

# **The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0**

**Number 80**

**“Leviticus 19-20”**

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**With**

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**December 27, 2015**

## **Leviticus 19-20**

**This episode covers two chapters in Leviticus, chapters 19-20. Leviticus 19 is essentially a mini-Torah of sorts, in that it mimes a number of the Ten Commandments and a wide range of laws and commandments that are representative of the overall Torah. Chapter 20 re-articulates much of Leviticus 18 with respect to prohibitions of certain sexual behaviors. More specifically, the episode devotes time to the issue of why “mixtures” are prohibited (e.g., sexual relationships, fabrics, animal breeding, planting) and how those prohibitions reflect the supernatural worldview of the Old Testament.**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 80, Leviticus 19-20. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

**MSH:** Very good, Merry Christmas, Trey.

**TS:** Yes, Merry Christmas. I hope you got all the toys and presents you asked for.

**MSH:** Yeah, all the books.

**TS:** you were nice and not naughty and Santa came to visit.

**MSH:** Yeah I always ask everyone for Amazon gift certificates.

**TS:** I do too. That's exactly what I ask for as well.

**MSH:** Yeah, then I get to hear my wife tell me how impersonal that is. It's like, oh yeah.

**TS:** It's perfect though, because you can get anything you want.

**MSH:** Yup, it's better than trying to explain why you want something.

**TS:** Yes, you don't have to think about it and pick something. Just give me that and I'll figure it out later.

**MSH:** Right, who would ever care about that? Well, that really isn't the question is it? So, yeah, it went well. We should jump in here to Leviticus 19-20. Hey, we're sort of I guess three quarters of the way here through Leviticus. Who would have ever thought, but 19 and 20 there will be some repetition to some of the things we've covered already. I'm going to try not to spend the time going over the familiar territory but picking out a few interesting things. And there are a couple really kind of puzzling things in these two chapters and I think people are going to find it really interesting that some of these sort of classic puzzles actually relate to what we would call the supernatural worldview of ancient Israel, getting into that divine council otherworldly kind of stuff when you really wouldn't think it.

We're going to see examples of that today just popping up where, just like I said a moment ago, you wouldn't expect it. So two chapters, 19 and 20, chapter 19, if I could summarize that, it's basically like a mini Torah, and that means they're a number of laws in chapter 19 and Commandments that are kind of found elsewhere in the Torah. But specifically, from roughly verse 3 on through verse 12, even a little bit beyond 12, you get to the latter end of Leviticus 19, there are going to be half a dozen or so commands that mirror the 10 Commandments. And so scholars tend to look at a good part of Leviticus 19 as this idea of a mini Torah for that reason.

You have a repetition of the Ten Commandments and you have laws that show up in Exodus after the giving of the law that are specifically brought up here so, hence, the characterization. Chapter 20 sort of re-states or re-articulates a lot of the things we saw last time in chapter 18 on the subjects of sexual prohibitions, forbidden sexual behaviors. It has a little bit

of overlap in some respects with the chapter 19 but there are two primary differences between chapter 20 in the sexual prohibitions here in this chapter, chapter 20, and chapter 18, which we talked about in the last episode, at least the previous episode of Leviticus. And I have a little pull quote from Levine to explain that sort of what the differences are. So he says in his commentary on Leviticus,

“The contents of chapter 18 are for the most part formulated apodictically. **[MSH: what that means is, that's academia's for a sort of a straight imperative; that shalt not, do not, you shall not, that kind of thing, just flat out commands. So that's the way chapter 18 tends to present these prohibitions.]** As is normally true of apodictic texts, a penalty is not specified for each offensive. **[MSH: If you goback and look at Leviticus 18, it doesn't really get into penalties.]** Rather, there's is only a collective penalty formulated within the overall framework of the admonition against pagan worshiping. **[MSH: If you remember back in Leviticus, the prohibitions were framed by saying hey, don't do things that the Egyptians and the Canaanites do. And then there was this sort of collective responsibility sense for holiness. That's what Levine's getting at here. He continues here,]** In chapter 20 on the other hand, we have these commands formulated casuistry **[MSH: That's another academies term for case law. And the wording for that is usually if XYZ happens or when XYZ happens, then here's the punishment, then here's what you do in response. So Levine ends his little quotation here,]** thus in addition to an overall admonition, it provides specific penalties here in chapter 20 and the penalties are often of a capital nature but each offense is going to get some sort of penalty.”

