

LEVITICUS

Lesson 28 - Chapter 19 Continued

We'll continue today with Leviticus chapter 19. If there is one single principle of God that the entire world has violated, and that is the greatest single cause (outside of sin itself) for the global chaos that we watch on the evening news or read about in our newspapers or experience in our own lives, it is the one we began to discuss last time and will take up again today. This principle is at the heart of all that God is and reflects in His nature, and therefore to violate it is to reject harmony with Him. The spiritual law that I speak of is that of dividing, electing, and separating. Expressed in the negative the law is that those who love the Lord are not to improperly mix things that are set aside for life, with things that are destined for destruction. We are not to cross God-erected boundaries and mix two things that while each may well be good and acceptable of themselves, they are to be kept separated and are not to be combined. We are not to mix the holy with the unholy or even with the common, the clean with the unclean. Further we are not to re-designate things that God calls evil, as good, or vice versa. We are not to replace God's laws with theological philosophies that are called doctrines. To do any of these things is to create **tevel**, confusion; and confusion is completely at odds with the Lord's attributes of wholeness and order. And confusion is the state of the whole world today, isn't it? The cause of it all is improper mixing at many different levels.

Let's refresh our memories by re-reading a portion of Leviticus 19.

RE-READ LEVITICUS 19:19 - end

The Hebrew word for this improper mixing of things.....the crossing of God's boundaries.....is **kilayim**. There have been profound writings by the ancient Hebrew sages on the subject as well as much fanciful allegory. **Kilayim**, improper mixing, results in **tevel**.....confusion.

Leviticus 19:19 is of course not the only place in the Torah where specific edicts against **kilayim** is mandated. Deuteronomy 22 also adds, and in some cases merely repeats, more examples of improper mixing which results in tevel.....that is **kilayim** ALWAYS results in confusion. Here are a couple of examples:

NAS Deuteronomy 22:5 "A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.

And, NAS Deuteronomy 22:9 "You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest all the produce of the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard

become defiled. 10 "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. 11 "You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together.

I'd like to share with you the general understanding among the Hebrew sages of the underlying principles and problems with improper mixing....*kilayim*.

To begin with there are 3 types of mixing....or hybridization....spoken of between Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 22. First is the kind represented by sowing grain in a vineyard (this is generally what is meant by not sowing 2 types of seed together). This is considered the most extreme example and produces the most serious result. When two species of plants are planted in super-close proximity to one another, the result is that the roots become enmeshed; each derives some part of its source of nourishment from the other. It's not that the grape will start to look like barely, nor that the barely will turn the color of ripening grapes. The outward physical characteristics don't necessarily change; however several of the internal attributes do change. Taste, texture, aroma, and a host of other changes occur as a result of this crossing over of boundaries.

As far as a category or class of *kilayim* to too closely plant two kinds of seeds together is considered to be the same of interbreeding two different species of *behemah*, domesticated farm animals.

The 2nd category the ancient Sages delineated is represented by the prohibition against harnessing an ox and a donkey together.....ostensibly to pull a cart or plow a field. That is the yoking together of two inherently different creatures for the purpose of using them to perform some sort of work. Here the hybridization is not in any kind of biological mixing, but in their action and their function. The problem is in using two different species, each designed for different purposes, for some type of common work (presumably work that is suitable for the one, but not for the other). So it is not that the attributes of either species is somehow altered, it is that the function each was created to perform was altered due to improper mixing by men.

The 3rd category, illustrated by the wearing of clothing made of a mixture of wool and linen, is kind of a middle ground between the first two categories. Even though on the one hand, the two fibers (wool and linen) come from entirely different sources, they should not be woven together to produce something of a singular purpose.

An important feature to note of each of these cases is that there is nothing inherently wrong, evil, unclean, or abnormal about any of the species of plants or animals individually that would make them taboo; it's when God-ordained boundaries are crossed and the two separate species are combined that the problem arises. And as when we discussed clean and unclean and found that clean animals were not inherently better, or more godly, or more normal as compared to unclean animals, so it is with these forbidden mixtures. Linen and wool woven together don't necessarily produce a physically inferior cloth as compared to pure linen or pure wool. And, in fact, depending on one's taste, a wine made of certain grapes produced by having a certain variety of wheat or barley grown underneath and alongside the grape vine might actually be desirable.

