

Deuteronomy 21-25 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

II. MOSES' SECOND DISCOURSE Chs. 5–26

P. Various Rules for Ordering Society Chs. 21–26

In our study tonight, we'll be seeing lots of quick little points of instruction that were meant to bring a sense of *uncompromising justice* to the legal system of Israel, as well as a deep sense of *mutual respect* among the people.

In fact, we'll see that the whole idea of *respect* was something God wanted to *ingrain* in their thinking.

As a nation that was in covenant with Him, they must come to see that they are in covenant *with one another*; that their society was built on a commitment to honor one another.

This honor and respect was to be so much a part of their outlook on life that it effected the way they treated each other *personally, legally, & economically*.

In fact, so prominent was the concept of *respect* to be among them it was to be shown toward animals & nature.

Let me begin tonight by asking – what do you think, in our society right now, is mutual respect for one another a value and trait that is considered important?

Do you witness respect & honor for others when you go to the mall or shopping center?

How many of you work with the public in the normal course of your job?

Are you treated with respect by customers or like an object to be abused?

As we work our way through these regulations tonight, look for the principle that lays back of them and that can help us live a life of moral excellence in our time.

1. Dealing with unsolved murder 21:1-9

¹ “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, ²then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities. ³ 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.

“Heifer” is not a term with which many of us city-slickers are not familiar so let me explain.

A heifer is a *virgin* cow, a young cow that has never had a calf.

⁴ 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. ⁵ 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*.⁶ 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.⁷ Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen *it*.'⁸ 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.⁹ 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*.

If this seems like a rather bizarre ritual it's only because we've lost something of the sense of the sanctity of human life God desires us to have.

Here's what being described here . . .

A murder has been committed but there was no eye-witness to the crime.

The body was found in the countryside, so a measurement is taken to see which village lies closest.

The elders of that city are to take a heifer to a stream flowing through an uncultivated field, kill it by breaking its neck, then they are to wash their hands over the heifer while confessing that they had nothing to do with the murder, and have no way of executing justice on the guilty party.

This act ***IS*** their execution of justice & by it they are asking God to lift the curse of sin & divine retribution from the land itself.

Often in scripture we see innocent blood ***crying*** out to God for justice.

In Rev. 6 we find that it's the innocent blood of the martyrs crying out to God for vengeance that results in the global judgments of the last days. [6:9-11]

This blood, poured into the ground, defiles the land & when enough of it has been shed, an avalanche of judgment is poured forth.

So God has those charged with the administration of justice perform this ritual to keep them in touch with the fact that there is a value to every human life, and as leaders, they are charged with the task of protecting this value for all.

They are not to grow cold or calloused to the reality of death, but are to work diligently to uphold the sanctity of life.

Now, here's what this rule would accomplish – it would ensure the elders were being diligent to resolve disputes among people before they developed into outright violence that would imperil someone's life.

It reinforced the idea that the elders were ***responsible*** for the welfare of the people under their oversight.

As the mature men of the community, they held the responsible for how things went.

And even if they weren't ***directly responsible*** for every little thing that happened, they were to ***take responsibility*** & work to ensure the safety of the community.

That's what they're doing here – they're saying, "While we didn't kill this person, we ***take the responsibility*** for dealing with his death and for clearing the guilt of this crime so the wrath of God's holy justice does not fall on our community."

That's one of the marks of *maturity*; it *takes responsibility*.

It assumes the duty to look out for not only its own interests but the interest of others.

When the mature person sees a need & has the capacity to meet that need, he/she moves to assist.

2. Marrying a captured foreign woman 21:10-14

10 “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, ¹¹ and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, ¹² then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.

This may again appear to be a rather bizarre regulation to us who are unaccustomed to ancient traditions of warfare, but for the age in which it was given, it was radical in the extreme.

In ancient warfare, it was the accepted practice that to the victor went the spoils, and chief among these were the women of a conquered foe.

It was a standard practice for soldiers to rape the women of the places they captured.

