

DEUTERONOMY

Lesson 31 - Chapter 23 Continued

We concluded last week after discussing only the first couple of verses of Deuteronomy chapter 23, and there is so much here in this chapter that we still won't finish it today.

Rabbi Baruch recently published a superb article on our TorahClass.com website entitled "Jewish Identity and the Torah", in which he deals with just how modern day Believers (Jewish and gentile)) are to consider the application of the Torah Law to our lives. And he does a superb job with it. He uses different terms than I typically use to explain but the result is essentially the same. Whereas I say "God-principles" that undergird the laws, he will speak of the "spirit" of the Law as opposed to the letter. Therefore as we go through Moses' Sermon on the Mount (here in Moab) keep in mind that just as he was reviewing and in some cases explaining the principles behind these many commands because Israelite cultural was about to evolve from life as Bedouin wanderers to that of a settled people, so it is that we must adapt the principles behind these commands to the much more advanced era in which we live. But always it is the spirit of the Law that matters, and therefore it is only the Holy Spirit living within us who can guide us to carry these out in a way that is in harmony with the Lord's will. But as Yeshua said in His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:17 -20), adapting these new Laws to the evolving state of societies in order to retain the spirit of the Law NEVER means that the letter of the Law is dead and gone, abolished, or even changed.

Verse 2 began a list of who should be excluded from the *kahal* (the Assembly) of Israel and we found that we should probably not take the word assembly to mean "every element of Israelite society that together loosely forms the nation of Israel". Rather it is more appropriate to see the meaning of "assembly" as full-fledged and wholehearted citizens of Israel. As you can imagine over the centuries there was a great and ongoing debate about just who could be included as a part of the "assembly" and who could not. Who could have any and every right afforded to an Israelite and who could only enjoy some (or none) of those rights.

We should not be surprised at this concept of an unequal range of rights for residents of Israel. As Americans our laws create a number of distinctions in our society about what status we hold as residents within our society. If you are 2nd or 3rd generation American, you are a full citizen with all the rights accorded. If you are a new immigrant and have obtained a Green Card as a means of legal residence but are not a citizen, then you have many rights and duties of a citizen but not all; you may not participate in elections of public officials or in military defense of our nation for instance. If you are here without documentation (an illegal alien) then

even though you may in many ways benefit from (or in some manner contribute to) the economics of our society you cannot vote, be in the military, get Social Security, and theoretically you can't even have a job. There is a status in between holding a Green Card and being an illegal whereby you have some rights but not others. Ancient Israel was quite similar in its structure and the Torah explains that structure.

Thus from the time Israel conquered Canaan, through the era of the Judges, then the brief period under David and Solomon when Israel was a single unified nation, to the period of the Divided Kingdom and the Kings, the exiles to Assyria and Babylon, and then finally to the NT era, the criteria for being admitted to Israel (as the Kingdom of God) and bearing the status of a full citizen changed and evolved.

At the earliest time there was no formal procedure for a foreigner to join Israel. There was no committee, no paperwork, and no ritual for inclusion or conversion. How did a foreigner become an Israelite? Primarily by assimilation. A man and his family might move to one of the Israelite tribal territories, slowly adopt Israelite cultural, and in time gain acceptability as good people. Perhaps they would join in some visceral way the Biblical Feasts, keep Shabbat, and stop openly worshipping whatever god they brought with them.

Their children might begin life knowing nothing but a Hebrew way of life, playing with the Hebrew children and simply blending in. Maybe a Hebrew man would marry one of these children and soon they would have children who were now seen as more Israelite than anything else. Another generation passes and no remnant of their foreign identity would remain nor would the new generation have any conscious identity with their foreign ancestors. They were merely, now, Israelites. As a matter of routine the 3rd and 4th generation former immigrants had their boy babies circumcised (because that's what everyone did) and by all outward appearances there was really no discernable difference between them and the descendants of Jacob.

Later though, Sages and eventually Rabbis began to see the admission of foreigners into Israel as more of a legal matter that needed official supervision; therefore they came up with rigid guidelines. For instance a Hebrew man was permitted to marry a foreign girl who lived in one of the Israelite tribal territories, and such a thing instantly made that girl an Israelite. But in general a Hebrew girl was discouraged from marrying a foreign man (who lived in Israel) because this now made her LESS of a Hebrew and put her on a possible path to giving up her Israelite identity. The product of their marriage, their offspring, became more problematic. What were these children in the sight of Israelite society; Hebrews or foreigners?

