

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 23

Orders are here given to restrain certain persons from entering into the congregation of the Lord, (^{<R231>}Deuteronomy 23:1-8), and to take care that there be no unclean person in the camp, or any indecent thing done in it, (^{<R231>}Deuteronomy 23:9-14), to protect fugitive servants, and not deliver them up to their masters, (^{<R235>}Deuteronomy 23:15,16) not to suffer a filthy person to be among them, or any filthy thing to be brought into the house of God for a vow, (^{<R237>}Deuteronomy 23:17,18), then follow some laws against usury, and for the payment of vows, (^{<R239>}Deuteronomy 23:19-23), and the chapter is concluded with some directions how to behave in a neighbour's vineyard, or standing corn, (^{<R234>}Deuteronomy 23:24,25).

Ver. 1. *He that is wounded in the stones*, etc.] In any of them, not accidentally, but purposely; which are crushed and bruised by the hands of men, with a design to make him unfit for generation, or to make an eunuch of him:

or that hath his privy member cut by himself or another, and is a thorough eunuch by the hands of men; for of such eunuchs that are made by men, and not born so, the law speaks; so Maimonides interprets it ^{f381}; (see Gill on "^{<R912>}Matthew 19:12")

shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; which is to be understood not of the sanctuary of the Lord, or of being refused admittance into the church of God, and to join in religious rites, and partake of sacred ordinances, which all Israelites, and strangers that were proselytes, had a right unto; such might bring their offerings, keep the passover, etc. (^{<R128>}Exodus 12:48,49 ^{<R228>}Leviticus 22:18 ^{<R914>}Numbers 9:14 15:14,15) nor of the commonwealth of Israel, as if unfit to be members of civil society; it cannot be thought that such defects should abridge them of their civil rights and privileges: but by the congregation is to be understood the elders, judges, and representatives of the people, that met together in some one place to execute judgment; (see ^{<R512>}Numbers 35:12,24,25 ^{<R911>}Psalms 82:1), into which such persons were not to be admitted; either

because disgraceful and dishonourable, or because of the influence such defects have on their minds, they thereby becoming effeminate, irresolute, and wanting courage, as well as in opposition to the customs and usages of the Heathens, with whom it was common to admit such persons to civil offices; hence the word eunuch is sometimes used for an officer, (~~0376~~Genesis 37:36) and elsewhere; the Jews^{f382} restrain this law to marriage, but unnecessarily.

Ver. 2. *A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord*, etc.] That is born of whoredom, as the Targum of Jonathan; and for the sake of avoiding whoredom and deterring from it was this law made, according to Maimonides^{f383}, that adulterers might see, as he observes, that they affect their whole family with an irreparable stain, should they commit such an infamous action; though the Jews commonly interpret it of one that is born of any of those incestuous copulations forbidden in (~~0800~~Leviticus 18:1-30) which they gather from this following upon, and being near unto one of those incests mentioned in the last verse of the preceding chapter^{f384}; and it is a rule with them^{f385}, that persons born of such copulations were reckoned bastards; now such an one, according to Jarchi, might not marry an Israelitish woman, or rather might not be admitted into the assembly of elders, or bear any public office. Jephthah may seem to be an objection to this, who was the son of an harlot, (~~0710~~Judges 11:1) which might be owing to the badness of the times, the laws of God being neglected, or to the providence of God so ordering it, who is not bound by his own laws, though men are; nor was he the son of a common harlot, nor of an incestuous person, but of his father's concubine; besides some think such only are intended who were born of strangers and not Israelites:

even unto his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord; which seems as if he might at the eleventh; but it is generally interpreted never, as is gathered from the following verse, and from the tenth number being an absolute and perfect one; yet according to the Jewish writers there were ways and means by which their posterity became legitimate; so they say, bastards may be purified (or legitimated), how? if one marries a servant maid, the child is a servant, who if he becomes free, (his) son is a free man^{f386}.