God says, “No!” to this practice among the Jews.

As we'll see a bit later, having sex with a woman was equivalent to marrying her.

So God says, “If you desire to take a woman, then here's the way you're to go about it.

Take her home – you can't just ravish her on the spot!

She must shave her head.

She must cut off her fingernails.

She must remove her native dress.

And she must be in your home for a whole month, during which she's allowed to grieve for all that's befallen her; the loss of all she's known! THEN, if after all that, you still want her – fine.”

All of this was a safeguard against lust and against the mistreatment of these poor women, who have always been the *real victims* of war.

By having the man live with her for a month, he'd get to see what kind of a person she really was – and not be blinded by her stunning beauty alone.

By having her shave her head, a large part of her physical beauty would be removed.

In that culture, a woman's hair was her glory.

Long fingernails were a sign of elegance and showed refinement – which was highly attractive to the men of that time. [Explain]

Also, women who knew they were their city was about to be conquered, would

often doll themselves up by putting on seductive clothing.
These garments were to be replaced with the garments appropriate for mourning; sackcloth & ashes.

Then she was to mourn for an entire month.

Then, if after listening to her bald-headed, fingernail-less, sack-clothed jump-suited wailing for an entire month, the man still wanted her – fine, he could marry her.

BUT – if after all that his lust wore out and he decided she wasn't such a hot babe after all, he had to let her go.

He couldn't treat her as a slave and sell her as such.

He'd made clear his intention to marry her & now must show her the respect due her as one he'd put through a harrowing ordeal.

3. Preserve firstborn rights 21:15-17

15 “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, **16** 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. **17** 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.

This passage begins by speaking of a guy who has 2 wives.

Since there is no remark added that this is wrong, there are those critics who want to say this obviously can't be direction from God.

They miss the point of this regulation entirely.

You see, Moses had just spoken about taking a captive woman as a wife.

These verses come out of the same social context – one in which armed conflict had a profound effect on culture.

When ancient kingdoms went to war, it often resulted in so many men being killed that there was a massive surplus of women.

Since almost all laws were oriented toward men, including land ownership, the only way women could survive was through marriage.

In times when there weren't enough eligible men, polygamy was the only option.

What God is regulating here was a simple FACT of life in the ancient world.

True - it *wasn't* God's plan that a man be married to more than one woman.

But God's plan was willfully rejected by Mankind in the Fall and God in His merciful grace deals with us as we are – so this provision.

And what he says is that the firstborn is to be honored as the firstborn regardless of how much he loves or doesn't love his mother.

While we don't allow polygamy in our culture, divorce and remarriage has led to many families being blended.

We have a husband and wife who each have their own kids from a previous marriage, then some of their own together.

The principle back of this rule tells us that we must not neglect the children of our first or prior marriage.

Just because there's a loss of affection for the prior spouse, that ought to have no bearing or impact whatever on the love shown the children of that union.

4. Dealing with sociopaths 21:18-21

18 “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, ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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.’ ²¹ 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.

Now, I realize this seems extremely harsh – but understand that Moses is not saying that they were to execute every unruly kid.

No, this is a *grown child*, a young adult who consistently demonstrates a kind of amoral lifestyle.

This is what we would call a *sociopath*, a *psychopath*; someone whose antisocial behavior has become a *real* danger to others and who WILL NOT change.

History has shown that every so often, one of these individuals is born; someone in whom the Fall seems to be fully expressed.

Their moral sense is so bent, so tweaked that they justify every selfish & brutish act as okay.

It doesn't matter who's hurt or harmed on the way to their own gratification & pleasure; the ends justify their means.

The parents, whose task of parenting is now complete because the child is grown, are to go to the elders of the city and say that they know the course of their adult child's life is leading to danger for others.

If the elders conclude the young adult is indeed a sociopath, then they were to execute him.

No process of re-education or rehabilitation is going to help such a person. Their childhood has proven this to be the case.

