

# Deuteronomy 23 Commentary

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[Moses on Mt Nebo \(Deuteronomy 34:1+\)](#)

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Source: Ryrie Study Bible

## Deuteronomy

Dt 1:1-4:43	Dt 4:44-26:19	Dt 27:1-34:12	
Moses' First Discourse	Moses' Second Discourse	Moses' Third Discourse	
Historical Review	Legal Exposition	Prophetical Promises	
Looking Back 40 Years	Looking Up What God Expected of Israel	Looking Ahead What God Will Do for Israel	
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Remembrance of the past	Commandments for the Present				Dt 27:1-30:20 Blessing and Cursing		Dt 31:1-34:12 Death of Moses
Take Heed Don't forget	Ten Commands	Related Commands			Two Choices Affecting the Future		Moses' Parting Words
Dt 1:1-4:43 Looking Back	Dt 4:44-11:32 Exposition of Decalogue	Dt 12:1-16:17 Ceremonial Laws	Dt 16:18-20:20 Civil Laws	Dt 21:1-26:19 Social Laws	Dt 27:1-28:68 Ratification of Covenant	Dt 29:1-30:20 Terms of Covenant	Dt 31:1-34:12 Moses' Song, Blessing, Death
<b>Plains of Moab</b>							
<b>ca. 2 Months</b> <b>Moses: Author</b> (Except Dt 34)							

**Deuteronomy 23:1 "No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD."**

- **emasculated** : Lev 21:17-21 22:22-24 Ga 3:28
- **shall enter**: De 23:2,3,8 Ne 13:1-3 Isa 56:3,4 La 1:10
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Dt 23:1-8 = Maintenance of purity in the worship assembly

Dt 23:9-14 = Maintenance of purity in the war camp

**Keil's** introduction - From the sanctification of the house and the domestic relation, to which the laws of marriage and chastity in the previous chapter pointed, Moses proceeds to instructions concerning the sanctification of their union as a congregation: he gives directions as to the exclusion of certain persons from the congregation of the Lord, and the reception of others into it (vv. 1–8); as to the preservation of the purity of the camp in time of war (vv. 9–14); as to the reception of foreign slaves into the land, and the removal of licentious persons out of it (vv. 15–18); and lastly, as to certain duties of citizenship (19–25).

**MacArthur** - From the sanctification of the home and marriage in the previous chapter, Moses proceeds to the sanctification of their union as a congregation and speaks of the right of citizenship, including being gathered before the presence of the Lord to worship Him ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**HCSB** - Because Israel was to be a pure, undefiled people, certain types of people could not enter the LORD's assembly. Such discrimination had nothing to do with inherent worth but served metaphorically to draw attention to the Lord's demand for Israel to be separated from the corrupted and imperfect world around her. In Christ, such disqualifications no longer exist (Gal 3:27-29).

**No one who is emasculated** (Hebrew = "bruised by crushing") **or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD** - **Emasculated** pertains to the loss of virility or procreative power which may include actual castration (orchietomy - removal of testes), birth defect or virtual castration (injured irreparably)

**Deere** points out that "they did not exclude an individual because of his own specific moral sin. Rather they had a pedagogical or symbolic function. Furthermore exclusion from the "worship service" did not prevent an individual from believing in the Lord and receiving the gift of eternal life." Israel's history demonstrates that these laws (in Deut. 23:1–8) were never meant to be applied legalistically without regard for the circumstances of each individual who may have wished to worship with Israel. (**ED**: cf Ruth the Moabitess). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Assembly of the LORD** probably refers to the worship service or events at the tabernacle (later the Temple) and is repeated in this chapter - Dt 23:1, 23:2, 23:3, 23:8 (only other uses of this phrase "assembly of the LORD" are Nu 16:3, 1 Chr 28:8, Micah 2:5)

**NET Note** - Heb "cut off with respect to the penis"; KJV, ASV "hath his privy member cut off"; English versions vary in their degree of euphemism here; cf. NAB, NRSV, TEV, NLT "penis"; NASB "male organ"; NCV "sex organ"; CEV "private parts"; NIV "emasculated by crushing or cutting." ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**Utley** - "**or has his male organ cut off**" This refers to a severed penis ("a place of pouring fluid"). This would be another way of describing a **eunuch** (cf. Mt. 19:12). These two damaged males are the first in a series of those who are excluded from attendance at the assemblies of Israel (i.e., events at the tabernacle). **Their exclusion is symbolic of the purity and wholeness of God's**

**people seen as a kingdom of priests** (cf. Ex 19:6 and Lev. 21:17–23; 22:17–25). **Later in the OT many of these excluded ones are included** (e.g., Ruth the Moabitess and the eunuch of Isa 56:3–5 and Acts 8:26–40). It is also possible that this practice of damaging a male's sexual potential was part of Canaanite practices. Many of the seemingly unusual prohibitions in the Mosaic legislation were directed at a total break with Canaanite society and worship practices. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**POSB** - This point is a strong lesson on the need for pure worship. The word "assembly" (qahal) refers to the people of God, particularly when they gather together for worship. Not all people are allowed to worship God. Why? Because they are unclean. The worship of God is to be kept clean, for God is pure and holy. Therefore, various categories of unclean people were not allowed to approach and worship God at their whim, as they wished and willed. Note the people who were to be excluded from the assembly of worship. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy](#))

**NET Note** - The Hebrew term translated "**assembly**" (קהל, qahal) does not refer here to the nation as such but to the formal services of the tabernacle or temple. Since emasculated or other sexually abnormal persons were commonly associated with pagan temple personnel, the thrust here may be primarily polemical in intent. One should not read into this anything having to do with the mentally and physically handicapped as fit to participate in the life and ministry of the church. ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**Guzik** on "**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). But it doesn't always have this sense. Deuteronomy 31:30 refers to all the congregation of Israel, while Deuteronomy 31:28 makes it clear that "all the congregation" was gathered through all the elders of your tribes, and your officers. So, in some contexts, the congregation can 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 life of the nation. Poole suggests that the idea of the assembly of the LORD is the leadership, or the rulers of Israel. These people were barred not from the religious life of Israel, but from the political life of the nation. Trapp agrees, saying on shall not enter the assembly of the LORD: "Shall not go in and out before the people as a public officer." Clarke adds, "If by entering into the congregation be meant the bearing a civil office among the people, such as magistrate, judge, &c., then the reason of the law is very plain." 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. **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.

**IVP Bible Background Commentary** - **exclusions from the assembly.** "Assembly of the LORD," like the more common "assembly of Israel," is a technical term for all those adult males who are enfranchised to make decisions, participate in cultic activities and serve in the military of Israel (Mic 2:5). Because they were a chosen people, who were required to maintain their ritual purity as part of the covenant (Ex 19:6), the unclean and the stranger were excluded from the activities of the assembly. The examples listed include persons who were sexually impaired (probably eunuchs) and thus incapable of procreation, men of illegitimate birth (including incest and intermarriage) and certain national groups who were excluded from ever being adopted into the assembly.

**Utley** - "**the assembly of the LORD (YHWH)**" The phrase "assembly of the LORD" is used of the gathered covenant people of YHWH for worship beginning at Mt. Horeb/Sinai: ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

1. Exod. 12:6, "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel"
2. Lev. 16:17, "all the assembly of Israel"
3. Num. 16:3, "all the congregation," "the assembly of the LORD"  
Num. 20:4, "the LORD's assembly"
4. Deut. 5:22, "all your assembly"  
Deut. 9:10; 10:4; 18:16, "on the day of assembly"  
Deut. 23:1, 2, 3, 8, "assembly of the LORD"  
Deut. 31:30, "all the assembly of Israel"
5. Josh. 8:33, "all the assembly of Israel"

This phrase represents:

1. worshiping Israel
  - a. Mt. Sinai/Horeb
  - b. the tabernacle
2. The Jewish Study Bible, p. 418, based on Jdgs. 20:2, asserts that it refers to a leadership council or governing body (cf.

Num. 16:3; 20:4)

These excluded ones still have the legal rights of "resident aliens" spelled out in Exod. 22:21; Lev. 19:9–10, 33–34; 23:22; Deut. 1:16; 5:14; 27:19.

The Septuagint translated the Hebrew term qahal (BDB 874) as ekklesia, from which we get the English word, "church." Jesus and

the NT authors chose this term to communicate that the New Covenant people of God are to be identified as an extension of the Old Covenant people of God (cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–38; Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

**TSK** - It is evident that his law was not meant to exclude such Israelites either from the common benefits of civil society, or any essential religious advantages; but merely to lay them under a disgraceful distinction. This would tend to discourage parents from thus treating their children; a practice which was exceedingly common in those ages and countries. To this they were induced by the custom which prevailed, of employing such in the houses of the great and the courts of princes; so that they often rose to the highest posts of honour and authority. Some expositors therefore consider the phrase, "shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord," as meaning, that they should be incapable of bearing any office in that government which was placed over the people of God, who must thus enter a protest against this custom, and deliver selfish parents from this temptation.

**Emasculated - 06481. פָּשָׁא׳ pāṣāʾ:** A verb meaning to bruise, to crush. It means to destroy or ruin something by violently inflicting blows on it. It describes the emasculating of a man's testicles by crushing (Deut. 23:1[2]). It has the sense of injuring or bruising someone (1 Kgs. 20:37; Song 5:7).

**Male organ (penis) 08212. שֹׁפְכָה׳ šōpkāh:** (from verb **shāphakh** = to pour) is a feminine noun meaning a male penis, the reproductive and urinary organ of the male. It is (see verb of origin) literally a place of pouring out and is found only in Deut. 23:1. This is one of the physical injuries or conditions which could prevent a man from entering the priesthood privileges and responsibilities in ancient Israel was loss of his sexual organ.

**Assembly (06951). קָהָל׳ qāhāl:** A masculine noun meaning an assembly, a community, a congregation, a crowd, a company, a throng, a mob. The word describes various gatherings and assemblies called together. It can describe a gathering called for evil purposes—such as the deceitful assembly of the brothers Simeon and Levi to plan violence against the city of Shechem (Gen. 49:6; Ezek. 23:47). The man of God abhors the gathering of evildoers (Ps. 26:5); but he should proclaim the Lord's name in the worshiping congregation (Ps. 22:22[23]). An assembly for war or a group of soldiers was common in the Old Testament (Num. 22:4; Judg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 17:47); the various groups of exiles that traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem were a renewed community (Ezra 2:64; Neh. 7:66; Jer. 31:8). Many assemblies were convened for holy religious purposes: the congregation of Israel gathered at Sinai to hear the Lord's words (Deut. 9:10); many feasts and holy convocations called for worship and fasting as noted by the author of Chronicles (2 Chr. 20:5; 30:25).

The word describes Israel as a congregation, an organized community. Israel was the Lord's community (Num. 16:3; 20:4). The word also describes the gathering of Israel before King Solomon when he dedicated the Temple (1 Kgs. 8:14); the high priest atoned for the whole community of Israel on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:17; Deut. 31:30). The word designates the community restored in Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (Ezra 10:8, 12, 14); the gathering of the congregation of Israel when they killed the Passover lambs (Ex. 12:6). The word refers to gatherings of any assembled multitude: an assembly of nations (Gen. 35:11); or of peoples (Gen. 28:3), such as Abraham's descendants were to comprise. It refers to a great mass of people as mentioned by Balak, king of Moab (Num. 22:4).

**Swanson - קָהָל׳ (qā-hāl):** n.masc.; ≡ Str 6951; TWOT 1991a—1. LN 11.12–11.54 assembly, community, congregation, i.e., a socio-religious group of believers, with customs, rituals, and a leadership structure (Lev 4:13); 2. LN 55.7–55.13 army, throng, horde, i.e., a group of soldiers gathered for military purposes (Eze 32:22); 3. LN 11.1–11.11 crowd, throng, mob, company, i.e., a group which can meet for any purpose (2Ch 30:13; Ne 8:17; Pr 21:16; Eze 16:40) (DBL Hebrew)

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#### **QUESTION - [What is a eunuch in the Bible? What does the Bible say about eunuchs?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The eunuchs of the Bible were usually castrated males or those incapable of reproduction due to a birth defect. A eunuch could also be someone who performed work typical of eunuchs, although he remained perfectly capable of having sex—i.e., "eunuch" in some cases was simply a title. The purpose of intentional castration was to induce impotence and remove sexuality. It was a common practice in ancient times for rulers to castrate some of their servants and/or advisers in order to subdue and pacify them. It was especially common to castrate men who tended the royal harem. Queen Esther's eunuchs are mentioned in Esther 4:4.