Rather it is simply God's sovereign decision as to what improper mixing is. We can search for the "why" of those choices all day long and I promise you that most answers will be allegorical in nature, and generally pure guesses, because in most instances Yehoveh has not chosen to tell us the "why" behind His decision. That just bugs the living daylights out of man, so we continue our search for the why and that leads to men then deciding that if they can find no rational/logical "why", then there is no longer any good reason to obey that command. We see that reasoning in our era particularly as concerns homosexuality and gay marriage. The question usually posed is, 'what harm does it cause'? It's not like they can reproduce. What two people do in private is his or her business. Besides that was just an ancient taboo obeyed by ignorant people, which no longer has a place in the modern and enlightened world of the 21st century. If it were only the secular world arguing for that point of view I wouldn't be terribly concerned; but, sadly, more and more within the modern Church have adopted that stance, and in some cases it has become church doctrine. Recall the great hand-wringing WITHIN THE CHURCH over the selection of the newest Catholic Pope, because he was staunchly anti-gay marriage and anti-abortion. Or in the emerging battle over the next election for the President of the United States whereby the leading Republican candidate is pro-choice, pro-gay, and his main opponent is Mormon. The Church is in a complete quandary on how to react because it has so mixed itself with the ways of the world and decided that the old laws of the Old Testament are dead and gone, and with it went the morality that governed it and us. My advice is to abandon your search for the "why"; instead, focus on discovering the patterns, and how one pattern intertwines with the next.....then your understanding of who God is, how He operates and what He expects of us will be increased and your frustration and doubts will decrease.

Before we continue with more commands in Leviticus 19 let me end our discussion on improper mixing that results in confusion.....in Hebrew, *kilayim* that results in *tevel*....by showing you something in the NT that is a prime example of *kilayim* in action. And it is a statement of St. Paul that is one of the most quoted, yet most misunderstood; it is found in KJV **2 Corinthians 6:14 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?***

Paul was not making up new theology; he was simply stating the Torah principle of *kilayim*; no improper mixing. Actually he was referring directly to Deuteronomy 22:10, where it says that an ox and a donkey are not to be brought into union to pull a plow. Here in 2Corinthians righteousness should never be mixed with unrighteousness, nor should light be mixed with darkness. Here's the thing: Paul was doing what Jesus did, and what we should do as we seek to re-apply, and not re-interpret, the Torah for our time. Paul takes a command.....do not unequally yoke an ox and a donkey.....and takes it from the purely physical, earthbound realm, into the spiritual, Heavenly realm it was always intended to proclaim. Just how is that so? Because Paul equates the principal of unequal yoking of physical things like donkeys and oxen, to the unequal yoking of spiritual things, like righteousness and UN-righteousness. For the Believer.....just as for the Hebrew.....there is a strictly defined boundary established by God between righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness. And, remember, light and darkness.....as we saw in Genesis.....*owr* and *choshek*.....are spiritual in their essences. And neither the physical nor the spiritual boundaries are to be blurred or crossed.....or

kilayim.....improperly mixed. THAT is the meaning of “be ye not unequally yoked”; in modern thought it means, “do not be improperly mixed”.

Let’s move on to verse 20. I hope you’re all beginning to get used to hearing all the frank and explicit talk about sexual relations in the Torah, because we’ll encounter it again and again. Verses 20 –22 are one thought; it’s all about the same situation. And, since it has ascended to the lofty status of being one of the 613 Laws of Torah, we should probably assume that the scenario presented in these 3 verses happened with some regularity.

Let’s take a closer look, because this story gives us an interesting aspect of Hebrew society of the 14th century BC. The gravity of the situation is rather obscured because of the differences between Hebrew culture at that time, and Western Culture in the modern era; so allow me to explain what is happening. These verses ordain that a man is not to have sexual relations with a slave girl if she has been previously promised to another man. Here’s the deal: in this case, the “slave girl” is a Hebrew girl owned by a Hebrew man. Most of the slave girls owned by Israelites were in fact Israelite girls. Why would this be so? The ordinance of Exodus 21:7-11 makes it perfectly lawful for a father to sell his daughter into what we would call bond-servitude.

NAS Exodus 21:7 "And if a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do. 8 "If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her. 9 "And if he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. 10 "If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. 11 "And if he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

Now the selling of this young Israelite girl by her father to an Israelite man was usually the result of that family being poverty stricken, or the family being in debt and the girl was the payment. But we must not draw a mental picture of a girl in chains and tied to a stake each evening so she doesn’t run away; nor of a girl who is mistreated, starved or beaten, or used as an object of sexual pleasures by the man who now owns her. The Law insisted that she be well treated.

