a foreigner; but to your brother you shall not lend on interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you put your hand to, in the land where you go in to possess it.

DEUTERONOMY 23:21 When you vow a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you; and it would be sin in you.

Verse 21

When thou shalt vow, etc. - See on Num 30:2 (note), etc.

DEUTERONOMY 23:22 But if you refrain from making a vow, it shall be no sin in you.

DEUTERONOMY 23:23 You shall observe and do that which has gone out of your lips. Whatever you have vowed to the LORD your God as a freewill offering, which you have promised with your mouth, you must do.

DEUTERONOMY 23:24 When you come into your neighbour's vineyard, then you may eat of grapes your fill at your own pleasure; but you shall not put any in your container.

Verse 24

Thou shalt not put any in thy vessel - Thou shalt carry none away with thee. The old English proverb, Eat thy fill but pocket none, seems to have been founded on this law.

DEUTERONOMY 23:25 When you come into your neighbour's standing grain, then you may pluck the ears with your hand; but you shall not move a sickle to your neighbour's standing grain.

Verse 25

Thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand - It was on the permission granted by this law that the disciples plucked the ears of corn, as related Mat 12:1. This was both a considerate and humane law, and is no dishonor to the Jewish code.