This dilemma (and how each generation of Israelites dealt with these problems of nationality, citizenship, ethnic identity and so on) explains the fuzziness of the term we encounter in the 3rd verse of Deuteronomy 23 where it typically says in English that a "misbegotten" or in some

Bibles a “bastard” may not become a part of the assembly of Israel. The word that is being translated is the Hebrew *mamzer*.

Let’s re-read a portion of Deuteronomy chapter 23 beginning at verse 3.

RE-READ DEUTERONOMY 23:3 – 19

Here’s the thing: scholars have a real problem dating the precise regulations listed in Deuteronomy 23 for who can be excluded from Israel and who must be accepted. And among these regulations is question of exactly WHO and WHAT is a *mamzer*? The generally accepted opinion among Jewish and Christian scholars is that while what we read in Deuteronomy may have originally come from roughly the time of Moses (but more than likely from the time of his predecessor Joshua and shortly thereafter) the EXAMPLES given (along with precise nationalities) as to exactly who can join Israel and who can’t might have come a little later and may have evolved a bit over time. But understand; whether these scholars are right or wrong about the date the underlying principle of this commandment can rather easily be extracted.

Let me remind you of something that we sometimes prefer to ignore. Believers (especially Evangelical Christians) say with conviction that the Bible is infallible and literal and we should take it exactly as it is and that is because it is trustworthy. I completely agree with that; however what that actually means and how it is manifested is a somewhat more complex matter. In this room today I suspect we’ll have at least a dozen different Bible versions (translations) present. When you hold them up in parallel (and at times I’ll compare up to as many as 8 or 10 versions simultaneously, even in various languages, for study purposes) there can be some rather significant variations. So of these which is the infallible version?

When comparing the original KJV to the more modern Life Application Bible or the NIV on the surface the differences can be almost alarming. But in reality the issue is more in the way that the English language has mutated rather than in translators attempting to assert entirely different meanings to the same passage (although in some cases they are miles apart in meaning). In other cases it’s that the names of nations or cities have changed over the centuries, the older name being a relic and long since abandoned, so the latest name for the city or nation is inserted in place of the older name that no longer is in use. Does that mean that the Bible has been fraudulently changed? Of course not. For the average person they’ll get much more meaning by calling Bethel, Bethel, instead of it’s more ancient name, Luz. So it is natural that as time went on, and the Bible was recopied, sometimes the place names would change to the more modern ones current in that day and the names of nations regarded as examples of evil nations might change because the nation as mentioned might be extinct.

So with that concept in mind, what is this **mamzer** who is excluded from Israel? Well I can tell you for certain that it's not at all about being a child born from unwed parents, a bastard. Rather a **mamzer** is the product of an unlawful union (unlawful according to the Torah) of any kind. A **mamzer** is the result of some kind of an illicit mixture. And as my detour hopefully explained, precisely what combination of people and circumstances defined a prohibited mixture evolved over time.

In later rulings by Hebrew religious authorities there were 3 presumptions made about the first 9 verses of Deuteronomy that helped them in determining how to carry out this law in its proper spiritual intent. And it was using these 3 presumptions that they made and modified their various rulings about **mamzerim** (the plural of **mamzer**) over the ages.

The first presumption was that at the core of these verses is the assumption that it is dealing with marriage. Secondly that ANY foreigner may covert to Judaism without exception. Thirdly that the "assembly" of Israel should be defined as full-fledged citizens of Israel who are citizens BECAUSE they were native-born Israelites who were the products of legitimate marriages.

And as a result of these 3 presumptions the law concerning the definition of WHO was a **mamzer** and what their status in Israel could be went something like this: The men covered by the restriction may NOT marry a native-born Hebrew girl however they are permitted to marry a girl who was formerly a foreigner but has converted to Judaism. Further a **mamzer** living in Israel may marry another **mamzer**.

So a Jewish man could marry a foreign girl PROVIDED she was a convert, but a Jewish girl could NOT marry a male who became Jewish by means of conversion. If any of these regulations were violated the resulting children were **mamzerim** but they certainly weren't bastards. Rather they just weren't the products of unions of people that the Hebrew religious authorities deemed as Torah authorized. Therefore as the children of religiously unauthorized unions the children were deemed to be **mamzerim**. Let me say that in another way: it's NOT that the Hebrews decided that the marriage of, say, a Jewish girl to a foreign man was illegal and therefore when they had children it would be as though the girl was pregnant out of wedlock. Rather it's that this is a flawed union that should not have occurred under the ideal that the Lord has established and therefore the children of that union cannot be assigned the status of full citizens of Israel. The children aren't shunned; they just don't have the rights of the other children who ARE the products of authorized marriages.

