

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF DEUTERONOMY 22:5: THE MEANING OF GARMENT FIT FOR EACH GENDER

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The anti-transvestitism clause in Deuteronomy 22:5 has long posed a problem to translators and scholars. This study aims to give a clearer meaning of Deuteronomy 22:5. This will help the readers apply it correctly and avoid reading meanings into the text. It will enhance a proper reading, understanding, and interpretation of the material, particularly with the increased interest in the latest fashions in our postmodern era. After reviewing various commentaries on the text in question, the study applied exegetical approaches such as background, contextual, grammatical, and lexical analysis to examine Deuteronomy 22:5.

According to the study, the legislation prohibits men from wearing any products specifically designed for women, including a woman's outfit. Consequently, each sex's distinctiveness should be maintained and conserved in terms of outward appearance. A contemporary reader, therefore, needs cultural sensitivity in applying

Deuteronomy 22:5. This is not an easy task hence this study points out some general principles to be considered for the contemporary application of this text; the point of reference being the rationale for the prohibition. First, the contemporary reader should remember that man and woman have had a God-given differentiation since the beginning of creation, and the human race was defined as “male and female.”

Second, the contemporary reader should be sensitive to cultural variation concerning outward appearance. Mark Braun put it thus: “it is impossible to stick to a uniform dress code throughout history and styles evolve from time to time and from one place to another.” Third, the Bible has not prescribed any universal dress code for the human race. We live in a vastly different civilization than that of the Bible. Yet in every culture there are articles of clothes and adornment that are specifically worn by men or women. Bible believers should dress in a way that culturally distinguishes them from the opposite sex in their given cultures, bearing in mind that it is abominable to dress otherwise.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Sivili S. Arve Sr.

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First, this thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God who has been my source of all strength. A special feeling of gratitude to my late father, Elder John M. Sivili, who sowed the seed but never lived to reap the harvest; to my lovely wife, Shepherdess Faith O. Sivili, who has been that encouraging force and great blessing; and to my beloved children (Arve, Praise, and Joseph), all of you have been my biggest supporters. This thesis is to my trusted friends (pastors Baysah, Sellu, and Kollie) and church family, who have been supportive throughout the process. I cherish what they've done.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	1
Statement of Problem.....	2
Purpose of Study	3
Significance of the Study	3
Methodology and Procedure	4
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
Scholarly Views on Deuteronomy 22:5	5
The Restriction is to Maintain the Distinction of the Sexes in the Divine Order of Creation.....	5
The Restriction is to Prevent Idolatry and Cultic Practices Associated with Cross-dressing in the ANE Culture	17
The Restriction is to Avoid Homosexuality among the Children of Israel.....	20
Summary	24
3. EXEGESIS OF DEUTERONOMY 22:5.....	26
Literary Contexts of Deuteronomy 22:5	26
Historical/Geographical Situation of Deuteronomy 22:5	29
Interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5	37
Morphological Analysis.....	39
Literary Analysis.....	41
כָּלִי	41
אָפֶר	42
תּוֹעֵבָה	43
Syntactical Analysis.....	43
ANE Background of Deuteronomy 22:5	51
Dressing in Jewish Culture	54

4. THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION	61
Cultural Application.....	67
A Short History of Dress.....	70
Gender-specific Apparel	73
Unisex Apparel	74
Contemporary Application of Deuteronomy 22:5	75
5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	78
Summary	78
Conclusion	81
Suggestions for Further Study	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY	84

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ANE	Ancient Near East
BDB	The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
CBC	Cornerstone Bible Commentary
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
IB	Interpreter's Bible
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAAS	Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
LXE	The English Translation of The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NDT	New Dictionary of Theology
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SDABC	Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TWOT	Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

WBC Word Biblical Commentary
WTT Leningrad Hebrew Old Testament

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The inspired writer, Solomon, long ago said, “I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned, but time and chance happen to them all” (Eccl 9:11, emphasis added).¹ I thank JEHOVAH alone, for He is Excellent and the Provider of all things. I thank God for providing me with the strength to accomplish my thesis.

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¹ All Bible quotations are from the New International Version except otherwise stated.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The anti-transvestitism clause in Deuteronomy 22:5 has long posed a problem for translators and scholars.¹ However, scholars may agree in translating this text, trying to comprehend the meaning of גָּבֵר - כְּלִי shows up in the vagueness of the translations.² A proper understanding and interpretation of תּוֹעֵבָה in this text has also added to the enigma. This verse has not only triggered much debate in Christian circles,³ but has also been variously understood in Jewish texts.⁴ The exact meaning of Deuteronomy 22:5 remains an unanswered question. One would wonder how to write or preach on this text without offending someone because the question of the appropriateness of male and female clothes confronts most Christians today, with attendant differences in perspective and practice.

¹ Samuel R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 250-251.

² Ibid., 251. Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible: Genesis-Deuteronomy* (New York: Wesleyan Heritage Publications, 1998), 1042. Clarke posit that most likely an armor is here intended

³ John C. Maxwell, *Deuteronomy, The Preacher's Commentary 5* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 118-120.

⁴ Gregory G. Bolich, *Crossdressing in Context*, vol. 4 (Raleigh, NC: Psyche's Press, 2009), 31. According to Bolich, the Dead Sea Scroll poorly preserved this text with modification. The Targums renders it variously while the Midrashim (ancient commentaries) expand the interpretive effort. Interpretive effort to clarify the inherent ambiguity of the Hebrew account for the variations.

Early Church fathers held contrasting judgments as to the meaning and importance of the subject.⁵ Some scholars believe that the Mosaic laws are no longer binding on Christians;⁶ others insist that though they do not legally bind us, they still matter to Christians and should be appropriated through Christ-law fulfillment.⁷ Yet, some posit that the laws of Moses are still significant for Christians.⁸

The exact meaning of Deuteronomy 22:5 as well as its application remain a debate, especially with the increase of interest in fashion in our postmodern world. Consequently, a proper understanding and interpretation of the meaning of the text cannot be over-emphasized. This study emphasized the text in an attempt to provide an accurate interpretation and application.

Statement of Problem

Deuteronomy 22:5 remains an enigma. The present-day man and woman are curious to know the meaning of the admonition so they will know if it is normative or not. The exact meaning and the application of this text is debated with many

⁵ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XIX, Chapter 19 (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 96. Augustine reflects a relative indifference to dress. By contrast, Tertullian (Early 3rd Century) demonstrates an energetic concern in his work, on the Apparel of Women. Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women* (Hackensack, NJ: Lighthouse Publishing, 2018), 59.

⁶ Douglas J. Moo, "A Modified Lutheran View," in *Five Views on the Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 343-395.

⁷ David A. Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 3 (1991): 321-34. See also Moo, "A Modified Lutheran View," 317-76. Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 126-160. Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2010). Brian S. Rosner, *Keeping the Commandments of God*, NSBT 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013). William W. Combs, "Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 18 (2013): 19-39.

⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 314-24. Dorsey, "The Law of Moses and the Christian," 332-33.

interpretations of the text.⁹ Is the text against transvestism? What is the meaning of קְלִי-גִבֶּר? Is Deuteronomy culturally sensitive or normative? What is the meaning of תּוֹעֵבָה in the text? What is the rationale for this law? Suggesting a resolution to these conundrum forms the silhouette of this study.

Purpose of Study

The study aims to attempt to provide a clearer meaning of Deuteronomy 22:5. This will help the readers to apply it correctly and avoid reading meanings into the text. It will enhance proper reading, understanding, and interpretation of the text, especially with the increase of interest in fashion in our postmodern world.

An exhaustive review of the existing materials on this subject is beyond the scope of this study and would be useless. Our goal is to obtain exegetical meaning and interpretation, rather than the most logical decision among contending viewpoints.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in its investigation of biblical meaning and interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5. It will help the reader of the text to understand not only the meaning but also its application today.

⁹ Calum M. Carmichael, *The Laws of Deuteronomy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 147–48. Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 287–88. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 250-251. Harold Torger Vedeler, “Reconstructing Meaning in Deuteronomy 22:5: Gender, Society, and Transvestitism in Israel and the Ancient near East,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 3 (2008), 460-61. Frank Ritchel Ames, “Women and War in the Hebrew Bible” (PhD diss., University of Denver, 1997), 56-58. Richard Davidson, *Flame of Yahveh- Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 170.

Methodology and Procedure

The methodology adopted in this study is in line with its purpose. This study is exegetical and has employed literary analysis, grammatical analysis, morpho-syntactical analysis of main clauses, and semantic range of main Hebrew words to analyze Deuteronomy 22:5. Textual witness analysis and critical apparatus of the Hebrew Bible was also be employed in this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section offers scholarly views on or interpretations of Deuteronomy 22:5. The second embarks upon evaluating the findings.

Scholarly Views on Deuteronomy 22:5

Deuteronomy 22:5 has received various scholarly interpretations over the years. Scholarly views on Deuteronomy 22:5 can be grouped under three broad headings:

- i. The restriction is to maintain the distinction of the sexes in the divine order of creation,
- ii. The restriction is to prevent idolatry and cultic practices associated with cross-dressing in the ANE culture,
- iii. The restriction is to avoid homosexuality among the children of Israel,

Below are the proponents of the various views.

The Restriction is to Maintain the Distinction of the Sexes in the Divine Order of Creation

Barnes states that anything that is specifically appropriate for a man, such as weaponry, home goods, and other instruments, is also something that relates to a man. It is impossible to ignore the natural and divinely mandated phenomenon of gender separation without breaking social norms and endangering the integrity of society.

Largely, Barnes seems to agree with Gaebelein but he gave a broad application to “what pertains to a man.”¹ He stretches it beyond wearing to as far as utensils.

Arguing on the side of decency and nature’s distinctiveness, Jamieson and others submit that even while disguises were sometimes worn in pagan temples, it is likely that an allusion was made to improper levities used in everyday life. They were rightly prohibited because doing so violates morality, obliterates gender differences by encouraging softness and femininity in men, arrogance and bravery in women, as well as humor and insincerity in both, and, in short, invites an influx of so many evils that anyone wearing clothing from another sex is declared “an abomination unto the Lord.”² Jamieson et al deliberately did not state the evils that cross-dressing will lead to. However, they refused to link it to idolatry.

Lange renders כלי (כלה) as an emphasis on things prepared or created such as clothing, armor, or kitchenware. He observed that the concrete example illustrates the idea that, even though it may be assessed less in terms of our neighbor than a damage to property, every invasion of the inherent differences between the sexes and every mixing of sexual preferences should be viewed in terms of God. It is too broad, he maintained, to see it as an opposition to practices at pagan festivals, and too limited to see it as merely a safeguard for chastity. God created and established the natural division between the sexes; any disrespect or transgression of this division, even in external manifestations, not only leads to impurity but also disobeys God's

¹ A. Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament: Exodus to Ruth*, eds. F. C. Cook and J. M. Fuller, (London: John Murray, 1879), 312.

² R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and D. Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 135.

commands.³ Lange warned against applying the text too broadly and too limitedly. However, he fails to suggest the middle ground of application. He also seems to link abomination with impurity.

According to Hittite texts, in some magical ceremonies, gender-specific artifacts are used in addition to clothing to affect one's sexual orientation or to devalue or change an opponent's gender status. The mirror and distaff belonged to the female, while numerous weaponries belonged to the masculine.⁴ Though their conclusion on Deuteronomy 22:5 is not certain, they are driving towards distinction. Rogerson disagrees with Gilchrist and other scholars who attribute the restriction on cross-dressing to cultic worship. He stated that an overwhelming number of scholars interpret this concept as a prohibition on the practice of heathen faiths in which gender roles are reversed. Abomination is frequently used to refer to offensive acts committed in the name of a religion. However, the phrases that have been transcribed as “man's apparel” are actually “baggage” or “equipment of a man,” and this may provide weight to the argument that it is female involvement in combat as well as male avoidance of warfare by disguising themselves as women that is outlawed.⁵ To

³ J. P. Lange, P. Schaff and W. J. Schröder, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Deuteronomy* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 164.

⁴ V. H. Matthews, M. W. Chavalas and J. H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 209. According to Lise Manniche, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt* (London: Kegan Paul, 2002), 25–27 There is evidence that transgender behavior occurred in the court of Akhenaten (1353-1336 BCE.), where the monarch is commonly seen with feminine hips and his wife Nefertiti wearing the pharaoh's crown; the significance of this iconography is unknown. In addition to Hatshepsut. Furthermore, transgender activity frequently emerges in ritual contexts in the ancient world; see Will Roscoe, “Priests of the Goddess: Gender Transgression in Ancient Religion,” *History of Religions* 35, no. 3 (1996): 195-230., Assinnu, kulu'u, and kurgarrû in Akkadian, and sag-ur-sag, gala, and pi-li-pi-li in Sumerian, are only a few of the words for people whose gender does not appear to be male or female. Almost all of the references to the actual practice of cross-dressing come from Canaan and Mesopotamia., almost all of them in cultic context.

⁵ J. W. Rogerson, “Deuteronomy,” *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn & J. W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 165-166.

him, this command is to prevent anyone from playing the opposite sex, especially in terms of war.

Gaebelein posits that “The immediate purpose of this prohibition was not to prevent illicit behavior or to disagree with practices associated with idolatry; rather, it was to preserve the sacred nature of the distinction between the sexes, which was established by the creation of man and woman, and about which Israel was not to sin.” Every violation or erasure of this distinction, including but not limited to women's emancipation, was regarded unnatural and “an abomination in the sight of God” as a result. However, there is currently a global movement taking place around the world that is aimed at the total emancipation of women. This movement completely disregards the place that God's status as both the Creator and the Redeemer has allotted to women in the world.⁶ Gaebelein refused to attribute the cross-dressing restriction to a homosexual pagan cult or even a camouflage during the war. He rather pointed back to the creation of this restriction.

Ajith Fernando emphasizes the psychological satisfaction that transvestitism could offer a person. The “issue addressed here is breaching God's design for gender differentiation,” he says, notwithstanding the possibility of sexual and cultic spillover from this kind of clothing.⁷ Thus, the breaking down of distinction is the prohibition in the view of this verse.

⁶ A. C. Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible: Genesis to Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 419-420.

⁷ Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Living God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 508.

P. J. Harland, appealing to creation, argues that in the beginning of time, males and females were formed simultaneously in an identical state.⁸ In Genesis 2, the relationship is not one of equality; rather, the woman is formed to fulfill the role of a

⁸ P. J. Harland, "Menswear and Womenswear: A Study of Deuteronomy 22:5," *The Expository Times* 110, no. 3 (1998): 73-76

helper, which is distinct from the position of the one who is to receive assistance. From the second viewpoint, there is a distinction between roles and functions, while equality and identity are present from the first viewpoint. To be aware of the depth of the Old Testament (OT) history, the interpretation must take care not to read a male-dominated picture of society from the text and to avoid seeing contemporary egalitarian ideology in Genesis 1-3. This is crucial to understand the profundity of the OT. God decided to create humanity in two separate forms so that it may serve two distinct purposes. The essence of man is found in his two sexes; humanity was created to coexist with one another in communities, and every one of these communities is based on the creation of male and female.

The term *azay* refers to assistance or assistance in general, not merely in the context of physical labor. The formed man requires a companion; the word *kenegd* implies a counterpart, and the nature of the connection is one in which they complement one another. The woman was meant to be the male's counterpart, and men and women are intended to complement one another in their duties as created beings. It is clear that the OT's definition of male and female, as well as its emphasis on order, is the reason why individuals of the opposing sex are barred from wearing the clothing of the other sex is noteworthy that the OT has no stories concerning a person wearing garments of the opposite gender.