Ver. 3. *An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord*, etc.] Or marry an Israelitish woman, as Jarchi, and so the Targum of Jonathan,

“the male Ammonites and Moabites are not fit to take a wife of the congregation of the Lord;”

for 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 ^{f387}:

even to their tenth generation, shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever; that is, not only to the tenth generation, but for ever; and this law was understood as in force in Nehemiah’s time, which was more than ten generations from the making of it; though now, as these nations are no more a distinct people, they suppose it is no longer binding ^{f388}.

Ver. 4. *Because they met you not with bread and with water*, etc.] To supply them therewith, either as a gift, which was a piece of humanity to strangers and travellers, or rather to sell unto them, for on no other terms did the Israelites desire their bread and their water:

in the way when ye came forth out of Egypt; not as soon as they came forth from thence, for it was near forty years after; but it was while they were in the way from thence, as they were journeying to the land of Canaan, and so were travellers, and should have had kindness shown them as such; for though they needed not bread and water, God providing both for them, yet this does not excuse the inhumanity of these people: the words are to be understood by way of distribution; this charge here only belongs to the Ammonites, for it appears that the Moabites did give them bread and water for money, (^{f388}Deuteronomy 2:28,29) as what follows belongs peculiarly to the Moabites and not the Ammonites:

and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee; this the Moabites did in conjunction with the Midianites, but the Ammonites had no concern in it; (see ^{f387}Numbers 22:7), it was not therefore because the Moabites and Ammonites were born in incest that they were forbidden entrance into the congregation of the Lord; which might have been thought to have been the reason of it, these instances following upon the former, had not these reasons been assigned.

Ver. 5. *Nevertheless, the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam*, etc.] To his solicitations, and the methods he took to prevail on the Lord to

suffer him to curse Israel, which he gladly would have done for the sake of Balak's reward:

but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee; in the very mouth of Balaam, as the Targum of Jonathan; for when he opened his mouth and Balak expected he would have cursed Israel, and he intended it, could he have been permitted, the Lord overruled his tongue, and put such words into his mouth, that instead of cursing Israel, he blessed him; (see ^{<0231>}Numbers 23:11),

because the Lord thy God loved thee; and therefore would not suffer them to be cursed; for whom the Lord loves they are blessed, and shall be so in time and to eternity.

Ver. 6. *Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.*] Not that they were to retain malice towards them, or indulge a spirit of revenge, or not do them any good offices in a private way, which is contrary to the law of love; nor does this contradict any offices of kindness and friendship that might be performed in a personal way: so we find that David had a kindness for Hanun the Ammonite, and showed it, though ill rewarded for it, yet is not blamed for doing it; (^{<0002>}2 Samuel 10:2) for these words respect not persons in a private capacity, but the people of Israel as a body politic, who, as such, were not to carry on trade and commerce with those people, nor intermarry with them, nor make leagues and enter into alliances with them; the reason of which was, because being very near neighbours to them, had there not been such a law, as a wall of partition between them, they might have become very familiar, and so have learnt their evil ways and customs, which this was designed to prevent: the Jews restrain ^{f389} this to overtures and proclamations of peace, which they were not to make with these nations, as they were directed to do when they went out to war with others, (^{<0300>}Deuteronomy 20:10).

Ver. 7. *Thou shall not abhor an Edomite*, etc.] Or an Idumean, the descendants of Esau, whose name was Edom, (^{<0120>}Genesis 25:30) the Targum of Jonathan adds, "that comes to be made a proselyte"; he was not to be rejected with abhorrence, because of the old grudge between Jacob and Esau, and which was become national in their posterity:

for he is thy brother; the Israelites and the Edomites were nearest akin to each other of all the nations; for Jacob and Esau were own brothers by

father's and mother's side, yea, were twin brothers; the relation was very near:

thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; that comes to be made a proselyte also, as the same Targum; though the Israelites were so ill used by them, their lives made bitter with hard bondage, and their male infants slain by them, and they for a long time refused their liberty to depart:

because thou wast a stranger in his land: and at first received many favours and kindnesses from them, being supported and supplied with provisions during a long famine; and had one of the richest and most fruitful parts of the country assigned them to dwell in; and old favours were not to be forgotten, though they had been followed with great unkindness and cruelty.

