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Israelite Distinctiveness

22: 9-11

Israelite distinctiveness DIG: Why was Isra'el to maintain her distinctiveness? Why do you think the Ruach Ha'Kodesh inspired Moses to write about the same three mitzvot in two different books?

REFLECT: As a believer, how do you demonstrate your distinctiveness to those in your family, in your neighborhood, at work, to those you meet along the way, or to the world?

Isra'el was to maintain her distinctiveness; she was not to imitate worldly practices.

While several of the mitzvot grouped in **22:1-12** refer to mankind's relationships with our neighbors, there are also mitzvot about the care of animals and birds. The impression remains that **the Second Address: The Specific Stipulations of the Covenant (12:1 to 26:19)**, covers a wide range of topics. The present group of **eleven mitzvot** in **22:1-12** make it clear that the scope of **ADONAI's** concern for proper treatment in the covenant community was just as wide. There was to be a wholehearted application of the Torah. In these next **twelve verses**, much of them are concerned with the love that should be shown to other members of the covenant community (**Deuteronomy 15:1-18; Leviticus 19:1-37**). While the brief statement: **Love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:39)**, does not occur in **Deuteronomy**, it is implied here, and in many parts of the book. The covenant mitzvot was comprehensive in its demand for love. The love of **YHVH**, and the love for one's **neighbors**.⁴⁸⁰

Because **the Israelites** were **God's chosen people (14:12)**, separated from other nations, practices that were acceptable in pagan cultures were prohibited to **the Jews**. **ADONAI** set apart the priests and Levites to teach the people how to know right from wrong and the clean from the unclean, and this helped the people develop discernment. As they obeyed **YHVH** and sought **His** blessing, they learned more and more about what was fitting and proper in Jewish society. However, ultimately, **the nation** decayed spiritually because the priests and Levites failed to do their job, and **the Israelites** began to imitate their heathen neighbors (**Ezeki'el 22:23-29, 44:23**).⁴⁸¹

These three mitzvot have a counterpart in **Leviticus**, “**You must keep my statutes. You are not to crossbreed different kinds of animals. You are not to sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor are you to wear a garment woven of two kinds of material**” (**Leviticus 19:19**). The **Leviticus** passage is more general, whereas here in **Deuteronomy**, it is more specific.

8. You are not to plant your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest (Hebrew: *pen*, meaning *or, otherwise*) **the whole harvest will be forfeited - both the seed you plant and the produce of the vineyard (22:9)**. It would have prohibited the Egyptian practice of planting vegetables in a vineyard between rows of vines or perhaps mixing vines with other fruit trees in the same vineyard. There are a number of Egyptian paintings, from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty tombs, showing gardens and orchards in which various types of fruit-bearing trees are in vineyards. The sense seems to be that the violation of this mitzvah would have resulted in **the whole harvest** being **forfeited** as if it were under the cherem judgment (**Joshua 6:18-19**).⁴⁸² The first-fruits would not have been accepted by **YHWH**, and therefore the entire **harvest** would have been useless.



9. You are not to plow with an ox and a donkey together (22:10). One is stronger than the other, and one will work harder and tire very fast. **The ox** was clean, and **the donkey** unclean. Initially the animals were given to mankind to help, but they could be easily abused. So, this commandment reminds us that they are **God’s** creation. **A righteous man cares for the life of his animal; know the condition of your flocks, pay attention to your herds (Proverbs 12:10a, 27:23)**. The Sabbath was not only made for mankind. The animals were also to have rest (**Exodus 20:10**).⁴⁸³

10. You are not to wear a woven mixture, wool and linen together (22:11). Again, this was practiced in Egypt. The word **a mixed material**, *sha’atnez*, which is not Hebrew, appears to be a word taken from Egyptian. It may be noted that during the Eighteenth Dynasty, various complicated types of pattern weaves were being introduced in Egypt. As a result, they were to be detestable to **the Israelites**.⁴⁸⁴ **The rabbis declared that pious**

Jews would not sew a garment of wool with a linen thread, and that if one saw an Israelite wearing a garment of mixed cloth, it was lawful for him to fall on him and tear the forbidden garment to pieces.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are so loving and wise! **You** created the world with just words and everything **You** made was perfect the first time (**Genesis 1:31**). **You** also understand how all that **You** made should fit together, or not be put together. **You** know everything! **Messiah. In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Colossians 2:2c-3)**. We can rest confidently in trusting that as we follow **Your** guidance, we will be doing what is wisest. Thank **You** for caring so much for **Your** creation. In **Yeshua's** holy name and **His** power of resurrection. Amen*