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus mentions eunuchs in the context of whether it is good to marry. He says, "There are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it." Jesus identifies three types of "eunuchs" here: natural eunuchs ("born that way"), forced eunuchs ("made eunuchs by others"), and voluntary eunuchs ("those who choose").

Natural eunuchs include those who are born with a physical defect, but they also comprise those who are born with no real desire for marriage or sex. Forced eunuchs are those who have been castrated for whatever reason. Voluntary eunuchs are those who, in order to better serve the Lord in some capacity, choose to forego marriage. God calls some people to remain single (and therefore celibate). Paul speaks of those who serve the Lord in their unmarried state in 1 Corinthians 7:7—9.

Some gay groups argue that Jesus was referring to homosexuals when He mentioned eunuchs who were “born that way.” However, the Bible never uses the words homosexual and eunuch interchangeably. Furthermore, eunuchs are never referred to in Scripture as being in sin, while homosexuality is universally condemned in both the Old and New Testaments. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Deuteronomy 23:2 "No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.**

- Isa 57:3 Zec 9:6 Joh 8:41 Heb 12:8
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD** - The word illegitimate is used only here and in Zech. 9:6 where it is used figuratively of foreigners. Most translations interpret this as an "illegitimate" birth. ESV has "no one born of a forbidden union." Young's Literal has "a bastard doth not enter." The Septuagint translates it "one born of a harlot (**porne** from **pernemi** = to sell is literally, a woman who practices sexual immorality as a means of making a living, a prostitute, whore)."

**Guzik** - 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).

**MacArthur** - The illegitimate were excluded so as to place an indelible stigma as a discouragement to shameful sexual misconduct. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Deere** on **illegitimate** suggests "Possibly, however, the term refers to the child of an incestuous relationship, the child of a cult prostitute, or the child of a mixed marriage (i.e., an Israelite married to an Ammonite, Moabite, Philistine, or others). Again the stringent punishment inflicted on such a person would help deter Israelites from entering this kind of marriage." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Utley** - "**illegitimate birth**" This (**mamzēr**) is defined as either (1) a child conceived out of wedlock; (2) an incident of incest (cf. Lev. 18:6–18); or (3) a child of a mixed marriage (Jewish and pagan, cf. Ezra 9:2; Neh. 13:23–25; Zech. 9:6). The Hebrew word best fits option #2.... "**the tenth generation**" The number ten is idiomatic for completeness or forever ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - The word **mamzēr**, "one of illegitimate birth," probably refers to one born of a forbidden union such as incest or prostitution. The Ammonites and Moabites in v. 3 were descended from the incestuous union of Lot with his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38).

**Illegitimate** (04464. מַמְזֵר **mamzēr**: A masculine noun identifying an illegitimate child. It specifies a person who does not have a proper pedigree or genealogy and was born out of wedlock (Deut. 23:2). In Zechariah 9:6, it is best rendered as a reference to foreign or mongrel persons. Only found in Deut 23:2, it is used of an illegitimate child who is refused entrance to the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation. Zechariah 9:6 may refer to an individual, but more likely it figuratively depicts the mixed population of Ashdod. It is possible that the Deut reference also refers to a child of mixed parentage—Hebrew and pagan. **Victor Hamilton** - 1. Anyone born of a "forbidden marriage" was not allowed into the congregation of the Lord until the tenth generation (Deut 23:3). מַמְזֵר here does not mean one born out of wedlock (in spite of LXX's κ πρόνηξ and Vg.'s de scorto natus) but one born of an incestuous union (A. D. H. Mayes, Deuteronomy, 1981, 316). 2. Zechariah prophesied that Ashdod, unlike Ashkelon, would not be deserted; rather, its native inhabitants would be replaced by mongrels/bastards (Zech 9:6). This prophecy must be a reference to the mixed character of the people after they had been colonized by their conquerors. (TWOT)

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**Utley** - **SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE** ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols:
  1. One—God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4–6)

2. Six—human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
3. Seven—divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
  - a. seven candlesticks, 1:13, 20; 2:1
  - b. seven stars, 1:16, 20; 2:1
  - c. seven churches, 1:20
  - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
  - e. seven lamps, 4:5
  - f. seven seals, 5:1, 5
  - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
  - h. seven angels, 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1
  - i. seven trumpets, 8:2, 6
  - j. seven thunders, 10:3, 4
  - k. seven thousand, 11:13
  - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9
  - m. seven plagues, 15:1, 6, 8; 21:9
  - n. seven bowls, 15:7
  - o. seven kings, 17:10
  - p. seven vials, 21:9
4. Ten—completeness
  - a. use in Gospels:
    - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1, 28
    - (2) Mark 10:41
    - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12, 17; 19:13, 16, 17, 24, 25
  - b. use in Revelation:
    - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
    - (2) 12:3; 17:3, 7, 12, 16, ten horns
    - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
  - c. multiples of 10 in Revelation:
    - (1) 144,000 =  $12 \times 12 \times 10$ , cf. 7:4; 14:1, 3
    - (2) 1,000 =  $10 \times 10 \times 10$ , cf. 20:2, 3, 6
5. Twelve—human organization
  - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
  - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
  - c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
  - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
  - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:12; 4:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 20
  - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
  - g. use in Revelation:
    - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5–8
    - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
    - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
    - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
    - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
    - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
    - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
6. Forty = number for time:
  - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
  - b. can be literal or symbolic
    - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4, 17; 8:6
    - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 18, 25
    - (3) divisions of Moses life:
      - (a) forty years in Egypt
      - (b) forty years in the desert
      - (c) forty years leading Israel
    - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
  - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
7. Seventy—round number for people:

- a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
  - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1, 9
  - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2, 24
  - d. mission team, Luke 10:1, 17
  - e. forgiveness (70×7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
1. John J. Davis, Biblical Numerology
  2. D. Brent Sandy, Plowshares and Pruning Hooks

**Deuteronomy 23:3 "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,**

- **Ammonite:** Ru 4:6,10-22 Ne 4:3,7 13:1,2,23 Isa 56:3
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **NO AMMONITES OR MOABITES IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE LORD**

**No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD** - Verse 4 explains what they are forbidden to enter the assembly. Not explained but probably a well known fact was that the **Ammonites** and **Moabites** not only treated Israel cruelly on their way to the Promised Land, but they also had a disgraceful beginning because both the sons, Moab and Ammon, were born to the daughters of Lot through incest with their father (Ge 19:30–38). Note the tenth generation is modified by "ever" and the **NET Note** says "The Hebrew term translated **“ever”** (עַד-עוֹלָם, 'ad-'olam) suggests that “tenth generation” (Dt 23:2, 3) also means “forever.” However, in the OT sense “forever” means not “for eternity” but for an indeterminate future time." ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**Utley** - **“No Ammonite or Moabite”** These nations were the result of incest mentioned in v. 2. Some rabbis say that Gen. 19:30–38 (nations from Lot’s incestuous relations with his daughters) shows that this applies only to the men, thereby getting around Ruth’s being a Moabite and a progenitor of King David. However, beyond incest, the other specific reasons for their being rejected is spelled out in vv. 4–6. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**TSK** - These nations were subjected for their impiety, wickedness, and enmity to Israel, (ver. 4, 5,) to peculiar disgrace; and on this account were not permitted to hold any office among the Israelites. This did not, however, disqualify them from becoming proselytes; for Ruth, who was a Moabitess, was married to Boaz, and became one of the progenitors of our Lord.

**Jack Deere** on Ruth - The treatment of Ruth, however, by Boaz along with other Israelites of Bethlehem demonstrates that this law was never meant to exclude one who said, “Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Isaiah seemed to have held a similar interpretation (cf. Isa. 56:3, 6–8) but perhaps those verses in Isaiah apply only to the end times. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** - Many of the Israelites were settled E of the Jordan in the immediate neighborhood of these people, so God raised this wall to prevent the evils of idolatrous influence. Individuals from all 3 of these outcast groups are offered grace and acceptance by Isaiah upon personal faith in the true God (cf. Is 56:1–8). Ruth the Moabitess serves as a most notable example (cf. Ru 1:4, 16). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

The treatment of Ruth by Boaz along with other Israelites of Bethlehem demonstrates that this law was never meant to exclude one who said “Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ru 1:16). Isaiah seemed to have held a similar interpretation (cf. Isa 56:3, 6-8). The NT support is Ro 10:13, 2Pe 3:9, Rev 22:17 Contrast the heart of Ruth with another Moabite-Jewish intermarriage in 1Ki 11:1. There is a striking difference in Ruth’s marriage to Boaz which was in the line of Messiah & Solomon’s marriage which resulted in introduction of idolatry into Solomon’s court & for which God tore the kingdom apart. Ruth sought after the One True God in contrast to these polytheistic idol worshipers. This restriction on intermarriage was also enforced by Nehemiah (Ne13:23.) See Ne 13:1,2 where God says no Moabite should ever enter the congregation of Israelites.

**Deuteronomy 23:4 because they did not meet you with food and 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.**

- Because they met: De 2:28,29 Ge 14:17,18 1Sa 25:11 1Ki 18:4 Isa 63:9 Zec 2:8 Mt 25:40 Ac 9:4
- because they hired: Nu 22:5,7,17 Ne 13:2
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**because** - Moses states the first of two reasons the Moabites and Ammonites are prohibited from entering the assembly of the LORD.

**they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt**- Both the Ammonites and Moabites failed to show hospitality to the nation of Israel as they were coming through their lands to reach the Promised Land.

**and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you**- Moab had been opposed to Israel from the beginning in view of their incestuous origin.

#### Related Resources:

- [What was Baal Peor in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who was Baal? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Deuteronomy 23:5 "Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you."**

- **Nevertheless:** Nu 22:35 Nu 23:5-12,16-26 24:9 Mic 6:5 Ro 8:31 2Co 4:17
- **because the:** De 7:7,8 33:3 Ps 73:1 Jer 31:3 Eze 16:8 Mal 1:2 Ro 9:13 11:28 Eph 2:4,5
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 22:2-6+ Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3 So Moab was in great fear because of the people, for they were numerous; and Moab was in dread of the sons of Israel. 4 Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. 5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, "Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. 6 "Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

**Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned**(Heb "the LORD your God changed") **the curse into a blessing for you** - Note twice Yahweh is called "your God." In fact He was figuratively Israel's Husband (Jer 31:32, Hos 2:19, Isa 54:5) and He was showing His covenant loyalty to them as His wife (by the conditional Mosaic Covenant) and His love and protection were also a reflection of His (unconditional) promise made in the Abrahamic Covenant. The prophet **Balaam** was asked by **King Balak** of Moab to curse Israel (see Nu 22:1-24:25+) but God would not let him succeed. Unfortunately he did give advice to seduce the Israelite men with women and this transpired in Numbers 25:1-18+. This prohibition harkens back to the prophecy in Genesis 12:3+ "And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

**because the LORD your God loves you** - Explains why God did not let **Balaam curse** Israel. It is not because Israel was so good for in fact they were in this leg of the wilderness wandering because of their unbelief and disobedience in Nu 13:1-Nu 14:45+. The reason is because God is so good and His grace is so amazing, for here He bestowed His love on a people thoroughly undeserving (like you and me as believers)(aka "elective grace")!

**NET Note** - The verb אָהַב ('ahav, "love") here and commonly elsewhere in the Book of Deuteronomy speaks of God's elective grace toward Israel. The concept of love here is not primarily that of emotional affection but of commitment or devotion. This verse suggests that God chose Israel to be his special people because he loved the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and had promised to bless their descendants. See as well Deut 7:7-9. ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**Love** (friend) (0157) **ahab/ahab** most important uses in the OT are as an expression of God's love of people (Dt 4:37, Hosea 3:1), man's love for God (Ex 20:6, Ps 116:1) and man's love for his fellow man (Ge 29:32, Ru 4:15+, 1 Kings 11:1 = a forbidden love by backslidden King Solomon!!!) The first use of aheb in the OT is



instructive as it is found in Ge 22:2 where Yahweh instructed his servant Abraham to "'Take now your son, your only son, whom you **love**, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.'" Notice that at the outset, we see that an inherent quality of this love (in many contexts) is that it is costly. God wants us to love Him above EVERYTHING, even our own flesh and blood. Matthews writes that Ge 22:2 "is the final test of the man's faith, the closing bookend to his discovery of God's sufficiency to achieve the promises made at Haran." (New American Commentary) As an aside God frequently "tests" His people to reveal their trust and obedience (cp Ex 15:25, 16:4, Judges 2:22+ - in this last one they failed repeatedly).