Ver. 8. *The children that are begotten of them*, Of such as became proselytes:

shall enter into the congregation of the Lord in their third generation; not in the third generation from the time that this law was made, but from the time that any of them should embrace the true religion; their sons were the second generation, and their grandchildren the third; and such might be admitted into the congregation, and be reckoned as of them, both in their civil and church state, and be capable of serving even offices among them, and of marriage with them, as the Targum of Jonathan; which some of the Jews interpret of males only, for females, according to them, 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
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Ver. 9. *When the host goeth forth against thine enemies*, etc.] An army of soldiers march in order to meet the enemy and fight him:

then keep thee from every wicked thing; the Targum of Jonathan adds, by way of explanation,

“from strange worship, uncovering of nakedness, and from shedding innocent blood;”

that is, from idolatry, uncleanness of every sort, and murder; and all other wickednesses ought to be abstained from at all times by all persons, but especially by soldiers in such a circumstance, just going to battle; since sin

committed weakens natural courage, as it loads the conscience with guilt; and since victory and success, which depend upon the blessing of God on arms, cannot be reasonably expected, where vices of all sorts are indulged and abound; and especially seeing such are about to expose their lives to the utmost danger, and know not but that in a few hours they must exchange this life for another, and appear before God, the Judge of all, against whom they sin; and yet how little are these things thought of by such in common! it was the wisdom of the Jewish legislature, which was of God, to inculcate such things into the minds of their soldiers.

Ver. 10. *If there be among you any man that is not clean*, etc.] Any unclean person in the army, that was even ceremonially unclean in any of the instances the law makes so, one of which put for the rest is mentioned:

by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night; through pollution by a nocturnal flux, as the Septuagint version, or a gonorrhoea, an involuntary one, occasioned by impure thoughts and imaginations in dreams; the same case as in (^{RS16}Leviticus 15:16)

then shall he go abroad out of the camp; out of the army, lest others should be defiled by such; they not having houses to retire to, and chambers to keep themselves in separate from others, as when at home:

he shall not come within the camp; that is, not till he has done what is prescribed him in the next verse. Jarchi says, he might not come into the camp of the Levites, and much less into the camp of God.

Ver. 11. *But it shall be, when evening cometh on*, etc.] When the day declines, and it is near sun setting:

he shall wash himself with water; dip himself all over in water, not only wash his garments but his flesh:

and when the sun is down he shall come into the camp again; and take his place and rank in the army. Now if all this was necessary on account of ceremonial uncleanness, which as much as possible was to be avoided, how much more careful were they to be of moral uncleanness, as fornication, adultery, and all sorts of debauchery and lewdness? and yet nothing more frequent among those that are of the military order; it would be well if there was no occasion for the reproach Maimonides ^{f391} casts upon the camps of the Heathens, among whom, no doubt, he means Christians, if not principally; when he observes that these orders were given, that this

might be deeply fixed in the mind of every one, that their camp ought to be holy as the sanctuary of God, and not like the camps of the Gentiles, in which abound corruptions of all kinds, transgressions, rapines, thefts, and other sins.

Ver. 12. *Thou shalt have also a place without the camp*, etc.] A place prepared, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, provided on purpose for the use hereafter suggested; so Ben Melech:

whither thou shalt go forth abroad; to do the necessities of nature, which they were to do without the camp, not in any place they thought fit and most convenient, but what was appointed for that purpose.

