

DEUTERONOMY

Lesson 29 - Chapter 22 Continued

We began Deuteronomy chapter 22 last week and will continue it today. The first part of the chapter address a series of laws on what the apostle James calls “true religion”, meaning the proper spiritual attitude that a disciple of the God of Israel employs when observing God’s commands and laws. It is also a call to holiness and to exhibit the spirit of the law rather than seeking to mechanically perform the letter. The key to always remember in our discussions of the Torah and the Law is that this is ONLY for those who are already redeemed. The Torah and the Law were given to Israel AFTER their redemption, not as a means of redemption. Thus following the Law Code of the Torah is not how redemption is achieved, it is simply the proper response that is expected by God as a result of the redemption He has given to us by grace as a free gift (first to Israel down in Egypt, and later to all who trust in Messiah).

Because cultures change and evolve over time, it is the principles of these commands that we must apprehend and then reapply to our present state. It is not always easy to determine how to do that; and so reasonable debate and disagreement is to be expected. But what is NOT debatable is that these laws and commands remain, just as Yeshua said they did in His Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5.

We ended our last lesson by discussing the concept of illicit mixtures, which is defined as the creation of unlawful unions between things that a worshipper of Yehoveh ought not to do. From a Biblical viewpoint, the definition of adultery IS an illicit mixture, and an unlawful union. That is while we think of adultery as a crime that revolves around sexual issues, in fact even the Webster’s Dictionary makes it clear that to adulterate something is to mix the pure with the impure, or the inferior with the superior, no matter what the material might be. In the Lord’s eyes adultery means to mix the holy with the unholy, the clean with the unclean, and the righteous with the unrighteous. The illustrations given were transvestism (men disguising themselves as women and vice versa), planting two different kinds of seeds together, mixing two types of thread (specifically linen and wool) to form cloth for a garment, and the yoking of two different kinds and sizes of animals together to a plow.

Let’s reread a portion of Deuteronomy 22 to set the stage.

RE-READ DEUTERONOMY 22:12 - end

I ended the last lesson by pointing out that Jewish and Christian scholars, teachers, and leaders have tried all manner of reason to explain the “WHY?” behind the Lord choosing the animals and materials and actions that He did and then dividing them into categories of clean and unclean, lawful and unlawful, and acceptable and unacceptable. In all the studies I’ve ever done on the matter I have not found one explanation of God’s supposed rationale for His choices, or some kind of logical rational system within those choices that stands up to close scrutiny. Exactly why a sheep is OK to sacrifice and to eat but a pig isn’t, is not clear. Why a cloven hoof or chewing the cud makes such a difference doesn’t compute. Why a turtledove is OK to sacrifice but a chicken isn’t does not seem to fit any discernable model. Why are frogs off limits? Why is sex out of wedlock prohibited?

In Deuteronomy 22 I asked the question: does weaving together linen and wool supernaturally create a cloth that is evil? Does planting corn and cucumbers next to one another make both inedible? My conclusion on the matter is that while these law and commands most certainly are meant to be taken seriously, as is, the much larger issue is that these are illustrations of God’s divine principles. He has created things in a certain order, and each for a certain purpose, and to adulterate this order and His purposes is wrong. It is sin. It should be avoided. And while the search for “why?” is certainly an understandable endeavor, it is completely secondary to our actually observing (if not) the literal law the clear principle it demonstrates. As great Hebrew sage Rashi said: we don’t have to know why the command is as it is in order to obey it.

Let me make some connections and in so doing point out why we need to adopt Rashi’s attitude towards obeying God’s commandments. First, in the laws of prohibiting wearing a garment of mixed linen and wool, this **ONLY** applies to certain individuals in the Israeli community, not all. Priests (who were on duty) were **required** to wear certain clothing items made from a mixture of wool and linen. It was **ONLY** lay people (non-priests) who could not wear cloth of this sort. Further there is no law against merely the weaving together of linen and wool; it’s only the wearing of it that presents the problem. Theoretically one could make a grain sack or even a tent out of such a mixed fabric. Therefore if it were that spontaneous evil erupted by mixing linen and wool together there is no way that the Lord would have compelled His own set-apart servants (priests) to wear it.

