

Assignment-2-Panom-Top-comments-Mike-Baran

Hi Panom,

I like the way that you chose a difficult and interesting scripture. It forced me to do some research which I thought I would share with you.

Various English Bible translations of Deuteronomy 22:9-11 present somewhat different implied meanings to this scripture, so I went to a Jewish Torah and Commentary to see what it says.¹

There was nothing said about Deuteronomy 22:9-11 that was useful. It was translated as follows:

“⁹You shall not sow your vineyard with a second kind of seed, else the crop – from the seed you have sown – and the yield of the vineyard may not be used. ¹⁰You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together. ¹¹You shall not wear cloth combining wool and linen.”

However, there were interesting comments made about the corresponding statements in Leviticus 19:19.

“Chapters 18 through 20 give a clear account of holiness in life. The prime emphasis is ethical. ... The ethical injunctions of chapter 19 are interspersed with ritual commandments. Some of these are directed against pagan and superstitious practices ... The intent of others is not so plain. To the biblical author, these ceremonial rulings are divine ordinances with the same authority as the ethical commandments. Traditional Judaism regarded them as “royal decrees” to be observed ***whether or not we comprehend them***. ... the Torah aim[s] to create a holy people which displays its consecration to God’s service in the normal day-to-day relations of farming, commerce, family living, and community affairs.” (my emphasis).²

The comment specifically about v.19 says:

“*My laws*: The Hebrew word for “law” here is *chukah* ... According to the Rabbis, it designates a commandment whose purpose and meaning are not clear to us and which we must perform with simple, unquestioning obedience. Such in fact is the character of the provisions in this verse. The Hebrew word *kilayim*, meaning “of two kinds,” appears in each of these three clauses. Similar regulations, using the same technical term, appear in Deuteronomy (22:9-11); in the latter passage nothing is said about breeding hybrid animals, but the yoking of an ox and an ass to the same plow is forbidden. ***These rules seem to reflect the belief that there is something unnatural about mixing breeds.***

The law of *kilayim* is elaborated fully in Talmudic literature; it occupies an entire treatise of the Mishna, called *Kilayim*.” (my emphasis).³

The Mishna⁴ has some seventeen pages dealing with *Kilayim* rules. The rules seem unbelievable in their detail, complexity and seeming contradiction in some instances, but seem to suggest that if you plant different grape varieties close to each other then they need to be at least a certain distance apart. This suggested to me that there may be issues of cross-pollination and so the need to ensure that the “*unnatural mixing of breeds*” is avoided.

¹ W.Gunther Plaut (Editor), *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981.

² *Ibid.*, pp.890-891.

³ *Ibid.*, p.897.

⁴ Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, Yale University Press, 1988.

The same idea seems inherent in “unequally yoked” animals, which seems to have an implication of interbreeding of unlike species, especially clean and unclean animals, besides the obvious issue of harnessing animals of unlike temperament and strength.

The mixing of wool and linen in the same garment weave, especially for the clothing of the priesthood, suggests an implied lack of “holiness” in the dress code where there is a similar “mixing of species” – animal products (wool) and plant products (flax to make linen). See Leviticus 16:3-5 for the all-linen dress code for the high priest.

It’s obvious that even the Jews don’t understand the reason for these and other similar rules, so we will only be guessing as to their exact meaning. Your suggested solution, which is implied from the New Testament scriptures, seems as good as any – Don’t be unequally yoked, for you are a holy (a sanctified) people. There may also be the additional injunction of don’t let any of your actions and activities be anything but honest and pure in their intent.

Thanks for giving me a “headache.” I had never previously stopped to wonder and research the details of this scripture from a Hebrew perspective.

Keep challenging us all with interesting scriptures.

Regards, Mike Baran