Ver. 13. *And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon*, etc.] A nail or spike, some kind of instrument to make a hole in the ground with, which was fastened to the sword upon their loins; which was to be instead of a spade or mattock to dig with:

and it shall be, when thou shalt ease thyself abroad; without the camp, in the place appointed for that use, whenever nature required such an action to be performed;

thou shalt dig therewith; with, the paddle, an hole in the earth: the Essenes used, according to Josephus, to make it a foot deep with a spade or mattock, and to everyone that was newly admitted among them, a little pickaxe was given for that purpose^{f392}:

and shalt turn back; having eased nature:

and cover that which cometh from thee; their dung, with the earth they dug out of the hole they made. This law was made to preserve modesty and decency becoming men, and not act like brute beasts, as well as cleanliness in the camp, and, the health of themselves and their fellow soldiers; and that, they might not be offensive to the smell, as well as pernicious to the health of one another; and especially for a reason that follows in (~~f394~~ Deuteronomy 23:14); so Maimonides^{f393} says, the intention of this law is especially cleanliness, and to avoid nastiness, filthiness, and impurities of every kind, that men might not be like the brute animals.

Ver. 14. *For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp*, etc.] In the tabernacle, which moved when the host marched after the camps of Judah and Reuben, and before those of Ephraim and Dan, in the midst of

them: this was the position of it while in the wilderness, and afterwards when they came into the land of Canaan, and went to war with their enemies, the ark sometimes went with them, the symbol of the divine Presence; and here it is made a reason why they should avoid all uncleanness, since the holy God, or that token of his, presence, was in the midst of them:

to deliver thee, and give up thine enemies before thee: to save them from falling into the hands of their enemies, and to deliver their enemies into their hands, which depended not upon their numbers, strength, and skill, but on the Presence, providence, and power of God with them; wherefore, as the above writer ^{f394} observes, by these actions (of purity and cleanliness) God meant to confirm the faith of those that engaged in war, that the divine Majesty dwelt among them; for which reason such orders were strictly to be observed by them:

therefore shall thy camp be holy; both in a moral and ceremonial sense:

that he see no unclean thing in thee; whether natural, moral, or ceremonial; the word here used signifies such nakedness as is forbidden to be uncovered, (^{CR86}Leviticus 18:6-19). Hence Maimonides ^{f395} applies it to whoredom; for he says,

“by this phrase God meant to deter and dehort from whoredom, which is too usual and common among soldiers, as long as they are absent from their own houses; that therefore we may be delivered and abstain from those impure works, God has commanded such things to be done, which may bring to our remembrance that his glory dwells in the midst of us:”

and turn away from thee; and so they fall into the hands of their enemies, and become an easy prey to them, their God having forsaken them; and that this might not be their case, care should be taken not to offend him, and cause him to depart from them.

Ver. 15. *Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee.*] That is, one that has been used ill by a cruel and tyrannical master, and was in danger of his life with him, or of being lamed by him, and therefore obliged to make his escape from him on that account; such an one, when he fell into the hands of an Israelite, was not to be taken and bound, and sent back to his master again, but was to be retained till his master's anger subsided; or however until inquiry could be

made into the cause of the difference between him and his master, and matters be made up between them to mutual satisfaction; or if it appeared that the flight of the servant was just, and it was not safe for him to return to his master, then he was to be used as hereafter directed; for it cannot be thought that this law was made to encourage and protect every idle, disobedient, and fugitive servant, which would be very sinful and unjust: the Jewish writers generally understand it of the servants of idolaters fleeing for the sake of religion; Onkelos renders it,

“a servant of the people,”

of Heathen people; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“thou shalt not deliver a stranger (i.e. a proselyte of righteousness, as Maimonides ^{f396} calls this servant) into the hands of those that worship idols, but he shall be delivered by you, that he may be under the shadow of my Shechinah, because that he fled from the worship of his idol.”

Jarchi makes mention of another sense; that it may be understood of

“a Canaanitish servant of an Israelite that flees (from his master) without the land, where he was not obliged to go with him, and serve him against his will; but I suppose a proselyte is meant;”

and much more then will this hold good of an Hebrew servant in such circumstances. Aben Ezra interprets this of a servant not an Israelite, who, in time of war, flees from his master, not an Israelite also, unto the camp of Israel, and that for the glory of the divine name which is called upon Israel; such an one, though a servant, might not be delivered to his master.