5. Bury the executed 21:22-23

22 “If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ 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.

Those who'd been executed were sometimes hung on a tree in a prominent place as a way to give the community at large a graphic lesson on what happens when you run afoul of the law.

Since the elders of the city were acting as the agents of God's justice, the executed were understood as being cursed by God.

But even the executed were human beings, and deserved the honor afforded them as such.

So, once the purpose of their public display had been served, they were to be shown a measure of honor and buried properly.

This ought to speak to us about how we look at those condemned to lethal injection or the gas chamber.

We ought to be *sickened* by the rallies of people who stand outside prisons as some notorious murderer is executed, waving placards that make fun of his death, while they cheer and whistle with delight when the word comes of the execution's success.

We ought to weep, not celebrate.

We ought to weep that a human being would have his own humanity so debased by sin that he/she would deal death to another.

When we delight in the death of *anyone* – we side with the destroyer or man, not the Redeemer.

Ezekiel 33:11 • Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'

Of course, there's a prophetic aspect to these verses –

The religious leaders of Jesus' day were worried about leaving Jesus' body on the cross as the day came to a close because it was the high holy day of Passover and if His body was not taken down it would defile the land.

As the end of v. 23 says, the one hung on a tree is cursed of God.

Jesus became a curse for us, so that we might become righteous in Him.

6. Respect others property 22:1-4

1 "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. 2 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. 3 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. 4 "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.

Just simple, practical rules for respecting others and what belongs to them.

Many people today have the attitude that if someone loses something, "We'll their loss is my gain." Finders keepers; losers weepers.

God says, "Respect others by showing practical respect & honor for what belongs to them."

If you find something, do your best to return it to the owner.

If you see someone else's property in danger, do what you can to preserve it.

7. No cross-dressing 22:5

5 “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.

A straightforward prohibition of *transvestitism*.

This rule comes out of the context of pagan religious practices which used ritual prostitution as a form of religious devotion.

Both male & female ritual prostitutes were frequented by the people as an act of worship to their gods.

The temple prostitutes would often cross-dress so that people didn’t know if they were getting a man or a woman.

These get-ups would even be worn outside the temple in the public marketplace as a kind of seductive advertisement, reminding the people of the temple and it’s service.

What God is saying is that among His covenant people, there is to be no gender-bending, no blurring of the cultural lines that differentiate between male & female.

There have been some who have used this passage to say that women can’t wear *pants* and that men cannot wear, let’s say, a *Scottish kilt* because it looks like a dress.

That is not really the intent of this rule.

What this is aimed at preventing is the blurring of distinctions between men and women and doing away with those boundaries that allow us to know who is who when it comes to man and woman.

A simple principle to live by in regards to this is – if your appearance is such that other’s cannot readily identify you as a man or a woman, then changes need to be made to clear that up.

8. Respect the environment 22:6-7

6 “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; ⁷ 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.

Here’s a regulation that speaks to the *ecology* of the area in which they live.

If they happened upon a nest with a mother bird and eggs or young, they could take the young, but not the mother.

Why? Because it would diminish the population of that species – and that was something they were not to do.

They were to be careful to make sure the ecosystem of their land remained intact.

So much for the objection of the skeptic that the Bible teaches man is to rape and pillage nature!

9. Show care for other’s safety 22:8

8 “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.

Yep – there’s a building code in the Bible!

People spent a good part of their time on their roofs.

God tells them to make sure no one can fall off.

10. Avoid mixture 22:9-11

9 “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. 10 “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. 11 “You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together.

Okay, I have to tell you that when I 1st read this, I was perplexed.

What’s the big deal with mixing these things? Well it turns out, quite a big deal actually.

Grains & flowers reproduce through cross-pollination.

The pollen of some plants, combined with others can produce bastardized seed that is noxious to the animals that eat it & the soil it falls in to.

Putting an ox and a donkey in the same yoke would result in agony for each.

The Jews were allowed to mix fabrics in their clothing. The only prohibition is mixing wool & linen.

