

# Deuteronomy 20-22

Bible Study

## Review

Chapter 16: 18-22 (New chapter could have started here)

Fundamental requirement of judges

- [v.18-20]: just judgment (righteous judgment for judges)
- 1<sup>st</sup> requirement of judges—[v.21-22]: prevent impure worship practices (syncretism)

Chapter 17—matters of justice: judges, kings and the courts

- 2<sup>nd</sup> responsibility of judges—false worshippers to be executed (testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses)
  - King in Israel—to read God’s law and govern by it

Chapter 18—Leaders in Israel: priests and prophets

- Levites—no land inheritance; their part of the people’s sacrifices is their inheritance for faithful service
- God’s qualifications for a prophet—he will follow God’s model, message and speak by God’s authority
  - Prophecy of a prophet to come like Moses, a mediator and intercessor (Jesus Christ) [v.15]

Chapter 19—Cities of refuge (for the accidental manslayer to escape the blood avenger)

- Three more cities to be established in the promised land, besides the three on the east side of Jordan
  - Roads to be built so he could flee to the cities easily
- If the killing is found to be intentional, the elders of the city turn him over to the avenger of blood
  - Warning against testifying as a false witness

## Chapter 20

### Regulations regarding warfare

<sup>1</sup> "When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God *is* with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people.

<sup>3</sup> And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;

<sup>4</sup> for the LORD your God *is* He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

v. 1 "horses and chariots...more numerous than you"—military advantage of the Canaanites

➤ There is no evidence that Israel used horses in warfare before Solomon's time

- Israel was not to fear when the enemy was more numerous than they
  - Israel was not to fear when they came against them with chariots
    - God would fight against their enemies

v. 5-7 Exemptions from military service

Occupying the house

- <sup>5</sup> Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: 'What man *is there* who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it.
- <sup>6</sup> Also what man *is there* who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it.
- <sup>7</sup> And what man *is there* who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.'

v.6 (NSB) "The vinedresser was exempt from battle. It took as many as five years for a vineyard to begin to produce. A man who waited for several years for the first produce from his vines was allowed to oversee the vines until they produced grapes."

v. 7 (NSB) "Betrothal was a **commitment** to be married; it was more binding than an engagement today. The betrothed man was exempt from battle. This exception also applied to the newly married. [24:5]"

God is showing that it was not necessary to rely on numbers—a small force could overcome a large one with God fighting for His people (exemptions did not matter)

Exemptions from military service continued: v.8

<sup>8</sup> The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'What man *is there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.'

<sup>9</sup> And so it shall be, when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

v. 8 “whoever is fearful and fainthearted...let him return to his house”

(NICOT) “The reason is clear, for fear in any army is like an infectious plague, which can quickly cripple the ranks...the people were to be wholly committed to him [God], and fear undermined the wholeness of commitment.”

v. 9 (NICOT) “It is apparent in this verse that there is no conception of a permanent standing army, with regular officers and soldiers.

After those granted exemption had departed, it would be clear who was available for military service; from those remaining, military captains would be appointed, who would be responsible for their men in the approaching conflict.”

v. 10—20 Military strategies

A city far away (not Canaanite) v. 15

<sup>10</sup> "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it.

<sup>11</sup> And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.

<sup>12</sup> Now if *the city* will **not** make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

<sup>13</sup> And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword.

<sup>14</sup> But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD your God gives you.

<sup>15</sup> Thus you shall do to all the **cities which are very far from you**, which *are* not of the cities of these nations.

v. 10-11 (NSB) "This offer of peace specified that the people surrender, open up the city, and accept whatever conditions were laid down."

v. 11 "serve you" The people of the city: the Israelites could impose taxes and labor requirements

v. 15—makes it clear these are not Canaanite cities, but far away distant places

- 16 But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive,
- 17 but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you,
- 18 lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

(NSB) “The rules of spoil applied only to distant cities. Different rules applied to the cities of Canaan. They were to destroy the people of Canaan as part of God’s judgment on those immoral peoples. The people who lived in Canaan had practiced disgusting religious and social perversions for centuries.”

v. 18 “lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations”  
(Und. Bible Com. Series) “The Canaanites were to be destroyed, not merely because of their wickedness, but because of the long-term threat of idolatry and syncretism that they presented to Israel.”

v. 19-20 Trees around enemy cities

Cutting down trees and completely laying waste the land was practiced by Egypt and other military powers in the ancient near east

- <sup>19</sup> "When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field *is* man's *food*.
- <sup>20</sup> Only the trees which you know *are* not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

(Zondervan Bible Backgrounds Com.) "The flora in the land of Canaan was vital to the survival of the inhabitants. Over fifteen species of trees are mentioned in scripture.

