**Various Laws**

Chapter 19 contains a multitude of God’s laws that are prescribed for living a holy life in accordance with verse 2 where God says that we are to be holy because He is holy repeating what He said in chapter 11, verse 45. This scripture is quoted in 1st Peter 1:16 where he said that Christians were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down from their forefathers. God wanted to emphasize that the Israelites were his chosen people and were to be set apart. He was preparing them to enter Canaan where they would encounter a society rife with sin and pagan worship. Many of these laws had been previously conveyed to the Israelites and most of them can be tied directly to the Ten Commandments.

Commandments 1&2-You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol

Verse 4 prohibits making idols. Verses 26 and 31 prohibit the use of sorcery or seeking out evil spirits. Verses 26, 27 and 28 relate to this as those were customs practiced by idol worshipers.

Command 3-You shall not misuse the name of the Lord

Verse 12, do not swear falsely by my name.

Commandment 4-Remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy

In verses 3&30 God says they must observe His sabbaths. Verse 5 would fit this command as it relates to the manner of worship.

Commandment 5-Honor your mother and father

Verse 3, respect your mother and father

Commandment 6-Do not murder

Verse 16, do not do anything that endangers your neighbor’s life

Commandment 7-Do not commit adultery

Verses 20 and 29 regarding sleeping with a slave woman and prostituting a daughter are both related to adultery. Much of chapter 19 is devoted to various forms of adultery.

Commandment 8-Do not steal.

Verse 11, do not steal, verse 13 says do not defraud your neighbor or hold back wages, verse 35 requires the use of honest scales and measurements

Commandment 9-You shall not give false testimony

Verse 11, do not lie or deceive, verse 16, do not slander

In verse 18 God says that the people are to love their neighbors as themselves. This became the foundation for personal relationships and was quoted by Jesus as the second greatest commandment (see Mark 12:29-31, Matt. 7:12 & Gal. 5:14). While this recognizes the reality of self-love (see Eph. 5:29), Jesus introduced a new level of love known as agape love when he told his disciples he was giving them a new command to love one another as He had loved them (see John 13:34, Rom. 12:10 and Phil. 2:3). Many of the remaining laws were made by God pursuant to this command (verses 9-10, 14, 15, 17, 32 & 33).

In verse 19, God prohibited mating 2 kinds of animals, sowing 2 kinds of seed and wearing 2 kinds of material. His instructions in Deut. 22:9-11 are similar. There were practical considerations as sowing different seeds would result in a poorer crop (also observing verse 23 would increase the later yield of fruit trees). The underlying message was that the Israelites were to be set apart and could not co-exist with the Canaanites. Jesus drew on this Old Testament law when He talked about new patches on old garments and putting new wine in old wine skins. That was symbolic of the Pharisees clinging to the old covenant instead of embracing the new.

Chapter 20 is entitled Punishments for Sin and as the name would imply describes the punishment required primarily for sexual sins identified in chapter 18. The chapter begins with God proclaiming a death sentence for anyone sacrificing a child to Molech which was a false god worshipped by the Canaanites. The Israelites stubbornly clung to idol worship for generations as even Solomon erected a statue for Molech (see 1st Kings 11:7). God’s punishment for the various sins ranged from being cut off from the people to death. The chapter ends with God repeating that they were to keep all His decrees and laws and not adopt the customs and practices of the Canaanites. He also repeated his requirement that they observe the differences between clean and unclean animals.