

Ki Tetze "When thou go forth"
Devarim 21:1-25:19

From the beginning of the book of Devarim, or Deuteronomy, it has been stated that these are the words of Moses to the children of Israel just prior to their entrance into the land of promise. We may also remember here that Moses would not be making this journey across the Jordan with them.

Deuteronomy 1:1 *These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.*

Numbers 20:12 *And YHWH spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*

Numbers 27:12 *And YHWH said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. ¹³And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. ¹⁴For ye rebelled against My commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.*

Deuteronomy 1:37 *Also YHWH was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither.*

Deuteronomy 3:26 *But YHWH was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and YHWH said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter. ²⁷Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.*

Deuteronomy 4:21 *Furthermore YHWH was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee for an inheritance.*

Israel's transition from wanderers and wayfarers to citizens of the land of promise and the Kingdom of YHWH would be accomplished without Moses, the shepherd of Israel. These final words of Moses are not simply a reaffirmation of all that previously transpired, but are the very heart of the covenant as well as the very foundation upon which the Kingdom of YHWH would be ushered in by Yehoshua the son of Nun.

Numbers 27:18 *And YHWH said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him.*

Numbers 27:22 *And Moses did as YHWH commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: ²³and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as YHWH commanded by the hand of Moses.*

Deuteronomy 1:38 *But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.*

Deuteronomy 3:28 *But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.*

Deuteronomy 31:3 *YHWH thy Elohim, He will go over before thee, and He will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as YHWH hath said.*

Deuteronomy 31:7 *And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which YHWH hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.*

Deuteronomy 31:14 *And YHWH said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.*

Deuteronomy 31:23 *And He gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee.*

Deuteronomy 34:9 *And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as YHWH commanded Moses.*

We see in this change of leadership a shadow picture of Yeshua (or Yehoshua), who follows Moses and ushers in the Kingdom of YHWH. But we also see in these teachings of Moses as given to Yehoshua and the children of Israel the very structure of the Kingdom of YHWH. If Yehoshua (Joshua) is the shadow picture of Yeshua, the one who follows Moses,¹ then we must also understand that these teachings concerning the establishment of the Kingdom of YHWH are also a part of the shadow pictures. In other words, we should understand that Yeshua, like Yehoshua of old, will establish the kingdom of YHWH through the teaching of the Torah!

Matthew 4:17 *From that time Yeshua began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Matthew 5:3 *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:10 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 5:19 *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 7:21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Matthew 8:11 *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 10:7 *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Matthew 13:24 *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.*

Matthew 13:31 *Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field.*

Matthew 13:33 *Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

Matthew 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Matthew 13:45 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.

Matthew 13:47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.

Matthew 13:52 Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Matthew 18:23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

Matthew 20:1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

Matthew 22:2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.

Matthew 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Matthew 25:14 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

There can be no question that the very heart of the preaching, teaching, and ministry of Yeshua the Messiah was the ushering in of the Kingdom of YHWH. That this was connected directly to the teaching of the Torah is also alluded to by Yeshua in his comparison of his own teachings with those of the Pharisees. Yeshua constantly referred to the teachings of the Pharisees as being leaven mixed with the actual Torah. These additional teachings and man-made injunctions were overbearing to the average believer.

Matthew 15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of Elohim by your tradition?

Mark 7:7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. ⁸For laying aside the commandment of Elohim, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. ⁹And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of Elohim, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Mark 7:13 Making the word of Elohim of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Matthew 16:6 Then Yeshua said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matthew 23:1 Then spake Yeshua to the multitude, and to his disciples, ²saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: ³all therefore whatsoever he bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. ⁴For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Matthew 23:13 *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

In contrast to this burdensome mixture of Elohim's Word with the words of men, Yeshua taught the pure Word of Torah.