**Love in Deuteronomy** - Deut. 4:37; Deut. 5:10; Deut. 6:5; Deut. 7:8; Deut. 7:9; Deut. 7:13; Deut. 10:12; Deut. 10:15; Deut. 10:18; Deut. 10:19; Deut. 11:1; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 11:22; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 15:16; Deut. 19:9; Deut. 21:15; Deut. 21:16; Deut. 23:5; Deut. 30:6; Deut. 30:16; Deut. 30:20

**Utley** - "because the LORD your God loves you" This is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy:

1. 4:37, "He loved your fathers"
2. 7:7–8, "the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers:"
3. 7:12–13, "He will love you and bless you and multiply you" (if obedient)
4. 10:15, "Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them"
5. 33:3, "He loves the people(s)"

YHWH's actions are based on His choice, not Israel's goodness (cf. 7:7–8). He chose Abraham to choose a world (see Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 4:6). ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Balaam in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Balaam was a wicked prophet in the Bible and is noteworthy because, although he was a wicked prophet, he was not a false prophet. That is, Balaam did hear from God, and God did give him some true prophecies to speak. However, Balaam's heart was not right with God, and eventually he showed his true colors by betraying Israel and leading them astray.

In Numbers 22—24, we find the story about Balaam and the king of Moab, a man called Balak. King Balak wanted to weaken the children of Israel, who on their way to Canaan had moved in on his territory. Balak sent to Balaam, who lived in Mesopotamia along the Euphrates River (Numbers 22:5), and asked him to curse Israel in exchange for a reward. Balaam was apparently willing to do this but said he needed God's permission (verse 8). Balaam, of course, had no power, in himself, to curse Israel, but, if God were willing to curse Israel, Balaam would be rewarded through Balak. God told Balaam, "You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed" (verse 12). King Balak then sent "other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first" (verse 16), promising a handsome reward. This time God said, "Go with them, but do only what I tell you" (verse 20).

The next morning, Balaam saddled his [donkey](#) and left for Moab (Numbers 22:21). God sent an angel to oppose Balaam on the way. The donkey Balaam was riding could see the angel, but Balaam could not, and when the donkey three times moved to avoid the angel, Balaam was angry and beat the animal. "Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth" (verse 28), and it rebuked the prophet for the beatings. "Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn" (verse 31). The angel told Balaam that he certainly would have killed Balaam had not the donkey spared his life. Ironically, a dumb beast had more wisdom than God's prophet. The angel then repeated to Balaam the instruction that he was only to speak what God told him to speak concerning the Hebrews (verses 33–35).

In **Moab**, King [Balak](#) took the prophet Balaam up to a high place called Bamoth Baal and told him to curse the Israelites (Numbers 22:41). Balaam first offered fourteen sacrifices on seven altars and met with the Lord (Numbers 23:1–5). He then declared the message God gave him: a blessing on Israel: "How can I curse / those whom God has not cursed? / How can I denounce / those whom the Lord has not denounced?" (verse 8).

King [Balak](#) was upset that Balaam had pronounced a blessing on Israel rather than a curse, but he had him try again, this time from the top of Pisgah (Numbers 23:14). Balaam sacrificed another fourteen animals and met with the Lord. When he faced Israel, Balaam again spoke a blessing: "I have received a command to bless; / he has blessed, and I cannot change it" (verse 20).

King [Balak](#) told Balaam that, if he was going to keep blessing Israel, it was better for him to just shut up (Numbers 23:25). But the king decided to try one more time, taking Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland (verse 28). Again, Balaam offered fourteen animals on seven newly built altars (verse 29). Then "the Spirit of God came on him and he spoke his message" (Numbers 24:2–3). The third message was not what the Moabite king wanted to hear: "How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, / your dwelling places, Israel!" (verse 5).

Balaam's three prophecies of blessing on Israel infuriated the king of Moab, who told the prophet to go back home with no reward:

“Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the Lord has kept you from being rewarded” (Numbers 24:11). Before he left, Balaam reminded the king that he had said from the very beginning he could only say what God told him to say. Then he gave the king four more prophecies, gratis. In the fourth prophecy, Balaam foretold of the Messiah: “A star will come out of Jacob; / a scepter will rise out of Israel. / He will crush the foreheads of Moab, / the skulls of all the people of Sheth” (verse 17). Balaam’s seven prophecies were seven blessings on God’s people; it was God’s enemies who were cursed.

However, later on Balaam figured out a way to get his reward from Balak. Balaam advised the Moabites on how to entice the people of Israel with prostitutes and idolatry. He could not curse Israel directly, so he came up with a plan for Israel to bring a curse upon themselves. Balak followed Balaam’s advice, and Israel fell into sin, worshiping [Baal of Peor](#) and committing fornication with Midianite women. For this God plagued them, and 24,000 men died (Numbers 25:1–9; Deuteronomy 23:3–6).

Balaam’s name and story became infamous, and he is referred to several times in the New Testament. Peter compares false teachers to Balaam, “who loved the wages of wickedness” (2 Peter 2:15). Jude echoes this sentiment, associating Balaam with the selling of one’s soul for financial gain (Jude 1:11). Finally, Jesus speaks of Balaam when He warns [the church in Pergamum](#) of their sin: “There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality” (Revelation 2:14). Satan’s tactics haven’t changed all that much. If he cannot curse God’s people directly, he will try the back-door approach, and [idolatry](#) and [sexual immorality](#) are his go-to temptations. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Balak in the Bible?](#)
- [Did Balaam’s donkey really talk to him?](#)
- [What is the doctrine of Balaam?](#)

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#### Deuteronomy 23:6 "You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days.

- Thou shalt: 2Sa 8:2 12:31 Ezr 9:12 Ne 13:23-25
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days-** No peace with Ammon or Moab.

**Pulpit Commentary** - Israel was not to seek, i.e. care for and use means to promote, the welfare of these nations. Individuals, however, of these nations might be naturalized in Israel, and as proselytes enter the congregation, as the case of Ruth proves. It was against the nations, as such, that this ban was directed, and this they had brought on themselves by choosing to be enemies of Israel when they might have been friends and allies.

Prophets’ denunciation of **Moab and Ammon** described in Isa 15–16; Jer 48:1–49:6; Eze 25:1–11; Am 1:13–2:3; Zep 2:8–11.

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#### Deuteronomy 23:7 "You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land.

- he is thy: Ge 25:24-26,30 Nu 20:14 Ob 1:10-12 Mal 1:2
- because thou: De 10:19 Ge 45:17,18 46:7 47:6,12,27 Ex 22:21 23:9 Lev 19:34 Ps 105:23 Ac 7:10-18
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Exodus 12:36 (EGYPT HELPING ISRAEL) and the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

### CONCESSIONS FOR EDOMITES & EGYPTIANS

**You shall not detest** (abhor) **an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest**(abhor) **an Egyptian** - Israel was more closely related to Edom than with Moab and Ammon, because Edom was descended from Esau (Ge 36:40–43), Jacob’s twin

**brother** (Ge 25:19–26)

**NIVSB** - Edom (Esau) is often condemned for his hostility against his “brother” Jacob (Israel; see Am 1:11; Ob 10; see also notes on Ge 25:22, 26).

**Because you were an alien in his land** - Individual Egyptians had shown kindness to the Israelites at the Exodus (Ex 12:36). “Egyptians had provided security and sustenance for Israel for more than four centuries.” (NN)

**Guzik on an alien in his land** - 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.

**Deere** adds “The harsh treatment of Israel by the Egyptian people was overlooked because of Israel’s long sojourn there and perhaps also because of the initial positive treatment given to Joseph and his family when they first entered Egypt (Gen. 37–50).” ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Pulpit Commentary** - It was to be otherwise with the Edomite and the Egyptian; though the former had refused permission to the Israelites to pass through their land, and the latter had oppressed and wronged the nation, yet as the former were connected with Israel by a bond of kindred—for he is thy brother—and the latter had received Israel to sojourn in their land, where, notwithstanding the oppression which clouded the later times of their sojourn, they had reaped many benefits, they were not to abhor these nations or place them under a ban of perpetual exclusion

**Utley** - Rashi says the difference between vv. 3 and 7 is that those countries listed in v. 3 caused Israel to sin (cf. Gen. 36). ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Detest** (abhor) ([08581](#)) **taab** related to **toebah** = abomination) means to despise, detest, to loathe, to degrade, to have a hatred or very strong dislike for something. It describes “persons, things or practices that offend one’s ritual or moral order.” (NIDOTTE) Israel was to treat idols as abominable (cf. Deut. 7:26), something which wicked King Ahab did not do (1 Ki. 21:26). Also, the Psalms describe a proper loathing for violence and deceit (Ps. 5:6), the spiritual fool (Ps 14:1), rebellious Israel (Ps 106:40) and lying (119:163).

**Deuteronomy 23:8 "The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.**

- **enter:** De 23:1 Ro 3:29,30 Eph 2:12,13
- **third generation:** De 23:2,3 Ex 20:5,6
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **MORE FAVORABLE RX TO EDMITES & EGYPTIANS**

**The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD**- So there is some restriction for Edomites and Egyptians from entering the assembly but it is finite and limited.

**ESVSB** has an interesting note on **third generation**. - The possibility of foreigners becoming worshiping Israelites shows that, with God, faith is the issue more than race.

**Keil** - Their children might come into the congregation of the Lord in the third generation, i.e., the great-grandchildren of Edomites or Egyptians, who had lived as strangers in Israel (see at Ex. 20:5). Such persons might be incorporated into the covenant nation by circumcision.

**Guzik** - 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. ([Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 23:9 "When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing.**

- Jos 6:18 7:11-13 Jud 20:26 2Ch 19:4 20:3-13 31:20,21 32:1-22 Lu 3:14 Rev 19:11-14
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FLEE EVIL!

**Keil** on Dt 23:9-14 - Preservation of the Purity of the Camp in Time of War.—The bodily appearance of the people was also to correspond to the sacredness of Israel as the congregation of the Lord, especially when they gathered in hosts around their God.

**Impurity** (unholy) **and** (holy) **war do not mix!** This is true in the holy wars that ancient Israel was to fight in order to possess their possessions and it is just as true today in the holy war believers must fight to possess their possessions! Ceremonial cleanliness was mandatory for waging holy war!

**THOUGHT** - The corollary is **beware** if you are dabbling in unholy things dear soldier of the Cross, for you are jeopardizing (and in a sense jettisoning) the holy presence and power of the Spirit (quenching and/or grieving the Holy Spirit) and thus you are very unlikely to possess your spiritual possessions in Christ as you wage war against the powerful adversaries, the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). The watchword is just that - **WATCH! STAY ALERT!** Don't compromise or "contaminate" your spiritual armor beloved, for to do so could lead to a costly defeat.

**When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing**= This speaks of the necessity to exhibit continual watchfulness to maintain purity in the military camp (by application is a picture of our need to be spiritually clean in spiritual warfare! Woe!) Keep is a key verb in Deuteronomy ([shamar](#)) which in the [Septuagint](#) is translated with [phulasso](#) which means to guard like a military sentinel would at his post. **Every evil thing** in the [Septuagint](#) is translated *every evil word* ([rhema](#)).

**NET Note on evil** - The context makes clear that this is a matter of ritual impurity, not moral impurity, so it is "evil" in the sense that it disbars one from certain religious activity. ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**MacArthur** - Israel's army fighting against the enemy was a religious gathering in the midst of which God was present. Hence laws of cleanness applied. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Keep** (careful, guard, kept, observe, watch) ([08104](#)) [shamar](#) means to keep (cause a state or condition to remain), watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard, beware, pay attention, make sure, watch oneself, guard oneself, i.e., learn or remember information and take care to watch for dangers. Contrast first use Ge 2:15 with next use in Ge 3:24!

[IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) - **sanitation in the camp** (Dt 23:9-14). Since the army is engaged in a holy war, they must maintain themselves in a state of ritual purity consistent with God's holiness. Thus matters of personal hygiene are elevated to reinforce the need to keep both person (see Lev 15:16–17) and place clean. Obviously, there would be health value in digging latrines outside the camp, but such mundane activities here are keyed to preventing the ritual impurity that would cause God to abandon them (see Deut 8:11–20+).

**Deuteronomy 23:10** "If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he may not reenter the camp."

- Lev 15:16 Nu 5:2,3 1Co 5:11-13
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Leviticus 15:16-18 'Now if a man has a **seminal emission**, he shall bathe all his body in water and be **unclean** until evening. 17 'As for any garment or any leather on which there is seminal emission, it shall be washed with water and be unclean until evening. 18 'If a man lies with a woman so that there is a seminal emission, they shall both bathe in water and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 22:4 'No man of the descendants of Aaron, who is a leper or who has a discharge, may eat of the holy gifts until he is clean. And if one touches anything made unclean by a corpse or if a man has a seminal emission,

**If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he may not reenter the camp** - A nocturnal emission is a likely a so-called "[wet dream](#)" which while not morally wrong would impact the purity of the camp (exactly how is uncertain). Note that Lev 15:16 it specifically says "**seminal** (Heb = zera = seed, sowing) **emission**" to this could be a more general term for any kind of emission at night. Such a person was ceremonially impure

and had to leave the main camp for a day (v11) until ceremonially purified. Some commentators think the nocturnal emission refers to bedwetting or urinating in the camp, but that is less certain.

**NET Note** - Heb "nocturnal happening." The Hebrew term קָרָה (qareh) merely means "to happen" so the phrase here is euphemistic (a "night happening") for some kind of bodily emission such as excrement or semen. Such otherwise normal physical functions rendered one ritually unclean whether accidental or not. ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**Utley** broadens the meaning of a **nocturnal emission** - The Hebrew is "a happening or event at night". It could include other types of bodily fluids such as urination and diarrhea, etc. Any leakage of bodily fluids makes one ceremonially unclean (cf. Leviticus 15). Remember, this has to do with ceremonial cleanliness, not sin. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - 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. . ([Commentary](#))

**Nocturnal emission (07137).** קָרָה qāreh from qarah = to happen, to encounter) A masculine noun indicating a temporary sickness. It refers to a man's nocturnal emission of semen during the night, which rendered him temporarily unclean and used only in Deut. 23:10. This describes male reproductive fluids leaving the body in a normal manner, but not due to sexual contact, but involuntary bodily responses as an "accident."

**Deuteronomy 23:11 "But it shall be when evening approaches, he shall bathe himself with water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp.**

- evening: Lev 11:25 15:17-23
- Bathe himself: Lev 14:9 15:5,11,13 22:6 Ps 51:2,7 Eze 36:25 Mt 3:11 Lu 11:38,39 Eph 5:26,27 Heb 9:9,10 10:22 1Pe 3:21 Rev 1:5
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**But it shall be when evening approaches He shall bathe himself with water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp.**- Israel began a new day at sundown. This requirement for purification is almost identical to that in Leviticus 15:16 **Now if a man has a seminal emission, he shall bathe all his body in water and be unclean until evening."**

**Deuteronomy 23:12 "You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there,**

- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## OUTSIDE "OUTHOUSE"

**You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there**- This expression is euphemistic for an area for a potty, **outside**, like an old fashioned "outhouse." It is interesting (and surprising) that the sanitation practices outlined in Deuteronomy 23:9-14 were much in advance of those of other nations of the time, especially in reference to armies in their encampments. This no doubt contributed to their freedom from disease promised by the Lord (cf Ex 15:26).

[Wikipedia](#) - An outhouse is a small structure, separate from a main building, which covers a toilet. This is typically either a pit latrine or a bucket toilet, but other forms of dry (non-flushing) toilets may be encountered. The term may also be used to denote the toilet itself, not just the structure. Outhouses were in use in cities of developed countries (e.g. Australia) well into the second half of the twentieth century. They are still common in rural areas and also in cities of developing countries.

**Deuteronomy 23:13 and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement.**

- **cover** : Eze 24:6-8

- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement** - **Sit down outside** is a euphemistic way to say go to the toilet. Israeli soldiers were to carry with them along with their implements of war a tool for digging in the earth for covering over **excrement** (Hebrew literally is a euphemism "what comes from you."). This instruction is practical for as an infectious doctor I would give hour long talks on the variegated infectious diseases associated with feces. It was not just for cleanliness in general but for good hygiene for the army.

**Spade (03489) יָטֵד yāṭēd:** A feminine noun denoting a pin, a peg, a stake. It is used of a wooden peg or nail (Judg. 4:21, 22; 5:26). It could be driven into a wall for hanging something on it (Isa. 22:23). It refers to a tool used for digging a hole in the ground (Deut. 23:13[14]); or a tool for working on a loom (Judg. 16:14). Metal pegs for use in the Tabernacle are also a part of its range of meaning (Ex. 27:19). It is used metaphorically as a means of having a share in the Lord's plans (Ezra 9:8); or to symbolize a leader who will bring stability to God's people (Zech. 10:4).

**Swanson - 3845 יָטֵד (yā-ṭēd):** n.fem.; ≡ Str 3489; TWOT 932a—1. LN 6.14–6.22 tent peg, tent stake, i.e., a device to hold a tent up by fastening to the ground (Ex 27:19); 2. LN 6.14–6.22 hanging peg, i.e., a pin or peg to hang things on (Eze 15:3); 3. LN 6.14–6.22 loom pin, i.e., a device to fasten part of the weavings on a loom (Jdg 16:13, 14+); 4. LN 6.215–6.225 digging tool, digging trowel, i.e., a spade or shovel-like instrument for digging shallow holes (Dt 23:14[EB 13]+); 5. LN 21.9–21.13 security, safety, i.e., a secure place as a figurative extension of a pin or peg as a fastening device (Ezr 9:8) (DBL-Hebrew)

**Deuteronomy 23:14 "Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you.**

- **walks:** Ge 17:1 Lev 26:12 2Co 6:16
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passage:**

Leviticus 26:12 I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

Dt 7:2 and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

**HOLY GOD MUST HAVE  
A HOLY CAMP!**

**Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat**(Heb = "give [over] your enemies") **your enemies before you** - God had promised on a number of occasions that He would be with them when they encountered their enemies (cf Dt 2:33, Dt 3:2, Dt 7:2, Dt 20:3-4, Nu 14:9, cf Josh 21:44, Jdg 1:4, 2 Chr 20:17, 32:8), so this serves as a reminder of His presence and His power to **deliver and defeat** the enemies of Israel.

**THOUGHT** - If an unholy camp in Israel would hinder the LORD from delivering and defeating their enemies how much more would this apply to NT believers who have Him not only walking in our midst but literally living in our body, His temple. Could an unholy camp explain why you or I are having trouble eradicating the enemies that plague us from the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#)? Just wondering?

**Deere** has a rather convicting comment we dare not read too fast - By regularly observing these regulations Israelite soldiers were reminded of the Lord's holiness and omnipresence. **Even in a person's most private moments the holy God was with him, observing his behavior.** ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Utley** - "the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp" This is a possible reference to the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Exod. 25:10–22), which took the place of the shekinah cloud (e.g., Exod. 13:21–22; 14:19–20; 16:10; 19:9, 16; Lev. 16:2, 13) as the symbol of the divine Presence after Israel crossed the Jordan. The rabbis later took this verse literally and ruled that no manure could be used in the gardens in the city of Jerusalem. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. Based on the fact that the Holy One of Israel is walking in their midst the following conclusion is only

natural and expected

**Your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent** (Heb - nakedness of a thing) **among you or He will turn away from you** - And if God turns away clearly deliverance and defeat of enemies goes with Him! **Anything indecent** would be anything that one would be ashamed of. Woe! Are you as convicted as I am?

**NIVSB Note** on Lev 11:44+ is pertinent - Holiness is the key theme of Leviticus, ringing like a refrain in various forms throughout the book (e.g., Lev 11:45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; 21:8, 15; 22:9, 16, 32). The word "holy" appears more often in Leviticus than in any other book of the Bible. Israel was to be totally consecrated to God. **Their holiness was to be expressed in every aspect of their life, to the extent that all of life had a certain ceremonial quality.** Because of Who God is and what he has done (Lev 11:45), his people must dedicate themselves fully to him (cf. Mt 5:48). See Ro 12:1. When God's holiness is spoken of in the Bible, reference is to (1) his incomparably awesome majesty and (2) his absolute moral virtue.

Don't miss the point of this section of instructions on keeping your camp holy, for ultimately they are simply an illustration of what God desires in the "camp" of our heart!

**Brown** - This statement about Israel's holy God provides a threefold testimony to his **omnipresence** (in your camp), **omnipotence** (to protect you) and **omniscience** (that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you). For the Hebrew people, their everyday conduct was determined by the nature of God. Because he is holy they were to be like him: 'Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy' (Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7–8). ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**THOUGHT** - This passage is a good reminder to believer of Peter's command "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance (**NLT** = Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then), but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL **BE** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1 Peter 1:14-16+). **How is your conduct lately** - wholly holy, partly holy or wholly unholy?

In his lexicon entry on **indecent W E Vine** writes "The phrase "indecent thing" represents any uncleanness in a military camp or any violation of the laws of sexual abstinence—nocturnal emission not properly cleansed, sexual cohabitation and other laws of purity (for example, excrement buried in the camp) (Dt. 23:14).

**Utley** on "anything indecent" This is a CONSTRUCT of "word" (dabar/davar) with "nakedness". In this context it refers to ceremonial cleanness related to bodily fluids (cf. Leviticus 15). It seems to be a way to teach Israel that YHWH's presence and power with them must be matched by their "holiness" and constant vigil. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**NET Note** on **indecent** - Heb "nakedness of a thing"; NLT "any shameful thing." The expression עֲרוּת דָּבָר ('ervat davar) refers specifically to sexual organs and, by extension, to any function associated with them. There are some aspects of human life that are so personal and private that they ought not be publicly paraded. **Cultically speaking, even God is offended by such impropriety (ED: WOE!!!)** (cf. Ge 9:22–23; Lev 18:6–12, 16–19; 20:11, 17–21). ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

This passage has a definite NT parallel for believers...

2 Corinthians 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God (HOLY PEOPLE, SEPARATED PEOPLE); just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

**Indecent (06172)** 'erwāh: A feminine noun expressing nakedness. This word can pertain to physical nakedness for either a man or a woman (Gen. 9:22, 23; Ex. 20:26); however, it is more often used in a figurative sense. When used with the verbs gālāh (1540), meaning to uncover or remove, and rā'āh (7200), meaning to see, one finds a common euphemism for sexual relations—to uncover one's nakedness (Lev. 18:6; 20:17). On the other hand, when combined with the verb kāsāh (3680), meaning to cover, one finds a common idiom for entering into a marriage contract (Ezek. 16:8). Nakedness is also a symbol of the shame and disgrace of Egypt (Isa. 20:4); Babylonia (Isa. 47:3); and Jerusalem (Ezek. 16:37). Furthermore, when in construct with dāḇār (1697), meaning a word, matter, or thing, this term forms an idiom for indecent or improper behavior (Deut. 23:14[15]; 24:1). When in construct with the word 'ereš (776), it can refer to exposed or undefended areas (Gen. 42:9, 12). ([Word Study Dictionary - OT](#))