**MSH:** So moving on from Levine, I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on comparing the apodictic section and the casuistic section because the commands are basically the same. It's just the penalties issue. We will talk about the penalty, but that's only the first difference between chapters 18 and 20. There's a second difference and that is chapter 18 is sort of oriented or presents the rationale for the commands in terms of what the Canaanites and what the Egyptian Egyptians, what those pagan cultures, pagan civilizations, Gentile civilizations, do. In the first three verses of Leviticus 18 that's what the content says. Hey, don't do like these cultures do. Chapter 20 on the other hand is focused only on Canaanite context, only on Canaanite religion, and we'll hit a little bit of that when we hit chapter 20 in the first five verses.

Now what that means, just by way of a general introduction I thought I'd throw this in because they're some people I know who follow the podcast the blog, and they're interested in these sorts of things, but since you have the same laws, the same commands in two different chapters but one is framed by Egypt and the second one is framed by Canaan, scholars will tend to look at things like that and say okay, it looks like these respective chapters were written at different periods of Israelite history. Take that for what it's worth. In chapter 18 if we have Egypt and Canaan, that really reflects the Mosaic context, the Mosaic period because you have Exodus from Egypt and then you're going on into Canaan, Whereas chapter 20 Egypt is not even in the picture and so it seems to be framed by a later period, maybe during the monarchy after they're in the land, that kind of thing, specifically Moloch worship is focused on in chapter 20. The

idolatry was a big problem during the monarchy and Moloch gets mentioned in the prophets, that sort of thing.

And so these are the sorts of things that lead scholars to wonder about the time of composition of certain portions of the Pentateuch. So it's not all sort of like source critical theory and that kind of thing. There are actually things in the content of books of the Torah that make people wonder why is it this and that, or this verse is that. Why do we have the sameness and then yet we have a difference? And in this case, it just seems reflective of different periods of Israelite history. Now whether that's the case or not, we're not omniscient, we can't know but you can make an argument that makes sense or assuming that helps make sense of why one thing is cast one way and then another chapter is cast a different way. So I thought I'd throw that in. There are some people out there that are interested in those sorts of things. Chapter 20, one more general note, the first 16 verses are going to be capital offenses and then verses 17-21 are going to have the penalties being cut off from the Israelite community. We spent a lot of time in our last two chapters in Leviticus or last couple chapters on the cut off penalty. So I'm not going to go back into that but Levine comments here about that. He's really talking about the differences in the penalties.

“This penalty is imposed for certain marital violations that were not considered sufficiently severe to warrant punishment by death.”

**MSH:** What he means by that is that the first 16 verses, those offenses are violations of sexual relationships between members of the nuclear family, the immediate family. And since those were viewed as more offensive then they get dealt with more harshly capital offense whereas the other ones, other violations that occur with people not included in that inner group you get this penalty of being cut off the Israelite community. We talked about that last time how that might be exiled that sort of thing. So they're differences there, just wanted to throw that in because some people I know are interested in those sorts of things. Let's jump into chapter 19, do some specific things. I'm going to read the first 4 verses so let's just jump in here.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. <sup>3</sup>Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. <sup>4</sup>Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves any gods of cast metal: I am the LORD your God.

**MSH:** Now the first thing I want to park on here is this statement, and we're actually going to come back to it a little bit later. But every one of you shall revere his father and his mother. What it actually says, it inverts those. See, we're used to putting father ahead of mother like occurs in the 10 Commandments and other things like that. But here we have every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, they're reversed. Literally, it's every one of you shall or each one his mother and his father you shall revere. So even in the original, the mother is placed before the father. This is kind of unusual and commentators think that in this case here, it's deliberate.

The mother precedes the father whereas the father usually comes first, that's usually what we think of. That's what you'd expect in a patriarchal, patrilineal society, when you actually

go back and look at the commands, though, honor thy father and thy mother, the expected father first-order. Scholars look at this and say what's probably going on here, the reason for the change in order is that the two statements need to be understood together. And so the two statements amount to an equal estimation, an equal exultation, an equal honoring of both parents. So someone in Israel could not get away with saying, oh, I just offended my mother but not my father.

It would've been worse if ... you can't do that, even in the patriarchal culture because of the versions of the word order, most scholars are going to say we need to understand these together and each parent was put at the same level in terms of honoring them for the sake of avoiding punishment or just in general pleasing God, that sort of thing. So we're going to come back to this father and mother honoring point in a bit, but I wanted to start off by saying that. We continue on in Leviticus 19, verses 5-8 talk about the peace offering. That's not territory we're going to revisit. From about verses 9 to 11, you get some things about when you're gleaming in the field, you leave some for the poor. Don't strip your vineyard bare, verse 10, provision for the poor, we're going to come back to this when we hit some of the Jubilee legislation, that sort of thing, later in the book so I'm not going to camp on it now.

