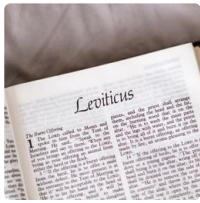


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Leviticus 21 - 22



Leviticus - Steve Gregg

Leviticus 21-22 emphasizes the importance of the purity and sanctity of priests in approaching God, including rules on avoiding contact with dead bodies, prohibitions on prostitution and restrictions on marriage partners. These regulations extended to sacrifices and vows made to God, which had to be done in a state of purity and sincerity. The symbolism of the tabernacle and the garments of the priests also carried deep meaning in strengthening the relationship between God and His people.

Transcript

Now we'll come to the 21st chapter of Leviticus. And just as chapters 18, 19, and 20 were talking about the holiness code for the ordinary people of Israel, chapters 21 and 22 provide the holiness code for the priests particularly. This had a lot to do with what they eat and who they marry, because for the most part, the morals of the priests were supposed to be the same as everybody else's.

So what was said about the holiness, the moral behavior of the rest of Israel, on most points would be the same for the priests. But there are some special circumstances for the priests, and we are given separate treatment of the requirements for the priests in general, and for the high priests in particular, about marriage in particular, who they can marry and who they cannot, and also their avoidance of dead bodies. Because coming near a dead body made a person unclean for a period of time, and the priest could not afford to be made unclean, and therefore going near a dead body should be avoided.

Now lots of cases of coming near a dead body might be involuntary. The law speaks in one place of the situation of a man at war, and his companion on the battlefield with him gets shot and killed and dies near him. Well the man is unclean because he was just that close.

He didn't even touch the dead body, he was just that close to a man who died, and therefore he is unclean until the period of uncleanness is over. Likewise, going to a funeral would defile a person. Now remember when we say defile a person, it doesn't mean that it makes them morally guilty of anything, it just means that they, as far as the

ritual practice is concerned, they can't go into the tabernacle for a period of time.

But the priest had to be in the tabernacle, that was where they worked. And so although they might in some cases be made unclean involuntarily, for example if they had an issue of semen or something that they had no control over, or became a leper, or something like that. Well, if that were so, well then they couldn't serve as a priest.

But going to a funeral is voluntary, and a person who goes to a funeral would incur uncleanness. Now many Jews would do so anyway, because it's not morally wrong, it's just a matter of they would incur uncleanness and they'd go through the procedure of waiting to become clean. And they would especially do so if the funeral was of somebody that was close to them.

They might even have to be pallbearers, they might have to be involved in burying the body. These are things that are not sins, but they are things that are defiling in the ceremonial sense. Well, the priests were not allowed to defile themselves, even with close relatives.

Well, the priests, the ordinary priests could, the high priests could not. This is what it says in chapter 21. Yahweh said to Moses, speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, none shall defile himself for the dead among his people, except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother, also his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband.

For her he may defile himself, otherwise he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among the people, to profane himself. Now, it is saying that if an immediate relative, father, mother, child, brother, or sister, assuming the sister is unmarried and has not become part of another family, then she is somewhat of a more distant relative. If she is still a virgin sister, still at home, she is part of your family.

And if they die, well, you can go to their funeral as a priest. Actually, you would still be defiled, but you are not violating your priestly duties. It was not wrong to become defiled in certain cases, but they would have to be isolated from the temple or the tabernacle for a season.

But anyone who is a more remote friend or relative than these immediate relatives, a priest could not even go to their funeral. The ministry was more important than those relationships. And then it says, verse 5, They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.

They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God. For they offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire and the bread of their God. Therefore, they shall be holy.

So these strange haircuts and beard cuts and cuttings and so forth, I'm sure it's saying they have to be holy. They have to be separate. It means they have to be different.

Different than the pagan priests of the pagan religions. The priest of Yahweh did have uniforms, but they didn't have special haircuts and beard cuts associated with their uniforms. Pagan priests did.