So here we have the case of a young Hebrew girl.....a child by our standards, actually..... sold to a Hebrew man. When the girl matured and got to the marrying age.....generally 15 years old or more.....the man who owned her had an obligation to either marry her himself, give her to his son for marriage, or allow her to be redeemed. Now this particular kind of redemption usually meant that if a man who was looking for a wife wanted to marry this slave girl, the slave owner was required to give her to him.....but at a price.....a redemption price.

The procedure was that the interested man would bargain with the slave owner over the redemption price. Once agreed to the girl was now legally designated to her future husband. A period of time usually passed, though, before the future husband brought the redemption money to the slave owner. During that time the slave girl continued to live with the slave owner

although she had been sold (it was kind of the ancient Hebrew version of the lay-away plan). Legally, however, she remained an unmarried girl and a slave.

If another (a different) man came along and seduced the girl there was a problem. The problem was that the girl was now damaged goods. The future husband was expecting a virgin. But since she was no longer a virgin there is NO way her future husband would have accepted her; he would have canceled the marriage and called the whole deal off. This means that the girl's owner would be out the money he had expected.

The end of verse 20 says that as a result of this there shall be an *indemnity*. Don't go blind looking in your Bibles for this word because it's not there. Instead, like in my CJB, your Bibles will say "punishment", or "inquiry", or "inquisition" or something like that. Hebrew scholars have looked on that translation with suspicion for centuries. Within the Hebrew cultural context of that era none of those words make sense in the situation being described. Over the last few years as the study of language cognates pertaining to Hebrew has progressed the true meaning of many odd and rare Hebrew words has come into better focus. A cognate simply means that a word in one language is closely related to a word in another language. So if one can be certain of the meaning of a word in an older and related language, that meaning can generally be transferred to it's cognate in its sister language. We have that exact situation here; for the Hebrew word in question appears here and here alone in all the Bible; but a cognate has been discovered.

The Hebrew word that has typically been translated as *punishment or inquiry* is *bikkoret*. And what language experts now know is that many Hebrew words are taken from the Akkadian language. In Akkadian we find the word *baqaru*; and *baqaru* means "to make good on a claim.....that is, to indemnify". Indemnity is a word most Floridians are familiar with due to our frequent Hurricane damage, because it pertains to Homeowners Insurance. In legalese a person who buys insurance is "indemnified" against certain risks.

It is now generally agreed that *bikkoret* is the Hebrew cognate of the Akkadian *baqaru*. So the idea that is being expressed here in our story is that the man who seduced the slave girl who had been promised to another man (for a redemption price) was now responsible to pay the full-agreed price that had been negotiated between the slave owner and that future husband who has now pulled out of the deal. The slave owner would have confronted the seducer, made a claim, and demanded reparations.

Now it is interesting to note that it was not so much the future husband who was wronged; it was the slave owner. Because he would have been out the money promised for the girl he owned. Therefore the seducer had to pay reparations to the slave owner. How about the future husband? He was simply out of luck. The future husband merely lost a fiancé, which meant he'd have to go to all the trouble to find another. End of story.

But that wasn't the end of the story for the guy who seduced the girl who was already promised to another man. According to verse 21 the seducer in addition had to make a sacrifice at the Altar; specifically he had to make an 'Asham sacrifice, a reparation offering, at the Tabernacle. For not only had he committed an indiscretion that damaged and devalued the

property of the slave owner, he trespassed against Yehoveh by violating a command. And because an 'Asham was established in order to make atonement for committing a sinful act it was usually fairly expensive. So the seducer paid quite a price for his lust; and by the way notices that he didn't get the girl. Oh, he could, I suppose. But he would have to cough up, now, an additional negotiated bride price because the money he paid to the slave owner was a penalty, not a purchase price.

Just a small, but interesting (I think), glimpse into the Israelite culture of long ago.