But in verse 11, we get thou shall not steal, very familiar, this is a mini Torah, and verse 12, we get this line, "you shall not swear by my name falsely and so profane the name of your God; I am the Lord." Now this harkens back to some of the familiar language of Torah and the 10 Commandments about lifting up or taking the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Here the verb is changed to swearing falsely, and swearing is the language of entering into an oath. We have here in verse 12 a parallel to the third commandment and notice, I thought I'd throw this in, notice neither of these commands say or forbid taking an oath by God's name. In other words, it doesn't say you shall not take an oath by God's name. It says don't take an oath falsely by the name of the Lord.

And so the idea is that since this, especially here in Leviticus when you have this swearing language, which is the language of covenant and the language of agreement, making agreements, the better binding in some way. If you swear by God's name, that, in effect, brings God into the proceedings as a witness. It makes God party to the agreement. And so God naturally wants no part of a false agreement, and the result of that is profaning the name of your God, in other words, you treat God's name as if it were not holy. And we've talked before about name theology, that the name of God isn't just this abstract like consonants or pronunciation of particular letters. It's more than that. It refers to God's person, God's presence, his identity, okay, so when you swear falsely by the name of God, you bring him into the agreement. And you know you're not going to keep this thing or you end up just sort of just treating it as a light thing, a contemptible thing, and just not honoring it.

You have brought God into the process. You've brought God into the agreement, and God wants no part of a false agreement. It treats him, not just his name, we're not worried about revering consonants here. We're worried about revering a person, okay, Yahweh of Israel. It treats him as if he were not holy, as if he were not distinct, as if he were not special. In other words, you treat him with contempt the same way you would treat an equal or a lesser person with contempt. God is not your equal. God is not your lesser. He is your superior and he's far superior. He does not want to be represented by anyone who is corrupt. He does not want his own renown diminished. So when we enter into agreements, we need to be careful to obey an

oath that involves saying God as my witness or something like that because we want to sanctify God's name.

We want his name to be elevated. When people think of you, they think of you in good ways and they would think of your God in good ways, that sort of thing, not just to make it mundane or drag it down, that sort of thinking, that sort of thought goes behind it. Now, continue on in Leviticus 19, we've got in verse 14 something interesting. I'll just go back to verse 13.

<sup>13</sup>“You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. <sup>14</sup>You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

**MSH:** The point of this, this is one of the few instances where physical handicaps are brought up in the text and, specifically, the treatment of people that are in these situations. So the point is not obviously to restrict good treatment of the handicapped only with respect to these two handicaps. That would be kind of silly, but rather the point is that you're not supposed to prey on someone by using their weakness or their handicap against them. It's just a moral principle that shows up pretty clearly in this passage and some others. You keep going.

<sup>15</sup>“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

**MSH:** Now that's interesting because of all the social justice talk you hear, especially in our cultural context, you almost come away with this idea, and I've blogged a lot about this before, but you almost come away with this idea that if someone's poor, there somehow better in the eyes of God or God like favors them more or smiles at them more or whatever. This verse actually makes it pretty clear that that is not the case. It says, you shall do no injustice in court. Don't be partial. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. Don't be partial to either. In righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.

So there's not supposed to be any favoritism at all, even if someone is in a certain situation where you're naturally, at least if you're human, you're going to be instinctively sympathetic toward someone because of their situation of poverty and who might really need help. But if it's unjust, if you're actually crossing a line of justice to help that person at the expense of someone who doesn't need as much help, it's still an unjust act. So the point of the Torah is that there should be no favoritism at all. Everyone should be viewed equally in this setting. This is actually stated in Exodus 23:3. That's going right back to that section that's after the Torah is given on Sinai. Exodus 23:3 says,

<sup>3</sup> nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

**MSH:** Just because he's poor doesn't mean he wins the dispute. It doesn't mean he gets treatment that would result in injustice to someone else. Now there's plenty of laws of the Old Testament about the reverse, about oppressing the poor, but the reason I bring this up is

because typically in this discussion, that's the only thing that's discussed, the laws about oppressing the poor. And it's very clear in Torah.

It's very clear in the law that the point is equity, complete equity, complete impartiality, in matters of justice no matter who the decision is between, rich or poor, small or great, whatever. Everybody's even. So that tends to be minimized in a lot of the social justice discussions we get today, at least in our culture. Let's go down to verse 19 and there's something interesting here. We have an interesting parallel, and this is going to get us into one of the main subjects of our time today. We have a very strange verse that comes up a lot of times from people. If they talk about Leviticus, they'll end up here at some point. Leviticus 19:19 says,

<sup>19</sup>“You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

**MSH:** What? What in the world? What's up with that? It's this weird law, these laws against mixing things, against mixtures. Leviticus 19:19 has a parallel over in Deuteronomy 22:9 says this,

<sup>9</sup>“You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole yield be forfeited, the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard. <sup>10</sup>You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. <sup>11</sup>You shall not wear cloth of wool and linen mixed together.