Everybody has seen, I'm sure, the Eddie Munster type of widow's peak haircut. Actually, the occult priests often did shave the top of their forehead into that shape with a peak, a point coming down in the middle. Satanists, high priests still do that sometimes.

In fact, traditional pictures of Satan often depict them that way with that kind of a haircut or a little pointy beard. Pointy beards and widow's peak haircuts were forbidden for the priest. They couldn't take off the corners of their beards to narrow them or to shape them into a point, and they couldn't shave parts of their forehead to make it artificially bald for those purposes.

They might think that's a pretty cool style when they see another priest wearing it, but they're not supposed to copy that because they're holy to the Lord. Verse seven, then they shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband for the priest is holy to his God. Now, the fact that it says that they cannot marry these women underscores the fact that an ordinary Jew could.

A divorced woman could marry, but she couldn't marry a priest. A harlot could marry. Rahab the harlot did.

Rahab married a man of the tribe of Judah, and she's in the ancestry of Jesus. Also, you know, Hosea's wife became apparently a harlot, and then he married her afterwards again, but he wasn't a priest. A person could marry a woman who had been a harlot or who had been divorced, or it says a defiled woman.

And it's not clear exactly what this refers to. One might think of a woman who's maybe got an ongoing issue of blood, but no one could touch a woman like that. Defiled is a word that could mean dishonored woman.

It could be a woman maybe who had been raped or had some other thing in her past that's made her dishonorable in the sight of the community. Maybe she'd had a child out of wedlock or something like that. Then she'd be a defiled woman.

A priest couldn't marry her. Someone else could, but not the priest. Therefore, you shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God.

He shall be holy to you, for I, the Lord who sanctify you, am holy. The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be

burned with fire.

Now, sometimes people were stoned to death. Sometimes they were burned with fire. There's different penalties that also we saw back in chapter 20, verse 14.

If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They should be burned with fire. There's not really very many infractions that have that particular death prescribed.

Other forms are more common, especially stoning. But this woman, apparently she defiles the priesthood because she is the daughter of a priest. She profanes her father when she becomes a prostitute.

Now, not all prostitutes were necessarily put to death. But if it was a priest's daughter, she would be. Prostitution was forbidden, of course, back in chapter 18.

Or I guess maybe it was not 18, it was in chapter 19. There was a reference to prostitution. Yeah, there, prostitution is forbidden.

It's forbidden, but it doesn't prescribe a penalty for it. But a prostitute whose father is a priest could be burned to death. I think probably burned alive.

Or maybe not. Good question. Maybe the stoning would take place first and then the body would be burned in order to purge the land of that thing.

That's a good point. I had not thought of that. You know, when I think of people being burned, you know, in some societies, burning people alive.

Like many martyrs, Christian martyrs were burned alive. But, yeah, this might not speak of burning a woman alive, but rather after she's been executed in a normal fashion, maybe her body is burned to cleanse the land. I wouldn't be surprised if that's what's implied.

It doesn't say. And then verse 10, we have those things that pertain to the high priest. Now, up to verse 10, verse 1 through 9, are requirements about the ordinary priests.

Namely, that they can only go to a funeral if it's an immediate relative. They can't carve their coiffure to imitate the pagan priests. And their wives have got to be honorable women who have never been with anybody else before.

Or I shouldn't say haven't been with anyone before. But they can't be a woman who is a harlot or divorced from her husband. They could be a widow.

The ordinary priest could marry a widow. But the high priest could not. Verse 10 says, he who is a high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured, and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes, nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his

mother, nor shall he go out of the sanctuary nor profane the sanctuary of his God for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him.

I am Yahweh. So, tearing his garment or uncovering his head is part of the mourning of the dead, what someone does to mourn the dead. And this is all talking about if his father or his mother dies, he can't go to the funeral, can't mourn.

He cannot interrupt his duties. He's the high priest. Now, the ordinary priest could for their father or their mother or someone else.

