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Purity in the Military Camp

23: 9-14

Purity in the military camp DIG: How were the Israelite soldiers to treat the land in the military camp? Why? What did the Israelites carry into battle that the pagan nations did not? What is the difference between uncleanness and sin? How are they the same? How did ADONAI walk in the midst of the military camp? What did it mean to the Israelites if the Ark was captured?

REFLECT: As you put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-17) every day, and go out to fight for His holiness and Kingdom in the world, how pure is your camp? Do you live your life as if ADONAI is always with you, seeing and hearing everything you do and say? Why? Why not? Is there anywhere you can go and escape His presence? Is that a good thing? Why? How do you keep your family, church, or community clean?

The purity in the military camp outside of Isra'el needed to be treated as pure as the land inside Isra'el. For ADONAI, the Holy One was in their midst.

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.

This section applied to **Isra'el's soldiers** when **they** were encamped away from home. The basic principle was that **they** would treat **their camp** as **they** would treat **their** land at home, for **ADONAI** was with **them**, even on the battlefield, walking in **their** midst. The idol-worshipping nations believed that they left their gods behind when they went to another country. But **Isra'el's God** was always with **them**, for **He is the God** of the earth. If a

soldier had become unclean at home, **he** would have to leave the community, wash, and return the next day, and that same rule applied in the military **camp**.⁴⁹⁶

*Dear heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that you are with **Your** children wherever they go. We don't have **You** with us only when we are worshipping or reading **Your** Word. From the time we wake up in the morning till when we go to sleep at night and wherever we go during the day, we are so thankful that **You** are with us! **ADONAI, You searched me and know me. Whenever I sit down or stand up, You know it. You discern my thinking from afar. You observe my journeying and my resting and You are familiar with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, Adonai, You know all about it. You hemmed me in behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from Your Ruach? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to heaven, You are there, and if I make my bed in Sheol, look, You are there too. If I take the wings of the dawn and settle on the other side of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely darkness covers me, night keeps light at a distance from me," even darkness is not dark for You, and night is as bright as day—darkness and light are alike (Psalms 103:1-12). We love to make time during our day to talk to **You**, to praise **You** and to love on **You**. **You** are the most wonderful **Father**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and **His** power of resurrection. Amen***

When you go out as an army camp against your enemies, you are to guard yourself from every evil thing. The noun **evil thing** (Hebrew: *ra*), has a wide semantic range, but generally doesn't refer to something that is morally **evil** as to something that is *unclean* or *unbecoming*. In the first example: **If there is among you a man who is not clean from an involuntary nighttime emission (Leviticus 15:16), which made him unclean, he is to go outside the camp - he may not reenter the camp. Now toward evening he is to bathe in water, and when the sun sets, he may reenter the camp.** In the second example: **There is to be a place at hand for you outside the camp, and you are to go there outside. You are to have a shovel for yourself among your weapons. When you relieve yourself, you are to dig a hole first and afterwards cover your excrement (23:9-13).**

The reason for such ritual cleanliness is now given: **For ADONAI your God walks in the midst of your camp, to rescue you and to give your enemies over to you. Therefore, your camp must be holy, so that He does not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you (23:14). The LORD walked in the midst of the Israelite camp as the commander of ADONAI's army (Joshua 5:14). As the God who will go before them**

and fight for **them**, **He** travels with **them** everywhere **they** go as **His** army.

Even though **God's** presence is often associated with **the Ark of the Covenant** (see the commentary on [Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace](#)), it is not necessary to conclude that **the Ark** traveled with the fighting men of **Isra'el** to every battleground. There is no evidence in later biblical passages that **the Ark** was transported with the army when it conducted military campaigns. The use of the verb **walks** (Hebrew: from the root *halak*) equates **YHVH's walking** among and with **Isra'el** with the exercise of **His** sovereignty (**Genesis 3:8; Job 22:14**). Wherever **God walks, He walks** with absolute authority.⁴⁹⁷

And because **YHVH's** presence in **the camp** was **the Ark**, no unholy thing could be tolerated. **Anything indecent** could turn **the LORD** and **His** promise of victory away from **Isra'el's** military camp. On the one hand, in the days before **the Ark** had a permanent resting place, it was the visible sign of the presence of **God** when **Isra'el** went to war. When it arrived in **the Israelite camp**, **the Philistines** said: **God has come into the camp (First Samuel 4:7)**. On the other hand, the capture of **the Ark** was regarded as the loss of **God's** presence when it was on the battlefield. When **Eli** learned that **the Ark** had been taken by **the pagan Philistines**, **he fell backward from his seat, broke his neck, and died**. Now **his** pregnant daughter-in-law, **Phinehas' wife**, learned that **the Ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, crouched down and gave birth to a son because she was seized with labor pains. As she was dying, she named the child**, appropriately enough, **Ichabod** (Hebrew from the root *I-kabod*, meaning *there is no glory*), **saying: The Sh'khinah glory** (see the commentary on [Isaiah Ju - The Glory of the LORD Rises Upon You](#)) **has departed from Isra'el, for the Ark of God has been taken (First Samuel 4:18-22)**. So, the presence of **the Ark** in **the camp** signified that **God** was present.

No matter where we go, **ADONAI** goes with us, and we must not think that we can disobey **Him** and get away with it. **God** encourages us to "keep away from everything impure." Whether we're on vacation or away from home on business, **the Lord** watches us and desires us to be as careful in **the light** of day or in **the darkness** of night.⁴⁹⁸ **David** said it this way: **Where can I go from Your Ruach? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to heaven, You are there, and if I make my bed in sh'ol, look, You are there too. If I take the wings of dawn and settle on the other side of the sea, even there Your hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely darkness covers me, night keeps light at a distance from me," even darkness is not dark for You, for night is as bright as day - darkness and light are alike (Psalm 139:7-12)**.