Therefore this law of the **mamzer** in verse 3 connects with the law of verse 4 whereby no foreigner from Moab or Ammon can become a full citizen of Israel. Nor can any descendant of a Moabite or Ammonite become a full citizen of Israel for 10 generations. Why is this? Because it is said that during the Exodus the Moabites and Ammonites would not assist Israel with food

and water. Not only that but they hired a sorcerer, Bil'am, to come and put a curse on Israel (which as it turned out, he didn't do). In fact the Moabites and Ammonites are to be seen as people that Israel should have nothing to do with. Israel shouldn't necessarily go after them to harm them but neither should they seek them as friends and allies and certainly not as potential family members.

Let me say bluntly that these verses have created all kinds of problems. First is that most scholars take the admonition that no Moabite or Ammonite can become a citizen of Israel for 10 generations to actually be a poetic way of saying forever. However apparently the ancient Hebrews didn't see it that way because in time Moab and Ammon became friendly to Israel and intermarriage was common. Second is if the 10 MEANS precisely 10 (and not forever) when does the count of 10 generations begin? Does it count when Israel conquers Canaan? Does it count when an Ammonite or Moabite first moves to Israel as a resident alien? Another issue is about Ammon and Moab not meeting the Israelites with food and water. Does this mean that they refused to sell these essentials to Israel or that they didn't simply offer them as a gift?

It is better to look at the underlying principles than to get involved in the precise names and numbers in this particular matter because we may never know exactly what this meant to the mind of the original writer. The first thing to understand is that (as the 2nd of the 3 presumptions of these verses I told you about earlier stated) it is not that Ammonites and Moabites are to be excluded from living in Israel. There is no racial objection nor are they to be treated differently from any other resident alien living among the Hebrews in the Promised Land. It's only that their status is limited (at least for several generations). A general principle of Torah is that resident aliens are to be treated with respect and given full protection under the law. This went for Moabites and Ammonites as well.

But perhaps at the bedrock level of understanding why some foreigners are accepted into Israel and others are rejected is this: people who are involved in illicit unions or are the product of illicit unions or that are not physically whole (eunuchs is the example in this chapter) are rejected as candidates for joining Israel. Perfection (or wholeness) in God's eyes is the requirement for holiness in both the OT and the NT, and holiness is bestowed by God upon all members of Israel. Priests were especially required to be whole and without physical defects; a priest who lost part of a finger in an accident or who had a limb shrivel up due to disease could no longer officiate at the Tabernacle. Messiah says in the last verse of Matthew 5 during His Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore, be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect".

The Lord God used these examples that we are reading about in the Torah as illustrations of the need for perfection in order to be admitted to the Kingdom of God. The point the Father was always making was that it was trust in Him and the acceptance of His grace that clothed us in His perfection and it was this that made us acceptable in His eyes. Even for the Israelites it was NOT righteous behavior that won you acceptance into the Kingdom of God, it was grace.

But after you were “graced” into the Kingdom, it was observing Gods laws and commands (in their spirit) that KEPT you in the Kingdom and maintained your harmony withy God. Upon the advent of Yeshua it is He that is to be our unstained garment of righteousness that we put on as a sign our acceptance into the Kingdom. Acceptance or rejection in to the Kingdom has at all times, and in all eras, been a spiritual issue (despite terribly misconceived and false doctrines to the contrary).

The reason for the Ammonites and Moabites having this special restriction seems to be historic in nature; when Israel needed help they didn't given them any. Instead Ammon refused to let Israel pass through and Moab tried to have Israel cursed. Further they apparently **sold** Israel the essentials of life that they needed without offering it to them as the guests they were. This was a great offense. Understand that in the Bible era when a guest came to you (and usually the guest was a stranger) it was the custom to OFFER them food and drink as a friend. Certainly the guest would have offered to pay for it as a courteous response (and we actually see this offer by Moses in the Torah to pay for food and water) but then a little Kabuki dance would have occurred in which these courtesies fly back and forth until the guest either appropriately accepts the hospitality of the host or if there are too many guests (and it would be unfair to expect these strangers to GIVE them needed supplies for free) the host reluctantly accepted money.