As we move into verse 23 we get into another of these Laws that will not take effect for a while because it involves farming; something that would not take place until Israel settled in Canaan. The Law is that when Israel plants fruit trees.....and in the Bible, this really means any kind of tree that bears something that is edible; nuts, olives, dates, oranges, whatever.....that for the first 3 years none of the tree's produce is to be eaten. I won't go into too deeply into detail here, but when one takes the original Hebrew literally the idea is not so much about a prohibition against picking and eating the fruit but instead destroying it; rather it is about trimming...or pruning.....the tree. In other words BECAUSE of the pruning that is necessary to get the tree to mature and be productive the fruit is lost during the pruning process. So for the 1st three years the young branches are to be heavily pruned, and the fruit that might otherwise have grown will be lost, apparently so the trees will be better producers in the long run. Then in the 4th year a good harvest can be expected, but that entire first legal harvest of fruit must be set apart for praising God. In other words, in that 4th year, the harvest is considered holy (set apart) to Yehoveh and thus it is given to Him.

What this amounted to was that it was (in some undefined way) offered to God in a celebration and assuredly eaten during this time of celebration, but probably eaten by the Levites and Priests. The fruit of the 4th year was consecrated and set-apart; it was HOLY PROPERTY; it belonged to God which meant that some of it was burned up and the remaining holy portion went to the priesthood. Then in the 5th year normal harvesting of the fruit could commence. What is the purpose of this 5-year progressive procedure? We're told in verse 25 it is so the yield of the tree harvest will be increased. This is seen as another of those Reality of Duality situations; that is that there was a horticultural reality in that by allowing the trees to grow be pruned without harvesting fruit for the first 3 years, the trees would become better producers over their lifetime. On the other hand from a spiritual standpoint by being obedient to this command of God, Yehoveh would see to it that the yield was supernaturally increased as a blessing. But the increase of the harvest was not the only aspect to being blessed; Shalom was also increased. Shalom, when taken as an overall state of well being (having joy, peace, health, and grace from God) is something ONLY God can give. The pagan Canaanites and God-fearing Israelites might each receive a similar amount of fruit from following this practice of pruning and not harvesting until the 4th year, but only the one who loves God can receive Shalom and that is the greatest blessing of them all.

Someone last week asked a great question....or perhaps as less a question and more the expression of a thought....in that can we say that those who love and obey God will reap reward.....earthly reward.....while those who do not, will not. Without doubt the Scriptures make it clear that those who follow Torah, who obey God, and who make Yeshua Lord of their lives,

will see increase of the fruit of their lives as a blessing. And for those who don't, blessing will be withheld. So it is advantageous to us to be obedient to God, that even in our earthly lives we will be blessed with better lives.

But that concept can be easily misunderstood. For instance if the Canaanites who would remain in the land after Israel conquered it watched what the Israelites did with their fruit trees and emulated it; that is, they saw that by following those practices we just discussed that the trees would become more abundant and long term producers, then the Canaanites would have better fruit crops.....even though they did NOT worship Yehoveh. The Israelites, on the other hand, while receiving a better fruit crop, would also receive spiritual blessings from Yehoveh, because THEIR MOTIVES FOR DOING WHAT THEY DID were correct. In my example, the Canaanites merely wanted more fruit, and did whatever it took to get it; Israel sought to be obedient to God, and the **result** was abundance. They both DID the same things as regards the fruit trees, but Israel received God's blessings, and the Canaanites didn't. Why? Motive.

So it is that we can at times see the most greedy, unkind, ungodly people have what appears to be great success and great lives; often by following (unbeknownst to them) Scriptural principles of business and stewardship. But that is NOT the same thing as receiving God's blessing. It is God's blessing we should seek.....because often what appears to be prosperity and abundance is simply Fool's Gold, and the Devil's trap.

I tell you this because it adds another small piece to the puzzle of understanding the principle of humans having an evil inclination and a good inclination residing within us. Doing what SEEMS to be good is not good if the motivation is wrong. Good people, who do good things, but do not know God, are actually doing evil in God's eyes. This is because their motive is not God directed, it is self-directed. And, this is why it is so important to have Yeshua as our Lord; because the ONLY way our good inclinations can be properly channeled and guided is by Him. Without Him even our attempt at good is evil. Without Him our motives are, by default, wrong.

Verse 26 repeats the Law that a Hebrew should not eat anything with its blood; simply, they shouldn't drink animal blood or make food out of animal blood. And this also necessitated that an animal be killed and it's flesh prepared in a certain way; its blood was to be fully drained from the meat. Yet please remember that this law about blood means much more than only being prohibited from eating animal blood; how, where, and why an animal is killed is also part of the picture. As of this time the ONLY place a domestic animal could be killed for any reason was at the Tabernacle, at the Altar, even if the intent was for meat as food.