**Vine** - 'erwah (06172, עֲרוּת), "nakedness; indecent thing." Thirty-two of the 53 occurrences of this noun are in the social laws of Lev. 18, 20. The rest of its appearances are scattered throughout the various periods of Old Testament literature with the notable exception of poetical literature. This word represents male or female

sexual organs. In its first biblical appearance *erwah* implies shameful exposure (Ge 9:22-23) This word is often used of female nakedness (the uncovered sex organs) and is symbolical of shame. In Lam. 1:8 plundered, devastated Jerusalem is pictured as a woman whose nakedness is exposed. To uncover one's nakedness is a frequent euphemism for cohabitation (Lev 18:6) ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Erwah 40 verses** - bare(1), indecency(1), indecent(1), nakedness(48), shame(1), undefended parts(2). Gen. 9:22; Gen. 9:23; Gen. 42:9; Gen. 42:12; Exod. 20:26; Exod. 28:42; Lev. 18:6; Lev. 18:7; Lev. 18:8; Lev. 18:9; Lev. 18:10; Lev. 18:11; Lev. 18:12; Lev. 18:13; Lev. 18:14; Lev. 18:15; Lev. 18:16; Lev. 18:17; Lev. 18:18; Lev. 18:19; Lev. 20:11; Lev. 20:17; Lev. 20:18; Lev. 20:19; Lev. 20:20; Lev. 20:21; Deut. 23:14; Deut. 24:1; 1 Sam. 20:30; Isa. 20:4; Isa. 47:3; Lam. 1:8; Ezek. 16:8; Ezek. 16:36; Ezek. 16:37; Ezek. 22:10; Ezek. 23:10; Ezek. 23:18; Ezek. 23:29; Hos. 2:9

**Holy (06918).** **שׁוֹדֵף** *qāḏōšh* - An adjective meaning sacred, holy. It is used to denote someone or something that is inherently sacred or has been designated as sacred by divine rite or cultic ceremony. It designates that which is the opposite of common or profane. It could be said the *qāḏōšh* is a positive term regarding the character of its referent, where common is a neutral term and profane a very negative term. This word is often used to refer to God as being inherently holy, sacred, and set apart (Ps. 22:3[4]; Isa. 6:3; 57:15); and as being free from the attributes of fallen humanity (Hos. 11:9). Therefore, in the Old Testament, God is accorded the title "The Holy One of Israel" (2 Kgs. 19:22; Ps. 78:41; Isa. 17:7; Jer. 50:29). As such, God instructed that humanity should be holy because He is holy (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2). In addition to its divine references, this word can also modify places, like the court of the Tabernacle (Ex. 29:31); the camp of Israel (Deut. 23:14[15]); Jerusalem (Eccl. 8:10); heaven (Isa. 57:15); people, like the priests (Lev. 21:7, 8); a Nazirite (Num. 6:5, 8); the prophet Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:9); Levites (2 Chr. 35:3); saints [angels] (Job 5:1; 15:15; Dan. 8:13); water (Num. 5:17); time (Neh. 8:9–11; Isa. 58:13). ([Word Study Dictionary - OT](#))

**Holy** things and holy people are not to be used for common or sinful, idolatrous purposes. Three times in the OT God's Spirit is called the **Holy** Spirit (Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10f). God is holy and speaks and swears on the basis of his holiness (cf. Ps 60:6; 89:35). This means that He acts consistently with his moral character. His acts, flowing from his nature, define what goodness and purity are. Holiness really sums up all of what God is as separate from his creation and from all evil; He is awesome and wonderfully good (Ps. 97:12). God's people should worship Him "in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2), which may refer to the LORD himself or to what worshipers are to wear when approaching Him.

**Vine** - *qāḏōšh* (6918, שׁוֹדֵף), "holy." The Semitic languages have two separate original forms of the root. The one signifies "pure" and "devoted," as in Akkadian *qadistu* and in Hebrew *qadec*, "holy." The word describes something or someone. The other signifies "holiness" as a situation or as an abstract, as in Arabic *al-qaddus* "the most holy or most pure." In Hebrew the verb *qadash* and the word *qadesh* combine both elements: the descriptive and the static. The traditional understanding of "separated" is only a derived meaning, and not the primary.

*Qāḏōšh* is prominent in the Pentateuch, poetic and prophetic writings, and rare in the historical books. The first of its 116 occurrences is in Exod. 19:6: "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

In the Old Testament *qadosh* has a strongly religious connotation. In one sense the word describes an object or place or day to be "holy" with the meaning of "devoted" or "dedicated" to a particular purpose: "And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel ..." (Num. 5:17). Particularly the sabbath day is "devoted" as a day of rest: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ..." (Isa. 58:13–14). The prescription is based on Gen. 2:3 where the Lord "sanctified," or "dedicated," the sabbath.

God has dedicated Israel as His people. They are "holy" by their relationship to the "holy" God. All of the people are in a sense "holy," as members of the covenant community, irrespective of their faith and obedience: "And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" (Num. 16:3). God's intent was to use this "holy" nation as a "holy," royal priesthood amongst the nations (Exod. 19:6). Based on the intimate nature of the relationship, God expected His people to live up to His "holy"



expectations and, thus, to demonstrate that they were a “holy nation”: “And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine” (Lev. 20:26).

The priests were chosen to officiate at the Holy Place of the tabernacle/temple. Because of their function as intermediaries between God and Israel and because of their proximity to the temple, they were dedicated by God to the office of priest: “They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God. Thou shalt sanctify him therefore; for he offereth the bread of thy God: he shall be holy unto thee: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy” (Lev. 21:6–8). Aaron as the high priest was “the holy one of the Lord (Ps. 106:16, NASB).

The Old Testament clearly and emphatically teaches that God is “holy.” He is “the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 1:4), the “holy God” (Isa. 5:16), and “the Holy One” (Isa. 40:25). His name is “Holy”: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). The negative statement, “There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none besides thee: neither is there any rock like our God” (1 Sam. 2:2), explains that He is most “holy” and that no one is as “holy” as He is. Also the angels in the heavenly entourage are “holy”: “And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up, for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it; and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord your God will come, and all the holy ones [KJV, “saints”] with him” (Zech. 14:5, RSV). The seraphim proclaimed to each other the holiness of God: “And one cried unto another, and said, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isa. 6:3).

In the **Septuagint** the word **hagios** (“holy”) stands for the Hebrew qadosh. ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Swanson** - **קָדוֹשׁ (qā-ḏōš)**: adj (1) **holy, i.e., pertaining to being unique and pure** in the sense of superior moral qualities and possessing certain essential divine qualities in contrast with what is human (Lev 11:44); **2. sacred, consecrated, i.e., pertaining to what is dedicated in service to God** (Nu 6:8); **3. saints, God's people, i.e., persons who belong to God, and as such constitute a religious entity** (Ps 16:3; 34:10); **4. holy one, i.e., a supernatural being that is not God** (Da 8:13); **5. Holy One, i.e., a title of God** (Ps 22:4)

**Qadosh - 106 verses** - Exod. 19:6; Exod. 29:31; Lev. 6:16; Lev. 6:26; Lev. 6:27; Lev. 7:6; Lev. 10:13; Lev. 11:44; Lev. 11:45; Lev. 16:24; Lev. 19:2; Lev. 20:7; Lev. 20:26; Lev. 21:6; Lev. 21:7; Lev. 21:8; Lev. 24:9; Num. 5:17; Num. 6:5; Num. 6:8; Num. 15:40; Num. 16:3; Num. 16:5; Num. 16:7; Deut. 7:6; Deut. 14:2; Deut. 14:21; Deut. 23:14; Deut. 26:19; Deut. 28:9; Deut. 33:3; Jos. 24:19; 1 Sam. 2:2; 1 Sam. 6:20; 2 Ki. 4:9; 2 Ki. 19:22; 2 Chr. 35:3; Neh. 8:9; Neh. 8:10; Neh. 8:11; Job 5:1; Job 6:10; Job 15:15; Ps. 16:3; Ps. 22:3; Ps. 34:9; Ps. 46:4; Ps. 65:4; Ps. 71:22; Ps. 78:41; Ps. 89:5; Ps. 89:7; Ps. 89:18; Ps. 99:3; Ps. 99:5; Ps. 99:9; Ps. 106:16; Ps. 111:9; Prov. 9:10; Prov. 30:3; Eccl. 8:10; Isa. 1:4; Isa. 4:3; Isa. 5:16; Isa. 5:19; Isa. 5:24; Isa. 6:3; Isa. 10:17; Isa. 10:20; Isa. 12:6; Isa. 17:7; Isa. 29:19; Isa. 29:23; Isa. 30:11; Isa. 30:12; Isa. 30:15; Isa. 31:1; Isa. 37:23; Isa. 40:25; Isa. 41:14; Isa. 41:16; Isa. 41:20; Isa. 43:3; Isa. 43:14; Isa. 43:15; Isa. 45:11; Isa. 47:4; Isa. 48:17; Isa. 49:7; Isa. 54:5; Isa. 55:5; Isa. 57:15; Isa. 58:13; Isa. 60:9; Isa. 60:14; Jer. 50:29; Jer. 51:5; Ezek. 39:7; Ezek. 42:13; Dan. 8:13; Dan. 8:24; Hos. 11:9; Hos. 11:12; Hab. 1:12; Hab. 3:3; Zech. 14:5

**Deuteronomy 23:15 "You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.**

- 1Sa 30:15 Ob 1:14 Philemon 1:19
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DEMONSTRATE MERCY

**John MacArthur** has an interesting not pointing out that in Dt 23:15–25:19 "Moses selected 21 sample laws to further illustrate the nature of the requirements of living under the Sinaitic Covenant." ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you-** Note that these **slaves** were not Israelite slaves, but were from other countries escaping to seek sanctuary in Israel. We know these refugee slaves were from

foreign lands for otherwise there would have been legal complications, since slaves were a valued possessions.

**Deere** - The command not to hand him over to his master went against the normal practice in the ancient Near East. In fact treaties in the ancient Near East included the provision that escaped slaves and other fugitives be returned. (ED: ONCE AGAIN ISRAEL WAS TO BE DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHER NATIONS!) ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**HCSB** - Contrary to the ordinary practice of repatriating such persons, Israel must show a superior moral code by letting such a slave live among you wherever he wants.

**Utley** - “**You shall not hand over to his master a slave**” The central interpretive question is the nationality of a slave and of his master. To whom does this exactly refer? This must refer to a foreign slave or a foreign slave-master (or both). This does clearly show Israel’s understanding that a slave is more than an animated tool. YHWH allows servitude under certain restrictions and limits, but He also cares for the powerless, helpless, and vulnerable! ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**IVP Bible Background Commentary** - **slavery**. Although debt slavery occurred in ancient Israel, it had a term limit of six years and then the slave was freed. Perpetual slavery did exist as well, but that involved foreign captives and Israelites who had made the decision to accept that condition (Ex 21:2–11; Deut 15:12–18). It is most likely this latter class of persons that is mentioned in this law, since debt slaves could expect to be released eventually. Israel’s fugitive slave law is unusual in the context of ancient Near Eastern law. However it is tied to Israel’s former condition as slaves in Egypt and thus is based on a national hatred of the institution (see Ex 22:21). The [Code of Hammurabi](#) makes hiding a runaway slave a capital crime and sets a bounty of two shekels of silver for the return of a slave. Similarly, the international treaty between Pharaoh Rameses II and the Hittite king Hattusilis III (c. 1280 B.C.) includes an extradition clause requiring the return of fugitive slaves.

**Master 0113.** אֲדֹנָי **’ādôn:** A masculine noun meaning lord or master i.e., one who exercises control or authority over another, or others (1Sa 20:38);. Basically, **’adon** means master and is distinguished from the Hebrew word **baal**, which signifies “possessor” or “owner.” The most frequent use is of a human **lord** who occupies the position of a “master” over a slave or servant, but it is also used of divinity (Dt 10:17 = “For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the **Lord of lords**”). Generally, it carries the nuances of authority rather than ownership. When used of humans, it refers to authority over slaves (Gen. 24:9; Jdg. 19:11); people (1 Kgs. 22:17); a wife (Gen. 18:12; Amos 4:1); or a household (Gen. 45:8; Ps. 105:21). When used of divinity, it frequently occurs with yehōwāh (3068), signifying His sovereignty (Ex. 34:23; Josh. 3:13; Isa. 1:24). See the Hebrew noun **’adōnāy** (136).