Ammon and Moab insulted the Lord's people and therefore the Lord. So the wonderful blessing of joining with Israel was held back from Moab and Ammon. Don't ever think this idea, or this example, of what Yehoveh expects of gentile nations towards Israel eventually left Jewish thought or God's thought. Listen to Jesus' statement:

^{CJB} Matthew 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you made me your guest,

You see, so many of the passages of the NT and the sayings of Yeshua actually recall the ancient historic happenings of Israel's past that remained embedded in Hebrew cultural fabric. Just as this statement of Messiah in the book of Matthew so eloquently says, those who the Father has blessed are welcome to come and take their inheritance (as part of Israel). What are the criteria for being blessed? “I was hungry, you fed me; I was thirsty, you gave me drink; I was a stranger, you welcomed me”. This is why Torah Class and Seed of Abraham Ministries actively and constantly gives to, and cares for, God's people in Israel: it is our duty (and joy) as Believers. Ammon and Moab did none of this for God's people so they are excluded from joining God's people and from participating in the inheritance reserved for God's people, Israel.

Certainly Yeshua used this as an illustration of welcoming HIM but the point is that as gentiles we will have much about our actions judged (especially on a nationalistic level) by how we treat Israel. I've said on numerous occasions that we can boil down the way the Lord will judge every man as based on two things: our individual decision on Christ as our Salvation and on our national decision concerning our treatment of Israel.

As we've studied Torah now for quite some time, carefully examining the Word of God in context, what (now) would you suppose is the Lord's stance on that portion of the church who sides with the Arab and Muslim world against His people Israel? What do think is Yehoveh's position on Believers who could care less about Israel or about the Jewish people and their fate? How might we expect to be received when we stand before Him in heaven when we treat Israel essentially as did the Moabites and Ammonites?

Let's get back to this subject of the *mamzer* by pointing out something interesting: Ruth, an ancestor of Jesus, was a Moabite. And she married a Hebrew man, Boaz. Were their children *mamzerim*? No because she converted to the religion of the Hebrews (your God shall be my God, she said to Na'omi) and because it was permitted for a Hebrew man to marry a foreign woman who converted to the Hebrew belief. Ruth's marriage to Boaz is proof that the 10 generations of prohibition meant exactly that, and further that NO nation was given a blanket exclusion from joining Israel. The key to being allowed to join Israel is exactly as Ruth pronounced to her Hebrew mother-in-law: "Your God shall be my God **and** your people shall be my people".

As interesting is the exclusion of Ammon and Moab from Israel is the INCLUSION of Edom and Egypt! There indeed is mentioned a rather short-term temporary exclusion of 3 generations of Egyptians and Edomites, but afterward all restriction is removed. And though I'm sure many Israelites of Moses' era would argue with God's rationale for this somewhat unexpected acceptance of Edom and Egypt as candidates for joining Israel, His reasons are stated for us.

As for Edom it is because, "he is your brother". How is Edom a brother of Israel? Edom is another name for Esau. Edom means "the red" which is a kind of nickname for Esau (son of Isaac) who we are told had reddish hair and a ruddy complexion (generally much like King David would have). Esau's twin brother was Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel). So indeed Edom and Israel are brothers (fraternal twins) and the Lord intended on honoring this relationship.

Further even though what we generally remember about Esau and Jacob is how Jacob deceived Esau by taking his birthright, and then how Esau intended to kill Jacob for this fraud, they reconciled when Jacob returned to Canaan from Mesopotamia with 2 wives and a number of children and servants in tow. The Lord had promised Isaac that He would bless Esau.

Apparently this was sufficient for the nation of Edom to be forgiven for doing essentially the same thing to Israel that Ammon and Moab did; for Edom refused to let Israel pass through their land and forced them to march all the way around Edom on their way to the Promised Land.

As for Egypt, as unlikely as it would all seem on the surface, the Lord has reserved a special place in His heart for Egypt. In the end times Egypt will be viewed as somewhat better than the nations who surround Israel and will be given certain rewards. This is because it was in Egypt where Israel sojourned. Apparently the Lord is sort of balancing the great honor and respect that Egypt accorded Israel when it first arrived (with Joseph as the Vizier of Egypt) and for about ½ of their stay there, versus the hard oppression Egypt eventually forced upon Israel (during the last ½ of their time in Egypt) that led to Yehoveh rescuing them via Moses.