Dressing as the opposite sex contradicted the natural order established by God when he created the universe, which was to classify individuals into males and females based on their anatomy. Because this separation was critical to human survival and could not be blurred in any way, the regulation in Deuteronomy 22:5 was established.

The complementarity of a woman as a man's equivalent would be undermined if this were to be done, and it may also lead to homosexual behavior, which was also prohibited (Lev 18, Given that Deuteronomy 22 contains several additional restrictions governing the relationship between man and woman, this reading fits well with the passage's context (Deut 22:13-30). He believes that the prohibition on wearing clothing belonging to persons of the opposite gender was not imposed for cultic or military reasons. Rather, it was intended to preserve the differentiation between males and females. Israel demonstrated her holiness to the Lord by following this commandment as one of the ways.⁹ To Harland, God was guarding against disrupting the created distinction.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown reasoned that all idolaters misrepresented their gods' gender, portraying them as male and female at different times. As a result, their devotees, both male and female, gradually adopted the practice of changing their dress according to the gender of a specific divinity, which finally became widespread.¹⁰ It is possible that a reference was made to the unsightly levities that are ubiquitous in daily life. Because wearing the opposite gender's clothing is offensive to decency, it blurs the lines between the sexes by encouraging weakness and effeminacy in men, impudence and boldness in women, as well as levity and hypocrisy in both. It paves the way for an influx of so many ills that anyone who dresses in the manner of the opposite gender is deemed “an abomination in the sight of the Lord.” The primary issues here are decency and differentiation.

⁹ Harland, “Menswear and Womenswear: A Study of Deuteronomy 22:5,” 73-76.

¹⁰ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, 135

Deuteronomy 22:5 is interpreted by Eugene Merrill as a ban against “transvestitism” for the people of Israel, in part because of the concept of separation that likely runs throughout this passage.¹¹ The importance of the subversion of clothes may be founded on the right arrangement of things, as Deuteronomy 22:6 forbids separating a mother bird from her young. Men and women wearing alike are referred to as “an abomination to the Lord,” a denunciation that is often reserved for behavior deserving of harsh punishment.¹² For Merrill, the watchword is Distinction.

To Richard D. Nelson, the ban in Deuteronomy 22:5 is more of a call for the covenantal society to work toward clearly defined sexual and gender boundaries, while the prohibition against cross-dressing is a caution against other forms of gender confusion.¹³ Nelson notes that the verb כָּלִי-יִגְדָּר suggests something even more gender sensitive. Therefore, the focus of this restriction, to Nelson, is gender differences independent of particular sexual actions. Deuteronomy 22: 5's Prohibition on crossdressing “can barely pertain to transvestitism”, according to Earl Kalland,¹⁴ who believes that the Biblical author did not have in mind the current idea of transvestitism. However, Kalland recognizes that the prohibition also includes a ban not to reverse God's plan.

Vedeler concludes that cross-dressing between men and women occurs for quite different causes, to the extent that each gender's definition of transvestitism in a

¹¹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary (NAC) 4 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 297.

¹² *Ibid.*, 298.

¹³ Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing, 2002), 267-68.

¹⁴ Earl S. Kalland, *Deuteronomy*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary 3, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 135.

given community will frequently vary.¹⁵ This explains why the nouns and verbs in sections 1a and 1b of Deuteronomy 22:5 differ. Since men's clothing was less identified with gender in ancient Israel's society than was women's clothing, the text is much more than just a simple prohibition of certain wardrobes and in fact does not address the issue of women wearing male apparel. Instead, the verse represents the most fundamental ideas about gender in Israelite culture, and as a result, it makes distinctions between different aspects of men as well as between male and female. One had to act, behave, and have a positive relationship with Yahweh to reach the standards of manhood and masculinity, which were neither easy nor natural. Contrary to Job's first assertion, a boy might be born an אש, but not a גבר. Additionally, he argues, to keep up one's standing as גבר. A continual threat existed that such a man may lose his superiority by showing signs of weakness, harboring doubts about Yahweh, or even coming into inappropriate contact with the incorrect objects.

Being exalted, a גבר had farther to fall, if he does, than a mere אש. We might thus interpret the stipulations of Deuteronomy 22:5, at least in part, as an attempt to safeguard the גבר, especially in light of Hoffner's finding that in the ancient Near East, it was thought that feminine symbols could diminish masculinity. The verse in section 1a distinguishes גבר and the prohibition it poses on women by forbidding all women from possessing weapons or any other kind of power, including those belonging to the most powerful and morally upright men, not men in general. The prohibition of active contact with a potent symbol of all women (wearing a שְׂמֵלַת אִשָּׁה), in section 1b, sets up the warning in part two for גבר for 1A not to lose his high position by participating in customs akin to Israel's polytheistic neighbors' religious ceremonies and therefore,

¹⁵ Vedeler, "Reconstructing Meaning in Deuteronomy 22:5," 459–476.

disturbing Yahweh by restricting active contact with a powerful emblem of all women¹⁶ Vedeler however, suggest that cultural differences be taken into consideration in applying this law.

Tobi Liebman posits that the context of Deuteronomy 22:5 in this Qumran text is different from the context in the Bible's surrounding passages, which are a collection of universal regulations.¹⁷ The restriction against selling an Israelite slave (related to Lev 25: 39–46) and the requirement to utilize a council of twelve judges when deciding a capital offense are found before Deuteronomy 22:5 in the Scroll. The text describes a husband accusing his wife of not being a virgin after they married Deuteronomy 22:5 (cf. Deut. 22:13-21).

In contrast, Liebman argues that Deut. 22:5 is followed by a restriction against catching a mother bird along with her young ones and is preceded by laws governing the return of lost animals and helping fallen animals. The Bible only addresses what a man should do if he thinks that his wife is not a virgin later, in Deuteronomy 22:13-21. The Dead Sea scroll's odd ordering of the regulations may be important, although its purpose is unclear. Both texts have been categorized as generic ordinances or miscellaneous laws with few linkages elsewhere that can explain their settings, and neither arrangement shows a coherent succession of laws.¹⁸ According to Liebman, the prohibition pertains to mixture.

Stone posits that the community, which is shaped by its culture and history, determines the gender character of a particular article of clothing. He however added

¹⁶ Vedeler, "Reconstructing Meaning in Deuteronomy 22:5," 459–476.

¹⁷ Tobi Liebman, "The Jewish Exegetical History of Deuteronomy 22:5: Required Gender Separation or Prohibited Cross-Dressing?" (MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 2002), 45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

that with respect to that area, each group develops its own distinct “gender ideology” without which the clothing itself has no specific significance. It can only be attributed to clothing based on the role it serves in society.¹⁹ There is no question, Walton argues, that it is a visual representation of the body and of the personality. As a result, it carries social connotations for both the wearer and the onlooker.²⁰ It can be seen that Walton sees the command as normative but should be applied with cultural sensitivity.

According to Janusz Lemański, it should be assumed that the lawmaker intended to strongly emphasize “masculinity” (the construction כְּלִי-גִבֹּר) and everything especially linked with such “masculinity” (the word כְּלִי) due to the purposeful language, notably the choice of the phrase “כְּלִי-גִבֹּר”.²¹ It could be used to describe clothing in a wide sense as well as weapons and other items of “manly” gear. On the other hand, the term “שִׂמְלֵה,” which refers to a woman's outer clothing, also refers to a general ban on dressing as a woman. So, Lemański argued, rather than just outlawing cross-dressing as such, both formulations are meant to “guard the unique character of masculinity,” to interdict the crossing of borders within this domain, binding for a patriarchal society. In other words, neither should men effeminate themselves by dressing like women nor should women strive for what is distinctly masculine (masculinization). Lemański based his conclusion on the assumption that the interest of the lawgiver here was to affirm masculinity.²²

¹⁹ Joshua C. Stone, “A Theological Definition of Gender: Human Ontology Reflected upon Community,” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022), 78.

²⁰ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah: Law as Covenant in Ancient Context* (Downer Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2019), 186.

²¹ Janusz Lemański, “Post-Deuteronomistic Prohibition of Transvestitism (Deut 22:5)? The Question of Its Actual Meaning and Motivations,” *Collectanea Theologica* 90, no. 1 (2020): 77–104.

²² *Ibid.*

Rhoda Ayomiotan Bamisile contends that no one can say exactly how the Jews applied that scripture to themselves, but it is known that they were easily identifiable and that the idea was obviously valid despite the disparities in their male and female attire. Due to the multiplicity of cultures, whatever is regarded as belonging to either gender in each culture should not be arbitrated.²³

Deere posits that because it distorted the sex distinction and thus violated a crucial aspect of the created order of existence, wearing clothing from the opposing sex was prohibited (Gen 1:27). It might have also been linked to or supported homosexuality. God's opinion of homosexuality is conveyed by the same Hebrew term that is translated as “detests” (tô'âh, lit., “a detestable thing”; KJV, “an abomination”) (Lev 18:22; 20:13). There is some proof that transvestism may have been linked to the worship of pagan deities as well. Believers today should also observe this command since it was tied to the divine order of Creation and because God hates anybody who violates it.²⁴ Deere is here suggesting that clothing is what distinguished the sexes in the created order of life. One would wonder whether there was no sex distinction before the fall when mankind was without cloth. How about the animals, do they lack sex distinction because they wear no clothing? If using clothing of the opposite sex was associated with homosexuality just because both are declared abominable then it could also be linked to incest and all other abominable acts by the same argument.

²³ Rhoda Ayomiotan Bamisile, “Interpreting Deuteronomy 22:5 in the Light of Jewish Dressing Culture: A Case for 21st Century Christian Dressing,” *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 21, no. 38 (2020): 1-6.

²⁴ J. S. Deere, *Deuteronomy*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures 1, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 301-302.

According to Roy E. Gane, there are two genders in the Bible: male and female. These genders are distinguished by their unique bodily traits, and society should acknowledge these distinctions to prevent confusion and temptations to act immorally.²⁵ Such comments would not be limited to gay behavior. If two heterosexuals mistakenly believe they are the same gender, they may get closer than they otherwise would.

Gane further states that although transgender people are not specifically covered by the law, it appears to have an impact on a big part of their life.²⁶ To Gane, this law can be applicable in condemning homosexuals behavior but they were not the primary focus of the restriction.²⁷

The Restriction is to Prevent Idolatry and Cultic Practices Associated with Cross-dressing in the ANE Culture

Driver has established that the prohibition is not intended to be a simple conventional propriety norm, but even if it were, it would be an important precaution against obvious moral risks. Rather, it is designed to prevent the mimicked gender changes that occurred in Canaanite and Syrian heathenism, which led to considerable moral degradation in those who followed it.²⁸ He further argued that כְּלִי is a fairly broad term that can refer to nearly any item worn or used, such as weapons (Gen 27:3), diamonds (24:53), ornaments (including domestic items, instruments, containers, &c.), a “thing” of skin (Lev 13:49), and a shepherd's “sack” (1 Sam

²⁵ Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 215.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902), 250.

17:40). Thus, it encompasses a concept far larger than “garment.”²⁹ Driver sees this command as preventing idolatry which he termed a very dangerous moral act than obscuring sex distinction. He sees the command as having to do with more than a garment.

Bratcher and Hatton followed Driver to some extent in suggesting that this regulation addresses transvestism, or dressing in clothing typically worn by people of the opposite sex. He holds that it referred to an abomination, which seems to correlate with practices used by pagan-related cults (See Deut 7:24 and Deut 18:12 for the word abomination in itself). The same word is used in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 to describe homosexual activity—anything that relates to a guy, which would appear to encompass accessories and weapons in addition to clothing. However, it most often refers to a man's clothing when used in comparison to a woman's attire.³⁰ Bratcher and Hatton here insinuate that whatever is declared an abominable act is ritual-related.

According to McConville, the issue here is not just about fashion, but also about some sexually aberrant behaviors, which are represented by wearing clothing from (or belonging to) the opposing sex. Pointing to Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, he believes there could be a homophobic motive for the law. It is also likely that transvestitism was used in some non-Israelite religious ceremonies, and that transvestitism is decried for this reason.³¹ McConville seems to partly agree with Lange and Bratcher in pointing to pagan ritual practices as a reason for the

²⁹ Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 251.

³⁰ R. G. Bratcher and H. A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 366.

³¹ J. G. McConville, “Deuteronomy,” *New Bible Commentary*, 21st Century ed. eds. D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer and G. J. Wenham (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 220.

prohibition. At the same time, he is in agreement with Driver that some sexually aberrant behaviors, which are represented by wearing clothing belonging to the opposing sex are a driving force behind the prohibition.³² This points out that McConville is not certain on what the law is actually condemning. But the emphasis still is on confusion of distinction within worship.

Arguing from the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) background, Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton suggest that gender was also indicated by dress as a status marker. Cross-dressing took place in the theater in classical times, where women were not permitted to appear, and it was also a part of homosexual behavior.³³ According to them, Ancient Near Eastern texts frequently refer to cross-dressing or transvestitism in cultic or legal contexts. For instance, they further state, that in the absence of a male relative, Paghat, the sister of the Ugaritic hero Aqhat, dons a male costume beneath her female robes to act as the blood avenger.³⁴ A debate between a husband and wife who want to swap clothes and take on each other's gender roles can be found in Assyrian wisdom literature. This might be a fertility ritual or even a scene from a religious play dedicated to a goddess. Deuteronomy may have referred to transvestitism as an “abomination” because of this connection to other religions, although gender boundaries may also be a problem today.

According to Michael Allen Grisanti, Deuteronomy 22:5 forbids homosexuality or transvestitism, not mixing or a certain type of attire.³⁵ Despite being

³² Ibid.

³³ Matthews, Chavalas and Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed., 209.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Michael Allen Grisanti, *Deuteronomy*, Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 267.

ambiguous in terms of purpose, Grisanti contends that it relates unquestionably to idolatry and/or horrifying sexual perversion based on the Mesopotamian tradition of transvestitism in cultic activity. The confusion of the distinction of the sexes forms the basis of the prohibition to Grisanti.

Smith is of the opinion that the cross-dressing law most likely refers to pagan rituals. For the practice of these rituals, which included the exchange by the sexes of their clothes, weapons, and other items, leading to gross impurities, there is abundant evidence in the records of Syrian and other ancient religions.³⁶ Smith also followed Gilchrist and others in appealing to pagan religious practices to explain the reason behind the restriction.

The Restriction is to Avoid Homosexuality among the Children of Israel

Woods suggests that this regulation is a reflection of the blurring of mixtures in Leviticus 19:19, but its primary focus is on wearing anything, even apparel, that belongs to the other sex. The word abominable (tô'bâ; cf. 12:31; 18:12; 23:17-18) suggests that this was an attempt to forbid homosexuality or the transgender activities that were present in Canaanite and Mesopotamian worship. It is asserted that this verse also acts as a bridge leading from the requirements of sexual purity in 22:9-23:18 to the sin of improper mixing.³⁷ Woods does not seem to really place hands on what exactly this regulation is pointing to. Hence, he offers possible interpretations for it. The pivotal issue of the verse, for Woods, is an improper mixture of sexual practices through blurred identity.

³⁶ G. A. Smith, *The Book of Deuteronomy in the Revised Version with Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), 250.

³⁷ E. J. Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, ed. D. G. Firth, (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 237-238.

