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Purity in Public Worship

23: 1-8

Purity in public worship DIG: Which non-Israelites could enter the worshipping assembly? Who is excluded, and why? How did Ruth, a Moabitess, and the great grandmother of King David, end up being included in the genealogy of Yeshua (Matthew 1:5)? Why were foreigners excluded? Why treat the Ammonites and the Moabites differently than the Edomites and the Egyptians? What will happen to these four countries in the far eschatological future?

REFLECT: Who seems to be excluded from your place of worship? Who is most welcomed? Why? What guidelines does this chapter give believers for inclusion and exclusion? How has Yeshua changed the “membership” of the worshipping assembly? What do you learn about hospitality from these verses? How do you feel about the mercy shown to Edom and Egypt during the near historical future, and the judgment shown to Edom in the far eschatological future? Why was Edom ultimately left as a smoldering wasteland inhabited with demons during the Millennial Kingdom?

Ha'Shem had the right to determine who could enter His holy nation.

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.

*Dear Wise and Great Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** loving control all who may enter **Your** holy heaven. **Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many.***

How narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and those who find it are few (Matthew 7:13-14)? Praise You for opening the door to heaven to all who love You (Matthew 22:37-38) thru the sacrificial death of Yeshua Messiah (Second Corinthians 5:21).

Yet though **You** open heaven's door, it is not open for just anyone who wants to walk in it into heaven. Not even by doing many good deeds in **Your** name can someone enter heaven. **Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:21-23)! Those who love You will make You their Lord and willing confess You as their Lord, and they will joyfully enter heaven's gates. For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all - richly generous to all who call on Him (Romans 10:9-12).**

You are merciful and gracious to provide righteousness for all who love **You**. **You** are wise to deny salvation to those who deny your Lordship of their lives. **He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).** I love **You** and look forward to worshipping and praising you for all eternity! In **Yeshua's** holy name and **His** power of resurrection. Amen



It was a privilege to be a member of the Jewish nation and share in the blessings of **God's**

covenant. The word **community** here, refers to the worshipping assembly, and not the nation as a whole. **Gentiles** could live within **Israelite** territory, but that didn't give **them** the right to share in the feasts and other religious events. **Gentiles** who submitted to circumcision and confessed **YHVH** as the true and living **God** could become proselytes, but some of **them** were excluded for various reasons.⁴⁹⁰

Like the mitzvot of uncleanness (**Leviticus Chapters 12-15**), these did not exclude an individual because of his or her own specific moral sin. Rather they had a teaching, or symbolic function. Furthermore, exclusion from the worshipping community did not prevent an individual from believing in **ADONAI** and being one of the righteous of the TaNaKh. The treatment of **Ruth** is a good example of this. **Her** treatment by **Boaz**, along with **the** other **Israelites** of Bethlehem demonstrates that the mention of **Moabites** here was never meant to exclude one who said: **Your people will be my people, and your God my God (Ruth 1:6)**. It may be that a reason for her acceptance, and eventually her inclusion within the genealogy of David, is that her people showed hospitality to the family of Elimelech and Naomi in their need and distress.⁴⁹¹

Eunuchs (23:1): No one with crushed or cut-off genitals is to enter the community of ADONAI (23:1). Priests laboring under any personal defect were not allowed to officiate in the public service; they might be employed in some inferior duties about the sanctuary but could not offer any sacrifices (**Leviticus 21:16-23**). Therefore, the men entering **the nation** had to be free from this defect. The practice of castration in the ancient Near East was sometimes done for entry into particular forms of government service. But **eunuchs** might have been barred because self-inflicted castration was a feature of certain pagan religious rites that **Isra'el** utterly rejected.⁴⁹² The prophet **Isaiah**, however, looked into **the far eschatological future** when **eunuchs** would be welcomed into the Kingdom and be blessed of **God** (see the commentary on **Acts Bb - An Ethiopian Asks about Isaiah 53**). We can rejoice today that physical blemishes and limitations are not a barrier to faith in **Yeshua Messiah** and participation in the blessing of the B'rit Chadashah.⁴⁹³

Illegitimate children: (23:2): No one born of forbidden relations (Hebrew *mamzer*, meaning *incest*) **is to enter the community of ADONAI**. The exact definition of a *mamzer* is not clear, but it could refer to children born of incestuous relationships (**22:29**), those born to cultic prostitutes (**23:17-18**), or the offspring of a marriage between an **Israelite** and a foreigner (**7:3**). In that case, the children would have been born into a pagan religion, and therefore would be an abomination in the eyes of **the Israelites** and **YHVH**. A person, or **his descendants**, in this category could never (meant by the figure of speech **even to the tenth generation**) **enter the community of ADONAI (23:2)**. Again, the stringent

punishment inflicted on such a person would help deter **Israelites** from performing such acts, or entering a marriage with anyone who had.⁴⁹⁴