So, the high priest, he's more important. He can't let even an immediate relative's death interfere. So, it's a little stricter for him in that respect.

And then verse 13 and 14 and 15, it says, He shall take a wife in her virginity, a widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot. These he shall not marry. Now, this is just the same as the other priests, except a widow is added to this.

He has to marry an actual virgin. The other priests did not have to marry a virgin if she's a widow, but they couldn't marry someone who was perhaps had been a harlot or maybe had premarital sex or had been divorced. These he shall not marry, but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife, nor shall he profane his posterity among his people, for I, the Lord, sanctify him.

Now, this statement of profaning his posterity apparently is the reason why he's not even allowed to take a widow. A woman who's a widow may very well have children of her own. And if he marries her, they become his children.

They become, you know, officially his adopted children. Well, that muddles up the high priest line, because, of course, the next high priest has got to be the oldest son of his family. What if he marries a widow who's got a son already? Then he and she have sons later, but the older son who's not even of his offspring is the old.

It kind of confuses the lineage. And so just keep it simple. The high priest has to marry a woman who's never been with a man.

And therefore, the lineage that comes from that marriage will be uncomplicated. Verse 16, we begin to read about certain physical defects that a priest cannot have. Now, a priest might have these defects.

I mean, it's not like they're forbidden to have the defect, but if they have the defect, they cannot serve in the sanctuary. Now, we will find that even though they can't approach God in the sanctuary with these defects, they can eat the holy bread that the other priest eats. So they still are priests.

They just can't go into the sanctuary with these defects. Now, a lot of people have been

offended by this because the defects are in most cases handicaps that a person would have through no fault of his own. People that we have would be very, you know, we'd have pity on people like this, and yet they seem to be punished that they can't serve in the priesthood in the tabernacle.

Well, again, it's all symbolic, just like the clothes the priest wore, the rituals they performed, everything about the tabernacle is symbolic. And therefore, the forbidding of these kinds of physical defects from being on a priest when he goes in is symbolic of spiritual things. Once again, God is not holding it against the person if he's blind or if he's wounded in his testicles or something like that, which are among the things that would disqualify him to serve.

But it's not that God's against him. God is keeping the ritual in such a way that it does not depict spiritual things wrongly. And a person who would approach God has to be of a certain set of spiritual qualifications, spiritual traits.

And these physical traits correspond or represent, I think, in the imagery, spiritual conditions that are comparable. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, speak to Aaron saying, no man of your descendants and succeeding generations who has any defect may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach.

And here's a list. A man blind or lame. Who has a marred face, perhaps scars on his face or burns on his face or any limb too long.

A man who has a broken foot or a broken hand or who's a hunchback or dwarf or a man who has a defect in his eye or eczema or a scab or is a eunuch. No man of the descendants of Aaron, the priest who has defect like this, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord. He has a defect.

He shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy. Only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar because he has a defect.

Lest he profane my sanctuaries for I, the Lord, sanctify him. And Moses told it to Aaron and his sons and all the children of Israel. Now, a person with these physical defects was not really punished.

They still didn't. They didn't have to go find another job. They could they could eat and be supported by the priests income.

They were priests officially, but they could not go into the ritual of approaching God because approaching God requires a certain set of qualifications. But those are we know that in reality, the qualifications God requires are spiritual. But as I said, the spiritual things correspond with physical outward things.

A person who is blind or lame, verse 18, would suggest somebody, of course, somebody who is spiritually blind, who spiritually cannot walk, cannot walk in the right way before God. Their walk with God is defective. Their spiritual vision is absent.

If they have a marred face that would possibly speak of their outward testimony to the world, the visible part of them that people see. If a person's testimony is marred, if they're spiritually blind or don't walk properly with God, they have a limb too long. Their walk is imbalanced.

A man who has a broken foot or broken hand, again, hindering him from walking or serving God properly. A man who is spiritually unable to walk with God or to serve God because of spiritual handicaps. A hunchback is someone who can't stand upright.