Interestingly there was an item to be worn by **all** Hebrews that **DID** consist of this otherwise outlawed mixture of wool and linen: tzitzit. Tassels. Verse 12 of Deuteronomy 22 makes it a law for Hebrews to wear these tassels. When we go back to Numbers 15 and then study the most ancient works of the Sages, we find out just how these tassels are to be constructed; they must be made out of linen threads, with one wool thread (a blue one) added. So traditional Tzitzit are made out of a mixture of wool and linen that for other uses and purposes is prohibited for the laymen of Israel (by the way, as one might expect, not all sects of Judaism are in agreement on this issue).

The Hebrew word for cloth made of linen and wool is **sha'atnez**. Sha'atnez is usually translated as "mixed material" and that is a pretty good translation. But it's key to remember that these laws of illicit mixing are all about the 7th Commandment: adultery. Thus we find that while **sha'atnez** most literally may mean mixed material, in fact the common usage and sense of that term carried a much different message. **Sha'atnez** is a Hebrew idiom for prostitution. More specifically in the Biblical era a prostitute WORE sha'atnez (clothing made of mixed material).

Don't let that confuse you but instead enlighten because most every language does the same thing; it says one thing but at times a certain string of words used in a particular circumstance means something else. We're just so immersed into our own language and culture with its own idioms that we use unconsciously that we don't even see them. For instance: in English we'll hear of a juicy rumor like, "I hear that your friend Steve is sleeping with that girl Connie." Now of course we all know that what is being said is that Steve and Connie are having sexual relations. But that is certainly NOT what the words say, is it? If 1000 years from now someone stumbled upon that statement they'd wonder what the big deal was that Steve and Connie had each gone to sleep near each other. Everybody has to sleep. Since when is sleeping a bad thing? What possible harm or evil could there be in them sleeping near each other? Not even a hundred years ago, in America as elsewhere, it was completely common for men and women, unmarried and in some cases barely acquaintances, to sleep several to a bed. I said, SLEEP. It was no different than a bunch of people sleeping in sleeping bags next to a campfire. See: it's just that in our culture, the literal words "sleeping together" don't mean what they say, they indicate something else entirely that people OUTSIDE of our culture probably wouldn't catch, and even inside our own culture a mere century ago it meant something else.

It's the same idea with **Sha'atnez**, mixed material. The implication of the word **Sha'atnez** was understood among the ancient Hebrews. Literally what this law in verse 11 says is: "you shall not wear **sha'atnez**, wool and linen together". Simple enough; just don't wear mixed material of wool and linen (for whatever God's reason). But that is NOT what it meant. What it MEANT to the Israelites of the Bible era is that "you shall not wear the clothes of a prostitute, which are wool and linen together". A prostitute in ancient times wore lovely clothes, and expensive perfumes, because it was that which helped to entice her male customers. The finest cloth in that era was often a mixture of wool and linen; the wealthy pagans routinely wore this material. So here is a direct understanding among the ancient Hebrews that mixing wool and linen for use as a garment among lay people was **symbolic** of prostitution because that's actually what prostitutes of that era generally wore. But it was also symbolic of what prostitution essentially is in a much deeper sense. Prostitution is by definition a form of adultery; adultery is effectively an unauthorized union; an unauthorized union is an illicit mixture; and therefore any illicit mixture is simply an act of adultery before the Lord. And that, my friends, is a very important Biblical principle for us to grasp as we read the words of the Bible.

So what we see is that while a mixture of wool and linen is usually thought of as being a cloth that God completely prohibits (and we make the wrong assumption that it is inherently evil to

do so), that is simply not true to the words and commands of Torah. The Scriptures make it clear that God's priests can and **MUST** wear some garments made of linen and wool mixture (we find this in Exodus 28). In addition some items of priest's clothing are to be wool only and others of linen only. And the example of the **tzitzit** shows us that even laypeople can wear something made out of this mixed material even though a **tzitzit** cannot be truly classified as a garment but rather as a symbol.

So what we see is that clean and unclean unions, acceptable and unacceptable mixtures have not only to do with **WHAT** the materials of the mixture are, but the circumstance and even **WHO** is involved. Let me be clear: this does not give us license to simply apply circumstance willy-nilly in order to rationalize our behavior. The Torah gives us a good deal of information so that we can understand the purpose and spirit behind these laws.

