**Laws for Human Relationships (continued)**

In Deuteronomy chapter 23, Moses continued with issuing laws, many of which had previously been given by him or God. He provided a list of people who were to be excluded from the assembly beginning with someone who was emasculated (a eunuch). It may have been a birth defect or an intentional castration which was sometimes done during a pagan ceremony and thus detestable to God. Next he prohibited any person born from a forbidden marriage which could have been an incestuous marriage or a marriage of an Israelite with a Canaanite. The KJV indicates also anyone born out of wedlock would be excluded. Ammonites and Moabites were prohibited down to the 10th generations. This was because those nations had the Israelites when they came out of Egypt and later hired Balaam to curse Israel. Moab and Annon were the 2 sons born to daughters of Lot through incestuous relations with their father. Finally, Moses allowed Edomites and Egypt beginning with the 3rd generation. The Edomites were descended from Esau and thus considered distant relatives. Several scholars believe that the term assembly refers to the elders and officers of Israel rather than the entire assembled nation as described in 5:22.

Next Moses addressed sanitary conditions in the camp, requiring latrines to be dug outside the camp. God required the camp to remain holy and excrement would defile it.

Next were miscellaneous laws that addressed a variety of subjects. First Moses decreed that a slave who took refuge was not to be turned over to his master. It is thought that this refers to a slave from a foreign land rather than a slave owned by a fellow Israelite. God demanded that Israelites treat their slaves humanely unlike Canaanite slave owners who might punish or even kill an escaped slave who was returned. Slavery was addressed in the New Testament as well (see Eph. 6:9). Following is some interesting observations from Got Questions-Biblical Answers: *Jesus and the apostles did not outright condemn slavery. They didn’t need to. The effect of the gospel is that lives are changed, one by one, and those changed lives in turn bring transformation to entire families, clans, and cultures. Christianity was never designed to be a political movement, but, over time, it naturally affected political policy. Alexander MacLaren wrote that the gospel “meddles directly with no political or social arrangements, but lays down principles which will profoundly affect these, and leaves them to soak into the general mind” (*The Expositor’s Bible*, vol. VI, Eerdmans, 1940, p. 301). In nations where Christianity spread and took firm hold, slavery was brought to an end through the efforts of born-again individuals.*

Prostitution among Israelites was forbidden and earnings from prostitution were not permitted to be used for offerings. I would think that God would not honor an offering from any ill gotten gain. One could take that a step further and question offerings from sources that are legal but immoral.

Moses then stated that the Israelites were not to charge a brother interest on anything that was loaned. Note that previous instruction regarding this referred to loans to poor fellow Israelites (see Ex. 22:25 and Lev. 25:35-36).

Moses then addressed the taking of vows. He says what is repeated in numerous other places in the Bible (see Num. 30:2, Ecc. 5:5, Matt. 5:33-37). In Acts chapter 5, we have the account of Ananias and his wife Sapphira who sold a piece of land they owned and donated some of the money to the church. They vowed to give all the proceeds to the church but held some back and lost their lives as a result of their broken vow. As Peter told Ananias, the money was theirs to keep, their sin was Their sin was making a vow to give it all to the church then failing to make good on the vow. I think the severe punishment was probably due to their desire to win praise from the church for a generous gift while still enjoying the benefit of some of the money.

The chapter ends with Moses telling the people the difference between consuming small quantities of a neighbor’s crops and harvesting basketfuls, perhaps for resale.