A Christian must be spiritually upright and walk uprightly before God. A person who is a dwarf, their growth is stunted. A person who has not grown spiritually properly or who has something about them that prevents them from growing spiritually.

A person has a defect in his eye, and like I said, similar to blindness. That is, his vision is impaired spiritually. Eczema or a scab probably both refer to skin conditions that, once again, the skin is the part of you that's visible.

Your outward, it's like a marred face, marred skin. It's the part that people see. It is your outward testimony, what you project to the world in your behavior.

Also, a eunuch would be somebody who's infertile, someone who's spiritually barren, somebody who doesn't produce any fruit. Remember Jesus said that, in this my father's glorified, that you bring forth much fruit, so shall you be my disciples. You need to have a fruitful life.

So, these physical defects speak of the kind of person who can approach God only in the spiritual sense. A person whose spiritual growth is stunted, like a dwarf. A person who isn't upright, like a hunchback.

A person who's spiritually blind, spiritually lame. They can't walk with God, or they don't. Or their limb is too long, so they walk crooked.

They are imbalanced spiritually. Someone who's spiritually barren. These are the things that this, I believe, represents.

Of course, what this means is that the priests not only had to dress the part, when someone would watch the worship of God taking place in the tabernacle, God's desire is that they would see nothing imperfect. Because God is desiring perfection. Perfect devotion, perfect faith.

No compromise. And there's no compromise in even the appearance of the priest that is

to be permitted. Chapter 22 is almost entirely devoted, at least the first part, the first half, I'd say, is devoted to the question of who can eat the holy bread.

That is the food that is brought to the priests, the grain offerings. Remember, they would take a handful of the grain offering and burn it on the fire, but the rest would belong to the priests for their food. Or even the, you know, the heave breast or the, or I should say the wave breast or the heave shoulder.

The parts of the animal that are eaten by the priests. These are holy food. And ordinary people who are not priests can't eat them.

But priests have families, too. And sometimes they have extended families. Sometimes they have guests in their home and so forth.

And so there's a chapter given to who can and who cannot eat the holy food. And the first consideration is that a priest himself cannot eat it while he's in a state of uncleanness. If he's unclean, he can, of course, eat food, but he can't eat the holy food.

He's got to get his food from somewhere else. Because a person has to be clean to eat that which is the bread of life. He says, speak to Aaron and his sons that they may separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel.

And that they may, they do not profane my holy name in those things which they sanctify to me. I am the Lord. And he says they separate themselves as it goes on.

Makes it clear when they're unclean. When they're in a state of uncleanness, they have to separate themselves from them. We see that in the next verse.

Say to them, whoever of all of your descendants throughout your generations who goes near the holy things, which the children of Israel sanctify to the Lord while he has uncleanness upon him. That person should be cut off from my presence. I am Yahweh.

Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who is a leper, which is an unclean condition, or has a discharge like of semen or blood or something that makes him unclean. He shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse or a man who has had an emission of semen.

Or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean or any person by whom he would become unclean. Whatever his uncleanness may be, that person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening. And shall not eat the holy offerings unless he washes his body with water.

And when the sun goes down, he should be clean. And afterward, he may eat the holy offerings because it is his food. So he didn't have to go a whole day without food.

Unless, of course, he was a leper or had some other ongoing condition of uncleanness.

But the things that simply contract momentary uncleanness would only keep him unclean until the sun goes down. And then he could eat the holy bread, but he can't eat it while he's unclean.

The point is, eating the bread, eating the sacrifices required that a person be ceremonially clean. What's that symbolize? Well, Jesus is the bread of life. By eating his bread, we're eating eternal life.

And in order to partake of the tree of life, as it were, the food that gives eternal life, as Jesus spoke of it in John 6, where he said, do not labor for the food that perishes, but labor for the food that endures to eternal life. Which he then goes on to say is him, the bread of life. That food that gives eternal life is only available to those who are clean.