Ver. 16. *He shall dwell in thee, [even] among you,* etc.] This seems to confirm the sense of it, being a stranger, a: proselyte servant that is here spoken of, since the law provides for his dwelling among the Israelites:

in that place he shall choose, in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: he was not to be detained by the person that took him up in his own house, or be obliged to dwell in any certain place under, a restraint, but he might take up his abode in any of the cities of Israel, which would be most for his good, profit, and advantage:

thou shalt not oppress him; by words, as the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“calling him a fugitive servant, or by any opprobrious name.”

Ver. 17. *There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel*, etc.] The word for “whore” is “kedeshah”, which properly signifies an “holy” one; and here, by an antiphrasis, an unholy, an impure person, one that is defiled by man; (see Gill on ^{<41318>}Genesis 38:18”). Jarchi interprets the word, one that makes herself common, that is sanctified, or set apart; that is, one that separates herself for such service, and prostitutes herself to everyone that passes by: but some understand this not of common harlots in the streets, but of sacred whores, or such as were consecrated to Heathen deities, as such there were to Venus. Strabo ^{f397} tells us that the temple of Venus at Corinth was so rich, that more than a thousand of those sacred harlots were kept, whom men and women had devoted to that goddess; and so a multitude of the same sort were at Comana, which he calls little Corinth ^{f398}; now these of all harlots being the most abominable are forbidden to be among the daughters of Israel:

nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel: by the same rule that “kedeshah” is rendered “a whore” in the preceding clause, “kadesh” should be rendered “an whoremonger” here, as in the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions; though Aben Ezra interprets it passively, one that is lain with, and Jarchi one that is prepared to lie with a male, that prostitutes his body in this unnatural way; and it looks as if there were such sort of persons sacred to idols, since we read of the houses of the sodomites, which were by, or rather in the house of the Lord, (^{<4237>}2 Kings 23:7).

Ver. 18. *Thou shall not bring the hire of a whore*, etc.] Which was given to her as a reward for the use of her body:

or the price of a dog; not of the firstborn of a dog, the price for the redemption of it, as some; nor for the loan of a hunting dog, or a shepherd’s dog for breed, as Josephus ^{f399} interprets this law. Abarbinel understands it figuratively of a sodomite, comparable to a dog, for his uncleanness and impudence; (see ^{<46215>}Revelation 22:15); and the price of such an one the gain he got by the prostitution of his body to unnatural lusts; and so as the hire of a whore answers to one in (^{<4537>}Deuteronomy 23:17), the price of a dog to a sodomite here; and in this he is followed by some, nor is it a sense to be despised; though the Jews ^{f400} understand it literally of a dog, and of the exchange of another creature with that; so Onkelos renders it,

“the exchange of a dog:”

now neither of these might a man bring

into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow; that is, when a man vowed to offer any sacrifice to the Lord, it was not to be anything that was given to a whore as her hire; as, for instance, as Jarchi, if he gave her for her hire a lamb, it was not fit to be offered; which agrees with the Jewish ^{f401} canons,

“what is the hire of a whore? if one says to a whore, take this lamb for thy hire, though an hundred, they are all forbidden; and so if one says to his neighbour, lo, this lamb is thine, that thine handmaid may lie with my a servant, Rabbi says it is not the hire of a whore, but the wise men say it is.--If he gives her money, lo, this is free; wines, oils, and fine flour, and the like, that are offered on the altar, are forbidden; (but the commentators say ^{f402}, wheat, olives, and grapes, out of which fine flour, oil, and wine are made, are free;) if he gives her consecrated things, lo, these are free, birds, they are forbidden.”