Now without doubt this decision about Egypt was a practical as well as ideal matter because thousands of Egyptians had attached themselves to Israel as they fled Egypt (so impressed were they with the God of Israel). What was to be their status, though? After a couple of generations (and perhaps the first 2 generations of Egyptians were part of the Wilderness journey) the 3rd generation can be admitted to Israel. Very likely the descendants of those Egyptians that accompanied Israel from Egypt, and who produced children and then died, were almost instantly made full citizens upon the conquering of the Promised Land.

The next several verses (10-15) switch topics and deals with Holy War. A little more specifically it deals with the military camp, which is essentially what Israel is at this point in history. Israel truly is God's army convened for Holy War. YHWH is the divine warrior leader and Israel is YHWH's troops. And since this is a war led by the Holy One the camp itself must be held in sanctity; therefore we get some rules about just how to do that. And the general principle is stated at the end of verse 10: ".....you are to guard yourself against anything bad (meaning evil)". This is referring to being sure that all of God's rules and ordinances are followed scrupulously.

The first rule is that of so-called nocturnal emissions; an inadvertent flow of semen by a man. When this happens to a man, especially in God's war camp, he must leave the camp until he is ritually purified. This is not some kind of strange superstition rather it is illustrative of a profound God-principle. I stated at the outset of the last couple of lessons that human sexuality is at the heart of this section of Moses' sermon and underlies the foundation of the entire Bible so just as a woman is declared impure by the onset of her monthly cycle in her reproductive system, so is a man declared impure by an unintended emission from his reproductive organ. In one case a human egg is rejected as not viable and in the other sperm is spontaneously ejected but without an opportunity to create new life.

Impurity happens to both the male and female in this case because of a *misuse* of God's

procreative system even if it's unavoidable... Therefore this is NOT called sin. However by definition this failure of procreation whereby not all eggs survive and not all sperm meant for fertilization are put to their intended good use, is the result of mankind's sinful nature and condition. Death of those ovum and sperm should never have been for they contain life, precious life. Therefore verse 11 declares that this man (this soldier) who had an emission must immediately leave the camp and go to a designated place (outside the camp). There he has what I call "a wash and a wait". He must purify himself by bathing in water and then wait until the sun goes down to re-enter the camp. Recall that a Hebrew day ends at sundown so essentially he must wait for the current day to end and the new day to begin before he can return, be cleansed and restored.

Sin would only occur if the soldier did NOT follow this procedure. This points out, again, that while sin and impurity are related they are not exactly the same thing and therefore we find the Biblical principle that while water is used for cleansing from impurity, only blood can atone for sin.

Please take notice of the principle of being sent away because of impurity but being allowed back once purified. Paul explains this principle of being separated but then being taken back by using a different metaphor, the Olive Tree in Romans 11, when he explains that although much of Israel became impure by not accepting Yeshua, should they change their minds they CAN be made pure and taken back. Turn to Romans 11 in your Bibles. This is a section that many of you are becoming more and more familiar with because it completely refutes an all too common doctrine that God has rejected Israel and replaced them with the gentile church. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 especially deal with this issue.

ROMANS 11:16-24

Just as the man with the nocturnal emission is removed from the camp of Israel because he is impure but can come back once he's cleansed in water, so it is for those branches (certain Hebrews) who were cut off the tree of Israel because they refused to accept Messiah and were thus deemed impure; they can return once they are cleansed by being immersed in the purity of Yeshua and atoned for by accepting His blood.

In Deuteronomy 23 verse 13 is a law that is of course both practical and a teaching tool. It is that people who need to relieve themselves are to go outside the camp to do so. They are to take some kind of a digging instrument, dig a hole, make their deposit and cover it up. To have exposed bodily waste inside the area of sanctity (the Holy War camp) where God "walks" is unthinkable. Now understand that the notion of God walking is used figuratively; it is meant in the sense of God's presence. In ancient times the owner of land "walks" his land as a symbol of possession and this mental picture is being expressed here.

Chapter 23 shifts gears yet again in verse 16 when it lays down the law of the fugitive slave. Contrary to all known laws of the Middle East in Bible times the Lord says that if a fugitive slave (by definition this would be a foreign slave who has run away from his foreign master) comes into any of Israel's tribal territories he is to receive asylum. In a nutshell this is a law that bans forcefully returning slaves to their masters. The idea is that a person who was being held against his will by a slave master (which typifies an evil force) but manages to escape and come to the land set apart for God's people, should never be rejected nor forced to return.