**Slave (05650)** עֶבֶד **’ebed:** noun appearing over 750 times in the OT first in Ge 9:25 A masculine noun meaning a servant, a slave, bond servant, i.e., one who is owned by another for service until sold to another, or worked his way out of slavery (Ge 39:17);. Although the most basic concept of this term is that of a slave, slavery in the Bible was not the same as the slavery of modern times. The period of slavery was limited to six years (Ex. 21:2). Slaves had rights and protection under the Law (Ex. 21:20). It was also possible for slaves to attain positions of power and honor (Gen. 24:2; 41:12). In addition, the people under the king were called his servants (Gen. 21:25); as well as his officers (1 Sam. 19:1); officials (2 Kgs. 22:12); ambassadors (Num. 22:18); vassal kings (2 Sam. 10:19); tributary nations (1 Chr. 18:2, 6, 13). This word is also a humble way of referring to one’s self when speaking with another of equal or superior rank (Gen. 33:5). The term is also applied to those who worship God (Neh. 1:10); and to those who minister or serve Him (Isa. 49:5, 6). Of prime significance is the use of “my servant” for the Messiah in Isaiah (Isa 42:1–7; 49:1–7; 50:4–10; 52:13–53:12). Israel was a blind and deaf “servant” (Isa. 42:18–22). So the Lord called “my righteous servant” (Isa. 53:11; cf. 42:6) “[to bear] the sin of many” (Isa. 53:12), “that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isa. 49:6).

**Deuteronomy 23:16** "He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him.

- **shall** : Isa 16:3,4 Lu 15:15-24 Tit 3:2,3
- **not**: Ex 22:21 23:9 Jer 7:6 Zec 7:10 Mal 3:5 Jas 2:6
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**DON'T MISTREAT  
A RUNAWAY SLAVE**

**He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him** - While Moses does not say it here, he has frequently reminded the Israelites that they were once slaves themselves and thus would surely want to extend mercy and kindness to others (like God had extended to them!). Note the four freedoms accorded this refugee slave - (1) live in your midst (2) place of his choosing (3) where it pleases him (4) not to be mistreated.

**Utley** points out "What freedom and protection! All other ancient Near Eastern law codes demanded the return (and with it probable death) of runaway slaves. The Mosaic covenant focuses on the rights and protection of the weak, powerless, socially ostracized, and poor. The catch phrase is **"the widow, the orphan, and the alien"** (cf. Dt 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:17, 19; 26:12, 13; 27:19). ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 23:17 "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute.**

- shall be. De 22:21,29 Lev 19:29 Pr 2:16
- sons Ro 1:26 Ge 19:4,5 Jud 19:22 1Ki 14:24 15:12 22:46 2Ki 23:7 Ro 1:27,28 1Co 6:9 1Ti 1:10
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **PROHIBITION TO PRACTICE PAGAN PROSTITUTION**

**None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute** Do not miss the Hebrew words below, for both female and male cult prostitutes are terms that mean "set apart" or "holy," they individuals set apart to wholly unholy abominable sexual practices! This obviously refers to both female and male cult prostitutes that were common in debauched Canaanite "religion" (if you could call it that -- probably better would be "Canaanite debauchery" or "Canaanite orgy" as judged from archaeological findings). This is a "preview of coming attractions" (pun intended) for if the Israelites did not eradicate the Canaanites totally, they would end up being attracted to the fleshly pagan worship (just like Nu 25:1-3+!) Sadly in the times of the Kings this prohibition was ignored - e.g., 1 Kings 14:24; 1 Ki 15:12; 1 Ki 22:46; 2 Ki 23:7; Hosea 4:14.

**Brown** - Religion must never be divorced from morality; genuine belief must go hand in hand with consistent behaviour. ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**Pulpit Commentary** - Amongst idolatrous nations prostitution was in certain cases regarded as an act of religious service (cf. Herod., i. 199), and both males and females prostituted themselves especially in the worship of Astarte. All such abominations were to be unknown in Israel (cf. Micah 1:7).

**NET NOTE** - In The Hebrew term translated **"sacred prostitute"** here (הַשְּׂדֵי [qédeshah], from שָׁדַי [qadesh, "holy"]; cf. NIV "shrine prostitute"; NASB "cult prostitute"; NRSV, TEV, NLT "temple prostitute") refers to the pagan fertility cults that employed female and male prostitutes in various rituals designed to evoke agricultural and even human fecundity (cf. Gen 38:21–22; 1 Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 22:47; 2 Kgs 23:7; Hos 4:14). The Hebrew term for a regular, noncultic (i.e., "secular") female prostitute is זֹנָה (zonah). The colloquial Hebrew term for a "secular" (NOT A TEMPLE) male prostitute (i.e., a sodomite) is the disparaging epithet כֶּלֶב (kelev, "dog") which occurs in the following verse ([Deuteronomy 23](#))

**Cult prostitute 06948. הַשְּׂדֵי qeḏēšāh:** A feminine noun refers to a person that was holy or sacred, and in context of pagan worship referred to a woman set apart for pagan temple service, i.e., a female prostitute (Dt. 23:17; Hos. 4:14). This term was used as a general term for prostitution (Ge 38:21, 22) because of its parallel usage with zānāh (2181) (see Ge 38:15). However, it is at the same time possible that zānāh was merely the more general term for a prostitute, while qeḏēšāh was the exclusive term for a shrine prostitute.

4v - Gen. 38:21; Gen. 38:22; Deut. 23:17; Hos. 4:14

**Cult prostitute (male) 06945. שָׁדַי qāḏēš:** A masculine noun meaning male temple prostitute, a man who was "holy" or set apart for pagan temple service, namely, male prostitution (Deut. 23:17[18]; 1 Kgs. 14:24; 15:12; 22:46 [47]). This term is sometimes translated as sodomite, which is an excellent expression of the likelihood that these were homosexual or at least bisexual prostitutes.

9v - Gen. 38:21; Gen. 38:22; Deut. 23:17; 1 Ki. 14:24; 1 Ki. 15:12; 1 Ki. 22:46; 2 Ki. 23:7; Job 36:14; Hos. 4:14

**Deuteronomy 23:18 "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God."**

- **hire:** Eze 16:33
- **dog:** Ps 22:16 Pr 26:11 Isa 56:10,11 Mt 7:6 Php 3:2 2Pe 2:22 Rev 22:15
- **votive** De 23:21 12:6 Lev 7:16 Ps 5:4-6 Isa 61:8 Hab 1:13 Mal 1:14
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination ([toebah](#)) to the LORD your God** - Note the parallel use of "hire of a harlot" and "**wages of a dog**" indicate that "dog" is the Hebrew "epithet" for a male cult prostitute (practice in Canaanite worship). This may help explain the somewhat enigmatic term used by our resurrected Lord Jesus to define those who will not be allowed to inhabit the New Jerusalem. (Rev 22:15 "Outside are the dogs...")

**Deere** - The words for prostitutes here indicate that prostitution in general was in view, not specifically temple prostitution. The word for female prostitute is zônâh and the word for male prostitute is keleb (lit., "dog"). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Utley** - "**the hire of a harlot**" This is a different word from v. 17 (cf. Hosea 9:1). This is the common term for a fertility worship partner (BDB 1072). There is some debate whether the terms for cult prostitution in v. 17 are parallel to this term of v. 18 or if v. 18 refers to non-cultic prostitution (BDB 1072). In many texts there is a distinction, but here the parallelism seems purposeful. The wages charged are attempted to be given back to the deity (cf. Micah 1:7). YHWH refuses all revenue from sexual fees! ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

Of note is that here in Dt 23:18 the [Lxx](#) translates [toebah](#) with [bdelugma](#) (from [bdelusso](#) = emit foul odor, turn away from something or someone on account of the "stench". A loathing or disgust, abhor in turn derived from [bdeo](#) = to stink; cf [bdekluktos](#)) which describes something foul, that which is extremely hated, disgusted, detested or abhorred. The first NT use of [bdelugma](#) is in Mt 24:15+ which is fitting as it describes the "**Abomination** ([bdelugma](#)) of desolation" (the Antichrist) (cp Mk 13:14+). The other 4 uses of [bdelugma](#) are - Lk 16:15+, Rev 17:4, 5+, Rev 21:27+.

**Guzik** - Later, in the reigns of Asa (1 Kings 15:12) and Josiah (2 Kings 23:7) we are told that the perverted persons (male prostitutes) were expelled from Israel. This means that for some period of time before they were expelled, they were allowed to practice their "holy prostitution," which was an abomination to the LORD your God. The pay of a female prostitute (the hire of a harlot) and the pay of a male prostitute (the price of a dog) were never to be offered to the LORD. This was a common practice among the sacred prostitution cults that abounded in the ancient world. A reminder of the principle that the work of the LORD does not need money from immoral or ill-gotten gains. ([Commentary](#))

**McGee** - God said there were not to be harlots or sodomites among His people. God says that under no circumstance will He accept income from that which is illegal or from that which is immoral or wrong. He does not want any of it. Now I am going to say something that I know is not popular to say. I do not believe that any Christian organization should receive money from any industry that is illegal or immoral. I thank God for the two schools that turned down a gift from a large brewery. Many questionable businesses try to gain respectability by giving to charity, as you know. (Thru the Bible)

**Brown on hire...wages...abomination** - The way we earn our money is important. Believers must ensure that their wages are not obtained by employment which is either degrading to themselves, damaging to others or dishonouring to God. In the early Christian period certain occupations were considered unsuitable for Christians and, in the late second century, the North African writer Tertullian took the trouble to mention some of them. It is important in our own times to ensure that we are not earning our money at other people's moral or emotional expense. Some high-pressure salesmanship, for example, encourages thoughtless people to purchase goods they can ill-afford on deferred payment schemes. In some situations, high unemployment levels could drive some desperate, high-principled people into unsuitable and unhelpful work. Believers will want to subject their daily employment to divine scrutiny and so make sure that their daily work is not displeasing to the Lord. ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**Harlot** (Play the harlot) ([02181](#)) [zanah](#) is a verb meaning to fornicate, to prostitute and refers to marital infidelity or unfaithfulness. It was word used elsewhere in the OT to describe prostitution (Lev 21:7, Pr 7:10).

**Many of the uses of [zanah](#) are figurative describing Israel 's (Jehovah's "wife") commission of "spiritual prostitution" by having "intercourse" so to speak with other gods** (cp 1 Co 6:16). **Indeed, idolatry is looked upon as prostitution** (Isa 50:1, 2, 3; 54:6, 7, 8; Jer 2:1, 2, 3; 3:1ff; Hos 2:1ff; Jas 4:4-[note](#); Rev 2:4-[note](#)). In addition [zanah](#) describes Israel's improper relationships with other nations (Isa. 23:17; Ezek. 23:30; Nah. 3:4). "The thought seems to be of having relations with these nations for the sake of political and monetary benefit, although in the case of Nineveh the added element of alluring, deceitful tactics

leading on to oppressive dominance is implied." (TWOT) "A third figurative meaning is found in Isa 1:21, where the Israelites' departure from God's approved moral standards is called harlotry." (TWOT)

**Vine** - Zannah became the common term for spiritual backsliding. The act of harloting after strange gods was more than changing gods, however. This was especially true when Israel went after the Canaanite gods, for the worship of these pagan deities involved actual prostitution with cult prostitutes connected with the Canaanite shrines. In the Old Testament sometimes the use of the phrase "go a whoring after" gods implies an individual's involvement with cult prostitutes. The religious theory behind such activity at the Canaanite shrine was that such sexual activity with cult prostitutes, both male and female, who represented the gods and goddesses of the Canaanite fertility cult, would stimulate fertility in their crops and flocks. Such cult prostitutes were not designated as prostitutes but rather "**holy ones**" or "**set-apart ones**," since the Semitic term for "**holy**" means, first of all, to be set apart for a special use. This is illustrated in Deut. 23:17 his theme of religious harlotry looms large in the prophets who denounce this backsliding in no uncertain terms. Ezekiel minces no words as he openly calls both Judah and Israel "harlots" and vividly describes their backsliding in sexual terms (Ezek. 16:6-63; 23). The Book of Hosea, in which Hosea's wife Gomer became unfaithful and most likely was involved in such cult prostitution, again illustrates not only Hosea's heartbreak but also **God's own heartbreak because of the unfaithfulness of his wife**, Israel. Israel's unfaithfulness appears in Hos. 9:1KJV: "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for **thou hast gone a whoring from thy God**, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn floor."

**Dog 03611. קֶלֶב keleb**: A masculine noun meaning a dog, a male prostitute. It refers to a large and varied group of canines, usually domesticated. In various contexts, it refers to a watchdog (Isa. 56:10, 11); a hunting dog (Ps. 22:16[17]); a stray dog (1 Kgs. 14:11). The concept is used in figurative expressions of contempt: of a scorned person (1 Sam. 17:43); of abasing oneself (1 Sam. 24:14[15]; 2 Sam. 3:8); of a male cult prostitute (Deut. 23:18[19]). It was used in a mocking sense of a false sacrifice as if it were the sacrifice of a dog (Isa. 66:3), a pagan practice. The manner in which a dog lapped its water is noted in Judges 7:5. Dogs ate up Jezebel's dead body as a sign of reprobation toward her (2 Kgs. 9:10, 36). Dogs were known to growl and be menacing in their demeanor (Ex. 11:7), but God protected His people from even this, figuratively, as they left Egypt.