**MSH:** So not completely the same thing but basically the same thing. So Deuteronomy, if you noticed again listening to the quotations there, Deuteronomy has a few changes in it but the emphasis is still only on these rather strange laws about mixing, but Deuteronomy changes breeding the different animal species together to plowing them together, to using them in the same plow. That has led some scholars to wonder why Deuteronomy was changed. Why is it different? Some will take something like this and say well, maybe Deuteronomy was written later in a different time by a different hand or whatever.

Other scholars, and I think this makes good sense especially if you remember the Sampson story. Other scholars conjecture that Deuteronomy, the reference to plowing, is actually a reference to breeding because plowing was a common Ancient Near Eastern euphemism for sexual intercourse and the Sampson story actually uses of this kind of terminology. This is when Sampson was going to get married to the Philistine woman and he has this riddle and then the people, he says they aren't going to win the prize. They keep harassing his wife to get her to harass Sampson to tell them what the answer is. Sampson says this after the fact, after they've gotten the information out of his wife, he says in Judges 14:18,

And the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down,

“What is sweeter than honey?  
What is stronger than a lion?”



And he said to them,

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,  
you would not have found out my riddle.”

**MSH:** So plowing with the heifer has this implication, to use a sort of a euphemism, a double entendre in our culture screwing around. If you hadn't been screwing around with my wife, this is the idea that Sampson is using, kind of a sexual pun or idiom and saying if you hadn't messed around with my wife, you would have never gotten the answer to this. And so some scholars look at that passage and say well, maybe the plowing here in Deuteronomy is really sort of another way of referring to the breeding and there's really no difference here. Take it for what it's worth. It's kind of a piece of trivia because what I really want to get to in this passage is the whole idea of mixing.

What could the logic, the rationale possibly be? Why are mixtures bad? Why is it bad to throw two kinds of seed in the same hole for a plant? Who would care if you plow with two different animals? What about mules? Are they like evil and bad because you can mate horses and donkeys and mules are mentioned in the Bible. They were around at the time of David. You get a few references in Samuel and Kings. And mules are never called evil or awful or bad, or if you have a mule you should get rid of it because it came about as a result of this crossbreeding. There's nothing like that. So people have wondered why these things here listed and what could the logic possibly be?

Now this is where I think it gets kind of interesting and I can almost guarantee you probably would not have heard this before but I'm going to quote at length from Jacob Milgram on this passage because I think, and it's going to be a lengthy quote, and I'll do as I typically do, throw in some comments here and there but I'll tell you when the quote ends. It's going to be a long one. But it's really kind of fascinating what the logic appears to be and I think Milgram does a nice job of summarizing it, even though this quote will be somewhat lengthy. So he starts out by saying this,

“It is of utmost significance that the cherubim flanking the ark were mixtures (Ezek 1:5-11), as were the divine guardians in Mesopotamia. This is the initial indication, which will be corroborated in the two following prohibitions, that mixtures belong to the divine realm, on which the human being (except for divinely consecrated persons, the priests) may not encroach. The most favored prohibition against mixtures is that of a violation of the order God brought into the world by separating species. **[MSH: So Milgram's going to say you've probably heard this one. This is the answer you typically get. God separated the species and that's why the two animals shouldn't breed; never mind the fact that mules are okay. It's not consistent Milgram says,]** that theory could explain the mating prohibition but it has no relevance for the following two prohibitions, about mixing seeds and clothing. **[MSH: God didn't create different kinds of clothing that you shouldn't mix. And seeds, it's not the same kind of mixture because the seeds never fused together. They sprout. Maybe they're in the same hole but they don't**