Now this law seems to be made in opposition to the customs and practices of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, whose land the Israelites were going to inhabit; whose women, as we are told ^{f403}, used to prostitute themselves in the temples of their idols, and dedicate there the hire of their bodies to their gods, thinking thereby to appease their deities and obtain good things for themselves; and the like did the Babylonians and Assyrians; (see Gill on ~~“<3000>~~ Micah 1:7”); so it is asked ^{f404},

“what is the price of a dog? if a man says to his neighbour, take this lamb for that dog; so if two partners divide, one takes ten (lambs), and the other nine and a dog; what is in lieu of the dog is forbidden, but those that are taken with him are free:”

a whore and a dog are fitly put together, because both are libidinous, impure, and impudent; perhaps the vileness and baseness of the creature is chiefly regarded in this law, to keep up the credit and veneration of sacrifices as sacred things; and it may be in reference to the worship of this creature, as by the Egyptians, who are said to worship a dog, their god Anubis ^{f405}, the image of which had a dog’s head on it; or to its being offered in sacrifice to idols, as it was by others; the Colophonians sacrificed

the whelps of dogs to their goddess Enodius, as others did to Enyalios or Mars^{f406}:

for even both these [are] an abomination to the Lord thy God; both the hire of the whore and the price of the dog, when brought as a sacrifice to him; the one being a breach of the moral law, and the other tending to bring into contempt the sacrifices of the ceremonial law, if not a favouring idolatry, than which nothing is more abominable to God, who cannot endure anything evil, base, and impure.

Ver. 19. *Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother,* etc.] One of the same nation and religion, and who is in poor and necessitous circumstances, and wants either food for himself and family, or money to carry on his husbandry, till such times as the fruits of his ground will bring him in a sufficiency for his support, and the payment of what he borrows, and which is to be lent him without any interest: as the Jews were chiefly employed in husbandry, and not merchandise, they had but little occasion to borrow, and when they did could not afford to pay interest, as persons concerned in merchandise, whose gains are great, are able to do; and it is but reasonable that such persons should; but that the Israelites, when poor and in distress, might not be bowed down under their burdens, this law is made for their relief:

usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury; this takes in all sorts of usury, whether what is lent be money or food, or anything else, no interest was to be taken for it; (see Gill on ^{“~~RSB~~”} Leviticus 25:36-37”).

Ver. 20. *Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury,* etc.] To any Gentile, though some Jewish writers except the Edomites and Ishmaelites, as being brethren, and restrain it to the seven nations of Canaan; but it seems to design one that was not an Israelite, or a proselyte of righteousness, and especially to regard such that traded and merchandised, as the Gentiles very much did, and especially their neighbours the Phoenicians; and of such it was lawful to take interest, as it was but reasonable, when they gained much by the money they lent them, and as it is but reasonable should be the case among Christians in such circumstances; this is to be regarded not as a precept, but as a permission:

but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury; which is repeated, that it might be taken notice of, and carefully observed:

that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand unto, in the land whither thou goest to possess it; for their charity, humanity, and the kind usage of their poor brethren in distress, would not pass unnoticed by the Lord; but he would make the land they tilled fruitful, and their vineyards and oliveyards to produce abundance, and their flocks and their herds to increase greatly, which would be sufficient and more than a recompence for all that they had freely lent unto their brethren, without taking any usury of them.

Ver. 21. *When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God,* etc.] Which must be of things in a man's power to perform, and of what are lawful to be done, and according to the mind and will of God revealed in his word, and agreeably to the manner of worship prescribed by him; as that he will offer such a sacrifice, a freewill offering to him, and the like, besides what he was bound to do, or give such and such things for the repair of the sanctuary, or for the relief of the poor; (see Gill on "^{4061E}Numbers 30:2"). This law is thought by Aben Ezra to be repeated on the mention of the hire of a whore, etc. being forbidden to be brought for a vow, (^{4023B}Deuteronomy 23:18);

thou shall not slack to pay it; or delay the payment of it, but do it immediately; since zeal and affection might abate, and there might not be hereafter an ability to perform, or death might come and prevent it; the Targum of Jonathan adds, at the three feasts, that is, of the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles; and the Jewish writers ^{f407} say, that no man transgresses this precept respecting the delay of paying a vow, until the three feasts have passed:

for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; exact the payment of it, and expect it, insist upon the performance of it, and punish for neglect:

and it would be sin in thee; guilt of sin would be contracted, and punishment inflicted; Aben Ezra interprets it of the latter.