Now, remember Jesus said to his disciples in John 15, You are clean by the words I have spoken unto you. And cleanness to the Christian is at one level, of course, the condition that we have as a benefit for Christ's sacrifice. But that sacrifice needs to be applied.

Just as it had to be applied in the Old Testament. If a person was unclean, they had to go through a ritual. In some cases, they had to offer a sacrifice at the end of it.

Most of the time, they were just unclean until sundown. But the point is, while they are in a state of uncleanness, they cannot participate in the worship and in the receiving of the benefits of worshipping God. So it's simply making there be a penalty that the priests have to pay if they are unclean.

The other states of uncleanness on other people who aren't priests, since they don't eat holy things anyway, it does not have to interfere with their meals. It does interfere with their fellowship with other people. And with their coming to the tabernacle, it doesn't have to change the way they eat.

But with the priests, they can't eat while they are unclean these holy things. Whatever dies naturally or is turned by beasts, verse 8, he shall not eat to defile himself with it. I am the Lord.

Remember, we saw earlier that if a person does eat such things, he is unclean until the evening. I think it was back in chapter 18 that we saw that. Anyway, the priest can't eat that at all because that would make him unclean.

He's not supposed to voluntarily incur uncleanness for something like that. They shall therefore keep my ordinance lest they bear their sin for it and die thereby. If they profane it, I Yahweh sanctify them.

No outsider, meaning who's not a priest, or at least a close member of his family, shall eat the holy offering. One who sojourns with the priest or a hired servant shall not eat the holy thing. So someone who's just a visitor in the priest's home can't eat the meals

at the table with the priest because the priest and his family will eat the holy things.

The guest can't eat those. He's got to have some other food. And likewise, the hired servant, because neither the sojourner nor the hired servant is really a member of the family.

However, by contrast, verse 11, but if the priest buys a person with his money, he may eat it and one who is born in his house may eat his food. So a servant who is born in the home or who has been purchased is now part of the household, part of the family really, and therefore they can eat the holy things along with the priest. But a person who is simply a day worker, a hired servant who comes in and does work, or someone who is just staying there, they don't qualify as a member of the family, so they're not to eat the holy things.

Verse 12, if the priest's daughter is married to an outsider, that is she's married to someone who's not a priest, she may not eat the holy things, the holy offerings. But if the priest's daughter is a widow or divorced and has no child and has returned to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat her father's food, but no outsider shall eat it. So if she's not married to a priest, she can't eat it.

But if she has been in such a marriage, but that's over, he's divorced her or he's died, she's single again and childless, she's returned back to her father's home, she's part of the family again as before, as when she was a virgin daughter in the home. And if a man eats the holy offering unintentionally, apparently that is if somebody who is not qualified, not a priest, eats it, they don't realize that that's what that food is, and they eat it and they find out, then he shall restore a holy offering to the priest and add one-fifth to it. They shall not profane the holy offerings of the children of Israel, which they offer to the Lord, nor allow them to bear the guilt of trespass when they eat their holy offerings, for I, Yahweh, sanctify them.

So it's just the law of the trespass offering. We saw back in the law of that which was given in chapter six that if somebody trespassed in the holy things, they had to restore them, the value of them, and also 20% penalty. Now, not all animals, not even all clean animals, could be offered as sacrifices, they had to be flawless.

In fact, some of the things that are said about the animals that would disqualify them for being sacrifices are also the same things that are said about priests that disqualify them from serving the priesthood. Both the animal and the person who offered it had to be free from these defects. It says, Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the children of Israel and say to them, Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows, or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to Yahweh as a burnt offering, you shall offer of your own freewill a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.

But whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf. And whoever offers a sacrifice of peace offering to the Lord to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted. There shall be no defect in it, those that are blind or broken or maimed, or who have an ulcer or eczema or scabs.

You shall not offer to the Lord, nor make an offering by fire on the altar to the Lord, either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short. You may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted. OK, so that's interesting that a limb that's too long or short would disqualify a priest from serving.