**fuse together and so it's not the same as the intercourse idea. So Milgram's point is that you can argue for the separation of species thing in creation but it doesn't work with the other two. I think he's right. It doesn't work. He continues in his treatment,**] As intimated above, the most plausible explanation in my estimation is that mixtures belong to the sacred sphere, namely, the sanctuary as do its officiants, the priests. Thus, the lower cover of the tabernacle and the curtain closing off that part of the sacred enclosure are a mixture of linen and wool. **[MSH: They actually have a mixture of the two fabrics in the tabernacle.]** The high priest ephod, breastplate and belt contain the same mixture as well. **[MSH: Ex 28 and 39; the tabernacle curtain was Exodus 26; Milgram continues,]** For the ordinary priest, this mixture is limited to his belt (Ex 39:29) and the Israelite is conceded this mixture by the insertion of a single blue thread of wool in his linen tassels as recognized by the rabbis. Since linen is flax, blue must be wool. And as astutely perceived by another authority he quotes, it is as if the tassels served the layman as a royal scepter. **[MSH: In other words, having this one tassel go through the clothing of the average Israelite sort of made them part of the more sacred group, even though they were lesser. They're still the people of God. They're still going to be able to, if they're pure, they're still going to be on sacred space or at least parts of it. Then ordinary priests have a little bit more than mixture in their belt, but the high priest has mixture all over the place because he's the most holy. He's the closest to the sacred area, the most sacred areas, so the argument here is that this mixing of cloth, this mixing of textures was something you would associate with sacred space. Milgram continues,]** Sure, season analogy between the violet chords of the laypersons tassel and the high priest turban, however, the high priests violet cord is only an accessory to bind the holy gold plate to the turbans. Nonetheless, a connection between the two can be deduced. Whenever Israel sees the blue thread in any of his tassels, the high priest tassels or their own tassels, he is reminded of the blue cord banding the plate that bears the inscription holy to Yahweh on the high priest and thus he is constantly called **[MSH: by virtue of looking at his clothing and getting this reminder in his head,]** he is constantly called to seek holiness by fulfilling the divine commandments. **[MSH: The point of what would Milgram is saying is if you look at what the high priest wears, what the normal priests wear and what the average Israelite wear, even though it's only one thread running through their garment, they're mixtures and they're mixtures to degree. The greater the degree of mixture, the closer to the most holy place that person can go and so the mixing of the cloths is about sacred space. Now we'll go down a little bit to what Milgram says. He says,]** Of the three colors in the tabernacle curtains and priestly clothing, the blue is always listed first thereby signifying its greater importance (Exodus 25, 26). Note however that its primacy breaks down in 2 Chronicles 2:6. Furthermore, the high priest robe and the uppermost

art cover are composed of *tekhelet kalil*, pure blue, indicating the high priest's unique responsibility to officiate in the inner sanctum and on Yom Kippur to enter the holy of holies. Even more telling evidence of a higher status of the blue over the other colors is that a dark blue cloth covers all the inner sanctum, all the objects in the holy place during the wilderness journeys, but only the ark is covered on top with a blue cloth as a symbol of the divine presence. It is crucial that it always be visible [**MSH: The blue cloth is to be kept visible because that's linked to the divine presence**] whereas the inner sanctum, the table of the incense altar and the menorah, are bedecked with fewer cloths, the uppermost being of leather. Thus, the priestly command to add a blue thread to the fringes that must be worn by all Israelites indicates avid desire to inspire all Israelites to aspire to a life of holiness, the theme of this whole chapter. Above all, this explanation clarifies the insertion of this prohibition in this chapter (Leviticus 19). Israel is commanded to be holy but is warned that is not allowed the privilege of breeding different animals, sowing mixed seed, or wearing fabrics of mixed seeds for these are reserved for the sacred sphere and, in the case of clothing, to the priests. The mythology of the ancients was rife with mixtures, hybrid animals (cherubim) guarding temple entrances and flanking royal thrones, gods mating with humans (Genesis 6), animals are changing into human form. They are biblical allusions to this background as in the myth of celestial beings mating with Earth women. [**MSH: He quotes Genesis 6:1-4**] Cherubim exist in Israel's cult, more precisely, inside the sanctuary in woven form on the inner curtains and the veil of the tabernacle, carved on the inner walls and doors of the Solomonic Temple, find cherubims again and in sculpted form inside both sanctuaries. Being ensconced inside the sanctuary, all these cherubim were visible to only priests and the cherubim inside to no one who were admitted to their presence because they, too, wearing garments of mix scenes, symbolically became cherubim. [**MSH: In other words, they could join the heavenly entourage is the way I would put it they were qualified to penetrate the sanctuary, to attend the service of Yahweh.**] The cherubim themselves, however, were not visible to the laity. They could not become objects of worship. [**MSH: So you don't really think about this stuff until you actually start thinking about things, objects, in this case cherubim, furniture, cloths and how the cloths are made and what color they are and where those things are used, i.e. sacred space. When you start to notice that a lot of that stuff and frankly just that list Milgram went through is fairly thorough, a lot of the stuff would sort of violate Leviticus 19 because it's made of mixture. So the idea here that Milgram is trying to communicate is that mixtures characterize holiness in the sacred space, in the sacred sphere and those people authorized to be in that space. The laity can't penetrate that far because they have less mixture. Their clothing is a signal to them, yes, that you're part of a holy people. You do have the blue thread going through your garments but you are not a member of the**

**priesthood and you can't cross certain boundaries. Your clothing, think of it as a uniform, clothing identifies you with where you should be and shouldn't be.]** This is no different from the cherub guarding the entrance to the sacred garden so armed Levites guard the entrance of the sacred enclosure. Unauthorized encroachers must be put to death (Numbers 1, 3, 18).