Many Orthodox Jews today, for instance, do **NOT** include the blue woolen thread in their tzitzit. Instead they'll make the tzitzit entirely from wool. They say it is because they aren't sure what the exact color of blue to be used for the thread ought to be, so they just leave it out altogether. Yet here we see in Deuteronomy 22 that while the color of that woolen thread does play a role the far bigger issue is in the mixing of the wool and linen together; so in my mind, to leave out the linen just because the exact shade of blue wool thread is not certain misses the whole purpose and spirit of the law of **tzitzit**.

Folks, this is where Jews and Christians can get so far off the beam so easily. Jews can go astray by setting aside Scripture in favor of Tradition that is primarily the commentary and rulings of Rabbis and Jewish religious authorities. Christians can get off beam by setting aside Scripture (or even simply the OT) in favor of doctrines and denominational customs set down by our religious leadership. We can get so focused on doing good things that we forget the love and mercy with which we are expected to salt everything that we attempt. On the other hand we can get so focused on love and mercy that we declare everyone and everything "good" (so as to be peaceful) and wind up putting obedience to God's laws and principles on the shelf.

Now I have a question for those of you who, like me, consider the NT admonition that we (as Believers in Messiah Yeshua) are priests of the Lord to be literally true and that God sees us as His set-apart servants in this era. As His Believers we're to be the teachers of the Word as well as those who observe the Word. We're also to give the Lord our sacrifices (which are **our wills**) and we are to give Him a sacrifice of praise with our lips. Further we are to consider ourselves as sort of lesser priests working for and taking our direction from our High Priest Yeshua. We're to anoint with oil and pray for the needs of others; all things that prior to Yeshua were reserved as a function of the Priesthood of Israel, as ordained by Yehoveh.

^{NAS} **1 Peter 2:9** *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for*

God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Since Priests were not only allowed but also ORDERED to wear certain articles of clothing that had a mixture of **sha'atnez**, linen and wool, should we shun wearing it as many of the Jewish Orthodox community do? Some Believers today strongly believe that to wear a mixture of linen and wool garments is wrong; those who typically scoff at that idea however almost unanimously say that the reason we don't have to is because the Law is dead and gone and we don't have to observe it.

I think that those at both ends of the spectrum need to reconsider. As a member of God's royal priesthood I am fully authorized, by Torah and by the author of Torah, Yeshua our Messiah, to wear a mixture of linen and wool. I recognize that I'm far more of a **spiritual** priest of God than I am an **earthly** priest in the sense that (as far as I know) I am not a physical descendant of Jacob, let alone Aaron who formed the Israelite priesthood. Yet I (and you) do have physical earthly duties and my actions and attitude and spirit ought to at all times reflect God's view that I am His servant, His priest, set apart ONLY for Him.

And since I am made holy and set-apart for Him that means that what I join myself to, what I mix myself with, who and what I come into union with, must be carefully considered. I could give you countless examples of this in the New Testament. What I am hoping is that as we continue to discuss human sexuality, illicit mixtures and such, that you will see that the principles for all of this are laid down in Torah and that is where we'll gain our greatest understanding of illegal and legal unions. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 is almost exclusively about proper versus improper mixtures. As but one tiny example, listen to Paul pleading in ^{CJB} **1 Corinthians 6:16 *Don't you know that a man who joins himself to a prostitute becomes physically one with her? For the Tanakh says, "The two will become one flesh";***

Here he gives the prohibition against an unlawful union between a person who has been made holy and clean with a person who is **not** holy and is unclean. Then in the very next verse, he gives the rationale for this view in the positive form: ^{JB} **1 Corinthians 6:17 *but the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit (with Him).***

In other words as with all illicit mixtures, the concept is that a person who is set apart for God has no business coming into unions with those things or with those people who are not. To do so is an unauthorized mixture; to do so is essentially to adulterate what was pure. We not only adulterate the laws of God when we do that but we also adulterate our personal relationship WITH God. I know that this is really tough but it's not my rules that I'm telling you about it's simply Scripture. And with all my being I believe that what I'm telling you is fully the context and fully what is being communicated to us.

Well we've lightly touched on the human sexuality issues that I told you last week would challenge us; but now it starts to really heat up. Beginning in verse 13 are a few examples of relationships (or better, unions) between men and women of which some are right, some are wrong, and all affects those involved.