It doesn't disqualify an animal from being offered as a sacrifice, but it can't be vowed. It's not something that you can offer God through a vow. Now, what is a vow? A vow is when you just voluntarily promise to give God something because you're feeling thankful or you're feeling like you owe God something.

And so you vow, usually you'd vow some kind of an animal that you'd offer. It's saying you can't vow an animal that has a leg too long or too short, although you could offer it as a sacrifice. I find it interesting and I don't know why a distinction is made between those two uses of that kind of defective animal.

You should not offer to Yahweh what is bruised or crushed or torn or cut, nor shall you make any offering of them in your land. Now, bruised or crushed or torn or cut. Josephus and some of the rabbis believe that this is a reference to an animal that's been castrated.

So it'd be sort of like a eunuch that's been cut or its testicles have been crushed. The same concern that was for a priest who was a eunuch. Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God because their corruption is in them and defects are in them.

They shall not be accepted on your behalf. So the animals that would be offered need to be from a Jewish source. They can't buy their animals from foreigners, perhaps because they can't be 100% sure the conditions under which that animal is raised.

For example, a clean animal might have been stalled with a pig or something and come into contact with something unclean. The Jews would not do such things, but a foreigner might who didn't make a distinction between clean and unclean. So the animals had to come from a Jewish rancher or a Jewish breeder rather than a foreigner.

Verse 26, And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the Lord. Whether it's a cow or you do not kill both her and her young on the same day. And when you offer a sacrifice or thanksgiving

to the Lord, I'll thank you to offer it of your own free will on the same day it shall be eaten.

You shall leave none of it till morning. I am Yahweh. Some of this is repeat, but interestingly, when a child, when an animal that is a sacrificial clean animal is born, you should not offer it within the first seven days.

It's not clear why that is. It's possible that, you know, there's not enough flesh to be of much value as meat on the day of its birth, and it gives it a little chance to fatten up. But it's also the case that although you can sacrifice a lamb and its mother, you can't do both on the same day.

Why? There's no reason given. It's sort of like you should not boil a kid in its mother's milk. A law that was repeated a number of times previously.

It just seems inhumane for some reason. There's just something about it. You know, it's sort of one of those things that almost tells you to trust your intuitions about things.

It just doesn't seem right. It seems bizarre. A mother's milk is for the nurture of her offspring to boil the baby goat in the milk that was supposed to be his nurture.

It just seems like a perversion. Why? It's not really clear why. That a mother sheep would be sacrificed the same day as her kid, you know, together, it just doesn't seem right.

Now, maybe I'm being subjective about this, but it seems like God assumes that that's the way people would see it, too, because he doesn't give any reason for it. There may be some symbolism of it, but it's not obvious what the symbolism is. It is also possible that this practice was practiced by the heathen boiling a kid in his mother's milk or sacrificing two generations, the mother and the offspring of an animal on the same day together.

But if they did so, they did so against sort of, I don't know, a general intuition of right and wrong. And Israel is not supposed to do that. Therefore, you should keep my commandment, he says.

Verse 31 and perform them. I am Yahweh. You shall not profane my holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel.

I am Yahweh who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am Yahweh. So we had three chapters talking about special holiness code for the general public.

Then two chapters about the holiness code special to the priests and the high priest. In Chapter 23, we will not take it now. We will actually end our session early since we had a small portion to take.

But Chapter 23 is really a summary of the whole year of festivals for Israel. This is a very fascinating and important chapter because there are ways in which the year of festivals and the Holy Days was a picture of God's whole plan of redemption in Christ. And that is made clear by many New Testament references.

And so I would I will expect that we'll probably take Chapter 23 all by itself in our next session. I don't I don't know for sure, but I think we will probably take a whole hour on just that one chapter next time. But we'll cut this session short because we really I have nothing more to say really about the priests and their restrictions that are put on them.

And I don't want to get into Chapter 23 since we won't be able to finish it if I do. So that's that'll be the end of this session.