**MSH:** I think there's something to what he saying here. I think we can we can boil it down to a generalization like so, that these laws against mixtures, whether they be animals or mixing the seeds or the clothing items, the principle to focus on is the mixture itself, not what is being mixed or prohibited from being mixed. The focus is on the idea of mixture itself. Since mixture is approved in the Torah for sacred space and it had something to do with each area of sacred space, the people who are allowed to occupy those areas, the sacred objects, what they were covered with, the veils, all that sort of stuff, to communicate the idea that these areas are distinct. These areas are special. Sacred space is different than common space. People who are allowed on sacred space are different than people who aren't. God has chosen priests from the tribe of Levi and Levites to do certain things.

He is not chosen the other tribes to enforce this idea sort of in a sweeping way, or in a redundant way might be a better way to say it, through the congregation. These prohibitions in Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy later are given to remind people that mixture is associated with sacred space. These are visible reminders and they are reminders that are drawn that affect everyday life, plowing, breeding cattle, planting crops. This is an agrarian culture. So they are little reminders sprinkled in through the culture that teach this larger theological point about sacred space. I think there's really something to that and it might sound really odd but when you think about it, when you think about the dramatic contrast between where mixture is allowed and where it's condemned, I think it has a good deal of explanatory power. So it actually takes something as odd, as these really weird laws in Leviticus 19, and it shows how even those laws are a part of this supernatural worldview that the Israelites, this was their everyday reality. This permeates their culture.

It permeates their everyday lives to reinforce theological points, and now we're down to even what they wear, where they go. We've kind of covered that before with the system of sacrifices and offerings. We know about where the step and not to step. Now it's down to breeding my animals, planting my crops, what I wear, these constant reminders of the sacred versus the normal, the sacred versus the profane or mundane. I think it's really fascinating actually. Let's move into Leviticus 20. The rest of Leviticus 19 is just largely going to be laws we've already talked about before or will talk about. I want to spend a little time in Leviticus 20 because of the capital punishment issue and also just some of the logic that goes with this. We've already talked about being cut off so I don't want to drift too far into that but we'll try to focus on a few things that are associated with capital crimes here. So in Leviticus 20, let's just start with the first five verses.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. <sup>3</sup>I myself will set my face against

that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name. <sup>4</sup> And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, <sup>5</sup> then I will set my face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech.

**MSH:** So this is pretty severe and we talked about it a little bit last time that you have a death penalty and on top of the death penalty, it's this I'm going to cut you off from your ancestors and your descendants in the afterlife. You're not going to be with your people. I'm going to cut you off here with the death penalty, and I'm going to cut you off out there in the afterlife, too. This is a very severe thing. What you have here is you have two capital crimes sort of rolled into one. You have idolatry, which was itself a capital crime and you have murder, burning one of your children as an offering to Molech. So it's very clear what the penalty is going to be and the logic behind it so this one is really not too difficult. You go on to verse 6 though and we read this.

<sup>6</sup>“If a person turns to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. <sup>7</sup> Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. <sup>8</sup> Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you. <sup>9</sup> For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him.

**MSH:** Now that's through verse 9. It starts to get into specific commands, but let's just go back to verse 6 about turning to mediums and necromancers, whoring after them. In Leviticus 19, mediums and necromancers were also brought up. I waited to here to get to this point to read it but verse 31 in chapter 19 said this,

<sup>31</sup> “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.

**MSH:** Later in Leviticus 20, we had read verse 6, verse 27 says this,

<sup>27</sup> “A man or a woman who is a medium or a necromancer shall surely be put to death. They shall be stoned with stones; their blood shall be upon them.”

**MSH:** Now what you have here is you have a reference to the people who are doing this thing and people who are consulting with people who do that thing. There's the medium and a necromancer, the ones who are communicating with the spirits. The term for medium is *ob*. If any of you have read my article on the Old Testament response to pagan divination, and I'm going to give that to Trey and he can post that along with this episode. I recommend it because it gets into what the logic is and why biblical people, there's this whole list in Deuteronomy about divination, things you're not supposed to do, and some of them, necromancy, is not among them but that some of those things are actually okay later on and are used by godly prophetic figures

and my article is about why is it that some of this stuff is okay in some context and other context it's just horrible.

What was the deal? And it has to do with solicitation of divine knowledge and really the approval of who a true prophet is. A true prophet is the one who has been called and ordained and had an encounter with the source of true knowledge, that is, God, Yahweh of Israel, and the article gets into the whole thing about prophets having to appear before the divine counsel, and this is discussed in Unseen Realm as well, to sort of validate their ministry and who is their source of information. So if you try to tap into the spiritual world, the unseen realm, and solicit secret knowledge, divine knowledge from any other source, if you're the person doing that, right here in Leviticus, the man or woman who's a medium or necromancer shall surely be put to death because you've betrayed Yahweh.