Later on, in this same verse, the rule against practicing divination or fortunetelling was also repeated; that is, not to practice magic. Yet as we will find all throughout the O.T., the Hebrews were drawn like a moth to a flame to the occult by the evil inclinations that lurked within; and they were severely disciplined by Yehoveh for such things. Invariably the purpose of divination and fortune telling was to know the future; and Israel's neighbors.....as did all known cultures of that era....made abundant use of the occult. Knowing the future has always been, and will always be, something mankind lusts after. God, however, says that He will provide what part of the future He wants us to know by means of His Prophets. But all-in-all God's Prophets provided very little new information for Israel. When God didn't speak to the people through

the Prophets, then the people were expected to proceed in faith and by following God's clearly defined laws and principles as set down at Mt. Sinai. We Believers are to do exactly the same thing; we only occasionally get a direct answer to a direct problem from the Holy Spirit. Far more often we are to keep going forward in faith while referring to the unchanging Scriptures for direction, even though it would seem to be a whole lot easier if God would just TELL us exactly what to do.

Next, still in verse 26, is the injunction against "rounding the hair at the temples (of your head)", or tearing out the hair of your beard, or gashing one's self as a mourning practice, or getting tattooed.

Now all of these things were standard Canaanite cultural norms. In fact we need to keep in mind that most of the prohibitions we'll find in the Law are there to combat some pagan practice of some pagan nation or another; that is these are not theoretical or hypothetical issues that Yehoveh is addressing. Rather these things were actually occurring, and God wanted the Hebrews to avoid them.

Verse 29 is a little different than it appears. It says not to defile your daughter by making her a prostitute. And, this so the land will not fall into prostitution.

What this is referring to is RELIGIOUS prostitution; another standard Canaanite practice. In other words a man was not offer his daughter to a priest for a religious ceremony that involved sex acts. Nor was he to sell his daughter for general prostitution in order to obtain money to buy a sacrificial animal to sacrifice at the Tabernacle.

The warning is that if Israel begins to drift into ceremonial prostitution then the Promised Land will fall into depravity. I have mentioned on occasion that in God's eyes the land is connected with the people who occupy the land. The people and the land are organically intertwined. So often in the Scriptures, as it is here, the term "the land" refers to the place AND the people as one complete entity.

Notice that immediately following this prohibition against sacred sex God says, "keep my Sabbaths and revere my Sanctuary". This Hebrew literary structure is a way of indicating to avoid the one and instead DO the other. So the idea is "don't offer religious sex" as a misguided way to honor Me.....RATHER.....if you want to honor Me, observe my Sabbaths and have the utmost respect for the Tabernacle, God's earthly dwelling place. And, BTW, Israel did ALL these things against God, and more, which is why they were eventually expelled from the land and scattered throughout the earth.

The prohibition of verse 31 is to avoid spirit-mediums and sorcerers; some translations say to avoid familiar spirits or ghosts. The idea here is to NOT attempt communication with the spirits of the dead. So what are we to make of this? Is communication with the dead even possible? Well, the Bible tells us precious little about what happens after death; the OT says practically nothing on the subject. As I have mentioned on several occasions there is absolutely NO concept of dying and going to Heaven in the Torah or anywhere else in the OT.

It is not as though the Hebrews didn't wonder about death and worry about what happened afterwards. Just like all humans they were (and we are) concerned with death and what lies thereafter. But we need to be very cautious that just because God warns His people against hiring mediums and sorcerers to conjure up the "spirits of the dead", this is not an indication that "ghosts".....in the sense of a ghosts being the spirits of dead persons.....are real. Rather the problem (from a Scriptural standpoint) seems to be that a person who believes that they CAN contact the spirit of the dead winds up actually communicating with a demon that is doing Satan's bidding. It's kind of a bait-and-switch play by Satan. And a demon is NOT the spirit of a dead person; a demon (according to my best Bible understanding) is formerly an Angel of Heaven who fell from grace due to their loyalty to Satan's rebellion. Since that day the number of demons has been fixed at whatever number followed Satan.

The subject of death and the spirits of the dead is enormous; suffice it to say that beliefs on this.....even within Hebrew culture.....evolved and morphed and were never completely uniform, anymore than are afterlife beliefs universal within Christianity. I want to take sufficient time to sum this up because not only is the subject interesting on its face, but also is pertinent to our faith and our understanding of what comes after physical death. So we'll start with this subject next week.