Matthew 5:17 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

Matthew 11:28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

The Pharisees, by their numerous fences built around the Torah, had locked up the Kingdom of Heaven, making it impossible for any to enter; but the pure teaching of the Torah by Yeshua and his *talmidim*² was to unlock the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 16:19 *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Clearly Messiah Yeshua taught that Torah is the means to establish and enter into the Kingdom of YHWH. There is no way to enter the Kingdom without keeping the Torah. The Torah is the very constitution of the Kingdom. Thus like Moses before him, Yeshua seeks to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth through teaching and living the Torah.

Throughout the whole of the book of Devarim Moses confirms and reaffirms that YHWH alone is the Elohim of Israel, and that His unamendable Torah is the constitution of His kingdom.

Deuteronomy 4:10 *Specially the day that thou stoodest before YHWH thy Elohim in Horeb, when YHWH said unto me, Gather Me the people together, and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. ¹¹And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. ¹²And YHWH spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. ¹³And He declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and He wrote them upon two tables of stone. ¹⁴And YHWH commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. ¹⁵Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that YHWH spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: ¹⁶lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, ¹⁸the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: ¹⁹and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which YHWH thy Elohim hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. ²⁰But YHWH hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.*

Deuteronomy 5:1 *And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. ²YHWH our Elohim made a covenant with us in Horeb. ³YHWH made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of*

us here alive this day. ⁴YHWH talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, ⁵(I stood between YHWH and you at that time, to shew you the word of YHWH: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying, ⁶I am YHWH thy Elohim, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. ⁷Thou shalt have none other elohim before Me. ⁸Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: ⁹thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I YHWH thy Elohim am a jealous Elohim, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: YHWH is our Elohim, YHWH is one: ⁵and thou shalt love YHWH thy Elohim with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ⁶And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

Deuteronomy 4:2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of YHWH your Elohim which I command you.

Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth YHWH thy Elohim require of thee, but to fear YHWH thy Elohim, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve YHWH thy Elohim with all thy heart and with all thy soul, ¹³to keep the commandments of YHWH, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Deuteronomy 12:30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their elohim? Even so will I do likewise. ³¹Thou shalt not do so unto YHWH thy Elohim: for every abomination to YHWH, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their elohim. ³²What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Once it is established that YHWH is the sovereign authority in Israel and that His unamendable Torah is its constitution, Moses begins to lay foundational structures for the kingdom of YHWH upon the earth. This begins with the establishment of the central and exclusive altar among the children of Israel. After establishing the identity of the Sovereign of Israel, Moses instructs the children of Israel as to how they are to worship the Sovereign. Let us look at a brief outline of this particular portion of the book of Devarim and see the confirming pattern.

- The centrality of the altar – Deuteronomy 12:1-32
- Instructions concerning those who would encourage the worship of other elohim – Deuteronomy 13:1-18
- Dietary laws that affect our status at and as the altar – Deuteronomy 14:1-21
- Instructions concerning tithing and support for the Levites and *cohanim* – Deuteronomy 14:22-29
- Instructions concerning the Sabbatical year and charity – Deuteronomy 15:1-23
- Instructions on the Feasts of YHWH – Deuteronomy 16:1-17

After establishing the identity of the Sovereign of Israel and the pattern of His worship, Moses goes on to establish the very government of the Kingdom of YHWH which will assure, protect, and enforce the exclusive worship of YHWH ELOHIM.

- Instructions on the appointing of judges, officers, and courts of justice – Deuteronomy 16:18-17:5
- Instructions concerning witnesses – Deuteronomy 17:6-7
- The establishment of a High Court – Deuteronomy 17:8-13
- Instructions concerning the appointment of an earthly king – Deuteronomy 17:14-20
- Instructions concerning Levites and prophets – Deuteronomy 18:1-22
- Instructions concerning cities of refuge – Deuteronomy 19:1-13

- Further instructions for the courts – Deuteronomy 19:14-21
- Instructions concerning warfare and military matters – Deuteronomy 20:1-20
- Laws concerning manslaughter – Deuteronomy 21:1-9

Our portion this week begins with the next foundational issue – family life and daily living in the Kingdom of YHWH. We will expound on these teachings in greater detail in a moment, but now, for the sake of clarity, let us simply look at the outline of the portion.