And not only have you betrayed Yahweh but you're trying to solicit other people of Yahweh into departing from the worship of him and from trusting him as the source of divine knowledge. Yahweh has already given you a means to get divine knowledge. It's called the priesthood. It's called the urim and thummim. It's called the prophets, all this kind of stuff. So if you want to consult in some other way with some other God then that's a betrayal and that's the logic of that. Now it's a less severe for people who try to get that information from the people who are doing that. Leviticus parses that a little differently.

But the logic is a betrayal not only of Yahweh but trying to solicit and seduce other people to depart from Yahweh as their God, as the source of truth and divine knowledge, that kind of thing so hence, these commands whether they be here in Leviticus or Deuteronomy. So what it comes down to is this activity is a form of idolatry. It's soliciting divine knowledge presuming other gods are more truthful than Yahweh, are better sources of truth than Yahweh. You have to barter with those other gods. You have to do something for them for them to cough up the divine knowledge. And so that transgresses into offerings, rituals performed in the culture and that's a form of idolatry. So that's the logic behind this one. If you go down to verse 9 we read it briefly,

<sup>9</sup> For anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood is upon him.

**MSH:** This verse, verse 9, begins the list, the bigger list, of death penalty offenses in this chapter. It goes down to about verse 16 or so. And Milgram notes in this regard, and I think this is really kind of interesting, he says,

“The fact that a law regarding the dishonoring parents heads a list of prohibited sexual unions [**MSH: because that's where the list starts; verse 10 jumps into adultery, then we get incest and homosexuality. We get all this other stuff we've seen before in Leviticus 18, Milgram says,**] the fact that this list of death penalty offenses is led by a law regarding the dishonoring of parents is hardly an accident. On the contrary, it is crucial in understanding the providence of the entire list. It reflects a patriarchal society that relates all familiar relationships by the twin principles of consanguinity and affinity back to one's father mother [**MSH: We talked about this last time in the previous episode about**

**how sexual relationships were allowed or condemned based upon who's in the inner group, the immediate family, and who's in the other group. Milgram says,]** Having the list start this way directs our attention to the unstated premise that dishonoring parents, that is, the breakdown of obligations to one's father or mother specifically in relationship to not violating sexually the people in your inner family and thus destroying the family, the breakdown of obligations to one's father mother that leads to the breakdown of relationships with the other members of the familial chain.

**MSH:** So essentially he's saying look, the reason why this list of prohibited sexual relationships that get the death penalty begins with the dishonoring of your father and mother is because all of these are perceived as efforts to destroy the family. And when you destroy the family, you destroy the whole society. If you recall from the last episode, the entirety of Israelite society was based upon the relationships of these two groups, the consanguinity group, groups that are related in a certain way, children that you produce, and then the affinity group, basically family relationships that you get by virtue of marriage.

So those are the two building blocks to the whole culture, to the whole society, and when you destroy the inner group, it's going to take everything down with it, and so this was viewed, these acts were viewed as attempts to do precisely that. So in the Israelite mind, in their perception of this, if you have a person doing this, they're not just doing it because 'oh, I think that woman is hot, even though she's too closely related to me. Let me gratify myself. Get out of my bedroom,' that kind of thing. That isn't the logic. The logic is you're doing that knowing full well that the result of what you're doing will destroy the family unit and will encourage other families to destroy the family unit.

You are attacking our very existence as a people and as a culture. In other words, you're trying to undo us. It's going to sound kind of to our ear maybe a little bit really odd, but if you have a bunch of people doing this, to the Israelite it would look like you're trying to exterminate us as a people because this is going to be the result of intermarriage, the violation of the family. You are trying to literally destroy our culture and it's another means to erase us, not just as a holy people devoted to Yahweh, but as a people people. Because if these boundaries are not observed, everything is going to breakdown because of all the things tied to it, not just theology and religion but property, the ability to sustain yourself, the ability to stay alive. Because if the family units are broken apart, it's very easy to deny women and children, especially, they're the real victims here, it's very easy to deny them livelihood and provision and sustenance because this is a subsistence culture.

Now it's going to grow into an urban culture eventually when they get settled in the land, but at this point it's an agrarian culture not much beyond a subsistence culture. And especially if you're a woman and a child, if you don't have a man who will honor their commitment to you because of a physical birth consanguinity relationships, basically the men saying they're not mine, that's not my wife, it's not this, it's not that, you're toast. You don't have a means of survival unless it's something like prostitution or just a life of crime or something like that. It just breaks everything down and so it was viewed as extraordinarily terrible things to do within that cultural context. And Milgram's point is that this is why the whole list begins with dishonoring your father or mother, because you are attacking.