According to Peter C. Craigie, the restriction in Deuteronomy 22:5 “does not merely pertain to fads or forms of wearing... At first glance, it seems to allude to the aberrant sexual practice of transvestitism.”³⁸ Craigie associates wearing clothing with sexual behaviors that are “abominations” to the Lord, particularly gay behavior. While transvestitism may seem innocent, Craigie points out that it is either a kind of homosexuality or a religion dedicated to alien deities. Because one of these forms is seen as “an abomination to the Lord.” The difficulty for Craigie is the distinction that may be the milieu for homosexual conduct, either in Israelite culture or through other cultic practices, despite the fact that there is less external evidence to link transvestitism to foreign cultic practice than to homosexuality.

Freeman and Chadwick followed a similar line of argument with Matthews, Chavalas, and Walton but maintained that the difference between male and female clothing in the Old Testament was not very obvious. The law prohibiting men from donning female clothing most likely applied specifically to jewelry and headdresses, although it may have had further connotations on any particular occasions where there may have been a clear distinction between men's and women's attire. It is clear, they maintained, from our text-final verse's clause that the entire passage does not allude to fashion's guiding principles but rather to transvestism, a sexually aberrant practice in which a person dresses and behaves like a member of the opposite sex. Cross-dressing is dangerous because it is closely related to homosexual behavior, which is against the law (Lev 18:22, 20:13), and because it was frequently linked to the worship of pagan deities. According to Genesis 1:27, God created man and woman to be distinctly and uniquely separate from one another. Any attempt to obliterate or blur this distinction

³⁸ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 287.

is, in His sight, an “abomination,” as it is referred to throughout the Bible.³⁹

Therefore, if there was no clear distinction between male and female clothing, one would wonder why the use of garments in the text. The only danger they saw with cross-dressing was its close association with homosexuality and worship of pagan deities. It seems to them that cross-dressing in itself is not dangerous. This suggests that it was only prohibited to avoid homosexuality and worship of pagan deities.

Brown believes that the main reason for the ban is not the wearing of clothing, but rather what it implies—homosexual sex practices.⁴⁰ The second of two the bans is abbreviated as wearing clothing of the opposing sex. The first is the outlawing of homosexual behavior, and the second is the outlawing of pagan cults. This legislation forbids gay pagan sacred rituals since it was popular for male priests of female gods to dress as women.⁴¹ Brown uses this scripture to declare that we are “who we are” because of the biological make-up that God gave us. For Brown, pagan sacrificial rites that include gay sex acts are the important elements.

According to Gilchrist, transvestitism is forbidden due to its connection to homosexuality, to the worship of particular deities, or in some other circumstances—possibly because it is used in spells to treat infertility.⁴² Gilchrist does not seem to see

³⁹ J. M. Freeman and H. J. Chadwick, *Manners & Customs of the Bible* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1998), 178-179. Joyce Tyldesley, *Egypt's Golden Empire: The Age of the New Kingdom* (London: Headline, 2001), 59, also contends that while the Hebrew Bible and other works from ancient Israel contain no evidence of transvestitism, surrounding societies such as Canaan, Mesopotamia, and Egypt do contain transgender behavior and/or mythology. The most well-known example is from Egypt, where Pharaoh Hatshepsut (about 1478/72-1458 BCE) had herself adorned with masculine (and pharaonic) traits such as a beard, male kilt, and crown after attaining power. Her figure is depicted as that of a man without female breasts. Hatshepsut was not the first woman to accede to the throne—the last ruler of the Twelfth Dynasty, Sobeknofru, was a woman—but her use of masculine qualities and symbolism was noteworthy. It was unclear why a woman could not be pharaoh.

⁴⁰ Paul E. Brown, *Deuteronomy: An Expository Commentary*, Exploring the Bible Commentary (Leominster, UK: Day One Publication, 2008), 169.

⁴¹ Brown, *Deuteronomy*, 170.

⁴² P. R. Gilchrist, *Deuteronomy*, Evangelical Commentary on the Bible 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 123. In the ancient world, transgender behavior was common in ritual

a particular reason for this prohibition. All he is doing is guessing reasons. Gilchrist associated cross-dressing with cultic worship, homosexuality, and magic and seems uncertain about what he wants to share. Brown argues that, although the extraordinarily aggressive language regulating unsuitable clothes for men and women sounds weird to us (the Lord your God detests anyone who does this), there are two probable explanations for the rigorous prohibition.

To begin with, he claimed that there is most likely a significant ethical dilemma hanging in the balance here. Canaan was a corrupt and immoral place at the time, and transvestite activities were just one example of the widespread sexual promiscuity that characterized the region. Israel was set to inherit this land. The people of Israel were given this commandment as a warning that they should not identify with the degraded sexual and homosexual activities that were common among the Canaanites. The rule applies not only to clothing but also to any other typical possessions that are commonly carried or worn by members of the opposing sex group. It places an emphasis on the fact that gender distinctions are a component of the created order and should not be eradicated.

Second, it is highly probable that there were religious motivations behind the establishment of this regulation. As part of the fertility rites used by several pagan faiths in the ANE, it was required that men and women swap their garments with one another. A couple who wished to have a child would be expected to participate in magical rites that included this kind of behavior, and Israel is admonished not to have any involvement in such demeaning behavior. According to the biblical testimony

contexts; see Will Roscoe, "Priests of the Goddess: Gender Transgression in Ancient Religion," 195-230. Richard A. Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel: The Bible and the Rest of the Ancient Near East*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 31 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1994), 284-311, discuss the various titles for individuals with unusual sexual roles in the Mesopotamian cult.

(See 1 Sam 1), a couple who wanted a child was expected to pray earnestly and rely on God's might, rather than the pagan magical customs that were practiced at the time.⁴³ Brown here combines both the ethical and religious arguments in favor of the restriction. He also stated an either/or explanation. Again, this means he is not certain on what the restriction is actually about.

According to Joshua C. Stone, Deuteronomy 22:5 and 23:1 should be related. Cross-dressing and emasculation are two cultic practices that occur in the sacerdotal framework of ancient pagan worship and are prohibited in part because they distort and disrupt God's order of things. Both Deuteronomy 22:5 and Deuteronomy 23:1 have moral implications that include the undermining of gender distinctions, a crucial aspect of God's established order.⁴⁴ The focus here is pagan worship coupled with distinction and maintaining the created order.

Summary

The aforementioned poll makes clear that there is disagreement over the precise justification for Deuteronomy 22:5's inclusion in the law as well as its relationship to other verses. Even while there is not complete agreement on this particular cause, everyone seems to agree on the passage's next point. First, Deuteronomy 22:5's ban cannot totally be characterized as being against gay sex practices. Crossdressing and gay sex activities are two separate moral sins, but they are frequently related. Second, the outlawing of cross-dressing cannot be confined to the standard sin of pagan worship. As stated above, crossdressing and sexual activity

⁴³ R. Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone*, ed. J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 213-214.

⁴⁴ Stone, "A Theological Definition of Gender: Human Ontology Reflected upon Community," 78.

are frequently included in paganism, albeit not always. Crossing and paganism are nonetheless separate moral sins, even if sexual activities are typically involved when paganism incorporates crossdressing. Third, there is no moral issue with the kind, weave, or cut of clothes. The moral evil is instead the endeavor to overthrow God's natural arrangement of male and female. Re-examining Deuteronomy 22:5 is necessary in light of these differences of opinion.

CHAPTER 3

EXEGESIS OF DEUTERONOMY 22:5

This chapter aims at establishing Deuteronomy 22:5 in both its immediate context and the broader context of the book of Deuteronomy and, by implication, the Bible as a whole. It will also suggest an interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5. This study holds the Judo-Christian traditional view of Mosaic authorship of the book of Deuteronomy.¹

Literary Contexts of Deuteronomy 22:5

In studying Deuteronomy 22:5, one cannot overlook its literary context. Deuteronomy was generally interpreted as a speech or series of speeches given by Moses to a representative assembly of his Israelite contemporaries, all of which were eventually written down and inked. As a result, the work is perceived as having a style that is somewhat homiletical and strongly hortatory or parenetic.² The prior perspective on the content and organization of Deuteronomy is typical. According to R. Driver's 1902 edition of his *International Critical Commentary*, the book is primarily composed of three lectures “setting forth the laws that the Israelites are to

¹ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary 4, 22. See Duane L. Christensen and Marcel Narucki, “The Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch,” *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 32, no. 4 (1989): 465–471. Robert Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), 135. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament: Including a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (London, UK: Tyndale, 1970), 3–9. Foday Sellu, “1 Samuel 8:4-7 in the Light of Deuteronomy 17:14-20” (MA thesis, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, 2019), 26.

² Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 27.

obey and the spirit in which they are to obey them when they are settled in the land of promise.” He identifies these discourses as the introductory discourse (1:6-4:40), the presentation of the law (5:1-2), and the conclusion (29:1-30:20).

The remaining chapters of the book are made up of a variety of introductions (1:1–5; 4:44–49), summaries (31:1–8; 32:48–34:12), and other topics, many of which do not seem to be essential to the overall framework.³ Deuteronomy 22:5 falls within Moses' third discourse (with interlude): responding to Yahweh's grace with good conduct (12:1-29:1).⁴ This is the larger context of the passage. It especially falls within the context-specific stipulations (12:1–26:19)⁵. Scholars have made the case that the context in this instance is not particularly significant.⁶ At first appearance, the law appears to be out of place. Deuteronomy 22:1-12 contains the following laws: (1) the law to respect a neighbor's property (v. 1-4), (2) Deuteronomy 22:5, (3) the law to protect bird nests (v. 6, 7), (4) the law requiring parapets on homes (v. 8), the rules prohibiting forbidden mixes (v. 9-11), and the law concerning clothes and apparel (v. 12). However, a careful analysis of the region reveals that there are some links present. Deuteronomy 22:5 appears to predict both the limitations on forbidden mixtures in verses 8-11 and the laws governing sexual behavior between men and women in verses 13–30.⁷

Kaufman pointed out a chiasm that binds Deut 22:5–12:

³ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 27.

⁴ Douglas Mangum and Steven E. Runge, eds., *Lexham Context Commentary: Old Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Deut 12:1–29:1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Vedeler, *Reconstructing Meaning*, 460.

⁷ Gary Harlan Hall, *Deuteronomy*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2000), 330.

A dress, v. 5;

B animals, vv. 6–7;

C house, v. 8;

C¹ field, v. 9;

B¹ animals, v. 10;

A¹ dress, v. 11-12.⁸ This agreement established Deut. 22:5 in chiasmic parallel with the legislation relating to unauthorized combinations.

The literary genre of the book of Deuteronomy has a significant resemblance to that of the book of Exodus. The text encompasses elements of narrative history and law, with the inclusion of a song attributed to Moses following his appointment of Joshua. This musical composition provides a depiction of the historical events and experiences of the Israelite people. But, the genre of Deuteronomy 22:5 is a stipulation. It can best be referred to as a sermonic stipulation. It falls within the stipulations of the forbidden mixture (22:5–12). The pericope that introduces the regulation under analysis does consist of a relatively small number of legislations. So, its boundaries are diverse. It proves challenging to categorically group it based on its themes. The larger context (Deut 19:1-22:8) shows evidence of a bigger whole, the limits of which are indicated by the concept of bloodguilt (19:10; 22:8: *dîm*). More precisely, we are dealing with a set of family regulations (Deut 22:13-21.22-29), various social laws (Deut 22:1-4.6-8), and prohibitions on combining different sorts of crops (Deut 22:5.9-11). As a result, either the pericope of Deuteronomy 22:1-8 or Deuteronomy 22:1-12 would provide clear context for the verse.

⁸ Steven A. Kaufman, "The Structure of Deuteronomic Law," *Maarav* 1-2 (1978-1979): 136.

But, in the first instance, we are dealing with a collection of rules that are only loosely related and “hang upon” different applications of the prohibition against killing (verses 6–7). Yet, of the two final restrictions in the aforementioned mini-collection of laws, only these can be interpreted as expanding on the “thou shall not kill” motif. One portrays a mother bird protecting her fledglings (22:6-7), while the other is about an inadvertent blood guilt caused by failing to install a parapet for the freshly constructed roof (22:8). The other laws are only tangentially related to one another and have nothing to do with the issue of death (verses 1–3: the return of lost property; verse 4: the problem of a fallen cattle animal; verse 5: the prohibition of transvestitism). The regulations in the collection are nevertheless linked together by a number of subtle language connections, according to exegetes.⁹ But, thematically, Deuteronomy 22:5 solely refers to the laws stated in verses 9 through 11, while also taking into account the topic of “clothing” in verse 12. Because of this, its placement in the passage's context (between verses 1-4 and verses 6-8) seems a little odd. The third person singular double formula used in verse 5's formulation of the prohibition finds parallels in Deuteronomy 23:18 and 24:16.

The purpose of preparing the new generation of Israelites for entrance into the land that was promised to Abraham, and cautioning them about the grave errors committed by their predecessors, is to deter them from repeating those sins and therefore avoid incurring the divine anger of their God. This research offers an interpretation of the book of Deuteronomy, positing it as a farewell sermon delivered by Moses. Thus, Deuteronomy 22:5 is included in Moses' final lecture.

Historical/Geographical Situation of Deuteronomy 22:5

⁹ Alexander Rofé, *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretation* (London: T&T Clark 2002), 62, 72; J. R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2013), 613.

Beginning where the book of Numbers left off, the opening chapter of Deuteronomy (1: 1–8) introduces the book and links it to the preceding events in Exodus and Numbers (Deut 1:1–5; 4:44–49; 29:1; 33:1). This introduction begins by referencing significant geographic landmarks like Kadesh-Barnea (1: 2, 19, 46; 2:14) and Horeb or Sinai (1: 2, 6; 5:2; 9:8). The mention of Horeb serves as a poignant recollection of the covenant established by Yahweh with His chosen people. Moses continually requires the Israelites to recall the events at Sinai during his speeches (Horeb). The allusion to Kadesh-Barnea in (1:2) serves as a reminder of the Israelites' lack of faith in Yahweh after He miraculously delivered them from Egypt. All but a small number of the Jews who experienced the exodus died as a result of that failure after 40 years of wandering (Num 13–14). Yahweh gave the next generation the right to inherit the country because of their disbelief. Deuteronomy summarizes Yahweh's commandments for them before they enter the promised land, focusing on this new generation who had not been present at Mount Sinai. The beginning also reminds the Israelites of their triumphs over the Amorite rulers, Sihon and Og in Transjordan (Deut 1:4–5; Num 21). The plains of Moab, where Israel camped following that triumph (Num 22:1), are the scene for Moses' speech to the nation, which starts in Deuteronomy 1:6.

According to Francis Watson, Israel is once more on the cusp of the Promised Land at the beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy. It was time to make amends for what went wrong at Kadesh Barnea over forty years earlier in Moab (cf. 1:2, 19-46). He added that the location in Moab's country dramatizes and symbolizes the turning point Israel was at the time the story was being told.¹⁰

¹⁰ Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London, UK: A&C Black, 2004), 471.

