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Sexual Purity

22: 13-30

Sexual purity DIG: Who was at risk in these marriage violations? What injustices were these instructions meant to prevent? What was to be Isra'el's attitude toward the unmarried virgin? Toward divorce? Toward sex before marriage? What practices were forbidden? Who was protected? Which of these did Amnon violate with dire consequences for Tamar?

REFLECT: Why do you think the penalty for improper sexual behavior was so harsh? What concerns you about the changing sexual standards in your society? Have God's restrictions on sexual behavior changed? Is God's Word eternal? How has the world influenced your views on sexual behavior? Your children's views? Your grandchildren's views? What can you do today?

Sexual purity was, and is, at the heart of the family, the fundamental unit of the covenant community - a concern that explains the severity of the penalties attached to these mitzvot.

Deuteronomy 19:1 to 26:15 (to see link click [DI](#) - The Social and Family Mitzvot) deals with individual mitzvot, and to today's readers they might appear irrelevant at first, but the very principles behind these commandments were the ones that have brought dignity to mankind. We need to examine these mitzvot in depth to discover the spirit in which they were given, so that we can still live in obedience to **God's Word** today. For example, in **Numbers 18**, the **Israelites** were to bring **their tithes** to the Tabernacle because **the priests** and **Levites** had **no inheritance**. But today we have no Temple and no priesthood; however, we bring our tithes to our place of worship. That is the spirit of the mitzvah.

Six mitzvot touching on the question of purity are now given:



1. The virginity of an engaged woman (22:13-19): Suppose a man takes a wife and goes to her and then dislikes her, accuses her of shameful things and gives her a bad reputation by saying, “I took this woman, but when I came near her, I didn’t find her virginity.” On the marriage night, **the wise bride** provided **herself** with a **wedding cloth** that would be stained with **her** blood at the consummation of the marriage. That would be proof that **she** was indeed a virgin when **she** married. When such charges were made, the legal responsibility for defending **the young woman** rested on **her parents**, who could present **the marriage cloth** as evidence. **Then the father of the young woman is to take her and her mother is to bring out the signs of the young woman’s virginity to the city elders at the gate. The young lady’s father is to tell the elders, “I gave my daughter to this man as a wife, but he hates her.”** Indeed, he has accused her of shameful things, saying, “I didn’t find your daughter’s virginity.” Yet **these are the signs of my daughter’s virginity.’ They are to spread the wedding cloth before the elders of the city** as evidence.

The full proceedings of the court are not described. However, when it was determined, in this case, that **the man** was guilty of laying false charges, **he** was to be punished. **The elders of that city are to take the man and punish him. Then they are to fine him 100 pieces of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought an evil name on a virgin of Isra’el. Then she is to be his wife - he may not send her away all his days (22:13-19).** No faithful **woman** would want **her** reputation blemished or **her** future destroyed just because of a hateful **man’s** lie. In that case, **the elders** would beat **the husband**, fine **him** twice **the bride price (verses 19 and 29)**, the equivalent of ten years’ wages, and order that **he** could never divorce **her**. This mitzvah punished **the man** and protected **the woman**.⁴⁸⁷

2. Parents lying about their daughters virginity (22:20-21): But if this thing is true - that the signs of virginity were not found in the young lady, then they are to bring the young woman out to the door of her father’s house. They brought **her** there

because that's where **she** was living when **she** had **sinned**, and **the father**, who had to vouch for **his daughter's** virginity, lied to **her** prospective **husband**. **And the men of her city are to stone her with stones to death, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Isra'el, to behave like a prostitute in her father's house.** The location of the execution emphasized the shame resting on the family. Those **parents** could never walk out of **their** front door again without seeing the place where **their daughter** had been **stoned to death**. **So, you are to purge the evil from your midst (22:20-21).** **She** had not only disgraced **her** family, but had brought shame upon **the** entire **nation** as well. We hear this phrase many times in the study of **the Torah**. One that is repeated seven times from **Chapters 13 to 24, "You will purge the evil from your midst" (13:6, 17:7, 19:19, 21:21, 22:21, 22:24, 24:7).**

3. Adultery (22:22): Suppose a man is found lying with a married woman (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Gq - The Woman Caught in the Act of Adultery**). **Then both of them are to die - the man who lay with the woman and the woman** (see **Br - Do Not Commit Adultery**). A Jewish **girl engaged** to be married was considered to be a **man's wife** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ap - Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son**), and if **she** had intercourse in a city, it was considered **adultery** and **she** was **stoned**. This was true even if the intercourse was more like **rape**, for **she** could have **cried out** for help. Even if nobody came in time to rescue **her**, **her** cries were evidence that **she** wasn't cooperating in the act. **Her** silence would have been implied consent.⁴⁸⁸ Now all human societies, including **Isra'el's** ancient Near East neighbors, had sanctions to protect whatever the marital arrangements are customary there. But why was **adultery** treated so prominently, and given such severe punishment, in the TaNaKh?