**Swanson - קֶלֶב (kě-lěb)**: n.masc.; ≡ Str 3611; TWOT 981a—1. **dog, i.e., a mammal of the Canus family** (1Ki 14:11; Pr 26:11), note: this animal was not clean for ritual sacrifice, and never referred to as ceremonially clean for eating; 2. **dog, i.e., a person of low status** (1Sa 17:43; 2Ki 8:13); 3. **male prostitute** (Dt 23:19); 4. **evil person, formally, a dog**, i.e., a violent, evil person (Ps 22:17); 5. unit: מוֹת קֶלֶב (kě-lěb mût) scum, formally, dead dog, i.e., a person of very low status (1Sa 24:15; 2Sa 9:8; 16:9); 6. unit: רֹאשׁ קֶלֶב (rō(')š kě-lěb) puppet, formally, a dog's head, i.e., a person of low status in the pay of another as a traitor (2Sa 3:8)

Keleb - 31v - Exod. 11:7; Exod. 22:31; Deut. 23:18; Jdg. 7:5; 1 Sam. 17:43; 1 Sam. 24:14; 2 Sam. 3:8; 2 Sam. 9:8; 2 Sam. 16:9; 1 Ki. 14:11; 1 Ki. 16:4; 1 Ki. 21:19; 1 Ki. 21:23; 1 Ki. 21:24; 1 Ki. 22:38; 2 Ki. 8:13; 2 Ki. 9:10; 2 Ki. 9:36; Job 30:1; Ps. 22:16; Ps. 22:20; Ps. 59:6; Ps. 59:14; Ps. 68:23; Prov. 26:11; Prov. 26:17; Eccl. 9:4; Isa. 56:10; Isa. 56:11; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 15:3

**Abomination** (detestable, loathsome) (08441) **toebah** refers to an abominable custom or thing. Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent.

**Deuteronomy 23:19 "You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest.**

- Ex 22:25 Lev 25:35-37 Ne 5:1-7 Ps 15:5 Eze 18:7,8,13,16-18 Eze 22:12 Lu 6:34,35
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Exodus 22:25+ "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.

Leviticus 25:35-37+ 'Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. 36 'Do not take

usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you. 37 'You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.

## **REAL INTEREST-FREE LOANS**

**You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest.** Most agree that the loans in view here were those to relieve distress. Interest was not to be charged of fellow Israelites (probably including resident aliens) in cases of poverty. In Deuteronomy, though not in Exodus, it is explicitly stated that interest may be charged on loans to non-Israelites.

**Utley** - "You shall not charge interest" The Hebrew is literally "something bitten off"... ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Deere** - The parallel passages (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35–37) make it clear that the brother who was borrowing money was an Israelite (cf. Deut. 23:20) who had become poor or was in severe need. He was not borrowing money to engage in a capitalistic endeavor. To charge a poor brother interest would only worsen his condition and would also feed the greed of the one wealthy enough to lend ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - 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. . ([Commentary](#))

**NIVSB** - Laws dealing with interest on loans (see Lev 25:35–37; Dt 15:1, 7–11; 23:19–20; Ne 5:10 ; Job 24:9; Ps 15:5; Pr 28:8; Eze 18:8, 13; 22:12). Interest for profit was not to be charged at the expense of the poor. Generosity in such matters was extended even further by Jesus (Lk 6:34–35+).

**Grant** - After the return from Babylon there was a shortage of food due to a tax imposed by the king and an increase in the population. This brought some into poverty; they had mortgaged their lands to feed their families and the loans had to be repaid with interest which the borrowers were unable to pay (Neh 5:1-13). This caused Nehemiah to be very angry. Israel had been "sold unto the heathen", and were Israelites now willing to buy and sell each other? The lenders responded by restoring the mortgaged properties and lands to the owners. . ([What the Bible teaches – Leviticus and Deuteronomy](#))

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### **QUESTION - [Deuteronomy 23:19 What does the Bible say about lending money?](#)**

**ANSWER** - God's Word says that many people wander from the faith and pierce themselves with many griefs when they allow money to have an improper hold on their hearts. That's why the Bible contains hundreds of verses on how God wants us to treat money, and this includes the lending of it.

Moses addressed this issue in the Old Testament. Essentially, the Israelites were not permitted to charge interest when they loaned money to an impoverished brother. They could, however, charge interest on loans made to foreigners. This rule was part of the Mosaic Law: "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest" (Exodus 22:25; see also Psalm 15:5). This prohibition against charging interest actually included "food or anything else that may earn interest" (Deuteronomy 23:19). The purpose of the law was two-fold: an interest-bearing loan would only exacerbate the plight of the poor, and God promised a blessing on the gracious lender that would far surpass any interest he would make. Additionally, at the end of every seven years, creditors were to cancel all the debts they were owed by fellow Israelites (Deuteronomy 15:1).

In the New Testament, Jesus tells us not to "turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you" (Matthew 5:42). He applied this principle even to our enemies in their time of need: "But love your enemies and **lend to them** without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great" (Luke 6:35, emphasis added). Indeed, there are numerous passages throughout the Bible exhorting us to have a generous and giving heart, especially to the less fortunate. Moses taught his people, "If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs" (Deuteronomy 15:7-8).

The clear teaching of the Bible is that God expects His children to act righteously when lending money. And it helps us to remember that our ability to produce wealth comes from God (Deuteronomy 8:18) and it is God who "sends [both] poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts" (1 Samuel 2:7). Now, there is nothing wrong with legitimately loaning money and expecting to be repaid at a fair rate of interest (Psalm 37:21; Proverbs 28:8). Yet we need to remember that the Bible's teaching on money matters also includes borrowing money and indebtedness. Although the Bible does not expressly forbid borrowing money, it doesn't encourage it, either. It

is not God's best for His people, as debt essentially makes one a slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7). God would rather have us look to Him for our needs than rely on lenders. Additionally, as the psalmist makes clear, we are to repay our debts (Psalm 37:21). When we loan money to someone, we increase that person's debt load and make it easier for him to stumble.

Someone once said, "Before borrowing money from a friend, decide which you need most." There is no doubt that friendships have been strained or even lost due to the lending of money. Yet, if both parties stay within biblical parameters, there shouldn't be a problem. Nonetheless, to forego jeopardizing a relationship you value, in some situations a gift may be better than a loan. God expects His children to give to those in need, so we give of our time, talents and treasure. As Jesus taught us, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (Luke 6:38). - GOTQUESTIONS.ORG

**Deuteronomy 23:20 "You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.**

- **to a foreigner** De 14:21 15:3 Lev 19:33,34
- **so that the:** De 15:10 Pr 19:17 Isa 1:19 Lu 14:14 1Co 15:58
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## INTEREST PERMITTED LOANS

**ou may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess** - God's command was no interest charges to fellow Israelites. If Israel obeyed, they would be blessed. Over and over in Deuteronomy we see that obedience is the way to blessing. Foreigners could be charged interest but fellow Israelites could not be charged interest. "Impoverished Israelites were protected from exploitation at the hands of their richer brethren by the prohibition of interest on loans granted to them." (Kline)

**Kalland** - 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."

**Brown** - If a Hebrew has been blessed by God so that he is in a strong enough position financially to help his brother or sister, then he must do so as an expression of his gratitude to God and not as a way of increasing his wealth. ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**MacArthur** - This prohibition of lending money at interest to a fellow Israelite is qualified by Ex 22:25 and Lv 25:35, 36, which indicates that it restricts its application to the poor and prevents further impoverishment, but it was allowed for foreigners who were engaged in trade and commerce to enlarge their wealth. According to Dt 15:1, 2, it is also clear that money could be legitimately lent in the normal course of business, subject to forgiveness of all unpaid debt in the sabbatical year (cf. Dt 24:10). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Utley** - "so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake" Notice YHWH's blessing, which was meant to be a sign which attracted the world to Him, was conditioned on Israel's covenant obedience. The old covenant, like the new covenant, was grace-based, but performance to the covenant obligations was expected between God and His people because God wants to reflect His character through His people to a spiritually lost and needy world. New Covenant salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but it too has conditions and expectations (i.e., repentance, faith, obedience, perseverance). The goal of knowing God is living in His revealed will and character. It is interesting that several of these "blessing texts" occur in the context of Israel helping the poor and needy (e.g., 14:29; 24:19). ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

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### QUESTION - [What is usury in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Usury is, by modern definition, the illegal practice of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest. Usury is usually carried out with the intention of the lender, or usurer, gaining an unfair profit from the loan. A modern slang term for a usurer is *loan shark*.

Somewhat complicating the matter is the fact that, before the creation of usury laws, *usury* could refer to interest in general. Now, *usury* refers to exorbitantly (and illegally) high interest rates. The King James Version uses the word *usury* in its now obsolete sense. For example, in Exodus 22:25, the basic rule regarding interest is "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury" (KJV). However, in the English Standard Version,

the same verse reads, "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him."

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were forbidden from charging "usury," or interest, on loans to fellow Jews (Deuteronomy 23:19), but they were allowed to charge interest on loans to foreigners (Deuteronomy 23:20). The earlier iterations of this law in Exodus 22:25 and Leviticus 25:35–38 make it clear that it deals with loans made to fellow Israelites who were experiencing poverty. Having to pay back the loan with "usury," or interest, would only put them further into debt and was not beneficial to the economy. Loans to foreigners, however, were considered more of a business deal—such loans were seen as international commerce and therefore allowed. This law served as a reminder to the Jews that helping those in need is something that should be done without expecting anything in return.

Many of the loans we are familiar with in modern times come from banks, and the Bible doesn't say much about this. While the Bible does not prohibit the charging of interest, it does warn against becoming too concerned with money, telling us that we cannot serve both God and money at the same time (Matthew 6:24). We are reminded that the desire to be rich leads to destruction and that the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

In addition, God's wisdom includes a warning not to take advantage of the plight of the poor. "Sharks" who gouge the needy in the time of their distress will not enjoy their spoils for long: "He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor" (Proverbs 28:8, KJV), or, in another translation, "Whoever increases wealth by taking interest or profit from the poor / amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor" (NIV). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

- [What does the Bible say about lending money?](#)

**Deuteronomy 23:21** "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you.

- De 23:18 Ge 28:20 35:1-3 Lev 27:2-34 Nu 30:2-16 Ps 56:12 66:13,14 Ps 76:11 116:18 Ec 5:4,5 Jon 1:16 2:9 Na 1:15
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 30:2+ "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

James 5:12+ But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment. (NLT = But most of all, dear brothers and sisters, never take an oath, by heaven or earth or anything else. Just say a simple yes or no, so that you will not sin and be condemned for it.)

Mt 5:33-37+ "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' 34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. 36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil.

### BE VERY CAREFUL VOWING

**When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you** - Clearly the LORD takes vows in His name seriously (cf. Eccl. 5:1–7) and misuse of vows could result in taking "the name of the LORD your God in vain." (Ex 20:7+) It is important to note that vows could be made but this was not mandatory. What was mandatory is that the vow must be kept once made lest it disparage and denigrate the Name of Yahweh.

[ESVSB](#) - Vows must be kept because God keeps his promises and desires that his people imitate his moral character.

[HCSB](#) - A person could make a vow to the LORD in the form of a service to be rendered to Him (Nu 6:2,5,21) or a sacrifice to be offered as an act of worship (Nu 15:8; Dt 12:6; Ps 66:13-14). Though the vow was entered into voluntarily, refusing to pay it once it was made was to steal from the Lord what was rightfully His.



**Holman Old Testament Commentary** – A vow was a promise made to God that was conditioned upon his providing a desired benefit. The worshiper would come to the tabernacle (or later the temple) and publicly proclaim, "If God will produce (the desired benefit), then I will donate (so many shekels) to the poor (or to some other cause)."

**Solomon** gives good advice in Ecclesiastes 5:2-6

Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. 3 For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! 5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. 6 Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands?