Deuteronomy stands out and is outstanding in its own right. Whereas Yahweh is portrayed as speaking to Moses in Exodus-Numbers, Moses is portrayed in Deuteronomy as speaking to Israel at Yahweh's direction (Deut 1:1-4; 5:1; 29:1). The passage also makes clear that it is a hortatory summary of numerous addresses made

at various points and locations during the Israelites' forty-year desert experience. It is akin to a homily on the constitution, summarizing Moses' instructions to Israel during that time.¹¹

According to the opening verses, it has been hypothesized that the book of Deuteronomy may have been “spoken twice.” The names of the geographical locations stated in the title are far apart (Deut 1:1-2). These are the words that Moses spoke to all of Israel in the wilderness beyond the Jordan, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab; they are reinforced by the assertion that it takes eleven days to walk from Horeb through Mount Seir to Kadesh-Barnea. If these assertions are even remotely relevant to the contents of the book they introduce, they suggest that the historical-geographic setting of the book spans a large region, from Horeb to Moab.¹² Moses gave his address, just a month before he passed away.¹³

The message and occasion of Deuteronomy take place after Moses' tenure. These were the final sermons Moses delivered to the people before they crossed into the Promised Land. The initial chapters describe its historical context (chapters 1-4). The basic location was the same, but the content was very different. The latter book concludes with the lines, “These are the rules and commandments the LORD issued through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.” Deuteronomy presents us with a sequence of speeches by a human being (a

¹¹ George L. Robinson, “Deuteronomy,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 930–936.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary On the Whole Bible*, vol. 1 (Delmarva, DE: Zondervan, 2013), 232.

great and inspired man, but still human), to other human beings. Numbers contain the law of the Lord to Israel.¹⁴

These were the last lectures Moses gave to the people before they entered the Promised Land. Its historical setting is described in the first few chapters (chapters 1-4). The general location remained the same, however the substance has significantly changed. Deuteronomy presents us with a series of speeches by a human being (a great and inspired man, but still human), to other human beings. The latter book ends with the words: “These are the rules and ordinances the LORD issued via Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.” The Lord's law to Israel is found in the book of Numbers. To help the people understand the significance of the present, Moses emphasizes historical occurrences. They found themselves at a turning point in their history, therefore understanding the past was crucial to attaining the objective at hand. The key to achieving this objective was their obedience to God. The book's immediate context is around the Exodus, which commemorates Israel's deliverance from Egypt. At the time, Israel was still outside the Promised Land; the end of servitude and the beginning of liberty were, in fact, the birth of Israel as a country whose monarch was God.

After being freed, they were eager to settle in the country was given to them by their ancestors. Moses, who would not accompany them, gave them this particular message as they eagerly approached the Promised Land (Deut 1:37-38; 4:21).

The book of Deuteronomy is a collection of four speeches made by Moses to the Israelites as they prepared to enter the Promised Land (1:6-4:40; 5:1-26:19; 27:1-

¹⁴ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary On the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, 233.

28:63; 29:1-30:20). These speeches are both retrospective and prospective.¹⁵

The text falls in the context of the second sermon (5:1-26:19) which is prospective and can be structured as follows:

- A 5:1-33: Giving the Ten Commandments (the Law)
- B 6:1-11, 32: A challenge to love God holistically.
- A1 12:1-26:19: Stipulations, laws, and regulations.

Hence the larger context of the text is 12:1-26:19—Stipulations, laws, and regulations— which can further be structured as:

A. Civil Law (19:1–22:8)

- (1) Laws on Manslaughter (19:1-13).
- (2) Laws regarding witnesses (19:14-21).
- (3) Laws of War (20:1-20).
- (4) Laws on Unsolved Murder (21:1–9)
- (5) Laws for Wives and Children (21:10-21).
- (6) Laws for Life Preservation (21:22-22:8).

B. Purity Laws (22:9–23:18)

- (1) Illustrations for the Principle (22:9-12).
- (2) Purity in Marriage Relationship (22:13-30).
- (3) Purity in Public Worship (23:1–8).
- (4) Purity of Personal Hygiene (23:9-14)
- (5) Purity in treatment of the disadvantaged (23:15-16).
- (6) Purity for Cultic Personnel (23:17-18).

C. Laws of Interpersonal Relations (23:19-25:19)

¹⁵ Jeff S. Anderson, *The Blessing and the Curse: Trajectories in the Theology of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 160.

(1) Respecting the possessions of others (23:19-24:7).

(2) Respecting the dignity of others (24:8-25:4).

(3) Respect for Another's Sanctity (25:5-16)

(4) Dealing with Amalekites (25:17-19).

D. Laws for Covenant Celebration and Confirmation (26:1-15)

(1) Presentation of the First Fruits (26:1-11).

(2) Presentation on the Third-Year Tithe (26:12-15).¹⁶

The above structure indicates that the text's immediate context is (21:22-22:8)—laws regulating the preservation of life. After discussing a case that culminated in capital punishment (21:18-21), Moses proceeded to the policy for recovering and properly disposing of the remains of those dealt with (21:22-23). This is followed by a series of stipulations that avoid the death of animals and people (22:1-8). If one stumbled across a neighbor's straying or stray animal, he was expected to return it to the owner if the owner was identified (v. 1).

The implication is that animals let to roam would inevitably succumb to the elements, unscrupulous thieves, or other causes of harm or death. Furthermore, the animals in question were a valuable resource, and their loss would bring the owner distress and maybe destitution. This was true to the point that the person who discovered them had to keep them at his own expense until the owner, whether present or not, came and claimed them (v. 2). In fact, this regulation applied to all lost and found objects (v. 3). In a related incident, a domesticated animal belonging to a neighboring neighbor suffered an accident and collapsed on the road. (v. 4).

¹⁶ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary 4 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 39.

Unlike wandering sheep or oxen, which were rarely observed on public roadways and could be targeted by rustlers, donkeys were commonly seen in movement. In this case, it is plausible to conclude that the animal was with its owner when the accident occurred, rather than having wandered out on its own. The fallen creature should be assisted merely out of love for one's neighbor, but in this case, the focus is on the animal's well-being. If allowed to remain in this situation, it may perish. The restriction on transvestism, which appears to be the most intrusive regulation in the chapter, comes next (v. 5). The next section discusses bird preservation (vv. 6-7).

The prescriptions about the preservation of life (21:22-22:8), and, in fact, the entire section on life and death (19:1-22:8) culminates with the injunction to home builders to install a guard rail around the edge of the rooftop to prevent anyone from falling off accidentally.¹⁷

Deuteronomy 22:1-8 contains five laws that can be structured thus:

A	Returning a brother's lost property	22:1-3
B	Assisting falling animals	22:4
X	Do not dress the opposite sex clothing	22:5
B'	Do capture a mother bird and her babies.	22:6-7
A'	Building wall around the roof of one's house	22:8 ¹⁸

According to Christensen the outer frame of this structure transitions from a regulation about restoring a neighbor's misplaced property (vv 1-3) to a law requiring

¹⁷ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC, 298. The protection described here is immediately pertinent to the falling bird's nest in verses 6-7, as well as the stumbling ox and donkey in verse 4. Cf. Calum Carmichael, *Law and Narrative in the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008), 177–78.

¹⁸ Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, Word Biblical Commentary 6B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 492.

one to defend their property by erecting a parapet around the edge of their home's roof (V 8). Here, the inner frame shifts from a rule (v. 4) that express care for the wellbeing of domestic animals to a counterpart legislation (vv. 6-7) that expresses concern for the welfare of a mother bird in the wild. A rather cryptic legislation prohibiting the wearing of apparel belonging to the other sex is located in the middle (5).¹⁹

Built on the theme of Preservation of Life, which forms the basis of the broader literary unit of 21:22–22:8, four regulations are expanded to include illicit mixtures in general; the first law (22:5) pertains to humans, while the other three (22:8–11) deal with seeds, plow animals, and textiles. These four laws have prompted much discussion, introspection, and revision in later Jewish tradition, much like the law of the insubordinate son (21:18–21). Hence, this study establishes that Deut 22:5, the text under study, is part of Moses' sermon to the people as he admonished them before entering the Promised Land.

Interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5

לא־יִהְיֶה כְּלִי־גִבּוֹר עַל־אִשָּׁה וְלֹא־יִלְבַּשׁ גִּבּוֹר שְׂמֹלֶת אִשָּׁה כִּי תוֹעֵבַת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
כְּלִי־עִשָּׂה אֱלֹהִים

LXX: Οὐκ ἔσται σκεύη ἀνδρὸς ἐπὶ γυναικί, οὐδὲ μὴ ἐνδύσῃται ἀνὴρ στολήν
γυναικίαν, ὅτι βδέλυγμα Κυρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ σου ἐστὶ πᾶς ποιῶν ταῦτα.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint Version: Greek* (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851), Dt 22:5.

LXXE: A man's clothing shall not be worn by a woman, nor shall a man wear a woman's attire; for anybody who does these things is an abomination to the Lord thy God.²¹

DSS גבר שלמת אשה כִּי תַעֲבֹת יְהוָה²²

A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this. (NIV)

“A woman shall not wear a man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's covering, for anyone does so is an abomination to the LORD your God. (ESV)

“A woman shall not wear anything that belongs to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.” (NKJV)

“A woman shall not wear a male's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for anyone who does so is an abomination to the LORD your God. (NAB)

The prohibition contains two keywords כלי (*keîl*) and שמלת (*simlat*) (both in construct form). These two words are variously translated in various versions of the English Bible. The NKJV translates כלי as “anything that pertains unto,” and תלמש as “garment;” while, the LXX English translation renders כלי as “apparel,” and תלמש as “woman's dress.” The NIV translates כלי as “clothing,” and תלמש as “clothing.” However, the garment ESV translates כלי as “garment” and תלמש as “cloak.” The New American Bible (NAB) renders כלי as “article” and תלמש as “dress.”

²¹ Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament: English Translation* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1870), Deut 22:5.

²² *4Q36 Deuteronomy I* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), Deut 22:5.

Morphological Analysis

Table 1. Morphological Analysis

English equivalent	Hebrew word	Morphology	Root meaning
Not	לֹא־	Adjective, Negative particle	לא
Shall ware-wear	יִהְיֶה	Verb, qal imperfect, 3 rd person, masculine, singular	יָהַיַּה Fall out, happen, especially and very often, come about, come to pass. sq. substantive (subj.) clause almost always + modifying (typically temporal) clause or phrase: It happened that most of the time
Anything that pertains to	כְּלִי־	Noun, masculine, singular, common	כָּלִי utensil, vessel. Gen. 31:37; 45:20. ²³ clothing, ornaments, an implement, a tool ²⁴ , weapon, vessel, armor. This term can refer to a wide range of implements, including weapons ²⁵ .
A man	גִּבּוֹר	Noun, masculine, singular	גִּבּוֹר A powerful guy, distinct from women, infants, and non-combatants whom he must defend, ³⁰ a strong, heroic man
Upon	עַל־	Preposition	עַל upon, and hence on the ground of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, concerning, beside, in addition to, together with, beyond, above, over, by, on to, towards, to, against ²⁶
A woman	אִשָּׁה	Noun, feminine, singular	אִשָּׁה woman, wife, female ²⁷
And not	וְלֹא־	<u>Conjunction-wow, Adjective, Negative Particle</u>	לֹא not (always negatives properly the word immed. Following). ²⁸

²³ Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), s.v. "keli."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 399.

²⁵ Hon-lee Kwok, "Warfare," *Lexham Theological Wordbook* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 752.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 752.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁸ Kwok, "Warfare," *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, 518.

Shall put on	יִלְבֹּשׁ	Verb, qal imperfect, 3 rd person, masculine, singular	שָׁלַח put on (a garment), wear, clothe, be clothed ²⁹
A man	גִּבּוֹר	Noun, masculine, singular	גִּבּוֹר strong, valiant man
garment	שִׁמְלַת	Noun, feminine, singular, common	שִׁמְלַת Wrapper, cloak (of man or [Ru 3:3 +] woman), usually a square piece of cloth worn as an outer garment. ³⁰
Of a woman	אִשָּׁה	Noun, feminine, singular	אִשָּׁה woman, wife, female
for	כִּי	Conjunction	כִּי that, for, when ³¹
Are an abomination to	תּוֹעֵבָה	Noun, feminine, singular, common	תּוֹעֵבָה abomination in a ritual sense ³²
Yahweh	יְהוָה	Noun, proper, masculine, singular	יְהוָה Yahweh, the proper name of the God of Israel ³³
Your God	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	Noun, masculine, plural, common. Second person, masculine, singular	אֱלֹהֶיךָ God ³⁴
All	כָּל־	Noun, masculine, singular, common	כָּל the whole, all ³⁵
Who do	עָשָׂה	Verb, qal, participle, masculine, singular, common	עָשָׂה do make ³⁶
These	אֵלֶּה:	Preposition, common, plural	these ³⁷
Punctuation	פ		

²⁹ Ibid., 527.

³⁰ Ibid., 971.

³¹ Ibid., 471.

³² Ibid., 1072.

³³ Ibid., 217.

³⁴ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), s.v. “Elohim.”

³⁵ Brown, BDB, s.v. “kol.”

³⁶ Brown, BDB, s.v. “asah.”

³⁷ Brown, BDB, s.v. “eleh.”

Literary Analysis

The noun שְׂמָלָה implies a piece of cloth used as a cover and can refer to goods that cover a person or inanimate objects, like a bed (e.g., Gen. 9: 23; Deut. 22:17). Hilary Lipka also made the following suggestion: in the plural, it is also used to refer to clothing in general, including men's garments (Gen. 37: 34; Exod. 19:10; Josh. 7: 6). The phrase שְׂמָלָה in this context alludes to a cloak, mantle, wrap, or other clothing that a lady wears because it is combined with the verb לָבַשׁ “to wear, put on.”³⁸ The final clause of the passage, which states that men must not dress like women, is therefore clear. The interpretation of שְׂמָלָה is not that difficult. In the Old Testament, שְׂמָלָה is one of many phrases used to refer to clothing. It refers to an “outer garment,” “mantle,” or “cloak.” As a result of this study, any type of clothing is permitted.

כְּלִי

In this context, the phrase כְּלִי is vague in that it may signify a multitude of items such as armor, bag, vehicle, furniture, instrument, jewel, sack, stuff, thing, vessel, weapon, implement, baggage, boat, and seat. It appears 319 times in the Hebrew Bible and appears to be a word describing any form of personal possession, as well as equipment, containers, tools, and so on, relevant to a specific service or occupation. The range of words used in the English Bibles to translate כְּלִי (kelî) shows that the translators employed English words appropriate to the situation. Thus, in the context of an army or soldier, equipment could be armor or weapons (Jud 18:16) or baggage (1 Sam 17:22).

A musician's equipment would be an instrument (1 Chron 15:16), whereas a builder's equipment would be a tool (1 Kgs 6:7). In other contexts, skillfully crafted

³⁸ Hilary Lipka, “The Prohibition of Cross-Dressing,” accessed 3 June 2023, <https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-prohibition-of-cross-dressing>.

gold and silver articles are referred to as jewels (Gen 24:53; Num 31:50-51) or vessels (2 Kgs 12:13), depending on the context. If גְּבֵר־כְּלִי refers to personal or corporate belongings, it may suffice to translate גְּבֵר־כְּלִי as any material of a man, as it is rendered in many English translations of the Bible, especially as it appears to be a parallel to the expression הַשְּׂוֹלֵת אֵץ.

גְּבֵר

The Hebrew word גְּבֵר derives from the root גָּבַר. The verb גָּבַר (gābar) means “to prevail,” “be mighty,” “have strength,” or “be great.” The noun גְּבוּרָה, “gebûrâ” signifies “might,” while the adjective גִּבּוֹר “gibbôr” means “strong” or “mighty.” In the Old Testament, the word refers to “a brave man,” “a mighty man” (Josh 10:2; 1 Sam 14:52), or “mighty man of valor” (Judg 6:12; 1 Sam 16:18; 2 Kgs 5:1). Some dictionaries describe גְּבֵר not just as “man” but also as “a valiant man,” “warrior,” maybe due to its biblical meaning.