These two fabrics together create a serious dose of static electricity that’s hard on the body.

God uses these 3 areas of mixture and their negative result as a way to deepen the awareness that as His covenant people, they were to avoid mixture.

They were to be a pure people devoted to holiness.

And this holiness was to even work itself out in the way they dressed & worked.

There’s an even deeper application here for us.

The Word of God is often likened to seed. [Matthew 13:1-24]

Jesus spoke of the malicious worker who comes in the night to sew bad seed among the good. [Matthew 13:25-40]

Not mixing seed means that we must be cautious about mixing the Word of God with the wisdom of man.

An ox was a clean animal while the donkey was unclean.

Paul spoke of the importance of God’s people not being unequally yoked to the lost.

Linen was the cloth the priest wore when they performed holy service and in Revelation linen speaks of the righteousness of the redeemed.

Wool was the everyday fabric people wore to do their work in.

So linen speaks of spiritual inspiration while wool refers to carnally motivated works.

God wants His people to live by His Word, offering themselves in holiness by the Spirit’s anointing,

Not by the world’s values and ways, motivated by the flesh.

We are to be a people, not of mixture & confusion, but of **ONE THING** – God!

11. Remember the covenant 22:12

12 “You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which you cover yourself.

I shared a whole Sunday message on the tassel when we were in Numbers 15.

It was a distinctive reminder that they were in covenant with God, much like the wedding ring is a memorial to our covenant as husbands and wives.

12. Regulations for sexual morality 22:13-30

Let me say first of all that as we look at these things, they are going to seem rather antiquated, old fashioned and impractical.

But they will appear that way only because our culture has gone so very far astray from what we find here – which is a sexual ethic of holiness.

a. vs. 13-21 • charges against virginity

1) 13-19 • false

13 “If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, ¹⁴ 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,’ ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ And the young woman’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; ¹⁹ 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.

Here’s the sitch. A man marries a woman then decides he wants out.

As we’ll see in a moment, if she turned out not to be a virgin, then she would be stoned to death.

So he makes that charge because he wants out of the marriage.

Well, there’s a little problem you see, because his in-laws kept the sheet that was on the marriage bed and it’s stained with the evidence of their daughter’s virginity.

This is the practice in Orthodox Jewish communities to this day.

The day after the marriage is consummated, the wife’s parents set out the bedding so the community can see their daughter was a virgin at her marriage.

The whole community remembers this because a lack of evidence would be a scandal they would not long forget.

So if this guy charges his in-laws with fraud, because they betrothed their daughter

to him and he paid the bride price to them, then they would prove they didn't defraud them and he would have to pay a fine for his false accusation.

2) 20-21 • true

20 “But if the thing is true, *and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman,* ²¹ 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.

Now let's think about this. If a woman knew this regulation was in place in her village, is it likely she'd let some guy talk her sex with him?

And when sex outside of marriage is curtailed, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies are ended, sexually transmitted diseases are kept at bay, and fragile hearts are protected from sorrow over broken relationships.

I don't understand how people can think our modern age with its supposedly liberated views of sexuality are better than the ethic that's presented here.

b. vs. 22-27 • adultery

1) 22 • the married

22 “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.

Adulterers were to be executed.

2) 23-27 • the betrothed

a) 23-24 • in the city

23 “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,* ²⁴ 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.

Betrothal was a phase of marriage *before* the consummation of the wedding night.

Betrothed couples were legally married.

So sex with someone else was adultery, and punishable as adultery.

This speaks of adultery which occurs in a city and is discovered as some covert meeting the two had.

What about some betrothed woman who was raped in the country where no one could hear her protests?

b) 25-27 • in the country

25 “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. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ For he found her in the countryside, *and* the betrothed young woman cried out, but *there was no one to save her*.

The rapist of a betrothed woman where the rape occurred in the country was to be killed, but not the woman because no one was around to hear her cries of protest.

c. vs. 28-29 • fornication

²⁸ “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, ²⁹ 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.