The Lord did not instruct Israel to follow a scorched-earth policy. Egypt's warrior king, Thutmose III [1490-1436 BC], often pursued just such a policy, cutting down all kinds of trees in his Asiatic campaigns."

## Chapter 21

### Rectifying public and private wrongs

#### v. 1-9 Atonement for an **unsolved** murder

<sup>1</sup> "If *anyone* is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, *and* it is not known who killed him,

<sup>2</sup> then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure *the distance* from the slain man to the surrounding cities.

<sup>3</sup> And it shall be *that* the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked *and* which has not pulled with a yoke.

Blood shed (esp. murder) defiles the land— "which the Lord your God is giving you to possess" [v.1]

v. 1-2 A murder committed and remained unsolved—the first thing was to determine in which town's jurisdiction the crime had occurred (measure the distance to the surrounding cities)

v. 3 If there was no answer to who killed the slain man:

➤ An atonement had to be made to avoid defilement of the land

v. 3 For the atonement a heifer which had not been used for work was selected

- <sup>4</sup> The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley.
- <sup>5</sup> Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be *settled*.
- <sup>6</sup> And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain *man* shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley.
- <sup>7</sup> Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen *it*.
- <sup>8</sup> Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.' And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood.
- <sup>9</sup> So you shall put away the *guilt of* innocent blood from among you when you do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD.

v. 4 The heifer was brought to a valley with flowing water  
➤ The flowing water symbolized the defilement being carried away

v.6  
The elders washed their hands over the heifer's neck—indicating their innocence and the obtaining of atonement  
➤ Washing of hands in the ancient world indicated innocence (Pontius Pilate Mat. 27:24)

v. 8 "Provide atonement, O LORD, for your people Israel"—the ultimate purpose for the ritual

v. 10-14 An Israelite who desires to marry a woman among foreign war prisoners—(Distant cities, not Canaanite)

➤ This law serves and protects the female captured prisoner

<sup>10</sup> "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive,

<sup>11</sup> and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife,

<sup>12</sup> then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails.

<sup>13</sup> She shall put off the clothes of her captivity, remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.

<sup>14</sup> And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally, because you have humbled her.

v. 12 "she shall shave her head and trim her nails"

(NSB) "this ritual was intended to give the woman time to adjust to the new culture and to mourn over the forceful separation from her family. It was also a symbol of cleansing. She was preparing to become a part of the new community."

(NIV App. Com.) "These actions symbolize her change of status. When her hair and nails grow and she puts on new clothes, she emerges as a new person, with a new identity and new status"

The law benefits the captured woman (Und. Bible Com. Series)

1. She is accorded the full status of a wife [v.11]
2. She is given time to adjust to the new situation (one month v. 13)
3. Restricts the bridegroom's rights until one month of mourning is over [v. 13 last part]
4. If the man changes his mind and renounces responsibility to her—she is set free [v. 14]

v. 15-17 The right of the firstborn son (protecting him from an unfair father)

- A husband who has two wives

- <sup>15</sup> "If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, *both* the loved and the unloved, and *if* the firstborn son is of her who is unloved,
- <sup>16</sup> then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, *that* he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the *true* firstborn.
- <sup>17</sup> But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife *as* the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

(New Amer. Com.) "The matter of law that is pertinent here is the proper bestowal of inheritance rights."

(Und. Bible Com. Series) "Polygamy was permitted in Israelite society but was probably not very common. It was a sign of wealth and prestige and so was something of a perk of royalty."

(Tyndale) "Here for the first time in the Bible, the principle is stated that a firstborn son had to be given double inheritance rights, even if this son belonged to the unfavoured wife."

v. 18-21 Protecting parents from an unruly son

An offense that is a blatant and persistent breach of the fifth commandment

“stubborn and rebellious” (Heb. *sorer* and *moreh*)  
(Und. Bible Com. Series) “are terms for serious and persistent rejection of authority”

<sup>18</sup> "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and *who*,  
when they have chastened him, will not heed them,

<sup>19</sup> then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city.