Ver. 22. *But if thou shalt forbear to vow,* etc.] That a man might do, though there was ability; it was expected indeed that men should vow and bring freewill offerings in proportion to their ability; whether they were of the greater sort, of the herd and flock, or of fowls, or even of fine flour, these were acceptable to the Lord: but if they were not vowed and brought,

it shall be no sin in thee; no charge of guilt be brought or punishment laid; it should not be reckoned a crime, nor be punishable in any respect, and especially where there was a willing mind and no ability; otherwise negligence, niggardliness, and ingratitude, are not well pleasing in the sight of God.

Ver. 23. *That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform*, etc.] Which were in their power to perform and lawful to do; and this is observed to make them watchful and cautious, and not be rash in making vows, since, when once they were made, an exact and rigid performance of them was expected; (see ^{210B}Ecclesiastes 5:4,5);

[even] a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth; be it what it will, as to the matter of it, it was to be paid, and in the manner as it was vowed and promised. Aben Ezra observes, that every vow is a freewill offering, but not every freewill offering a vow; the Targum of Jonathan enumerates the several things to be performed, sin offerings, trespass offerings, burnt offerings, and oblations of holy things, and drink offerings, and gifts of the house of the sanctuary, and alms to the poor.

Ver. 24. *When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard*, etc.] To take a walk in it for recreation, and to see how the vines flourish, and what sort of fruit and what quantity of it they bear; being invited thither by the owner, or occasionally passing that way stepped in, and even it may be on purpose to taste the fruits of the vine and quench thirst and satisfy appetite:

then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill, at thine own pleasure; as many as they would, till nature was satisfied:

but thou shall not put [any] in thy vessel; to carry away, to be eaten by them or theirs at another time and place; they were to put none into their pockets or into their baskets, as the Targum of Jonathan, or whatsoever vessel they might have with them in the vineyard. Jarchi says, the Scripture speaks of a workman, and only at the time of gathering the grapes, when he was putting into his master's vessels, and might not put any into his own, and carry away; so the Jewish writers ^{f408} generally interpret it of a workman only, and of his eating those things in which he works, and not of such as pass by the way; so the Targums: and there are many traditions in the Misnah ^{f409} concerning this affair; as that by this law a workman might eat while in his work, as the ox may while it is treading out the corn, and

when his work is perfect; and that he may eat of what he is employed about; only if he is at work upon figs, he may not eat of grapes, and if on grapes, he may not eat of figs; nor might he eat more than his hire came to; and that he might make a covenant for his son and daughter, servant and handmaid, adult (that they shall take money and not eat), and for his wife, because they are endowed with knowledge; but not for his son and daughter, servant and maidservant, minors, because they are not: but Josephus^{f410}, their countryman, better interprets this law, who says, that travellers, of those that passed by the way, were not forbidden tasting ripe fruits, and even were permitted to fill themselves with them as if their own, whether they were of the country or strangers.

Ver. 25. *When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour*, etc.] Passest through it to go to some other place, the road lying through it, as it often does through standing corn; so Christ and his disciples are said to go through the corn, (~~<112>~~Matthew 12:1); but Jarchi says this Scripture speaks of a workman also, and so the Targum of Jonathan,

“when thou goest in to take thine hire according to work in thy neighbour’s standing corn;”

but the other sense is best, and is confirmed and illustrated by the instance given, as well as best agrees with what follows:

then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; the ears of wheat, and rub them, to separate the grain from the husk or beard, and eat it, as did the disciples of Christ; (~~<116>~~Luke 6:1); to satisfy hunger: but thou shall not move a sickle unto thy neighbour’s standing corn to cut it down and carry any of it off; which would have been an unjust thing.