Simple rule – you have sex with someone who’s neither married nor betrothed – congratulations, you just married her.

And because you took this route instead of the proper way, in addition to the bridal price, you have to pay her dad an extra 50 shekels and you cannot divorce her, ever, for any reason.

d. v. 30 • incest

³⁰ “A man shall not take his father’s wife, nor uncover his father’s bed.

Incest was prohibited.

13. Those excluded from the assembly of the Lord 23:1-8

¹ “He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD. ² “One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD. ³ “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, ⁴ because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵ Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. ⁷ “You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he *is* your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. ⁸ The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

The first question we have to ask is what is meant by the “assembly of the Lord?”

Does this refer to the entire nation of Israel or some more narrow expression of the people?

“The assembly of the Lord” refers to those who come to worship God at the tabernacle and by doing so express a desire to enter the covenant with Him – to be a part of the nation of Israel.

These vs. refer to *foreigners* who want to become Jews.

There are guidelines they must follow and rules that apply to different groups.

V. 1 says any man who’d been castrated could not become a part of Israel.

The reason why is because he wasn’t capable of having children, and as a member of the nation, it was expected that he would pass on his part in the nation to his children.

V. 2 says the children who come of the union of Jews & foreigners were banned from becoming members of the nation.

In vs. 3-6, Ammonites & Moabites were barred from being part of the nation.

Even if they lived in the land for 10 generations or more, they were *not to be* assimilated into the nation’s genealogy.

Vs. 7&8 say that the Edomites & Egyptians *could* assimilate & become members of Israel after 3 generations of living in the land.

After that time, they would no longer be considered anything but Jews.

14. Sanitation regulations 23:9-14

9 “When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing. 10 If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. 11 But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp.

Now, I realize the need to be discreet with this, but there’s something to be mined from this that we really ought to discover.

On a military campaign, such as is referred to here, a man could be away from his wife for weeks.

Since as a Jew he wasn’t allowed to ravish the women he was conquering there’s a good chance at some point he would have a nocturnal emission.

God says, when this happens, he’s to exit the camp, and wash himself.

Then he’s to stay outside the camp until the sun sets and a new day has begun in the Jewish reckoning.

Why? What’s the big deal? How does this make the man unclean?

Let me ask – to the Jewish mind, what was *the most* unclean thing? A dead body.

A man’s seed, when not produced in the act of love with his wife, is counted as dying.

When produced during intercourse, it can produce life.

But in any other setting it is wasted, spent life.

God wanted them to hold human life as so sacred, so special, that when a *potential life* was by-passed, either through a nocturnal emission or in the case of a woman’s cycle, they had the sense of loss, of death.

Now, here’s now this speaks to us today.

If this is how God wanted His people to think of the loss of even *potential* life,

how does this inform us about His attitude toward abortion?
The debate that has raged for years about abortion is that the unborn child isn't a person; just a potential person.

Now, this is a legal fiction & just plain morally insane, but even if it were valid, we need to understand that *God says* such potentiality demands the highest respect and honor on our part.

It ought to move toward reality, not toward death.

12 “Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; ¹³ and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. ¹⁴ For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.

They were to do their business outside the camp and make sure it was buried where the natural processes of the earth would biodegrade it.

This seems like a pretty obvious thing to us.

What we don't realize is that this was another socially revolutionary idea; that they would go outside their camp for their toilet duty.

Most groups just let it fly where and whenever.

One of the reasons why the plague was so virulent in Medieval Europe was because of the poor sanitation.

The Jewish ghettos were often the only places where the plague was killing thousands.

And because of this, the Gentiles blamed the blame for the Black Death on the Jews, saying they had cursed them.

No, the Jews just kept to their sanitation regulations and enjoyed the benefit of obeying God.

[Didn't know about germs, viruses – God did. Obey, even when you don't understand.]

15. Escaped slaves 23:15-16

15 “You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶ He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not oppress him.