The Ammonites and Moabites (23:3-6): The **Ammonites** and **Moabites** are also permanently barred from participation in worshipping assembly. **No Ammonite or Moabite is to enter the community of ADONAI - even to the tenth generation** (an expression meaning *forever*) **none belonging to them is to enter the community of ADONAI forever.** The **Ammonites** and **Moabites** were the descendants of the incestuous relationships between **Lot** and **his two daughters** (see the commentary on **Genesis Fb - Let's Get Our Father to Drink Wine and then Lie With Him**). They were banned from the worshipping assembly because of **their** treatment of **Isra'el** during **her** wilderness wanderings. **They did not meet you with bread and water on the way when you came out from Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam son of Beor from Petor of Aram-naharaim to curse you. But ADONAI your God refused to listen to Balaam, and ADONAI your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because He loves you. You are never to seek their shalom or welfare all your days (23:6-8).**

In contrast to customary ancient Near Eastern hospitality, **the Ammonites** offered no common courtesies to **the Israelites** when **they** passed through that region. Even worse, **the Moabites** hired **Balaam** to **curse God's people (Numbers 22:5-6)**. Though **their** efforts were unsuccessful (**Numbers 23:5-12** and **26, 24:13**). Not only were **the Ammonites** and **Moabites** excluded from participation in **YHVH's** assembly, but **the Israelites** were also prohibited from entering into any political or economic relationships with **them**.⁴⁹⁵ These facts confirm that from the very beginning, **they** had been, and would continue to be, adversaries of **the LORD** and **His people**. These verses are not mitzvot style, but are woven in among these to explain the reason for the exclusion of **Ammon** and **Mo'ab**.

The Edomites and the Egyptians (23:7-9): The treatment of **the Edomite people** was more lenient, they could enter the worshipping assembly in **the third generation**, since **they** were descended from **Esau (Genesis 36:40-43)**, **Jacob's brother**. **You are not to detest an Egyptian, for you were an outsider in his land. The children born to them - the third generation - may enter the community of ADONAI (23:7-9)**. It is notable that **Isra'el's** historical memory dates back to before **their** slavery in **Egypt**, and rewarded the original hospitality offered by Pharaoh to **Jacob** and **his** family who came down to **Egypt** for grain (see the commentary on **Genesis Kp - Jacob Settled in Goshen**). Therefore, for varying reasons, in **the near historical future**, **the Edomites** and **the Egyptians** would be treated differently than **the Ammonites** and **the Moabites**.

But in **the far eschatological future**, things would be very different. During the Messianic Kingdom, because of the grace of **God, Mo'ab**, or present-day central Jordan, will suffer destruction during the Great Tribulation, but it will not be total (see the commentary on [Jeremiah D1 - The Punishment and Restoration of Mo'ab](#)). Those who survive will repent and a faithful remnant will live during the Messianic Kingdom (see the commentary on [Isaiah Dw - The Hope of Mo'ab's Salvation](#)). Therefore, peace will come between **Mo'ab** and **Isra'el** by means of a *partial destruction* that will lead to a national regeneration of **Mo'ab**. Consequently, there will be a saved nation called **Mo'ab** during the Millennial Kingdom.

Ammon, or modern northern Jordan, will also suffer *partial destruction* during the Great Tribulation, and become a possession of **Isra'el**. But **their** destruction will not be total. A believing remnant will survive and believe that **Yeshua** is **the Messiah** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Dm - A Message About Ammon](#)). Consequently, peace will come between **Isra'el** and northern Jordan by the means of a *partial destruction*, followed by **their** conversion. As a result, there will be a saved nation in the Messianic Kingdom called **Ammon**.

To summarize, peace will come between **Isra'el** and the three parts of modern Jordan by means of destruction, but not all to the same degree. **Edom**, in southern Jordan, will suffer *total destruction* by the people of **Isra'el** (**Ezeki'el 25:12-14**), and there will be no nation called **Edom** in the Millennial Kingdom (see the commentary on [Isaiah Gi - Edom's Streams Will Be Turned into Pitch](#)). Founded by the descendants of **Jacob's** twin brother Esau, it is especially condemned for **their** hatred of **Isra'el** (**Jeremiah 49:7-13; Ezeki'el 35:1-9; Obadiah 5-21**). **Edom's** sin against **Isra'el** is the greatest because **she** betrayed **her** family. Both **Mo'ab**, or central modern Jordan, and **Ammon**, or northern modern Jordan, will suffer *partial destruction* but a believing remnant will survive in both countries. There will be a nation of **Mo'ab** and a nation of **Ammon** in the Millennial Kingdom. Both of **these nations** are descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham, and therefore, are distantly related by blood.

Lastly, peace will come between **Isra'el** and **Egypt** *initially* by means of *destruction*. Because of **Egypt's** ancient hatred of **Isra'el**, they will initially suffer the same fate as **Edom** and be desolate for the first forty years of the Millennial Kingdom (**Ezeki'el 29:8-16**). But after that, **they** will be regathered and a national regeneration of **Egypt** will take place. So, peace will *eventually* come between **Isra'el** and **Egypt** by means of *conversion* (see the commentary on [Isaiah Ef - The LORD Will Make Himself Known to the Egyptians](#)).