Adultery was a crime against **ADONAI** as much as it was a crime against the relationship between **God** and **His people Isra'el**; and it was a crime against that relationship as much as it was an attack upon the social basis on which it rested. Any attack on the stability of the household unit was a potential threat to the nation's relationship with **YHVH**. The legal and prophetic view of **adultery** can be clearly seen by the Wisdom literature, which characteristically looks to the consequences of such affairs, and, in addition to its attack against **Ha'Shem**, observes the disastrous social effects on the family and the covenant community (**Proverbs 2:16-19, 5:1-23, 6:23-35, 7:1-27**). Wisdom also offers the first step toward **Yeshua's** radical view of the roots of **the sin** of **adultery** in lustful looks (**Proverbs 6:25; Job 31:1**). **So, you are to purge the evil from Isra'el (22:22).**⁴⁸⁹

*Dear Holy Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** set the example for **Your** children by your being perfectly holy. Praise **You** that holiness to **You** is much more than outward*

appearances. The attitude of the heart is what **You** judge. **You have heard it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder, and whoever commits murder shall be subject to judgment." But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, "Raca" shall be subject to the council; and whoever says, "You fool!" shall be subject to fiery Gehenna (Matthew 5:21-22).**

Yeshua clearly states that **adultery** is committed not only by outward physical action, but by the heart. **You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I tell you that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).** Praise **You** that **Your Holy Ruach** lives in all believers (**Romans 8:9**) and is there to help. **No temptation has taken hold of you except what is common to mankind. But God is faithful - He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can handle. But with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so you will be able to endure it (First Corinthians 10:13).** Thank **You** for being such a wonderful **Father** and for always being with your children. **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5c).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and **His** power of resurrection. Amen

4. The rape of an engaged woman (22:23-27): Suppose there is a young woman who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her. Then you are to bring them both out to the gate of that city and stone them with stones to death - the young woman because she did not cry out in the town, and the man because he humiliated his neighbor's wife. So, you are to purge the evil from your midst (22:23-24). However, an engaged woman attacked in the country could cry out and not be helped because nobody was there to hear and come to her rescue. But if the man finds the engaged woman in the field, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her is to die. But to the young woman you are to do nothing, she was given the benefit of doubt - there is no sin in the young woman deserving of death. For this matter is the same as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him - for he found her in the field, the engaged woman cried out, and there was no one to save her (22:25-27). Nothing is said about her future wedding, for perhaps her fiancé wouldn't want to marry her if she had lost her virginity. About this, **Moshe** is silent.

The rape of a young virgin (22:28-29): Suppose a man finds a young virgin who is not engaged, grabs her forcefully and lies with her, and they are discovered. Then the man who lay with her is to give to the young woman's father 50 pieces of silver

because the exchange of gifts and dowry went along with the marriage, **and she is to be his wife, if the father** consented to it, since **he has humiliated her - he may not send her away all his days (22:28-29)**. Although unspoken in this passage, **the father** would hold the same right to decide who **his daughter married** as described in **Exodus 22:16-17**. **If her father** was so angry that he **absolutely refused to give her to him, he still** had to pay the **bride-price for virgins**. Even with that, **the young virgin** would no longer attract another potential bridegroom, unless **he** was willing to endure **the humiliation** of the town in which **he** lived. Therefore, for **a Hebrew woman**, it normally resulted in a kind of living death (see the commentary on **the Life of David Dh - Amnon and Tamar**). No husband, no children. This would have been a great shame in **Isra'el** even though **she** did nothing wrong. Presumably **the daughter** would make **her** feelings known to **her father**. It would obviously be an extremely difficult choice for her . . . but a choice nonetheless.

5. Sex with a stepmother (22:30): A man is not to take his father's wife. This mitzvah probably specifies that **a man** may not have **sexual** relationships with **his step-mother**, rather than **his** birth-mother. **Leviticus 18:7-8** regarded such a marriage as incestuous, and **Leviticus 20:11** condemned them both to death. This **sin** was also among those condemned on Mount Ebal: **Cursed is the one who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's nakedness (27:20)**. For **a man** to have **sexual** intercourse with **a woman** who had enjoyed such intimacy with **his** own **father** was viewed as the same as having **exposed his father's nakedness (22:30)**. Apparently this was **the sin of the man** in the **Corinthian** church who needed to be disciplined: **It is actually reported that among you there is sexual immorality, and such immorality as is not even reported among the pagans - that someone has his father's wife (First Corinthians 5:1)**.