The first case is of a man who falsely accuses a woman of being unchaste prior to their being married. To put it more directly a husband marries a woman and decides to accuse her of having sexual relations with another man PRIOR to their engagement. Now in our society that is considered virtually normal and generally speaking is no reason for concern by the new bridegroom. In fact a girl who has NOT had relations prior to engagement is today seen as ignorant, prudish, and a bit backward (not at all cool, to say the least). She is made fun of and often scorned by her friends, considered strange and abnormal, and so in our time a girl like this might actually keep her virginity a secret so that she is not embarrassed. Nothing could be more opposite of God's commands, Biblical reality, and what was expected in early Israelite society.

This first example is fascinating: a man marries a woman and decides he doesn't want her any more. When it says in verse 13 is that he hates her. Hate doesn't mean that he has developed an intense emotional dislike for her; it means that he rejects her for whatever reason. Since the Law has only the narrowest of reasons for permitting a divorce, and apparently the husband doesn't have one of those reasons to use, he makes up a false accusation. And if this accusation WERE actually true (which in this case it was not), it indeed constitutes a legal reason to get rid of his wife. And the husband's reason for wanting a divorce is that he discovered that this woman was not a virgin when he married her. He defames her, he announces publicly his complaint, and of course this causes an enormous loss of honor for both his wife and her family (and especially for this girl's father).

So a standard cultural solution to the problem unwinds before us: to counter these charges the mother and father bring "proof" of the girl's virginity to those who are empowered to judge the matter, the city's elders. This verse speaks of the elders being located at the gate; I've mentioned a few times that court was usually held next to the main entry gates of city (if it was a walled city). In that era the area next to the gates was where a town's main courtyard was located. It was where businessmen would congregate, strangers would be stopped and questioned by law enforcement, marriage ceremonies might occur, and where the local court met. The idea was that these were all things that were to be publicly witnessed.

The father now speaks and he says that this dastardly man that he gave his daughter to has rejected her for no good reason, and has made up false charges of fornication to divorce her. However indeed the father and mother DO have the required evidence to PROVE the girl's virginity prior to betrothal. And the required evidence is the "marriage cloth", or marriage garment, or some other term referring to a piece of cloth that had a very important role in the marriage process.

It is difficult to overstate the seriousness of this matter. A girl who has been found to have had sexual relations prior to betrothal can be stoned to death. The father is disgraced at such a horrible act by the daughter because it was his job to protect and supervise her until he turned the authority over her to another man, her husband; the shame is beyond enormous and will affect the family for generations to come. Further because it was customary for a substantial monetary price to be paid by the suitor to the father as a “bride price”, the father would have to give the money back. In most cases this could be a significant setback on the family’s finances. The husband certainly wanted his money back because he’d need it for another bride and besides, he had been defrauded.

Before we go any further let’s define a couple of terms. First, we find the term “virgin” is used often in the Bible. In the modern era the term refers to a woman who has never had sexual relations with a man. In the Bible it meant primarily that this woman has never been married. Of course what is part and parcel of a girl never being married is that a) she has never had sex, and b) she is still living at home under her father’s authority. Because girls usually married by around the age of 15 years, it also meant that these were YOUNG girls (only rarely might a girl have reached her 20’s and still be single and living with her parents).

Second is the matter of the marriage cloth, in Hebrew called *simlah*. In Israelite culture and according Biblical Law the first step towards marriage was for it to be arranged between the father and the potential bridegroom, and a price was paid. Once the agreement was reached and the money exchanged hands the couple was officially betrothed. The status of betrothed made the couple, for all practical purposes, married. Betrothal was NOT extended or serious dating. This was NOT a time when the parties could reasonably change their minds. To break an engagement required a VERY good legal reason. Only ONE THING separated the betrothed from the officially married.....consummation. Usually a very simple and quick marriage ceremony occurred on that day and then the man took his bride and they had sexual union. ONLY upon this was the couple legally married.

During the wedding night the consummation was to occur while the couple lay together upon a clean cloth; in earlier times it was not a cloth, like a sheet or a blanket, but simply a new and clean undergarment that the new bride wore during consummation. Only later did it become usual to have a special cloth used for this purpose. Before it’s intended use occurred the cloth, or garment, was turned over to specially selected elder women to verify that it was completely clean, unsoiled (and most importantly) unspotted with anything that could even remotely pass for blood because this marriage cloth was about to become a permanent piece of legal evidence.