However, the definition may not be valid, because according to Jenni and Westermann, the segholate noun גְּבֵר is used as a rule just like יָשׁ (‘îsh), restricting the main meaning of the root.⁴¹ Hence, גְּבֵר־כְּלִי is appropriately translated as man's garment, and as such, it is a simple analog to הַשְּׂוֹלֵת אֵץ drow eht taht mialc s'ekralC. גְּבֵר in Deuteronomy 22:5 refers to a strong man or warrior may not be valid.⁴² He went on to say, “It is very likely that armor is here intended; especially since we know that in the worship of Venus, to which that of Astarte among the Canaanites bore a striking resemblance, the woman was accustomed to appear in armor before her.”

תועבת

The word תועבת is from Hebrew תועבה which is a feminine noun in the construct form. תועבת (from the root תעב) means “an abomination”, “something abominable” (Prov 21:27; 28:9), תועבת יהוה “things which are an abomination to Jehovah” (Prov 3:32; 11:1, 20). Particularly applicable to products labeled impure and forbidden by religious regulations. Gen. 43:32 states, “For it is an abominable thing to the Egyptians” (to eat with the Hebrews). Genesis 46:34 and Deuteronomy 14:3 especially used of anything associated with idol worship, 1 Kings 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:2; Ezra 9:1; Ezekiel 16:2, and of idols themselves, 2 Kings 23:13.⁵¹ According to James Swanson, it can refer to a “detestable thing,” “abomination,” “or repulsion,” i.e., anything odious and vile (Deut 7:26), as well as a particular “thing” or a “way” or “practice,” as in lifestyle behavior. It can also allude to an idol, a repulsive thing, or a worship object, with the emphasis on its rejection (Deut 32:16; 2 Chron 34:33; Jer 16:18; Ezek 5:9; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 16:36).³⁹

The noun תועבה (*tô`eba*) occurs 117 times in the Old Testament and it is generally translated as “abomination.” The term is used to denote a bad act committed by either Israel as a whole or a specific Israelite. The phrase is used multiple times in Ezekiel to characterize culturally undesirable conduct. In the book of Deuteronomy, the term “tô'eba” is used to characterize pagan activities that are repugnant to Yahweh, almost as a technical term (Deu 18:9; 10–12; 20:17–18; 23:18).

Syntactical Analysis

Deu 22:5 can be broken into three clauses:

על־אשה לא־יהיה כלי־גבר “There shall not be a *kělî geber* upon an *'iššâ*.”

³⁹ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, OH: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 104.

ולא־יִלְבַּשׁ גִּבֹר שְׂמֹלֶת אִשָּׁה “and a *geber* shall not wear a garment for an *iššâ*.”

“for whoever does this is an abomination to Yahweh your God.”⁴⁰

The fundamental intent of the rule is briefly stated by Vedeler: “Two categories of persons are given, each of whom is forbidden from contact with an object associated with the other” (part 1). It is believed that breaking this boundary offends Yahveh in some way (part 2).⁴¹ There is need to look at key words in order to grasp the meaning of this law.

I will start from the second sentence of the first part since it looks clearer:

ולא־יִלְבַּשׁ גִּבֹר שְׂמֹלֶת אִשָּׁה “and a *geber* shall not wear a garment for a *iššâ*.”

Clothing is referenced in both the Hebrew words for wear (לְבַשׁ) and women's garments (שְׂמֹלֶת אִשָּׁה). Traditionally, לְבַשׁ refers to the act of putting on common clothing; it signifies to clothe oneself. In addition, שְׂמֹלֶת denoted an outer garment, cloak, or mantle. The ESV translation reflects this concept, stating that a male should not wear a woman's cloak. Finally, it assumes that the second sentence of the first half has a clear law prohibiting men from wearing women's outerwear.

In the first clause, the phrase כְּלִי־גִבֹר and the verb יִהְיֶה are of particular interest. It is quite intriguing that the verb is to be and not wear in the HB. This is the basis for my adoption of the translation “there shall not be”. Additionally, the word “*kelî*,” which appears in the second portion of the statement with its corresponding garment, is actually a fairly broad term. It is a male noun that denotes an object, such as a

⁴⁰ Harold Torger Vedeler, “Reconstructing Meaning in Deuteronomy 22:5,” 460-61.

⁴¹ Vedeler, *Reconstructing meaning*, 461.

vessel, tool, or jewel.⁴² It has a broad, encompassing meaning that encloses all beneficial objects. The identification of the specific object and the determination of its intended purpose is contingent upon the contextual factors at hand. Clothes appear to be a fair translation given the context, but the question remains: Does the Old Testament employ this word to refer to clothing?

Four dictionaries and lexicons (HAL, Gesenius, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, and Dictionary of Biblical Language with Semantic Domains: Hebrew) include the definition of *kěli* as a garment, but two dictionaries (TWOT, BDB) do not. HAL is the only translation of “*kěli*” that does not primarily rely on Deuteronomy 22:5. HAL renders another passage, 1 Samuel 21:6—Then David replied the priest, saying, “Truly, ladies have been kept from us for approximately three days since I came out. While the vessels of the young men are holy, the bread is essentially common, even though it was sanctified in the vessel. And the young men's vessels are holy, but the bread is common, despite being sanctified in the vessel, (NKJ; emphasis added). However, *kěli* is unlikely to refer to clothing in this context, unlike in Deut 22:5, (NKJ; emphasis added). Even the HAL writers acknowledge that there is an alternative reading here: body. Aside from Deuteronomy 22:5, *kěli* does not mean clothing in any other place in the Old Testament. Some academics believe that a weapon is a proper translation of *kěli* in this context. The broad meaning of *kěli* suggests that neither of the aforementioned translations. The above translations do not adequately capture the semantic significance of *kěli*, given its vast meaning. HAL has the following meanings for *kěli*:

⁴² Warren Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 508.

(1) vessel, receptacle; (2) item of equipment; (3) tool, instrument: (a) decoration, (b) clothing, and (c) weapons.⁶¹

Davidson advocates a broader translation of Deuteronomy 22:5, specifically gear. This paragraph could be referring to anything related to a male, such as his “gear”. The wording suggests that *kěli* encompasses more than just clothing. It can refer to nearly anything used or worn, such as weapons (Gen. 27:3), diamonds (24:53), ornaments (including domestic things, instruments, containers, and so on), Lev. 13:49 (a “thing” of skin), and 1 Samuel 17:40 (a shepherd's “bag”).

The verb that is used with *kěli* in the first clause serves as another indicator of how broad the term is: יהיה. The negative form of it לא־יהיה is used in this passage. It has a variety of meanings. The Hebrew negative was the subject of research by David Stabnow with אל and he addressed לא־יהיה.⁴³ He proposed various concepts that this construction could express: (1) the non-existence of anything (in the future- with imperfect, and in the past - with a perfect aspect of the verb), (2) ownership or possession, (3) not being “on the road”, (4) not being “with someone,” (5) not going “after someone,” (6) not being “in a group,” (7) Not being “from a group,” (8) Not being “from someone,” and (9) Not being “like someone.” At the outset, he addressed how this construction is used in legal documents. So, in Deut. 22:5 it will forbid the “existence of” a *kěli* geber upon an ’iššâ. While the text does not explicitly mention the act of wearing, it is plausible that it is being indirectly implied.

There is a potential presence of a tool intended for use by men that is now being carried. The subsequent inquiry pertains to the rationale behind the author's utilization of broad terminology in delineating the items that are proscribed for

⁴³ David Stabnow, “A Discourse Analysis Perspective on the Syntax of Clauses Negated by אל in the Primary History” (PhD. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2000), 88-99.

women to wear. If the only items being exhibited were garments, it would have been advantageous for him to exercise greater precision. This inquiry will be retained for future reference. The initial clause of Deuteronomy 22:5 has an additional term that possesses the potential to elucidate the interpretation of the passage through several

nuanced means. The term “גבר” is a seldom-used word in the Old Testament, appearing just 66 times and only in Deuteronomy 22:5. It refers to the concept of man. This term highlights an aspect of the characteristics of individuals, encompassing both males and females. Primarily, it signifies physical prowess, while furthermore carrying a sexual undertone.⁴⁴ “This word refers to a male at the peak of his powers, unlike more general terms like *ādām*, *iš*, and *enôš*. It is important to recognize this disparity, but it is incorrect to conclude that this individual is a greater man. The word גבר appears twice in the Exodus narrative, referring to Israel's exit from Egypt (Exod 10:11; 12:37). There it is used “to contrast men with women and children.”⁴⁵ It appears in Deuteronomy 22:5 and serves the same purpose.

To summarize the topic surrounding the first sentence of the first section of the verse, we see that the terms are somewhat vague in the first sentence, however, the prohibition is very clear and explicit in the second sentence. Women are not allowed to wear anything related to men's clothing; this is a rule.

Now the last part of the verse:

כי “Whoever does this is an abomination to Yahweh, your God.” The term “תועבת יהוה” is especially crucial in this circumstance. This sentence construction emphasizes how serious a violation of this legislation is. How does this sentence help us better understand Deuteronomy 22:5? תבעות means abomination or abhorrence. The term is used to indicate anything unpleasant in a wider context (Proverbs 8:7).⁴⁶ TWOT describes the nature of the sin as “may be of a physical,

⁴⁴ G. Johannes Botterweck, Heinz-Josef Fabry and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), 377-378.

⁴⁵ Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 183.

⁴⁶ Baker, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, 1218.

ritual, or ethical nature and may be abhorred by God or man.”⁴⁷ As a result, the OT can be used to allude to things that are of their nature ominous or hazardous, by *tô‘ēbâ*.⁴⁸ Only Deuteronomy and Proverbs have the word *יהוה* ,semit 11 dna 8) תועבת (respectively). In particular, it “expresses the incompatibility of some things with Yahweh's nature.” As Davidson stated, *הבעות* is not only about cultic taboos but also, as with Lev. 18, a transgression of the creation order.⁴⁹

The term *בכִּייל* ,lerappa enilucsam ot refer ylrassecen ton seod (sdoog s'naM) ג but rather to male-related items. Although this could be an allusion to wearing, nothing in the text specifically mentions wearing. Carrying men's tools may also be an option. The phrase would thus include not only clothing but also jewelry, weapons, and other items often associated with men. The second clause specifies women's attire. As a result, the ban in the second sentence is very clear and explicit, but the terms in the first are extremely broad. Women are not permitted to wear anything resembling men's clothing.

Hence Deuteronomy 22:5 does not only pertain to patterns or forms of wearing, as the admonition found in the final phrase, *אלה כל־עשה אלהיך יהוה תועבת כי* (For all who do these are an abomination to YHWH your God), makes apparent. It appears to allude to transvestism, an aberrant kind of sexual conduct. Although transvestism appears to be a very harmless deviation, the current legislation may be based on one or both of two characteristics of it. First, transvestism is frequently related to certain types of homosexuality; second, transvestite behaviors were most

⁴⁷ Robert L. Harris, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), 977.

⁴⁸ Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), s.v. “*toeba*.”

⁴⁹ Davidson, *Flame of Yahveh*, 171.

likely associated with the cults of specific deities in the ancient world.⁷⁴ In each or all of these cases, transvestism is an abomination to the Lord your God. Many acts are regarded as abominations in the Bible, however, only a few are described as abominations to the Lord, mostly in Deuteronomy (Deut 7:25; 17:1; 18:12; 22:5; 23:19; 24:4; 27:15). That it is an abomination to the Lord implies it is an objectionable act before the Lord. In Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, homosexual behavior is described as an abomination. However, Hoffner has proposed that there are more straightforward ways of referring to the behavior of homosexuality, which are used elsewhere in the OT.⁵⁰ This prohibition appears to be more than just legislation against homosexuality. The context of Deuteronomy 22:5 appears to indicate that the fundamental cause for this regulation is the blurring of the creation order.

Davidson expressed a well-balanced viewpoint: Cross-dressing is morally/culturally abhorrent to God due to its relationship with homosexuality and fertility cult rites. It also confuses the core distinctions of gender dualism (male and female) as established in creation.⁵¹

To sum up the discussion, I agree with McGee when she says that God wants a man to look like a man and a woman to look like a woman.⁵⁴ The law prohibits women from wearing male-specific items and men from wearing female-specific clothing. The distinctness of each sex should be maintained and preserved in terms of external appearance.

⁵⁰ Hary A. Hoffner Jr., "Symbols for Masculinity and Femeinity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85, no. 3 (1966): 326.

⁵¹ Davidson, *Flame of Yahveh*, 171-172. Ian Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy, International Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 172.

At the conclusion of the discussion regarding the Hebrew words used in Deut. 22:5, a working translation for this study is: “A woman shall not wear a man's item, and a man shall not put on a woman's garment, for anyone doing these is an abomination to YHWH your God!”

ANE Background of Deuteronomy 22:5

A great deal of the cases of transvestism and cross-dressing that are recorded in ancient Near Eastern sources are either legal or cultic.⁵²

Cross-dressing was associated with the ancient Mesopotamian sun god, Shamash. The Hammurabi Law Code stele depicted Shamash wearing a cascading skirt with five overlapping and flounced layers.⁵³ H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden characterize the religion of Syrian Hierapolis (ancient Mabbûg), wherein the mythology surrounding the goddess Rhea is rife with transvestite imagery and self-castration, and Galli priests, in self-devotion to Rhea, give up their masculine lives and dress as women.⁵⁴ Therefore, it stands to reason that worshipers of these deities would naturally find it easy to adopt a gender transition.

People who engaged in cross-dressing occasionally did so in Egypt. Two pharaohs decided to represent themselves with characteristics of the other sex. Among them is Pharaoh Hatshepsut, who “after seizing power, had herself depicted with such male (and pharaonic) features as a beard, male kilt, and crown.”⁵⁵ There had been

⁵² John H. Walton et al. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (London: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 194.

⁵³ Edwin M. Yamauchi and Marvin R. Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity*, Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2014), 327.

⁵⁴ H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden, eds., *The Syrian Goddess (De Dea Syria) Attributed to Lucian* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 23, 37, 39, 55

⁵⁵ Vedeler, *Reconstructing Meaning*, 465.

female pharaohs before her, so she did not have a compelling motive for doing any of this. Along with Hatshepsut, Pharaoh Akhenaten, who was seen with feminine hips, and his wife Nefertiti, who wore the Pharaohs' crown, engaged in transgender activity. It was also unclear how Akhenaten was acting.⁵⁶ There was a group of temple workers that engaged in cross-dressing in Mesopotamia. it is “inescapable that these individuals did partake in ceremonial homosexual behaviors” since the assinnu, kargarrû, or kulu'u male cult leaders in the worship of Ishtar “dressed like women, wore female makeup, and frequently carried the female sign of the (spinning) spindle.”⁵⁷ It was claimed that the goddess Ishtar had changed these bureaucrats from men to women.⁶⁰ The Canaanite goddess Anath is referenced in “The Bow of Aqhad” as one who “takes away men's bow, that is, who changes men into women.” This may have been an allusion to the change of those men into homosexuals, according to Mesopotamian accounts concerning Ishtar.⁵⁸ This appears to be the setting for Deuteronomy 22:5. The male members of the Ishtar cult may face legal consequences. The cult of Ishtar is akin to the religion of Astarte/Ashera in Canaan; thus, although there is no clear proof, it can be presumed that Assinnu had Canaanite equivalents.⁵⁹ Lambert quotes a saying from the Middle Assyrian Babylonians that seems to allude to transgender behavior. He translates: “You be the man; [I] will be the woman,” an Amorite tells his wife. [Since...] I have matured into a man. Woman ... Men.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Davidson, *Flame of Yahveh*, 170.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁶⁰ W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 226.