And Proverbs 20:25

It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!" And after the vows to make inquiry.

**Utley** - "a vow" The laws on vows (Qal IMPERFECT, cf. Dt 12:11, 17) are discussed in Leviticus 27 and Numbers 30 (Nazarite vows are described in Numbers 6). It was a promise made to YHWH based on certain events and circumstances. If you make a vow, fulfill it in a timely manner! "shall not delay to pay it" The rabbis later interpreted this time as "not past three festivals" (i.e., one year). ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**IVP Bible Background Commentary** - In the Decalogue is the commandment that no one should "misuse the name of the Lord" (Ex 20:7+). When a vow using God's name is spoken, it brings God into contract with that person. Thus any failure to carry out the stipulations of the vow breaks the contract and subjects that person to divine wrath (see Jdg 11:35–36+). The instruction about vows contained in Deuteronomy is a wisdom statement similar in form to Ecclesiastes 5:4–7. It is designed as a caution against unwise speech

**Grant** - To make a vow was to make a promise to God, who always keeps His promises. The Lord had promised possession of Canaan and He would keep that promise (Ex 12:25; Deut 1:11, etc). It would be quite out of character, therefore, for an Israelite who had enjoyed the faithfulness of God in keeping His promise, to be unfaithful in honouring his vows. A vow could be made as a promise to carry out a certain service, to bring certain offerings to the Lord, or to live in a certain way. "Our root connotes the act of verbally consecrating (devoting to the service) of God, i.e. vowing to perform (Gen 28:20ff) to make an offering, (Lev 27), or to abstain from something (Ps 132:2ff)" (TWOT 1308). ([What the Bible teaches – Leviticus and Deuteronomy](#))

**Brown** - Two statements are made here concerning a vow to the LORD. First, it is not sinful to refrain from making vows and, secondly, if a vow is made then it must be honoured without unreasonable delay. This rule emphasizes the importance in biblical teaching of the spoken word. Once again, their own conduct was determined by what they knew about God's nature. God's word was utterly reliable. If God said something, it was done. If he made a promise it would certainly be fulfilled.<sup>3</sup> Their word must also be trustworthy and dependable. ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**Guzik** - 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. In many circles today, the breaking of an oath is just standard business practice—but before God, it is simply sin. . ([Commentary](#))

**BSB** - No one was required to make a vow, but once made it was to be treated as a holy covenant. The principle underlying this admonition concerning a vow between man and God is based upon the covenant in which God promised His eternal faithfulness to Israel and demanded their complete obedience to Him.

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**QUESTION** - [What does the Bible say about keeping your vows / oaths?](#)

**ANSWER** - There are about 30 biblical references to vows, most of which are from the Old Testament. The books of Leviticus and Numbers have several references to vows in relation to offerings and sacrifices. There were dire consequences for the Israelites who broke vows, especially vows to God.

The story of Jephthah illustrates the foolishness of making vows without understanding the consequences. Before leading the Israelites into battle against the Ammonites, Jephthah—described as a mighty man of valor—made a rash vow that he would give to the Lord whoever first came out of doors to meet him if he returned home as the victor. When the Lord granted him victory, the one who came out to meet him was his daughter. Jephthah remembered his vow and offered her to the Lord (Judges 11:29–40). Whether or not Jephthah should have kept this vow is dealt with in another [article](#). What this account shows is the foolishness of

rash vows.

Jesus taught concerning vows, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Matthew 5:33–37).

A little background information is helpful in understanding Jesus' words here. The religious leaders of the day advocated keeping a vow *if* it was a public vow using God's name; however, if the vow was made in the course of everyday conversation, referencing only "heaven" or "earth" or "Jerusalem," it was not really binding. People had a loophole. They could lie or exaggerate in their conversations and lend themselves an air of credibility by saying, "I swear by heaven that this is true!" They could not be held to account because they did not specifically swear by God's name and the vow was private. Jesus countered that idea. If you swear something, it had better be true, He says. In fact, all you need to say is "yes" or "no." Your word should be good. There's no need for overwrought expressions to bolster your case.

Psalm 15:4 describes a righteous person as one "who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind." Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5 supports this biblical principle. Oaths are binding, even when spoken frivolously or privately as part of everyday conversation. A promise is a promise, and there is no loophole in God's eyes to allow a person to renege on an oath.

So, Jesus was not condemning all forms of promises, contracts, or agreements. Jesus was speaking of the kind of spontaneous vow made when a person says, "I cross my heart and hope to die" or "I swear on a stack of Bibles" or "I swear on my mother's life." Jesus warns against using those types of flippant oaths. His teaching in Matthew 5 is not meant to discourage careful, thought-out promises, such as wedding vows or a legal contract.

The principle here is clear for Christians: be careful about making vows, either to the Lord or to one another. The fact that we are prone to errors in judgment means that we may make vows foolishly or out of immaturity. Further, the informal vows we make ("I swear by all the angels in heaven!") are completely unnecessary. Our word is our bond. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

- [Did Jephthah sacrifice his daughter to the Lord? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Deuteronomy 23:22 "However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you.**

- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **FAILURE TO KEEP A VOW = SIN**

**However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you** - It is wise to not make a rash vow (Jdg 11) Vows are never required by God.

**Brown** - If we do not keep our word, what began as a high resolve can end as a serious offence: you will be guilty of sin. This saying needs to be seen in the light of its covenant setting. In any treaty, both parties had to be assured that each would keep his word and that the promises outlined in the covenant would be honoured. Jesus once referred to this passage from Deuteronomy when he spoke to his disciples about the importance of reliable words: 'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord." But I tell you ... Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes", and your "No", "No".' (Mt. 5:33, 37) Therefore, although this covenant obligation relates primarily to vows made to the Lord, it is also a reminder of the incalculable potential (for good or evil) of our everyday conversation. We must not speak carelessly, rashly or harshly. The believer's words need to be truthful, wise, helpful, dependable and loving. ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**Utley** has an interesting comment that "This does show the Hebrews' view of the power and importance of the spoken word (e.g., Genesis 1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1)." ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - Many wonder if vows or oaths are permitted for a Christian today.. Some think not, because of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:34–37: But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (See also James 5:12). But, in context of the rest of Scripture, we see that Jesus was not forbidding oaths, as much as telling us that we should be so filled with integrity in our words that an oath is unnecessary.i. Jesus answered under oath in a court (Matthew 26:63–64), and God Himself swears oaths (Luke 1:73, Acts 2:30, Hebrews 3:18, 6:13, 17). ([Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 23:23 "You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.**

- That which: Nu 30:2 Jdg 11:30,31,35 1Sa 1:11 Ps 66:13,14 116:18 Pr 20:25 Ec 5:4,5
- hast vowed: 1Sa 14:24 Jer 44:25-27 Mk 6:22,23 Ac 23:12,21
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO MAKE VOWS**

**You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised** - Yahweh always collects on His vows! An Israelite's word must be his bond at all times, whether the promise was made to the Lord or to a brother.

**Deere** - This law stressed the need for the Israelites to be completely honest before their God and to be careful in their verbal commitments to Him. The vow in view was one that was made freely by a worshiper. Once made it had to be kept (cf. Prov. 20:25; Ecc. 5:4–5) as the LORD kept His promises to Israel. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - 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.. Many vows are just plain foolish—"I'll never do that again" is a foolish vow, and it is foolish and unwise to demand such a vow from someone else.i. 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). ([Commentary](#))

**Grant** - The first recorded vow in the Word of God is that which was made by Jacob at Bethel: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Gen 28:20-22). The "If" at the beginning is not a condition laid down by Jacob, nor does it indicate that there was the possibility of the Lord failing to honour the promise that had been made to him (vv. 13-15). Young's Literal Translation captures the mood of Jacob: "And Jacob voweth a vow, saying, 'Seeing God is with me ...'". The vow was made early in the spiritual journey on which Jacob now embarked, but nevertheless shows that Jacob realised his obligation to return the faithfulness of the Lord, who reminded Jacob of it later (Gen 31:13). ([What the Bible teaches – Leviticus and Deuteronomy](#))

**Brown** - Jesus once referred to this passage from Deuteronomy when he spoke to his disciples about the importance of reliable words: 'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord." But I tell you . . . Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes", and your "No", "No".' Therefore, although this covenant obligation relates primarily to vows made to the Lord, it is also a reminder of the incalculable potential (for good or evil) of our everyday conversation. We must not speak carelessly, rashly or harshly. The believer's words need to be truthful, wise, helpful, dependable and loving. ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**Deuteronomy 23:24 "When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket.**

- **may**: Ro 12:13 1Co 10:26 Heb 13:5
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 15:4-8+ "However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, 5 if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today. 6 "For the LORD your God will bless you as He has promised you, and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you. 7 "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, **you shall**

**not harden your heart, nor close your hand** from your poor brother; 8 **but you shall freely open your hand to him**, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.

## **NO BASKETS IN THE VINEYARDS!**

**When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket** - They were allowed to put grapes in the "[bread basket](#)" (slang for stomach) but not in wicker baskets!

**Deere** - This law, like those in Dt 22:1-4, gave a concrete expression to the principle of loving one's neighbor as oneself. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Brown** writes, "A law of this kind brought immediate relief to the hungry or the refugee without encouraging the idle thief; to remove either grapes or grain would be stealing and a violation of the eighth commandment". ([Bible Speaks Today-Deut](#))

**Utley** - "**you**" This refers to the needy of the land, the orphan, the widow, the alien, and the poor. This was part of the law of gleaning. It is mentioned in several texts (cf. Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut. 24:21; Jdgs. 8:2; 20:45; Ruth 2; Isa. 17:6; 24:13; Jer. 6:9; 49:9; Mic. 7:1). It shows both God's care for the poor and His ownership of the harvest. "**until you are fully satisfied**" This is a combination of "according to your desire" (BDB 659) and "your fill" (BDB 959, cf. Exod. 16:3; Lev. 25:19; Ruth 2:18; Ps. 78:25; Pro. 13:25). It speaks, not of eating enough just to get by, but of eating all you want. What a marvelous provision for the poor, needy, and alien passing by. There is also no limit of how many times one can return. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - The idea is that, as one traveled they had the right to pick off a few grapes or heads of grain to eat along the way. It wasn't the right to harvest from your neighbor's fields, but to provide for your own immediate needs. ([Commentary](#))

**Ryrie** - 23:24-25 This liberty, which allowed a man to take from his neighbor's vineyard or field what he needed to eat, was kept from becoming license by prohibiting him from carrying anything away. Note on Matt. 12:2. not lawful to do on a Sabbath. It was lawful for persons to pick grain from another's field to satisfy hunger (Deut. 23:25) but not to do regular work on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:10). The latter was the charge of the Pharisees.

**Deuteronomy 23:25** "When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain."

- then thou mayest: Mt 12:1,2 Mk 2:23 Lu 6:1,2
- [Deuteronomy 23 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **NO HARVESTING ONE'S GRAIN FIELDS!**

**When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain** - God's "welfare program" calls for those who partake of the grapes or seeds to perform work. They do not just sit still and someone brings grapes or grain (or a government stimulus check as in 2021 in America!) Jesus and His disciples practiced this on the Sabbath with no criticism from the Pharisees except that they were violating the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-28+).

**Guzik** - This is the law Jesus and His disciples were operating under when they plucked heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands (Luke 6:1–5+). They were accused by the Pharisees of breaking the Sabbath, but not of stealing grain, because the Pharisees knew this law in the book of Deuteronomy. ([Commentary](#))

**Deere** - Since the Lord had been gracious in providing for the farmer, he in turn should be gracious to a stranger traveling through his land. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**IVP Bible Background Commentary** - **gleaning**. Just as widows may glean in a ripe field or orchard to sustain themselves from the harvest provided by God, it is permissible for a traveler to refresh himself with a handful of fruit or grain, taken in passing from a field (see Deut 24:19–21). However, it is theft if a person purposefully harvests from a neighbor's field

**Deere** - Since the Lord had been gracious in providing for the farmer, he in turn should be gracious to a stranger traveling through his land.

**Utley** - Verses 24 and 25 both show that the needy can eat all they want, but they cannot take any of the crop away with them for later consumption or sale (e.g., Matt. 12:1–8; Mark. 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5). YHWH cares for both the poor and the rights of the farmers. ([Deuteronomy 23 Commentary](#))