Because the girl was young and never had sexual relations before, it was expected that some bleeding would occur. I don’t need to go into the anatomical reasons for this, because you already know them. The blood smear would be on the clean wedding cloth, and voila, we have

proof that the girl was indeed a sexual virgin. Ahhhhh. But what happened if in the morning it was discovered that there WAS no blood smear? To the husband of that era it was de facto proof that his new wife had not remained pure prior to their betrothal. Now the trouble starts.

The following morning if all went as planned, the girl would proudly present the blood-stained marriage cloth to her mother and father as proof that she had been a good and faithful daughter. The parents would in turn proudly DISPLAY the cloth in their home and show all well-wishers and friends and family that an honorable marriage had occurred. Today we parents have wonderful 8 by 10 glossies hung on our walls as reminders of the wedding. In that day the parents laid out the stained marriage cloth as a marriage memento. I told you this got dicey.

After a time the cloth was carefully stored away as a kind of evidentiary document just in case such a thing as this particular case that is envisioned here in Deuteronomy 22 actually happened. That explains the need for the elder women to confirm the unstained nature of cloth before it was used so that if necessary they could testify to it. After all, the women knew full well if she was a virgin or not, and might have prepared a pre-stained cloth for use in this case; at least that was the mindset.

The cloth is all the proof that the elders needed; the husband is judged a liar and his punishment is appropriately severe. First, by definition his dishonesty and untrustworthiness is exposed for all to see. Second, he is to be publicly punished by being whipped. Next he is to pay the father a penalty of 100 silver shekels, a substantial amount of money for that era. As the coupe de gras not only can the man not divorce the woman as he had planned, no matter WHAT happens in the future he can NEVER divorce her. It doesn't matter what she does, he's stuck with her until the day he or she dies.

Now let me add that it was recognized by all that there are a number of circumstances whereby this wedding night scenario might not go the way it was supposed to and there would have been no fault on anyone's part. That is a blood smear might NOT appear on the cloth and there are anatomical reasons for that, which are well understood and normal. Therefore we will find Rabbinical rulings that might require a physical examination upon the bride by elder women so that they can act as witnesses to help determine if there need be cause for alarm.

The second case illustration begins in verse 20; and it is basically the same EXCEPT that it turns out that the husband's allegations are true. Should the bride be found to have had sexual relations before marriage she is taken to the doorstep of her father's house and THERE she is executed by stoning (not executed by her parents but by the community). I suppose we could argue that this is unfair and too severe; but recall earlier in the previous chapter that a rebellious son faced basically the same consequence. The primary way a daughter is rebellious is by refusing her father's supervision; cavorting with men he has not

betrothed her to, and thus bringing great dishonor to his household. The ultimate girl-child rebellion is to have sexual relations before betrothal. The ultimate boy-child rebellion is to be no-account; a glutton and a drunkard. Therefore God's justice is equal: death for both. And again in both cases the reason for this terrible price is that "it shall purge evil from Israel".

The crime the girl committed is called behaving as a **zanah**; it means behaving as a whore, a prostitute. And while we in the West give this act the designation of fornication (and a lot of bibles translate it that way) in fact that word covers over the point. The very meaning of the act of prostitution is about an illicit physical sexual union. It is all about illicit mixture, an unauthorized union. And all illicit unions are a form of adultery. So while we tend to make a distinction in modern society between fornication and adultery it's all contained under the same Biblical God-principle and is part of the 7th Commandment.

Following this is the 3rd example: that of a man committing adultery with a married woman. The case is pretty straightforward; if this proves to be true, both are executed (no favoritism here!).

The 4th example is contained in verses 23 and 24. It is the case of a betrothed girl who has sex NOT with the man she is betrothed to but rather another. Again the penalty for both participants is death because except for the consummation between bride and bridegroom under the Law there is almost no difference between betrothal and marriage. So the penalty is same as for the married woman and man because this is, once again, essentially adultery.