Since slavery IN Israel was regulated by the law, this had to refer to slaves who escaped foreign master and fled for refuge to Israel.

These slaves were to be granted their freedom and given refuge.

This makes perfect sense when you realize that slavery in Israel was unlike slavery in the rest of the world.

The Jewish system *protected* slaves while in other nations they were treated as objects to be used and abused.

16. Ritual prostitution prohibited 23:17-18

17 “There shall be no *ritual* harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a

perverted one of the sons of Israel. ¹⁸ You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog [a reference to a male prostitute] to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God.

The pagans used ritual prostitution as normal fare. This was not to be done in Israel.

17. Charging interest 23:19-20

¹⁹ “You shall not charge interest to your brother—interest on money or food or anything that is lent out at interest. ²⁰ To a foreigner you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you are entering to possess.

Pretty straight-forward.

18. Vows 23:21-23

²¹ “When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. ²² But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. ²³ That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.

They were to keep their vows, especially any promise they made to God.

19. Satisfying the present need 23:24-25

²⁴ “When you come into your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. ²⁵ When you come into your neighbor’s standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor’s standing grain.

If you happened to be passing through someone’s field & were hungry, you were allowed to take a handful of whatever food was there, but no more.

20. Divorce 24:1-4

We covered these verses at length in our marriage series recently so we skip them tonight.

21. Exemption from military service 24:5

⁵ “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

Newlyweds were given a full year off from military service in order to seal their relationship, and hopefully get pregnant.

Remember, that interpersonal, private contact between the two had been kept to a minimum prior to their wedding night, so that first year was an important time as they got to know each other.

People tend to look back on Bible times and this culture with disdain and think

they had things as so backward.

The more I have studied this, the more I see the wisdom in their system and conclude we're the ones who suffer.

First of all, they married young.

Men were between 16 & 20 and the women were 13-17.

An article in USA Today this week reported that now people are waiting till their late 20's to get married.

Second, the boys kept with the boys & the girls with the girls throughout their adolescent years, so there wasn't much sexual tension building.

Modesty in dress was the norm so lust wasn't much of a factor.

Today, the fashions are designed to *inspire* lust.

Third, a young couple who were betrothed were never allowed to be alone together or to discuss matters of the heart because this was deemed as a level of intimacy inappropriate to their relationship.

Today, we throw young people together into all kinds of private time and encourage deep talks about themselves and their relationship.

No wonder they end up in bed or the back seat of a car.

The way God planned it, the first time they were really ever alone with each other and had a chance to see each other, body & soul, they were not just permitted, but encouraged to consummate their intimacy as man and woman.

That seems like a lot better & more kind system than this thing we have today.

Today's system is cruel!

22. Collateral 24:6

6 “No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes one's living in pledge.

Here's a guy who needs a loan, so he goes to his neighbor and asks.

The neighbor says, “Sure, I'll loan you the money, but I want your millstone as collateral.”

That would virtually ensure the guys made no money.

And that's why the loaner asked for it – because he knew it would force the debtor into bankruptcy and he'd be able to claim the man's property for himself as payment on the loan.

God says no to this, and by extension, to anything as collateral that's instrumental to someone's livelihood.

God's people must not allow another's misfortune to become the basis of our advancement.

23. Kidnapping 24:7

7 “If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you.

Kidnapping was a capital crime.

24. Plague outbreaks 24:8-9

8 “Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and

do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. ⁹ Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt!

God had given the priests detailed instructions for how to deal with leprosy in Leviticus 13 & 14.

When Moses' sister broke out in leprosy in the early days of the Exodus, they'd followed the rules carefully.

If they applied them so closely with Moses' own sister, they must be careful to observe them among the rest.

25. Collateral (pt. 2) 24:10-13

¹⁰ “When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. ¹¹ You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you. ¹² And if the man *is* poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. ¹³ You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God.

The principle behind this is an important one we would do well to heed; The creditor does not have the right to lord it over the debtor.