One way to take away one's masculinity was to dress him like a woman. The ritual and invocation of Ishtar of Nineveh states,

“Take away from the (enemy) men, manhood, courage, vigor and mdl, maces, bows, arrows (and) dagger(s), and bring them to Hatti.” For those (i.e., the enemy), hold a woman's distaff and spindle and dress like a woman. Put the scarf on them, and take away your favor.⁶¹

The two things that determined an ancient person's masculinity were (1) their ability to fight in warfare and (2) their capacity to bear offspring.⁶² Due to the early Near Easterner's frequent association of these two characteristics of masculinity, the symbols he used to express his masculinity both to himself and his culture often had two meanings. Specifically, the emblems that mostly alluded to his military might also frequently reminded him of his sexual prowess. Similarly, items that remind a woman of her household responsibilities often allude to her sexual and reproductive desires. Two ladies are seen holding a mirror and a spindle on the Marash stela that is engraved in Luwian hieroglyphic writing.⁶³ It suffice to say these were their identifying emblems.

In early Near Eastern civilization, these symbols had two functions: first, they symbolized traditional decency in attire; second, they held the ability to confer the very sexual traits they represented, as if they had some sort of innate magical power. Because of this, the two sexes' emblems were frequently used in charms and rituals.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Billie Jean Collins, “Ritual and Prayer to Ishtar of Nineveh,” in *The Context of Scripture*, Vol. 1 *Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 164.

⁶² The Hittite term LV-natar is used to represent this idea (HWb, 284) “masculinity” in both the sense “male genitalia” (KUB XXXIII 84:13) and “military exploit” (so in the royal inscriptions and annals).

⁶³ James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament* (London: Princeton University Press, 1954), 631.

⁶⁴ Hoffner Jr., “Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity,” 326-333.

A woman's dress for a man as a symbol of taking away one's masculinity was so serious to the Hittite that it was an object of a curse used in oath-taking.

They bring a woman's gown, a distaff, and a spindle, as well as a broken arrow. You address them as follows: "What are these?" Are these not women's dresses? We're detaining them until the oath-taking. Whoever violates these oaths and engages in wickedness against the king, queen, and princes, may the oath deities transform him into a woman. May they make his troops female. Let them dress like women.⁶⁵

The Hittite god was said to be angry with the son of Ammattalla because he dressed himself in garments entrusted to his mother.⁶⁶

Practitioners appear to have employed the sign of the opposite sex in a tiny number of cases to "neutralize" or destroy the target person's current sexual talents.⁶⁷ We can be certain that these customs were common anywhere there was a prevailing belief in the power of magic in the ancient Near East. The spells' language may be Canaanite, Sumerian, Babylonian, Hittite, Egyptian, or Egyptian; the precise symbol selection could differ significantly across individuals and regions. However, the cultural phenomena remained virtually unchanged.⁶⁸

Dressing in Jewish Culture

Men's fundamental clothing consisted of a woolen tunic called a kuttonet (Exod 28:4; 29:5). It appeared to be constructed from two little pieces of material that

⁶⁵ Billie Jean Collins, "Ritual and Prayer to Ishtar of Nineveh," 166. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 354.

⁶⁶ Gary Beckman, "Oracles: Excerpt from an Oracle Report," in *The Context of Scripture*, Vol. 1 *Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 205.

⁶⁷ Both the self-maledictory vows taken by the Hittite soldiers (Laroche, Catalogue, no. 310) and the ritual and prayer to Ishtar of Nineveh (E. Laroche, Catalogue, no. 406) clearly express this purpose. There isn't an obvious demonstration of this in Ugaritic literature. David's curse against Joab and his lineage in 2 Samuel 3:29 may be an OT reference to it.

⁶⁸ Hoffner Jr., "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity," 326-333.

were attached to the sides, with a hole left for the head at the top. It was secured by a “girdle” (ezor). This was fashioned either of leather with clasps (2 Kgs 1:8) or of linen (Jer 13:1-2). A pouch, which occasionally even housed a knife, could be constructed in the tunic thanks to the girdle (1 Samuel 25:13).⁶⁹

According to Edwin M. Yamauchi and Marvin R. Wilson, the impoverished wore the simlah, or mantle, which looked like a square blanket slung over their shoulders and used as a cloak. Old Testament law said that if a debtor's belongings were taken as security for a loan, creditors could not keep this top garment overnight (Exod 22:26, 27), as this would deprive the debtor of protection from the cold during the night.⁷⁰

The Jews detested nudity (Gen 9:20–23; Lam 4:21; Hab 2:15). In order to hide their sexual orientation, Adam and Eve dressed in crude fig leaves (Gen 3:7). After that, God created coverings for them out of animal pelts (Gen 3:21). In the Jewish custom, one role of the housewife was to make garments, and this obligation was simply accepted regardless of the woman's social status (Prov 31:22–24). Samuel's mother Hannah sewed a little robe for her baby son (1 Samuel 2:19). Jewish women wore longer, finer-quality clothing, such as tunics and cloaks, and often wore elaborate fabric belts. Wealthy women wore sackcloth, an uncomfortable garment made from goat's hair, and were often stripped bare. They also wore elaborate footwear made from expensive skins and decorated in various ways. Women's

⁶⁹ Yamauchi and Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity—Clothing*, 322.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

clothing was often barefoot and bareheaded, as a sign of mourning. Women's attire was often influenced by their status and the status of their husbands and priests.⁷¹

Clothing worn during the patriarchal era is demonstrated extra textually by paintings and reliefs found in the tomb of Khnum-hotep III. The scene from Beni Hasan depicts a group of 37 Semites who are dressed to the ankles. Shalmaneser III's Black Obelisk depicts 13 Israelites paying homage beside Israel's King Jehu, who is dressed in a fringed mantle.⁷²

Ethnic communities define boundaries around themselves in a number of ways. They could use their religion, accents, dialects, clothing norms, diets, or a mix of these and other factors to do this. However, people construct borders around themselves in one way or another. In addition, ethnicity is produced by this delineation of boundaries.⁷³ The Jews were to maintain their boundaries especially in diet and dress. The prohibition on adhering to Gentile practices implies Jews needed to remove themselves' from Gentiles as well as also “talk poorly of all their actions” and even their dress.⁷⁴

Finding the traditional sex symbols in ancient Israel is not difficult at all because these symbols did not have any negative connotations. In fact, they were frequently used in the lyrical expression of authentic and traditional religious

⁷¹ Yamauchi and Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life*, 233.

⁷² Yamauchi and Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life*, 324.

⁷³ Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Baruch Halpern and P. Kyle McCarter Jr., *The Rise of Ancient Israel: Lectures presented at a symposium sponsored by the Resident Associate Program, Smithsonian Institution* (Washington DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2012), 97.

⁷⁴ Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 107.

sensation.⁷⁵ The bow and arrow represented manhood, while the spindle and the traditionally feminine attire represented women.

The Jews had five unique items of clothing: an undergarment, an upper garment known as a robe, a headdress, a sandal, and a belt or girdle. According to Silverman, Jewish dress has served as indicators of gender, ethnicity, power, resistance, position, and religious adherence, as well as historical markers and symbolic signposts.⁷⁶ It is stated in a Jewish text that, “God’s glory is a man and man’s glory is dress.”⁷⁷ Clothing is often a means of identification for the Jews. The insistence of the Hellenizing high priest Jason in 175 BC that Jews should wear the Greek petasos, the broadbrimmed hat associated with Hermes was one of the issues which led to the Maccabean.⁷⁸

Jewish attire has frequently been a response to non-Jewish world rules, such as the classification of Jews as a pariah race. Jews were forced to wear “honey-colored clothing, special buttons on their caps, and a pair of patches on top of their sleeves.”⁷⁹ clothing has been claimed to have an important role in Judaism since it represents social status, emotional state, religious identification, and even how Jews interact with the outside world. According to ancient rabbis, “one of the reasons the Jews were worthy of being rescued from servitude was to maintain their distinctive dress in

⁷⁵ The spindle is referred to in Prov 31:19 and 2 Sam 3:29. The bow or its arrows as a symbol of masculine physical prowess and sexual potency occurs in 2 Sam 1:22; 22:35; 2 Kings 13:15 ff.; Hos 1:5; Ps 127: 4:5.

⁷⁶ Eric Silverman, “A Cultural History of Jewish Dress,” accessed 3 July 2023, <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/book/a-culturalhistory-of-jewish-dress>.

⁷⁷ Solomon Schechter and Louis Ginzberg, “Derek Erez Rabbah (= "way of the world": "deportment")” accessed 3 July 2023, <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5102-derek-erez-rabbah>.

⁷⁸ 2 Macc. 4:12.

⁷⁹ Eric Silverman, “A Cultural History of Jewish Dress,” accessed 3 July 2023, <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/book/a-culturalhistory-of-jewish-dress>.

Egypt.”⁸⁰ During synagogue services, Jewish males have reportedly been seen wearing kippot and prayer shawls on their heads. About this, Brian remarked that, especially in the scorching weather, males frequently donned headgear (a turban, Hebrew - misnepet, sanip, peer, or tebulim). (Exod 28:39; 39:28; Lev 16:4). The linen turban (misnepet) of the high priest was a requirement. The majority of academics agree that Jewish women covered their faces while they were in public (cf. Gen. 24:65). The apostle Paul, who wrote under the inspiration of God, mandates head coverings (i.e., a garment covering a woman's hair) in public worship (I Cor. 11:3–16).⁸¹ Little is mentioned in the Torah regarding the varied attire for the sexes. The single dress-related prohibition in the Torah is found in Leviticus 19:19, which also forbids “mixing” various kinds of seeds and cattle. This restriction extends to both wool and linen clothes, known as shatnez. Deuteronomy 22:5 forbids men from dressing like women and vice versa without identifying either gender's characteristics. In addition, Jews must sew fringes onto the corners of a four-pointed garment (Num 15:37-41).

The difference between customary Jewish male and female attire does not appear to be realistic. Notwithstanding this, Jews can be identified by the specific clothing they wear for ritual, tradition, or modesty.

When married Jewish women left the house, it was usual for them to wear veils over their hair as a sign of their husbands' power (m. Shabb. 6.6). If a wife walked out without covering her hair, she might not get the money stipulated in her marriage agreement. “Among the Jews, it is so usual for their women to have the head

⁸⁰ My Jewish Learning, “Jewish Clothing,” accessed 16 July 2023, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-clothing/>.

⁸¹ Brian Schwertley, “Modesty in Apparel: Bringing a Believer’s Attire into Subjection to the Word of God” accessed 10 July 2023, reformedonline.com/index.html.

veiled that this is how they may be recognized,” said Tertullian, a Christian apologist.⁸²

Orthodox males (and some non-Orthodox men) wear kippot to cover their heads, and some wear black caps or fur hats. Except for the outer garment, which does not appear to have any significant distinctions between the men and the women, the only differences between the sexes, according to Brian, were in their headgear, jewelry, and possible differences in style.⁸³ Based on the foregoing, it is reasonable to assume that a normal Jew, male or female, would wear an undergarment composed of linen and worn adjacent to the skin. Linen was comfortable and did not itch like wool, thus they were expected to wear an outer garment, which Brian characterized as “a large cloth with armholes used by men and women.” It was draped like a blanket across the body. The belt or girdle gave both support and stability. It would be used as a sleeping cover at night (see Gen 9:23; Exod 22:26ff; Deut 22:17).

Josephus relates this commandment to fighting, writing, “Take care, especially in your battles, that no woman uses the habit of a man, nor man the garment of a woman.” That is, females in battle should not wear warrior gear, and men should not dress like women.⁸⁴

In his analysis of Deuteronomy 22:5, the renowned exegete Rashi of the eleventh century adopts the functionalist view:

“A woman shall not have on her an article that pertains to a man” — so that she looks like a man, to associate with males, for the purpose of adultery (unchastity).[...] “For whoever does these things is an abomination [to

⁸² Yamauchi and Wilson, *Dictionary of Daily Life in Biblical and Post-Biblical Antiquity—Clothing*, 333.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Antiquity*, 4.301.

the Lord thy God]” — This means that the Torah prohibits only the wearing of a clothing that leads to abomination (unchastity).⁸⁵

This study suggests that the prohibition in Deuteronomy 22:5 is culturally sensitive. The historical facts above indicate that in the Old Testament, men had particular objects that separated them from women (weapons, tools, and clothing), and Deuteronomy 22:5 forbids women from wearing these. The rationale for the broadness of the phrases in the first portion of Deuteronomy 22:5 is that these things and apparel will make women look like men, and God does not want people to muddy the distinctions. It also implies that women wear special clothing that distinguished them from men.

⁸⁵ English transl. in *Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Rashi's Commentary*, translated into English and annotated by M. Rosenbaum and A.M. Silbermann in collaboration with A. Blashki and L. Joseph (Jerusalem, Israel: Silbermann Family by arrangement with Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973).

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGICAL APPLICATION

The phrase that enhances the understanding of Deuteronomy 22:5 is “יהוה תועבת” (an abomination to YHWH). תועבת holds great significance in Deuteronomy 22:5. “יהוה תועבת” elucidates the gravity of violating this regulation. It is therefore necessary to point out the theological implication of the phrase in the Hebrew Bible.⁸⁶ Typically, both the word תועבת and the phrase יהוה תועבת might encompass either an ethical or a cultic transgression. Therefore, it is crucial to ascertain the specific kind of transgression discussed in this context.⁸⁷ An ethical breach may be defined as an instance when the actions of an individual cause harm to another person, whereas a cultic violation refers to the breaking of a norm related to purity or ritual that is special to a certain practice.⁸⁸

The culture of Deuteronomy was characterized by a strong sense of communal awareness, where individuals were highly attuned to one another's opinions and hence vulnerable to social pressure by shame. The individuals were anticipated to consider

⁸⁶ The Hebrew word “abomination” appears 117 times in 112 passages of the Hebrew Bible. In the book of Leviticus, specifically chapters 18 and 20, there are six instances of this word being used. These instances include references to male-male intimacy (18:22), collective references to defiling practices by Egyptians and Canaanites that resulted in being expelled from the land and facing “social death” punishment (18:26–27, 29–30), and male-male intimacy combined with capital punishment and bloodguilt (20:13).

⁸⁷ Köhler Ludwig, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1994), s.v. “toebah.” Francis Brown, et al. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix, Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (London: Clarendon Press, 2022), s.v. “toebah.” The term first appears in Deuteronomy

⁸⁸ See the discussion of this distinction in William W. Hallo, “Biblical Abominations and Sumerian Taboos,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 76, no. 1 (1985): 21-40; and idem, William W. Hallo, *The Book of the People* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 2020), 97-99.

their acts based on their aversion to shame or public derision, as shown in Genesis 38:23, and their desire for honor, as seen in Numbers 22:16-17, 37.⁸⁹

Likewise, actions might be penalized by employing labels of disgrace. In Leviticus 18, the term “abomination” (תּוֹעֵבָה) is employed to discourage individuals from participating in homosexual activities (Lev 18:22) and to prevent incest and bestiality (Lev 18:17, 23, 26-27, 29).