- Instructions concerning marriage(s) – Deuteronomy 21:10-15
- Instructions concerning the rights of the firstborn – Deuteronomy 21:16-17
- Instructions concerning rebellious children – Deuteronomy 21:18-21
- Instructions concerning the executed – Deuteronomy 21:22-23
- Instructions concerning stray beasts and lost property – Deuteronomy 22:1-4
- Instructions concerning women wearing men’s clothing – Deuteronomy 22:5
- Instructions concerning the gathering of young birds – Deuteronomy 22:6-7
- Instructions concerning the building of a new house – Deuteronomy 22:8
- Instructions concerning mixture – Deuteronomy 22:9-11
- Instruction concerning fringes on garments – Deuteronomy 22:12
- Instructions concerning intimate relations, incest, divorce, and accusations – Deuteronomy 22:13-30
- Instructions concerning the purity of the camp – Deuteronomy 23:1-18
- Instructions concerning honesty in business dealings and vows – Deuteronomy 23:19-25
- Instructions concerning divorce and remarriage – Deuteronomy 24:1-5
- Instructions concerning just and compassionate dealings with others – Deuteronomy 24:6-25:4
- Instructions on Levirate marriage – Deuteronomy 25:5-10
- Instructions on fairness and equity – Deuteronomy 25:11-16
- Instructions concerning the Amalekite – Deuteronomy 25:18-19

While it may appear that this portion is a disjointed collection of unconnected teachings randomly thrown together without thought or order; I assure you, it is not. First, as we have already stated, these teachings are all based upon the themes of daily life and family purity. We may recall that the children of Israel were to be set apart from the nations for the purpose of being a light and a revelation of the Holy One to the whole world.

Leviticus 20:26 *And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I YHWH am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine.*

Isaiah 49:6 *And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.*

Psalms 147:19 *He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. ²⁰He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye YHWH.*

Deuteronomy 4:6 *Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.*

The Torah is what ultimately sets the children of Israel apart from the rest of the nations; therefore we should understand that family purity and even our daily lives are the very means that YHWH has given to us to carry out our calling. We cannot compartmentalize our faith to a designated day or time of the week while ignoring the rest of our time and activities. Here we learn that every mundane aspect of our lives is to be consecrated in service to the Holy One; including our marriages, families, home life, the manner in which we build our house, plow our fields, earn our living, interact with those we love, and even with those we don’t love. Every aspect of our lives is to be involved in serving our Sovereign.

Another reality that we should recognize in these passages is the interconnection of all these teachings. These are not individual teachings, but one common theme with a logical flow through the whole portion. The spirit of these teachings flows like a river of thought throughout the whole portion, addressing issue after issue of daily life in the Kingdom of YHWH. Let us jump into this river of thought and try to understand the logic and will of the Creator.

We are going to jump into this river upstream from our portion, and begin with the last thoughts of last week's portion. As evident from the outline above, one of the last teachings in the previous portion was concerning Israel's warfare.³ We should remember here that the historical context of these teachings was a time when warfare and conquest were predominant factors in the lives of the people of Israel. The children of Israel had already numbered the men of war and organized their armies. They had already tasted war against the Amorites, Canaanites, and Amalekites. So it is of utmost importance that the children of Israel realize that even in warfare they are to love YHWH with their whole being and rise above the animal nature of man to live in the spiritual heights of holiness necessary to be the embodiment of YHWH ELOHIM.

To be holy or set apart would require that the children of Israel learn to make distinctions in their lives. The distinctions between *tahor*/clean and *tamei*/unclean animals for sacrifice and diet were just the beginning of this process. The Torah commands that the warriors of Israel live in their spiritual nature even in times of war. They were not to be animalistic barbarians. Distinctions were to be made as to who was to go to war.⁴ The warriors of Israel were to offer a means of peace to their enemies prior to battle.⁵ They were even to make distinctions between the trees that were cut down to be used for battle implements.⁶ These teachings protected the image of Elohim even in times when most men sink to their lowest natures. But Israel is not to be like the rest of the nations who ruthlessly rape, pillage, and plunder during times of war. The Torah demands more from the warriors of Israel. So it is that our portion this week begins with a teaching that ties the theme of warfare and family life together.