<sup>20</sup> And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a  
glutton and a drunkard.'

<sup>21</sup> Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel  
shall hear and fear.

(Und. Bible Com. Series) “The law is not talking about naughty young children but about seriously delinquent young  
adults...the case is brought to the elders only after prolonged parental discipline has manifestly been disregarded.

There is no account of this law ever being invoked in OT Israel. It is in its own terms a very last resort. Yet its mere  
existence indicates the serious nature of the fifth commandment.”

v.22-23 A criminal hanged on a tree-- [practiced widely in ancient world]

<sup>22</sup> "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,

<sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall **surely bury him that day**, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God.

(Und. Bible Com. Series) "The purpose of this law is to prevent the land from being polluted by improper treatment of a human corpse.

The difference here, of course, is that the corpse is that of an executed criminal, not a murder victim. Hanging is not the means of execution (which is stoning), but a kind of intensification, perhaps for its deterrent effect."

v. 23 "accursed of God"

Judgment that takes a person's life for a sin (capital offense) and a display of that judgment by hanging his body in public shows that the person is under God's curse (penalty for sin)

Galatians 3:13

<sup>13</sup> Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*"),

## Chapter 22

v.1-4 practical examples of loving our neighbor

<sup>1</sup> "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother.

<sup>2</sup> And if your brother *is* not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him.

<sup>3</sup> You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself.

<sup>4</sup> "You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift *them* up again.

Finding an animal or something that belongs to our neighbor—we are to return it or take care of it until it can be returned

v. 4 "hide yourself from them"—ignoring the situation

Galatians 6:2

<sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

<sup>5</sup> "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so *are* an **abomination** to the LORD your God.

(Gleason Archer)

Verse 5 completely excludes transvestism or any kind of impersonation of the opposite sex. Probably the practice of sex perversion and homosexuality, particularly in connection with pagan worship of fertility gods, accentuated the need for such a provision"

(NSB) "In the ancient middle east, dressing in the clothing of the opposite sex was a magical practice intended to bring harm to people. For example, a transvestite male would predict that the soldiers of another army would be as weak as females."

"an **abomination** to the Lord"

(Und. Bible Com. Series) "it is about the perverted crossing of genders either in orgiastic rites involving transvestitism, or is some form of pagan worship, or both."

v. 6-7 Concerns preservation of the environment and wildlife

<sup>6</sup> "If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young;

<sup>7</sup> you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and *that you may prolong your days.*

A person was not to take a mother bird and the young birds at the same time, but was to let the mother go free so that she could continue producing offspring, so as to perpetuate the species

## v.8 Safety precautions in building a house

<sup>8</sup> "When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

Ancient homes often had flat roofs which were used as rooms at times (sleeping, relaxing and entertaining guests)...this law was to build a parapet or rail around the perimeter that would keep one from falling off (a building code)

- Form of loving your neighbor and protects the householder from guilt of bloodshed

## Laws of purity

<sup>9</sup> "You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be defiled.

### Mixing different kinds of seed:

- 1)(JFB) "directed against an idolatrous practice, that of the ancient Zabians, or fire-worshippers, who sowed different seeds, accompanying the act with magical rites and invocations" (Lev. 19:19)
- 2) Given to prevent the intentional or unintentional cross-pollinating of different kinds of plants that would produce hybrid plants

(New Amer. Com.) "The implication is that a crop in addition to grapes may be in view. While this might be possible in the world of actual agriculture, it was not to be undertaken in Israel because it symbolized an admixture of spiritual elements that is abhorrent to the Lord."

<sup>10</sup> "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

1) An ox and donkey do not work together well, they pull unequally and can also pull against each other

2) An ox is a clean animal and a donkey an unclean one

(New Amer. Com.) "Paul the apostle understood this text in the way suggested by quoting it to underscore his point that believers should not be yoked together with unbelievers. (II Cor. 6: 14-18).

A mixed yoke speaks of unwholesome partnership, an attempt to find common ground when none in fact exists. The temptation of religious syncretism would be especially appealing in Canaan but was to be resisted at all cost."

2 Corinthians 6:14

<sup>14</sup> Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

<sup>11</sup> "You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, *such as* wool and linen mixed together.