This is where the attack begins. You are attacking the nuclear family and that's why for all these things that person must be put to death, and that kind of thing. It's kind of interesting. The language there that we read at the end, his blood guilt, his blood is upon him, their blood is upon them, in verse 16, all this language about blood guilt, that tells us the reader that people who committed these crimes were not put to death at the whim of the parents. Oh, the mom and dad just get bad and start stoning somebody. That is not the way it worked. It was the decision of an authorized court, of an authorized authority structure. Let's just go to Deuteronomy 21:18-21 says this.

<sup>18</sup>“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, <sup>19</sup>then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, <sup>20</sup>and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ <sup>21</sup>Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

**MSH:** That's a cross-reference to illustrate the fact that the elders, there was an authority structure in the community, the elders of Israel which began even before Sinai, remember back in Exodus 18, these were the people who would look at a case and evaluate it and say this person has committed one of these offenses, and they view it culturally, not as just a violation of some sexual rule that some guy is mad about what happens to his daughter. To their mind, it's bigger than that. You are attacking your nuclear family. If we do not punish this other people will be encouraged to attack their nuclear families and these ways start to break down, the two major groups of our society, two major groups of relationships, the consanguinity and the affinities relationships, and that puts us as a people in jeopardy.

And so we're just not even going to go down that road. We're going to eliminate the problem right here. So what I'm trying to get across is that there is a certain logic to this. And sure, it's associated here in context with theocratic old government rules. They make sense on their own level within a patriarchal culture the way they viewed the family and the culture and how that was maintained. So you can look at this and say we're not a theocracy. We don't look at necessarily the culture this way. I get that, right or wrong, I don't know how coherent that is to begin with, but there are cultural differences here.

But the point of the passage and the point of this kind of theology is you do not do things in this setting, you do not do things that if left unchecked will amount to the disappearance, the dissolution of the people of God. You just don't do that. And so the rules are basically meant to be stopgaps to immediately halt any sort of progress down that road. So to our ear they sound terribly harsh, and they are harsh. If someone winds up dead, of course that's harsh. But there's a thought process behind them. Now, one last note, this whole thing about the mixture issue, what's going on there and the family unit here, this possibility of transgression and dissolution, I hope you're seeing that the two main points here in these two chapters, the whole mixture thing was designed to reinforce the notion of there's sacred space and there's not a sacred space. And they have to, now catch this point because I didn't mention it earlier.



They have to coexist together. Why do they have to coexist, because God wants to dwell with you, but you have to be Taught in certain ways to respect and to honor and to exalt who God is, and you should be grateful that a being of this nature, of this perfection, of this holiness, of this fill in the blank, has decided to enter into a covenant relationship with you when he could have picked anybody. Because he disinherited nations back at Babel, and he says I'm going to go over to this guy Abraham and start with him. God could have done that anywhere at any point or not at all. So this God, who you have seen deliver you from Egypt and you know what you're dealing with to some extent, the power that you're dealing with here, has decided to love you and wants to coexist with you and, therefore naturally, you have to be reminded of who he is and who you are and not treat him as something normal or something profane or something ordinary.

And oh, by the way, for you to maintain yourselves, for you to maintain your status as his people, he's not going to have you do a bunch of crazy things just for no reason at all. The sexual relationships, he's not thinking how can I keep them from having as much pleasure as possible? That is not the point. The point is about the stability of the people who he raised up through Abraham and Sarah, perpetuating their existence. And there is a peripheral thing about how God knows what will make us happy, the kind of relationships that will foster happiness and good relationship and good character, and all that stuff, and those that won't.

That's part of it and that is usually how this is preached, but it's actually conceptually bigger than that. It's the stability of this entity called Israel, the descendants of Abraham whom God loves and promised to raise up and not only promised to raise up, but he has a destiny in mind for them. This whole thing about multiplying them as the stars and also going back to David Burnett's interview, the idea that using that star language to say something like, you have in the cosmic destiny. You are going to be reunited back to me like it was in Eden. You are going to join a divine family.

I have to keep you alive to do that. I can't have you going and worshiping other gods. I can't have you self-destructing through your behavior. And so I'm going to insist upon certain of these laws, and I'm also going to insist upon certain punishments to cut off any sort of degradation and dissolution process as soon as it begins. That's the conceptual idea. So in terms of application, there's a contrast between the divine world and the human world. And there's a respect for divine order and creation order. And God's wish, God's intent to keep his people intact, not just happy, but also intact in a very real sense so they can fulfill their destiny.