Deuteronomy 21:10 *When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and YHWH thy Elohim hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive, ¹¹and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; ¹²then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; ¹³and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. ¹⁴And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.*

Here we witness that the warriors of Israel are called to act in a righteous and holy fashion. Even in times of war the men of Israel are called to contain themselves and act in a holy and noble manner, even to a captive woman. The men of Israel's army are not simply allowed to satisfy their animal urges by ravaging and dehumanizing a captive woman. Instead, if the soldier genuinely cares for the woman, he is to take her home, shave her head, pare her nails, give her modest clothes for mourning, and allow her a month to mourn the loss of her family, homeland, and culture. Then after seeing this woman in these humbling surroundings for an entire month, if the man still desires to have her as a wife, he is free to do so. If, however, after returning home to his family his passions have ebbed after having seen her in her mourning and humiliation and he does not desire to have her as a wife, he is to let her go anywhere she pleases. He may not keep her as a slave nor sell her to anyone else. Shaving her head and keeping her captive was enough humiliation. In this act we should see not only YHWH'S righteous demands upon His warriors, but also His compassion toward the vulnerable.

This teaching begins the transition between teachings on warfare and those concerning daily life. Let us note that the very next teaching in our portion concerns a man having two wives.

Deuteronomy 21:15 *If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: ¹⁶then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son*

of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: ¹⁷but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

We need to be honest when dealing with texts such as this one. The Torah does not forbid a man from marrying more than one wife. However, we must be careful not to impose upon such arrangements our hypersexual culture. In most cases the addition of a wife was both economical and an act of social responsibility. This is clearly the case in the Levirate marriage arrangement⁷ where a childless widow is impregnated by a brother of the deceased in order to provide a child in his brother's name to care for the widow in her old age. Since children were in many cases the strength of a family and the means of productivity and protection against enemies, having more than one childbearing wife at a time provided family security. This was particularly important in nomadic cultures. We should also realize that there was not a social welfare program available to assist widows and orphans. An unmarried woman was vulnerable to the elements, poverty, and worse. Therefore, if a man married her as a second wife, she would have children to care for her in her old age and the protection of a family or clan around her. While the Torah permits multiple wives, there are also limits placed upon these arrangements.

Exodus 21:10 *If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.*

Leviticus 18:17 *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; for they are her near kinswomen: it is wickedness.*

Leviticus 18:18 *Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.*

While it may appear that Jacob violated this last prohibition, I would contend that he did not. Jacob did not marry sisters with the intention of using one to make the other jealous. Instead, Jacob clearly intended to marry only Rachel, but was tricked into marrying both sisters. I do not believe the prohibition is specifically against marrying sisters as much as it is the idea of pitting one sister against the other. We should also note, however, that in every place the Scripture reports of a man having two wives, there is a report of contention and strife.⁸ Never does the Torah encourage more than one wife.

While this could be a whole teaching unto itself, for now let us just take note of the continuity of this teaching with the preceding one. If a man leaves his wife and goes to war and finds another woman that he desires to have as a wife, he brings her home and the process begins. But the strife may also begin. This strife may stem from one wife, possibly the newer wife, being more favored than the first wife. So the Torah forbids the neglect of the first wife, but also protects the rights of the first wife's firstborn son. Jealousy in such matters generally spills over from the wives to their children, each mother desiring the best for her own.

It should not surprise us then that the next teaching is about a rebellious son.