The act of cross-dressing is referred to as “abomination to the Lord,” meaning it is seen as reprehensible before YHWH. However, it is important to acknowledge that the Hebrew term for “abomination” (תּוֹעֵבָה) encompasses activities that are considered morally repulsive for two distinct reasons. The word occurs a total of 118 times, appearing in 112 distinct verses.⁹⁰ The phrase appears 27 times in 25 passages throughout the Pentateuch. Out of these, only one specifically mentions ritual defilement, as stated in Deut 14:3. Out of the remaining occurrences, the term appears eight times in relation to idols and idolatry (Deut 7:25, 26; 12:31; 13:15[14]; 17:4; 20:18; 27:15; 32:16), seven times in summaries of sinful behaviors such as incest, various forms of sexual immorality, idolatry, and other forbidden religious practices (Lev 18:26, 27, 29, 30; Deut 18:9, 12, 2 times), four times to describe an offensive Israelite custom that Egyptians disapproved of (Gen 43:32; 46:34; Exod 8:22 [2×]), three times in the context of specific sexual sins (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 23:19 [18]), and once each in contexts of fraudulent practices involving unjust weights and measures (Deut 25:16), offering defective animals as sacrifices to the Lord (Deut

⁸⁹ T. Desmond Alexander and David W Baker ed., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 1043.

⁹⁰ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), s.v. “toebah.”

17:1), wearing clothing of the opposite gender (Deut 22:5), and a divorced woman remarrying her former husband after being married to another man (Deut 24:4). All these fraudulent practices are an “abomination to the Lord your God.” This makes them morally objectionable. Deeds that are abomination to the Lord can cause the land to sin (Deut 24:4; Jer 32:35), it can defile the land (Lev 18:27), and cause the Lord to drive a people before Him (Deut 18:12). Suffice to say that which is “an abomination to the Lord” is a grievous moral sin.

In summary, although some of these uses refer to things that are not inherently sinful (Gen 43:32; 46:34; Exod 8:22, 2 times), and while some Christians may question whether other activities mentioned here are inherently sinful (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Deut 22:5; 24:4), the majority of uses (18 out of 27 times, 17 out of 25 verses) are in the context of practices that most Christians today would agree are inherently sinful and are therefore prohibited for believers.

Excluding the Pentateuch, the phrase appears 91 times in 87 verses, and none of these instances uses it to describe ritual impurity. There are four occurrences where it specifically refers to the penalty for idolatry (Ezekiel 7:3, 4, 8; 44:13). There are three instances where the term “detestable” is used to describe something that is disliked, although not necessarily because it is morally wrong.

Firstly, one, who is deeply afflicted, is considered detestable to their supposed “friends” (Ps 88:8,9). Secondly, it is detestable for a fool to turn away from evil (Prov 13:19). Lastly, the wicked find the righteous to be detestable (Prov 29:27). On two occasions, it is employed to denote actions that Christians may not perceive as inherently immoral: consuming flesh containing blood (Ezek 33:29) and admitting the uncircumcised into the sacred place (Ezek 44:6). In the remaining 82 cases, the term denotes acts that the majority of Christians would affirm as inherently wicked and so

still prohibited for believers. In Kings and Chronicles, it is used in connection with idols, idolatry, other illicit cultic practices, and sexual immorality (1 Kgs 14:24; 2 Kgs 16:3 compare with 2 Chron 28:3; 21:2; 33:2, 11; 23:13; 34:33; probably also 2 Chron 36:8, 14); in Ezra it is used for unnamed abominations of the nations (Ezra 9:1, 11, 14), a probable allusion back to the sexual immorality and idolatry and illicit cult practices of the Canaanites (see Lev 18:24–30; Deut 18:9, 12; 20:17–18); in Proverbs (aside from the two uses identified above), it refers to a wide range of immoral practices, including haughty eyes, a lying tongue, murder, lies, wickedness, a false balance, being perverse in heart, evil plans, and the prayer of the disobedient (Prov 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 15:8, 9, 26; 16:5, 12; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27); in Isaiah, it refers to sacrifices by the rebellious, idols, and idolatry (Isa 1:13; 41:24; 44:19); in Jeremiah, it refers to, idolatry, greed, dealing falsely, stealing, murdering, adultery, swearing falsely, wicked actions in general, and the land being morally defiled by wicked deeds (Jer 2:7; 6:15; 7:10; 8:12; 16:18; 32:35; 44:4, 22); in Ezekiel, it refers to idolatry, general wickedness and disobedience, idols, idolatry, punishment for idolatry, not caring for the poor, lending money on interest, murder, and adultery (Ezek 5:9, 11; 6:9, 11; 7:9, 20; 8:6, 2 times, 9, 13, 15, 17; 9:4; 11:18, 21; 12:16; 14:6; 16:2, 22, 36, 43, 47, 50, 51, 2 times, 58; 18:12, 13, 24; 20:4; 22:2, 11; 23:36; 33:26, 29; 36:31; 43:8; 44:6, 7), and in Malachi, it refers to idolatry (Mal 2:11). Therefore, whether used in the Pentateuch or in other texts, it is evident that the phrase typically refers to things that are inherently evil.

Typically, it pertains to things that are abhorrent because of their inherent immorality, meaning they directly oppose God's universal purpose for the world. The Pentateuch provides several examples of sins related to idols or idolatry, such as those mentioned in Deuteronomy 12:31, 13:14, 17:4, and 20:18. It also addresses the idol

itself or items connected to it, as seen in Deuteronomy 7:25, 26, 27:15, and 32:16.

Additionally, the Pentateuch condemns sexual sins like prostitution, as stated in Deuteronomy 23:18, and stealing from others, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:16. Due to their inherent moral incorrectness, these matters are equally denounced in both the Old Testament and the New Testament (1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:15; Ephesians 4:28).

Occasionally, the term is used to describe things that are not inherently immoral, such as ritually filthy animals mentioned in Deuteronomy 14:3. Ritual cleanliness and impurity were integral aspects of Israel's culture throughout that time.⁹¹ The Lord capitalized on this cultural circumstance by prohibiting the Israelites from consuming ritually unclean animals, with the intention of reminding his people about the significance of abstaining from impure elements in all aspects of life.⁹² Although Jay Sklar has added that a pig is not inherently sinful and that its prohibition was based on cultural standards, rather than the moral fabric of his cosmos,⁹³ it suffice to say there was no reason for God to prohibit which by cultural standard was abhorred. The pig was not prohibited because it was culturally detestable, rather it was culturally detestable because the Lord declared it unclean and hence, prohibited it. Rather than the Lord capitalizing on cultural circumstances to prohibit Israel from consuming ritually unclean animals, as posited by Sklar, Israel's culture of what is ritually unclean is capitalized on YHWH's prohibition.

⁹¹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 764–65, 932–33.

⁹² Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 48–49.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 59.

Consequently, the issue arises as to which specific usage of the phrase is being referred to in this context. Is this referring to an act that is considered abhorrent due to its inherent immorality or to an act that is considered abhorrent only because it violates certain cultural norms? Notably, Deuteronomy 22:5 does not provide a clear and direct response to this inquiry. It condemns the behavior without specifying whether the motivation is based on basic moral principles or cultural norms. Hence, the issue persists: are these prohibitions still relevant in the present day?

The likelihood of various factors contributing to the moral reasoning underlying Deut 22:5 restrictions is significant. Conceivably, whereas we may believe that the moral justification for these restrictions connects to matters of ritual cleanliness, idol worship, or male reputation, or that these concerns are not as relevant in the present as they were in the past, arguments on the contemporary applicability of the restrictions remain unresolved. It should, however, be noted that deeds that are “abomination to the Lord: can cause the land to sin (Deut 24:4; Jer 32:35), defile the land (Lev 18:27), and cause the Lord to drive a people before Him (Deut 18:12). It suffices to state that anything that is considered “an abomination to the Lord” (including cross-dressing) is a serious moral transgression.

This is because a justification based on creation may also be present. The creation rationale is the most plausible alternative among the options often presented. If the other possibilities are feasible, the creation rationale is even more so. Merely affirming one of the other rationales is insufficient to dismiss the continued significance of the restrictions today. It is also necessary to demonstrate the unlikelihood of the creation reasoning.

Yehuda Brandes summarizes the halakhic views to cross-dressing as follows: “The religious public's intuitive opposition to the post-modern phenomenon of

blurring the distinction between the sexes would seem to be largely driven by the elements of this prohibition.”⁹⁴

As much as they may get benefits from applying the OT laws to their lives in legitimate, logical, and doable ways, Christians in general will be interested in the laws of Moses. The majority of these laws are unambiguous, demonstrate sound common sense, and are unquestionably cross-cultural and cross temporal. Therefore, it is clear that if we read and obey them, they may be just as beneficial now as they were in ancient Israel.⁹⁵

Cultural Application

Angel Manuel Rodriquez accurately said that the differentiation between male and female was formed during the act of Creation, when the human race was specifically identified as “male and female.” Any modification that changes such differentiation is refused... However, the idea cannot be only restricted to the cultural manifestation of ancient Israel, since it is rooted in the fundamental structure of the universe.⁹⁶

Dress serves as a means of recording social and ethnic identity, as well as gender roles and limits, via the use of clothing, decorations, utensils, and bodily alterations such as hair and skin.⁹⁷ While there may be instances of gender-neutral clothing in many countries, particularly in contemporary Western cultures, the

⁹⁴ Yehuda Brandes, “A Man’s Article and a Woman’s Garment,” in *The Old will be Renewed*, ed. Avigdor Weitzman (Jerusalem, Israel: Hebrew, 1999), 170.

⁹⁵ Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians*, 117.

⁹⁶ Angel Manuel Rodriquez, “Deuteronomy 22:5,” *Elder’s Digest*, October/December 2020, 23, accessed 12 July 2023, <https://cdn.ministerialassociation.org/cdn/eldersdigest.org/issues/ED%20Q4%202020.pdf>.

⁹⁷ Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eichler, “Dress and Identity,” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 10, no. 4 (1992): 1-2.

distinction between genders through clothes is typically established from a young age. Adults in society work as conveyors of the specific culture, teaching the younger generation not just how to present themselves, but also how to behave. Ultimately, clothing serves as a storehouse of significance related to societal expectations of gender and also functions as a means of either upholding or facilitating shifts in these expectations.

Undoubtedly, the interpretation of cross-dressing has varied throughout different historical periods and geographical locations. It is crucial to comprehend its importance within a certain cultural context in order to employ the correct research approach. It is not appropriate for scholars to make assumptions about the generalizability of ancient Near Eastern behaviors across different locations and time periods. Similarly, it is important to comprehend the importance of clothing in general and clothing that is exclusive to a certain gender, from the perspective of the specific culture being discussed. According to Vern and Bonnie Bullough, who have extensively researched cross-dressing throughout history, clothing has always been a widespread representation of sexual distinctions, highlighting societal perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Cross-dressing is a symbolic act that involves trespassing into area that goes beyond traditional gender limits.⁹⁸ It might be argued that the attire worn by the cross-dresser serves as a representation of their physical presence. The body undergoes a change when adorned with clothing, cosmetics, masks, and other accessories, even if this transformation is simply symbolic.

William J. Webb, in *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*, delves further than other scholars into the topic of why contemporary Christians ought to stick to some

⁹⁸ Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), viii.

aspects of biblical doctrine but not others.⁹⁹ Webb further states that the results of analysis that lead to application are determined by Scripture. Scripture does not distinguish between what is cultural and what is transcultural based on culture, whether it is ANE (in the Old Testament), Greco-Roman (throughout the New Testament), or contemporary. He therefore posits that, "...assessment of culture is a vital part of the hermeneutic of application because the Bible represents God's communication to human society through cultural forms."¹⁰⁰ God's people are expected to adapt to changes in their environment unless doing so goes against biblical principles, in which case they should respond in a way that is countercultural.¹⁰¹ Webb adds that: (1) biblical texts can show redemptive movement pointing to higher ethics than God could require in biblical times; (2) specific biblical commands that can involve cultural elements express higher-level transcultural principles; and (3) decisions regarding whether biblical requirements are transcultural or culturally bound are most solidly developed through coordinated use of multiple criteria. He opined that if Scripture alters the initial cultural norms in a way that implies additional movement is feasible and even beneficial in a later society, then a portion of the book may be culturally bound. This criterion is highlighted by two questions: (1) Has Scripture changed the original cultural norms? (2) If so, what kind of movement is it—a "preliminary movement" or a "absolute movement"? By absolute movement Webb means more movement is not wanted; the biblical author has pushed society as far as it should have gone. Whereas by preliminary movement,

⁹⁹ William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 16.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 22.

the author of the Bible pushed society as far as it could go at the time without doing more harm than good, but in the end, it can and should go beyond.¹⁰²

A Short History of Dress

The development of clothing may be traced to the early stages of human civilization, where the initial garments were crafted from natural materials such as animal skin, furs, grasses, leaves, bones, and shells. Throughout the course of history, clothing has undergone a transformation in order to signify and represent one's social standing, gender, and religious beliefs. Dress codes, both explicit and implicit regulations about attire, originated as legal statutes in Europe, exerting authority over the use of materials and determining social hierarchy.¹⁰³

The French Revolution (1789-1799) introduced a level of uniformity in attire, however, it did not entirely eradicate distinctions based on gender and social status. These disparities were represented by employing new clothing patterns, wherein women wore form-fitting garments to convey modesty, while males wore loose-fitting attire.¹⁰⁴

In the 19th century, there were changes in fashion for both men and women. Men started wearing long pants, while women began utilizing corsets to create the illusion of a narrower waist. The sleeves, for women, overall, were snug. Occasionally, an additional skirt, known as an overskirt, was employed. This overskirt was arranged in different styles at the sides and during the early 1870s, it was

¹⁰² Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*, 73.

¹⁰³ Melissa A. Toups, Andrew Kitchen, Jessica E. Light, and David L. Reed, "Origin of Clothing Lice Indicates Early Clothing Use by Anatomically Modern Humans in Africa," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 28, no. 1 (2011): 29–32.