What a beautiful picture and pattern is set out before us. We as foreigners to God and His people escape our cruel slave master (Satan) and run to our Jewish Savior for sanctuary in His Kingdom. The rule is that not only must we be accepted but that the King of this Kingdom will never force us to return to our former slave master and to that former condition. Here in Deuteronomy 23 that spiritual principle is laid out in physical form so that we can understand it better.

Even more these escaped slaves must live freely among Israel and are not to be told where they can live and where they can't. They must not be ill treated nor shunned. In God's eyes they are just as valuable as those people who were natural-born free Israelites.

Now this next law in verse 18 is going to take some explaining because there is a lot of new understanding of what the primary subject addresses: that which is usually translated as a "cult prostitute". The law is that whatever a prostitute of either sex earns for their services is never to be offered to God as a vow payment or a sacrifice or a tithe. And such a thing is abhorrent to God because it is another example of illicit mixture. The money gained from this practice came from an unauthorized union; therefore the money (the fruit of that illegal union) is tainted and unacceptable.

We've talked before about how sex was often used in religious practices in pagan religions so let's take a couple of minutes to understand a little better just what that means. One of the reasons that the term Temple prostitute or cult prostitute is chosen as the English translation in this verse is because the Hebrew word used is **kedeshah**. Literally the word does NOT mean prostitute, rather it means "holy woman" or "priestess". Yet in the Hebrew culture this word took on a very derogative meaning partly because in Israel's priesthood system ONLY men could be priests and because this pagan female holy woman was by definition serving a false god or goddess. Nothing could be more indicative of an illicit union in every way so **kedeshah** eventually became an idiom for "prostitute" (one who engages in illicit unions for pay).

While to this point records of ancient times do not explicitly say that some of the female priests committed ritual sex for their gods, we do have plenty of pictographs that obviously indicate they do and some ancient narratives that also heavily imply this gross religious ritual. The most

common pictograph is of a goddess mating with a god for the purpose of creating a new god (their son) and there is every reason to assume that female priests would have sex with male priests as a kind of commemorative drama to reenact that event. What is equally as disgusting (maybe more) is that the evidence is that some male priests would dress up as, and take the role of, females and perform this same ritual with another male priest who took on the male role. Thus we have the reference to the wages of a dog, which was a common idiom that meant a homosexual male prostitute.

We have significant written evidence about the common connection between brothels and the various temples to the gods. The records of the incomparable Greek historian Herodotus give graphic and rather detailed accounts of how and why this system operated, and that it was modeled after long standing customs of the pagans. Basically there were two types of temple or cult prostitution systems: first, there indeed were houses of prostitution maintained by temple authorities (again let me emphasize I'm talking about PAGAN temples not the Hebrew Temple) as income producing businesses. The temple to the goddess Aphrodite in Corinth was well known as having a major portion of its income produced by its string of brothels. The second was that in some places young girls who were betrothed were required to serve as prostitutes because it was honoring to the gods since what they were doing was producing income for the god's priests.

Because in most Middle Eastern cultures (since time immemorial) prostitution was indeed seen as "the world's oldest profession" it was accepted as completely legitimate although not universally accepted. The temples saw it as an excellent opportunity to control a market that was quite lucrative. Basically the idea was that the pagan temple would attach a religious aura to a man spending his money in a brothel operated by the temple rather than a "private" one operated down the street. A customer and the prostitute both actually were made to feel as though they were doing something good.

With this overall understanding you can certainly see why God forbade such things for Israel, even to go so far as to say that the money gained from ANY kind of prostitution under any circumstances was never to be used for a holy purpose like tithing or paying a vow price to the Temple of Yehoveh.

Let me close with this thought. The problem is that there can be no more illicit mixture than taking gain that is ill gotten in the Lord's eyes and then turning around and offering it to HIM as a holy thing. Further this points out the problem of His people (whether Jew or Christian) thinking that we can somehow mix the things of the world with the things of the Lord and wind up with something that is good and righteous. Yeshua said to give unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to give unto God the things that are God's. That is simply the NT way of putting forth this idea of not trying to bring things that belong in the sphere of the world into union with anything within the sphere of God's Kingdom.

We'll finish this chapter next time.