Now there are some caveats in this case brought about by circumstance. This is a situation that occurs in a city. Cities in ancient times were densely populated and the wall of one house was usually built incorporating the wall of the neighboring house. Water and roads determined as much as anything just WHERE a city might be built; so when a suitable place existed such that availability of water and the security of having several families in one place was important, there a town would grow. The idea is that an attack upon a girl within the city is practically impossible to go unnoticed. An unwilling woman would have cried out and someone would have heard her; maybe to rescue her or maybe simply to later be able to testify that she did cry out. But the crying out was an indication that this was a case of rape and not a willing act of illicit sexual union.

Without other evidence to the contrary, that no one heard her cry out means that she did not protest sufficiently and therefore she was guilty of willing participation. This is adultery and her life (along with the man's) is forfeit. The idea here is one of reasonable resistance; if there was no resistance then there is no excuse.

However as it says in verse 25, when the location of the same kind of crime is out in the countryside where houses might be a long way apart and whereby the girls screams could

very possibly never be heard, if she claims she was NOT willingly participating then her word is taken for it. She is innocent and he is guilty and he shall be executed.

The final case is of a man who has sex with a girl who is neither married nor betrothed and we see an interesting shift in the penalty; death is not prescribed for either. The best way to compare this to modern times is that an unattached teenage girl, living at home, has a date with a guy and they decide to have sexual relations. While this is anything but the ideal and this sexual union is not authorized, it does not carry the same weight as for a person who was married, betrothed, or was raped. Two willing, unmarried partners have set their course however, and they have done wrong.

The end result is that they MUST marry. Why? Because by God's rules such a willing union by a man and woman indicates marriage; a girl has decided she wants to have the authority over her transferred from her father to a husband. The Lord says that a man who has sexual union with a woman who is otherwise NOT committed to another man HAS engaged in marriage and NOW he is responsible for her.

Therefore, as it says in verse 29, the man must pay the father a bride price and it sets the price as 50 silver shekels. This is a high price, probably higher than usual. Not as high as the penalty the husband paid for falsely accusing his new wife of having not been a virgin when they married. On the other hand the man in this case has forever taken away this girl's virgin status; therefore there is very little chance that the father could ever marry this girl off in the future and that would mean he would never receive money for a bride price.

In addition to this man being required to marry the girl he will never have the right to divorce her in the future no matter how legitimate the case or egregious the reason.

There is so much for us to take from this. Let me end this lesson by pointing out but a few things:

1. When we hold up the state of our culture in light of these laws we have utterly no grounds to stand on to plead that we should be treated differently, corporately, according to God's justice because we are a so-called Christian nation absolutely brimming with churches and synagogues. We are, as they say, guilty as sin. We're as guilty as if we were a nation of atheists; perhaps more so because we KNOW the truth and often choose to ignore it.
2. A father has the duty to protect the women living under his roof. This is not some macho ideal or quaint societal demand; this is our ROLE as men as ordained by the God who created us as males. God has put these women under our authority not as chattel or slaves but as our responsibility for their welfare. The sexual conduct of our

children is not to be left to the school system to teach and dispense their progressive and secular humanist viewpoint. I don't know to what length a father and a mother should go to protect against this, but anything inside the laws of our society must be considered.

3. We also need to see that while the illicit sexual behavior that takes place here has its own consequences Jesus makes it clear that it all begins in our minds. Our bodies are slaves to our minds, not the other way around. Whether it is a girl deciding to treat her body as that of a prostitute or a man deciding to act as a rapist, or of two consenting adults engaging in an illicit sexual union, it begins with the thought of it. Therefore that is why Yeshua says that a man but looking at a woman in lust (meaning he has formed the idea of his intentions upon her in his mind and thus taken the first step) is **ALREADY** adultery.
4. While we have had the examples of animals yoked together, seeds planted together, two kinds of thread woven together, and the deception of a man disguising himself as a woman, no act of illicit mixture is as serious as the act of unlawful sexual union between a human male and female. Paul argued that the physical body of a Believer is to be considered as the temple of the Holy Spirit of God and thus it should be treated accordingly. To violate that temple is to violate God's property and to defile His dwelling place.

We still have a long way to go with Moses' sermon involving human sexuality and illicit mixtures (because it is such a serious topic with far reaching effects), but this closes out chapter 22. Next week we'll begin Deuteronomy 23 and continue the topic.