¹⁰⁴ Zoi Arvanitidou and Maria Gasouka, "Construction of Gender through Fashion and Dressing," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 11 (2013): 111-115.

gathered at the back to create a bustle.¹⁰⁵ The bicycle had gained tremendous popularity by the 1890s. As a result, it became necessary to wear a divided garment due to the impracticality of riding a bicycle in a long skirt. Divided skirts and roomy knickerbockers, sometimes known as 'bloomers', were also considered as possible solutions. They generated about the same level of enthusiasm as the initial blooming campaign of the 1850s. Despite being criticized in the media and chastised in religious sermons; their efforts were futile as young ladies persisted in wearing them.¹⁰⁶

In 1913, another significant development occurred. Dresses no longer had high collars that reached the ears; instead, they were designed with a neckline that formed a V-shape, commonly referred to as a 'V-neck'. This generated a remarkable level of enthusiasm. The act was condemned by religious leaders as resembling indecent exposing and by medical professionals as a health hazard. A shirt featuring a conservative triangular opening in the front was given the nickname 'pneumonia blouse'. Despite the objections, the V-neck style was quickly embraced. The collar, if present, now assumed the shape of a little medici collar positioned at the posterior of the neck.¹⁰⁷

During the 1920s, women's clothes adopted a more masculine style, reflecting the ongoing evolution of fashion. In 1925, the emergence of short skirts caused a controversy among many people, marking a true revolution. They faced condemnation from religious leaders in Europe and America, with the Archbishop of

¹⁰⁵ James Laver, *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1960), 185-198.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 208

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

Naples even attributing the recent earthquake in Amalfi to divine wrath against a skirt that did not extend beyond the knee. The non-religious authorities were also troubled, particularly in the United States. Despite the limited effectiveness of sumptuary laws in the past, the lawmakers in different American states attempted again to enforce their own moral perspective. In Utah, a Bill was proposed to impose penalties of fines and imprisonment on individuals who wore skirts that were more than three inches above the ankle in public. Similarly, in the Ohio legislature, a Bill was introduced to prohibit females over the age of fourteen from wearing skirts that do not cover the part of the foot known as the instep. It was fruitless.¹⁰⁸ The trend towards informality in men's clothing, which had been evident since the conclusion of World War I, continued to advance. Following the Armistice, the frock coat had become rather uncommon, and its competitor, the morning coat, was only observed at weddings, funerals, or events attended by Royalty. An important alteration that occurred in the mid-1920s was the increase in the breadth of pants, sometimes referred to as 'Oxford bags'. These are said to have evolved from the generously sized trousers made of toweling that were worn by college oarsmen over their shorts.¹⁰⁹

During the 1950s, clothing saw a shift towards greater functionality and intricacy, particularly in women's fashion, which aimed to make an impression on males.¹¹⁰ During the 1960s, there was a shift towards more relaxed and informal clothing, leading to the emergence of current fashion trends. During the 1970s and 1980s, fashion was heavily impacted by trends such as denim, skirts, and music.

¹⁰⁸ Laver, *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion*, 232.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

¹¹⁰ Jo B. Paoletti, *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 117-125.

During the 1980s, influential figures like Madonna, David Bowie, and Boy George had a significant impact on fashion trends. At the same time, Japanese designers pushed boundaries by challenging traditional gender norms and experimenting with innovative and unconventional shapes.¹¹¹

The fashion of the 21st century is an extension of the 90s style, including elements from prior decades, and embracing a wide range of influences. Daywear apparel is not limited to a single style, as individuals have the freedom to wear a wide range of clothing options, ranging from costumes to simple t-shirts and jeans. On major events such as job interviews, weddings, and funerals, it is customary to adhere to dress codes, and corporations establish guidelines for appropriate attire to maintain a sense of organization.

Gender-specific Apparel

Historically, men in nearly all societies would commonly wear women's clothing, including garments such as high heels and skirts. The precise roots of gender differentiation in clothing are uncertain, however it is widely considered to have emerged during the Victorian era, when infants were dressed in white gowns irrespective of their biological sex or gender identity.¹¹² The color codes for newborns today were established in the 1940s by American manufacturers and merchants.¹¹³ Prior to the 18th century, there were no notable distinctions in the attire worn by women and men. However, males used their clothing to showcase their affluence and refinement. During the 19th century, fashion underwent a process of feminization, as

¹¹¹ Laver, *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion*, 256-260.

¹¹² Arvanitidou and Gasouka, "Construction of Gender through Fashion and Dressing," 111-115.

¹¹³ Paoletti, *Pink and Blue*, 125.

males got more involved in politics and business, while women assumed the role of showcasing social position and elegance.¹¹⁴

Following the rise in the number of women working alongside men after 1960, males began to feel the need to express themselves via their choice of clothing. This is because fashion tends to reflect and adapt to evolving societal roles. During the latter part of the 20th century, women used clothing as a means to challenge gender inequality by either rejecting or embracing garments that challenged the traditional feminine norms imposed by the patriarchal society.¹¹⁵

Currently, clothing plays a prominent part in exacerbating the challenges experienced by those who do not conform to the gender binary paradigm. Women sometimes face mockery when they choose to wear attire traditionally associated with men, whereas transgender individuals may encounter disapproval when their clothing does not align with societal expectations of their gender.

Unisex Apparel

The androgynous style, which emerged in the early 1900s as a representation of women's liberation, involves combining both masculine and feminine elements in clothes.¹¹⁶ The word 'unisex' emerged in the 1960s to describe clothing that challenged traditional gender boundaries, enabling individuals to express themselves and challenge societal conventions. Unisex fashion also led to the emergence of

¹¹⁴ Laver, *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion*, 256-260.

¹¹⁵ Francois Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), 372.

¹¹⁶ Allen Carlson, "The Androgyny Hoax: On the Blending of Men and Women and the Corruption of Science by Ideology," in *Persuasion at Work* (Rockford, 1986), 50-67.

neutral attire and cross-dressing, primarily practiced by women.¹¹⁷ One can wonder if the androgynous style is an extension of gendered fashion, given that models typically conform to the stereotype of androgyny, such as having a more masculine face shape or being slender. Zara's unisex line comprises trousers, plain t-shirts, shorts, and hoodies.¹¹⁸ Designers should strive to challenge traditional gender norms and promote a progressive mindset in fashion, enabling individuals of all genders, including those who identify outside of the gender binary, to freely choose clothing that reflects their gender identity, social standing, emotional state, personal taste, or individual inclination. The realm of eroticism is boundlessly creative, and undoubtedly, there will be several unexpected developments in the fashion choices of both genders in the future.

Contemporary Application of Deuteronomy 22:5

The contemporary reader needs cultural sensitivity in applying Deuteronomy 22:5. This is not an easy task hence this study points out some general principles to be considered for contemporary application of this text; the point of reference being the rationale for the prohibition.

Going by Webb's view, the Bible does not prescribe what men and women should wear; clothing should be determined (not merely conditioned) by cultural norms. Hence, the biblical value in Deut 22:5 is for men and women to wear apparel

¹¹⁷ Katherine Morris Lester and Rose Netzorg Kerr, *Historic Costume: A Résumé of the Characteristic Types of Costume from the Most Remote Times to the Present Day* (Peoria, IL: C.A. Bennett, 1977), 288.

¹¹⁸ Diane Trilling, "Female Biology in a Male Culture," *Saturday Review*, October 10, 1970, 40.

that pertains to their respective genders, apparently to avoid gender-identity confusion.¹¹⁹

First, the contemporary reader should bear in mind that the man and the woman have a God-given distinction established at creation when the human race was defined as “male and female.” Anything that alters that distinction is rejected. The distinction, therefore is not limited exclusively to Ancient Israel’s cultural expression because it goes beyond it to creation itself.

Second, contemporary readers should be aware of cultural differences in apparent appearance. Mark Braun stated it this way: “Styles change from one time and place to another; it is impossible to prescribe a specific dress code for the rest of human history.” God wants men and women to value the dignity of their own sex rather than adopting the look or preferring the function of the opposite sex.”¹²⁰

Third, the Bible has not prescribed any universal dress code for the human being. We live in a different culture than the Bible, but every culture has elements of clothing and decoration that are distinctive to men or women. Bible believers should dress in a way that culturally distinguishes them from the opposite sex in their given cultures, bearing in mind that it is abominable to dress otherwise. According to Pickett, “In labeling the wearing of the clothes of the opposite sex (for whatever nonsexual reason or however 'innocently' done) as morally repugnant to God (תבעות יהוה) Deuteronomy seeks to assert that total fidelity to YHWH extends even to the mundane world of dress.” As a result, even if culture determines what we should

¹¹⁹ Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*, 73.

¹²⁰ Mark Braun, *Deuteronomy*, The People's Bible (Waukesha, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 197.

wear, Christians are required to select clothing that is consistent with their convictions from what society has to offer.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The purpose of this study is to attempt a clearer meaning of Deuteronomy 22:5 to help the readers to apply it correctly and avoid reading meanings into the text, especially with the increase of interest in fashion in our postmodern world. Instead of a speculative attempt to suggest an interpretation of Deuteronomy 22:5, this study focused on a close reading of the text. The following summarizes the findings of this study and draws conclusions and suggestions for further studies.

The book of Deuteronomy contains four speeches by Moses as the Israelites prepared to enter the Promised Land. These speeches are both retrospective and prospective; the original audience was the entire camp of Israel indicating their intended audience.

In the larger context, Deuteronomy 22:5 is part of Moses' third address (with interlude): responding to Yahweh's grace via virtuous life (12:1-29:1). It is especially relevant in the context of specific stipulations (12:1-26:19). At first glance, it appears that the law is out of place. However, a careful analysis of the region reveals that there are some links present. It appears that Deuteronomy 22:5 anticipates both the restrictions on forbidden mixes in verses 8-11 and the laws on sexual behavior between men and women in verses 13–30.” A cryptic legislation restricting the wearing of clothes belonging to the other sex is found in the center (5).

In the first clause, the phrase כל־יגבר and the verb יהיה are of particular interest. The verb is to be and not wear in the HB. The terms are somewhat vague in the first sentence; however, the prohibition is very clear and explicit in the second sentence. Women are not permitted to wear anything that resembles men's attire; this is a rule. The term כל־יגבר (Man's stuff) refers to male-related items, not necessarily clothing. There is nothing in the text that directly implies wearing. Carrying men's tools may also be in view. The phrase would thus include not only clothing but also jewelry, weapons, and other items often associated with men.

The second clause specifies women's attire clearly. It is forbidden for women to wear anything resembling men's clothing. Deuteronomy 22:5 does not only pertain to patterns or forms of wearing, as the admonition found in the final phrase: for all who do these are an abomination to YHWH your God, makes apparent.

Deuteronomy 22:5 is more than just a commandment prohibiting homosexuality. There are more direct ways of referring to homosexuality, which are used elsewhere in the OT. The context of Deuteronomy 22:5 appears to indicate that the primary reason for this law is the blurring of the creation order.

Cross-dressing is morally/culturally offensive to God. Cross-dressing is objectionable not just because it is associated with homosexuality and fertility cult rites, but also because it mixes/blurs the fundamental distinctions of gender dualism (male and female) established in creation.

A woman's dress for a man as a symbol of taking away one's masculinity was so serious to the Hittite that it was an object of a curse used in oath taking. Women were not becoming men in the Mesopotamia cults. Hence, the broad nature of the prohibition in Deuteronomy 22:5 suggest a context more than this background.

In ancient Israel traditional sex symbols, the bow and arrow represented manhood, while the spindle or distaff and the traditionally feminine attire represented women. Scripture does not distinguish between what is cultural and what is transcultural based on culture, whether it is ANE (in the Old Testament), Greco-Roman (throughout the New Testament), or contemporary.

Assessment of culture is a vital part of the hermeneutic of application of Deuteronomy 22:5 because the Bible represents God's communication to human society through cultural forms. God's people are expected to adapt to changes in their environment unless doing so goes against biblical principles, in which case they should respond in a way that is countercultural.

The restriction in Deuteronomy 22:5 is both moral and culturally sensitive. According to Jewish historical facts, throughout the Old Testament, men had distinct objects that separated them from women (weapons, tools, and garments), and Deuteronomy 22:5 forbids women from wearing these.

Anything that is considered "an abomination to the Lord" (including cross-dressing) is a serious moral transgression. God wants people to not blur the man-woman distinctions which extends beyond Ancient Israel's cultural expression. Deuteronomy 22:5 requires cultural sensitivity when applying its moral principle to contemporary society. The Bible does not prescribe a universal dress code for humans, but it encourages believers to dress in a way that culturally distinguishes them from the opposite sex in their given cultures.

Deuteronomy 22:5 labels the wearing of clothes of the opposite sex as morally repugnant to God, implying that total fidelity to YHWH extends even to the mundane world of dress. While culture dictates what we should wear, Christians are expected to choose clothing that aligns with their beliefs and societal expectations.

Conclusion

This study argues that deeds that are “abomination to the Lord: can cause the land to sin (Deut 24:4; Jer 32:35), defile the land (Lev 18:27), and cause the Lord to drive a people before Him (Deut 18:12). It suffices to state that anything that is considered “an abomination to the Lord” (including cross-dressing) is a serious moral transgression.

However, the prohibition on cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5 should be interpreted within its literary and theological-ethical framework, rather than simply adopting it as an absolute legal directive. According to the evidence offered above, God says that a man should appear like a man and a woman should look like a woman. According to the report, the legislation prohibits women from wearing male-specific items and males from wearing female-specific garments. The distinctness of each sex should be maintained and conserved in terms of external appearance. Any action that blurs this boundary is a major moral offense.

It should be noted, nevertheless, that geographical, historical, and social circumstances determined the form of a “typical” female and male attire. The gender identity associated with a certain piece of clothing is determined by the community, which is in turn shaped by its culture and historical context.

Nonetheless, each group formulates its own distinct “gender ideology” in respect to that particular area. Devoid of it, the outfit lacks any distinct significance. The dress is solely attributable to its socially defined purpose. Undoubtedly, it represents a depiction of both the physical form and the individual's character. Furthermore, it has social implications for both the person wearing it and the observer.

The contemporary reader, therefore, needs cultural sensitivity in applying Deuteronomy 22:5. This is not an easy task since dress code in every given culture is not static. Hence this study points out some general principle to be considered for contemporary application of this text; the point of reference being the rationale for the prohibition.

First, the modern reader should keep in mind that men and women have a God-given differentiation established at creation when the human race was defined as “male and female.” Anything that affects this difference is disregarded. The divergence, therefore, is not restricted to Ancient Israel's cultural manifestation, but extends to creation itself.

Second, the contemporary reader should be aware of cultural variations in terms of outer appearance. Mark Braun stated, “Styles evolve from one time and place to another; it is difficult to prescribe a single clothing code for the rest of human history. In every culture, there are certain objects that are only worn by men and others that are just for women. However, it should be noted that every human civilization has unisex things worn by both sexes with minor differences. God wants men and women to recognize the dignity of their own sex, rather than assuming the look or preferring the function of the opposite gender.”¹

Third, the Bible have not prescribed any universal dress code for the human being. We are living in a culture very different from that of the Bible, yet in every culture there are articles of clothes and adornment that are specifically wear by man or women. Bible believers should dress in a way that culturally distinguishes them from the opposite sex in their given cultures, and bearing in mind that it is abominable to

¹ Braun, *Deuteronomy*, 197.

dress otherwise. According to Pickett, “In labelling the wearing of the clothes of the opposite sex (for whatever non-sexual reason or however ‘innocently’ done) as morally repugnant to God (יהוה תבעות) Deuteronomy seeks to assert that total fidelity to YHWH extends even to the mundane world of dress.” As a result, even if culture determines what we should wear, Christians are required to select clothing that is consistent with their convictions from what society has to offer.

Suggestions for Further Study

This exegetical study has focused on the literary study of Deuteronomy 22:5 within its context and the context of the HB. There is a need for a detailed historical study on cross-dressing in the ANE cultures. Conduct a comparative cultural analysis that explores the norms and practices regarding gender-specific clothing in ANE societies, with a particular focus on the historical context of Deuteronomy.

Theological and Ethical Implications Recommendation: Engage in a thorough theological and ethical analysis of Deuteronomy 22:5, considering its implications for contemporary faith communities. This analysis should explore the hermeneutical approaches used to interpret this verse in the light of modern understandings of gender identity and expression.

The above recommendations aim to foster a more comprehensive understanding of Deuteronomy 22:5, encouraging scholars and readers to approach the text with both historical awareness and sensitivity to contemporary issues. By exploring the cultural, historical, theological and ethical dimensions of this verse, scholars can contribute to a more nuanced and informed discourse on its significance both in its original setting and in today’s world.

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