(JFB) "The essence of the crime consisted, not in wearing a woollen and a linen robe, nor in the two stuffs being woven together—for some portions of the high priest's robes were so interwoven—but doing them in a particular form, according to a favorite superstition of ancient idolaters."



**Zephaniah 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> "And it shall be, In the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, That I will punish the princes and the king's children, And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. [KJV] "strange apparel"

(NICOT) "it may be related to some custom practiced in Egypt. It may be noted that during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, various complicated types of pattern weaves were being introduced in Egypt...and they may therefore have had reprehensible associations for Israelites"

<sup>12</sup> "You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover *yourself*."

v. 12 (KJV)

<sup>12</sup> Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest *thyself*.

Not the same word as in Numbers 15: 38 (Heb.) *sisit or zizith*—a fringe where the threads hang down like a lock of hair (Comp.)

➤ fringes or tassels used as reminders to keep God's law

**v. 12** "tassels" / "fringes" (Heb.) *gedel*= twisted cords (Companion)

➤ These fringes were to be worn to show the distinctiveness of the Israelite and to indicate nobility

v.13-30 The integrity of marriage and sexual relationships

<sup>13</sup> "If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her,

<sup>14</sup> and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she *was* not a virgin,'

<sup>15</sup> then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out *the evidence* of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.

<sup>16</sup> And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her.

<sup>17</sup> Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter *was* not a virgin," and yet these *are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.*' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

v. 14 "Chargers her"—indicates a public accusation

(NSB) "In ancient times, virginity was highly regarded. The indisputable legitimacy of children was vital to society and inheritance rights."

v. 15 The father and mother would come to defend the girl and protect her name

v. 14, 17 'evidences of virginity'

(Expositors) "The proofs of virginity (v. 14, 17), the blood spotted bedclothes or garments, which, though not infallible, were widely accepted in the ancient near east as indications of prior virginity, are still accepted among some peoples today."

v. 18-19 Elders find the woman innocent—judgment on the man

<sup>18</sup> Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him;

<sup>19</sup> and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give *them* to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.

<sup>20</sup> But if the thing is true, *and evidences of virginity* are not found for the young woman,

<sup>21</sup> then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

v. 18-19 “punish him” (flogging)... “fine him” (compensation for hurting her reputation)

➤ A false accusation would result in punishment—a man was not permitted to bring a false charge against his wife

v. 20 “if the thing is true

(NSB) “If the woman was not a virgin, she would be punished for her immorality.”

v. 21 ‘the door of her father’s house’

“The parents also shared in her punishment. They were publicly disgraced because they did not dissuade her from such actions.”

v. 22 Adultery involving a married woman

<sup>22</sup> "If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die--the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

v.23-24 Adultery involving a virgin who is engaged to be married

<sup>23</sup> "If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her,

<sup>24</sup> then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

v. 24 'bring them both out'

(NSB) "Both parties were presumed guilty in this instance. In this situation, the woman could have screamed for help since she was in a city."

v.25-27 a woman who is a victim

<sup>25</sup> "But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die.

<sup>26</sup> But you shall do nothing to the young woman; *there is* in the young woman no sin *deserving* of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so *is* this matter.

<sup>27</sup> For he found her in the countryside, *and* the betrothed young woman cried out, but *there was* no one to save her.

v. 26 'no sin deserving of death'

(NSB) "The woman was presumed innocent by virtue of the isolated place where she could not receive help no matter how much she resisted."

v. 28-29 Adultery involving a virgin who is not betrothed to be married

<sup>28</sup> "If a man finds a young woman *who is* a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out,  
<sup>29</sup> then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.

v. 28-29 (NSB) "This law warned young men that they would be made responsible for their actions. A young woman was not freely available merely because she was not betrothed."

<sup>30</sup> "A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed.

v. 30 "father's wife"—most likely a step mother...not stated as 'mother'

## Lessons

Israel was not to fear the military advantage of the Canaanites—horses and chariots...God would fight their battles



God will help us in our battles we face

Psalm 18: 2 “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust”

The admonition that if one finds something that belongs to our neighbor to make an effort to return it to him

Instructions to put tassels on the four corners of garments—to show the distinctiveness of being an Israelite

➤ We have the Holy Spirit to set us apart as a holy people living God’s way