

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Neither eunuchs, bastards, Ammonites, nor Moabites, shall be incorporated with the genuine Israelites, Deuteronomy 23:1-3. The reason why the Ammonites and Moabites were excluded, Deuteronomy 23:4-6. Edomites and Egyptians to be respected, Deuteronomy 23:7. Their descendants in the third generation may be incorporated with the Israelites, Deuteronomy 23:8. Cautions against wickedness when they go forth against their enemies, Deuteronomy 23:9. To keep the camp free from every defilement, and the reason why, Deuteronomy 23:10-14. The slave who had taken refuge among them is not to be delivered up to his former master, Deuteronomy 23:15, Deuteronomy 23:16. There shall be no prostitutes nor sodomites in the land, Deuteronomy 23:17. The hire of a prostitute or the price of a dog is not to be brought into the house of God, Deuteronomy 23:18. The Israelites shall not lend on usury to each other, Deuteronomy 23:19; but they may take usury from strangers, Deuteronomy 23:20. Vows must be diligently paid, Deuteronomy 23:21-23. In passing through a vine yard or field a man may eat of the grapes or corn, but must carry away none with him, Deuteronomy 23:24, Deuteronomy 23:25.

Verse 1

Shall not enter into the congregation, etc. - If by entering the congregation be meant the bearing a civil office among the people, such as magistrate, judge, etc., then the reason of the law is very plain; no man with any such personal defect as might render him contemptible in the sight of others should bear rule among the people, lest the contempt felt for his personal defects might be transferred to his important office, and thus his authority be disregarded. The general meaning of these words is, simply, that the persons here designated should not be so incorporated with the Jews as to partake of their civil privileges.

Verse 2

A bastard shall not enter - *מזר* (mamzer), which is here rendered bastard, should be understood as implying the offspring of an illegitimate or incestuous mixture.

Verse 3

An Ammonite or Moabite - These nations were subjected for their impiety and wickedness, (see Deuteronomy 23:4 and Deuteronomy 23:5), to peculiar disgrace, and on this account were not permitted to hold any office among the Israelites. But this did not disqualify them from being proselytes: Ruth, who was a Moabitess, was married to Boaz, and she became one of the progenitors of our Lord.

Even to their tenth generation - That is, for ever, as the next clause explains; see Nehemiah 13:1.

Verse 12

These directions may appear trifling to some, but they were essentially necessary to this people in their present circumstances. Decency and cleanliness promote health, and prevent many diseases.

Verse 15

Thou shalt not deliver - the servant which is escaped - unto thee - That is, a servant who left an idolatrous master that he might join himself to God and to his people. In any other case, it would have been injustice to have harboured the runaway.

Verse 17

There shall be no whore - See on Genesis 38:15-21 (note).

Verse 18

The hire of a whore, or the price of a dog - Many public prostitutes dedicated to their gods a part of their impure earnings; and some of these prostitutes were publicly kept in the temple of Venus Melytta, whose gains were applied to the support of her abominable worship.

Verse 19

Usury - See on Leviticus 25:36 (note).

Verse 21

When thou shalt vow, etc. - See on Numbers 30:2 (note), etc.

Verse 24

Thou shalt not put any in thy vessel - Thou shalt carry none away with thee. The old English proverb, Eat thy fill but pocket none, seems to have been founded on this law.

Verse 25

Thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand - It was on the permission granted by this law that the disciples plucked the ears of corn, as related Matthew 12:1. This was both a considerate and humane law, and is no dishonor to the Jewish code.