Just because someone owes me something does not give me the right to abuse the respect I owe him as a human being.

26. Debtors 24:14-16

¹⁴ “You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, *whether* one of your brethren or one of the aliens *who is* in your land within your gates. ¹⁵ Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you.

Again, we're to show respect for those whose situation may not be as comfortable as ours.

We must be sensitive to their needs and be careful to add to their misery through our own thoughtlessness.

¹⁶ “Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

Justice must be carried out on the person to whom justice is due, not those closest to him/her.

27. Equal treatment under law 24:17-18

¹⁷ “You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge. ¹⁸ But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

As we've seen repeatedly no win the law, when it came to the court system, everyone was equal in Israel.

Justice was to be *blind*, recognizing no distinction between Jew & Gentile, male & female, rich or poor.

28. Charity by workfare 24:19-22

19 “When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. **20** When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. **21** When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. **22** And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.

When harvesting their crops, it would be that not all the grain or fruit would be ripe at the same time.

Whatever was left after the initial harvest was to be left for the poor & landless.

They could freely glean the fields & vineyards.

29. Punishing the guilty 25:1-3

1 “If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that *the judges* may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, **2** then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. **3** Forty blows he may give him *and* no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

When corporeal punishment was due, the judges would assess how many blows were to be given.

But the upper limit was 40.

Actually, the Jews ended up limiting it to 39; they figured it was best to stop there, just incase they lost count and forgot a blow.

30. Cultivate basic kindness 25:4

4 “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out *the grain*.

It would be just plain cruel to muzzle an ox that was treading grain.

The poor thing out to be able to enjoy the fruit of its own labor.

The Apostle Paul quoted this & applied it to the right of ministers of the gospel being supported by those they served.

31. Surrogacy 25:5-10

5 “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son,

the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

So, a married man dies before his wife has a son.

This means his lands are now in jeopardy of being lost to the family name.

This was a major tragedy in Jewish society because the lands were reckoned as having been given them by God.

The very promise of God was tied to the land itself and the people living in it by their tribes, clans, and families.

The solution was a surrogacy in which the next oldest brother would father a son by the widow in his dead brother's name.

But what if he's already married and doesn't want to do this thing?

⁷ But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.'⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But *if* he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,'⁹ then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.'¹⁰ And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'

Okay! Interesting.

What's the point of the loosing the sandal and spitting in the face.

Well, first of all, this man's refusal to perform this duty is seen as shameful and the ritual is a public shaming of him.

One took off their sandals when entering the home.

When the woman takes the man's shoe off it's saying that while he ought to help keep his brother's house going, he's shown disdain for his duty, which is equivalent to spitting in his dead brother's face, which the woman gets to do to him!

From then on, he's referred to as the "Shoeless Shlomo."

32. A 'touchy' bit of social etiquette 25:11-12

¹¹ "If two men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, ¹² then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity *her*.

This relates back to what we looked at in 23:9-11 and the whole issue of potential life.

A woman could not aid her husband in a fight by inflicting damage on the opponent's ability to father kids.

She would be imperiling future generations – and to keep this from happening

the decreed punishment was to have her hand cut off.
This threat would cause her to find some other means of assisting her husband.

33. Business ethics 25:13-16

13 “You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. **14** You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. **15** You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. **16** For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.

Cheating in business is incompatible with the integrity we’re called to as the people of God.

34. An assignment 25:17-19

17 “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, **18** how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. **19** Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, *that* you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

[Covered Sunday]

35. Firstfruit offerings 26:1-11

In these verses God tells them they were to bring the very first of their produce to the tabernacle and offer it as a way of saying thanks for all the Lord’s faithfulness in bringing them into the land.

36. Tithes 26:12-15

When they collected the third year tithe for the poor and needy of the land, they were to give it out with an oath that they had truly given it all and kept none of it for themselves.

37. Conclusion to second sermon 26:16-19

16 “This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. **17** Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. **18** Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, **19** and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.”