Deuteronomy 21:18 *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: ¹⁹then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; ²⁰and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. ²¹And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*

If one son is favored over another, the chances are great that the least favored son will rebel in anger. Ultimately such rebellion cannot be tolerated among the children of Israel. So it is that the parents bring such a rebellious child to the elders, and if he refuses to pay heed or reform his ways, his wickedness is to be removed from among the children of Israel as an example to other children that

may have a mind to rebel. This teaching is followed by a teaching concerning hanging dead bodies up for display as an example to others.⁹

The next few teachings concerning a brother's sheep or ox that has strayed or has been overburdened may at first glance make no logical sense in this location. But in reality what is being taught is specifically about a rebellious son. If we, of the children of Israel, see a mother or father struggling under the burden of an unruly son, or if we see the son of our brother straying and stumbling under the burden of injustice or bad parenting in the family, we are being asked to step in and help. If we would take care of our brother's animals, how much more so should we intercede with our brother's son or daughter that is straying or buckling.

This teaching on caring for our brother's family is followed by the prohibition against a woman wearing men's clothing and men wearing women's clothing. Again, while this is a clear prohibition against cross-dressing, it is also telling us that a woman should not try to take on the role of the father or to usurp the husband's authority or covering; nor should a man put himself under his wife's headship.¹⁰ Again, if a wife rebels against her husband's authority, she teaches her children rebellion against authority, and as a result will suffer the consequences of raising a stubborn and rebellious child.

The teaching on chasing away the mother bird from the nest before taking the young is directly connected to the above teaching. If a woman is an unfit parent, rebelling against her husband or otherwise unfit to raise the children, the children should be taken from her. But this should be done with compassion. The children should not be removed in the sight of the mother. An unfit parent should be chased away and yet shown compassion.

The building of a railing around the house is likewise a literal commandment for the physical safety of anyone who works or walks on the roof, since this was a common living space in biblical times. However, the building of a fence in this case is referring to the Torah as a hedge of protection for the whole family. The likelihood of rebellion, divorce, and strife in a family would be greatly diminished if when the man was building his house (which we should remember has to do with building his family), he would build his family within the covenant and the Torah. It is easier to raise a child in the Torah than impose it upon him later. It is also easier to raise a child in the Torah when both the husband and the wife are members of the covenant.

The following teachings concerning sowing with diverse seed, plowing with mixed animals, or wearing mixed fiber in clothing all have to do with marrying someone or building your house with someone who is not of the same faith. It is what Shaul later referred to as being unequally yoked.¹¹ If one marries outside the faith, the house is divided. This strife will cause rebellion, and the rebellion will cause the children to rebel and suffer the consequences.

The wearing of fringes upon the garments is again dealing with our covering or authority. A garment is a covering. The commandment to put fringes upon the corners of our garments is to remind us that no matter where we are, we are under the authority or covering of the covenant relationship with YHWH. We have willingly and lovingly submitted to being His bride and to raising His children. For this reason we are to follow the Torah – that we may be the bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Seeing the fringes reminds us that YHWH is our Elohim, our covering, and our Sovereign One.

In each of these teachings there is a connection about how we live and treat each other. These relationships are a part of our calling and covenant to manifest the image of YHWH in the world. As you study the rest of the teachings in this portion, watch for the connecting logic that reveals the heart of the Sovereign One. After establishing that YHWH is our covering and that we are to build a fence (the Torah) around our family, the rest of these teachings largely concern how to keep the camp clean, or holy. While we are indeed to receive these teachings at face value, there is yet within them revelation concerning the nature and character of YHWH. If we are to be His image in the world, then we must understand His heart and His Spirit as revealed in His Word.

¹ Deuteronomy 18:15-19

² Disciples

³ Deuteronomy 20:1-20

⁴ Deuteronomy 20:5-8

⁵ Deuteronomy 20:10-12

⁶ Deuteronomy 20:19-20

⁷ Deuteronomy 25:5-10

⁸ Genesis 16:4-6 – Sarah and Hagar; Genesis 29:21-30:24 – Rachel and Leah; 1 Samuel 1:1-6 – Hannah and Peninnah. David's many wives caused contention – 1 Samuel 25:43; 27:3; 2 Samuel 5:13. Solomon also had strife due to many wives – 1 Kings 11:2-8.

⁹ Deuteronomy 21:22-23

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:1-10

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18