

SHOFTIM – “Judges”

DEUTERONOMY (D’VARIM 16:18 – 21:9)

INTRODUCTION:

1. In this portion Moses addressed the status of judges, the king, the priests and prophets.
 - a. Leaders were all, individually and collectively, an integral part of Israel’s government.
 - b. Their conduct, good or bad, had influence on the rest of the nation.
 - c. So it is today, leaders of every station influence the masses for better or worse.
2. Thus, the Torah stresses that leaders, specifically the judges, must act justly when judging.
 - a. Those judgments were to be strictly adhered to by the people.
 - b. Which brings us to this introductory point – misconception about judging others.

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye;’ and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.” – Matthew 7:1-5

3. Judging others and their actions is considered taboo based primarily on this passage.
 - a. Y’shua was not saying we shouldn’t make judgments about situations.
 - b. This command refers to rash and **unjust** judgment.
 - c. The English “critic” comes from the Greek word for “judge”
4. Luke 6:37 explains it in the sense of “condemning.”
 - a. Refers to private judgment rather than “judicial” – not having all the facts.
 - b. According to the customs of those who judge based on their code of law and opinions.
5. It addresses those who endeavor to elevate themselves above others while lowering them.
 - a. Attempt to be esteemed without any equals.
6. Certain issues must be judged but with righteous judgment.

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” – 1 John 4:1

7. The word “prove” carries the concept of discernment, not condemning.
8. Paul judged issues within the body

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have

already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ... deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Y'shua." - 1 Corinthians 5:1-3, 6, 12-13

9. The word "judged" [also appearing in verse 12] is the same Greek word in Matthew 7:1.
 - a. There are times when judgment is sanctioned and that mandate comes from the Torah.
10. Torah delegates authority to those who are to judge and make halachic decisions.
 - a. e.g. Priests are to judge in certain situations.

**"In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to my judgments."
– Ezekiel 44:24**

11. There is an entire book called "Judges" and this portion is called "judges."

CHAPTER 16: JUDGES AND JUSTICE

1. Verse 18: "Judges you shall make ... and they shall judge with righteous judgment."
 - a. Hebrew term is שופטים *shoftim* from root שפט *shafat* – "create order."
2. Judges were to be competent, impartial and not to be rewarded because of social status.
 - b. Not to be appointed for political or family reasons and should be qualified for posts.
 - c. It is written as if directed to each individual judge and not collectively.
3. Verse 19: "You shall not pervert judgment" – regardless of those involved in dispute.
 - a. He is warned against temptation to render unjust decisions in "respect" to persons.
4. According to the Talmud:

"The judge shall not say, 'This man is poor and his opponent is rich, and it is the duty of the latter to help him in his need. I shall therefore decide against the rich man, and thereby cause the poor man to be helped without the taint of almsgiving.' Nor shall the judge say, 'How can I put this rich man to shame in public, on account of a paltry sum? I shall acquit him now, but tell him afterwards to make good the amount.' " (Talmud)

5. The judge is warned against taking a bribe for it "blinds the eyes" to the facts.
 - a. Judge not permitted to reinterpret the Scripture because of his personal convictions.
 - b. He was duty-bound to make judgments harmonious with Torah.
 - c. God's Justice superseded personal conviction.
6. Is it not accurate that judges today "interpret" the law according to their opinions.
 - a. They override and ignore decades of judicial precedent to advance their philosophy.
 - b. By Torah's standards, many judges today have perverted justice.
7. Verse 20: "Justice, justice shall you follow" – (Heb. צדק צדק *tzedek, tzedek*).
 - a. Literally means "righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue."
 - b. Duplication of the word is to emphasize how important it is.
8. Expanded to mean that unjust means not to be used to secure justice.
 - a. Not right to pervert justice in order to bring about your version of justice.

- b. Social justice, as defined today, perverts justice to attain its “just” goal.
- 9. Even true justice is strong enough alone without the aid of injustice to secure it.
 - a. It is the basis and foundation of God’s authority and Kingdom.

“Righteousness (צדק *tzedek*) and justice (משפט *mishpat*) are the foundation of your throne.” – Psalm 89:14

- 10. He is not God because He is righteous and just; He is righteous and just because He is God.
 - a. As His people we are to emulate these attributes.
- 11. Justice in Hebrew thought is much different than in western (Greek) thought.
 - a. The Greek idea of justice is “harmony.”
 - b. In Hebrew thought it is synonymous with “holiness.”

**“God who is holy (קדוש *kadosh*) shall be hallowed (קדש *kadash*) in righteousness.”
– Isaiah 5:16**

- 12. He is “set apart” and is “set apart” in righteousness/justice.
- 13. “Justice is the awe-inspired respect for the personality of others, and their inalienable rights.”
 - a. Condemned criminal is considered; his conviction requires two or more witnesses.
 - b. Their accusations must be confirmed.
 - c. Those who were hung could not remain hanging over night (Deut. 21:23).
- 14. Injustice is flagrant disrespect for the personality of others – i.e. lack of consideration.
 - a. One who tramples on those who can’t defend themselves is seen as an enemy of God.
 - b. Is it not true that one who tramples on those who do defend themselves is same?
- 15. Modern culture disrespects the rights and convictions of others to attain “justice” and respect for their ideology.
 - a. For instance, to resist the gay agenda is to “hate,” disrespect their “rights.”
 - b. In the meantime, the rights and positions of those who disagree are being trounced.
 - c. All in the name of “harmony” or “tolerance” and “social justice.”
- 16. Social justice – which is perversion of justice – wants “harmony” and tolerance, not holiness.
 - a. Justice is equivalent to holiness or “set apart.”
- 17. Social justice – the opposite - is equivalent to “mingling” which is a western concept.
 - a. The Hebrew word “west” מערב *ma’arav*, from root ערב *arav* – “mingle.”
 - b. It is western nations who, most prominently, promote “social justice.”
- 18. Believed by rabbis, that the world could not exist if ruled by strict justice alone.
 - a. Therefore, God rules by judgment tempered with mercy.
 - b. This balance is the Hebraic understanding of justice
 - c. אלהים *Elohim* compared with יהוה *YHVH*.
- 19. The word for “charity” is צדקה *tzedakah*, derived from צדק *tzedek* – “righteous, justice.”
 - a. When presented the woman caught in adultery, Y’shua administered mercy.

- b. Judgment would have condemned but justice included mercy.
 - c. This is how the judges of Israel were to act.
20. This was necessary that we might “live” (verse 20) – this is required:
“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” – Micah 6:8
21. Verse 21: “Shall not plant an idolatrous (*asherah*) tree ... or set up a pillar.”
- a. Idolatry equivalent to not listening to God’s word and considered treason.
 - b. “The LORD hates these things” distinguishes these pillars from others.
 - c. e.g. Jacob set up a pillar at Bethel (Gen. 28:18).
 - d. Context of “pillar” would be significant as in case of word בעל *ba’al*.
22. Why is this mentioned here? to juxtapose against criteria for judges.
23. Appointment of unqualified or unprincipled judge would be equivalent to planting idolatrous tree and, thus, establishing idolatrous worship and lifestyle.
- a. Perversion of justice is what leads to national decay; why Israel warned of it.
 - b. This is why, in large part, the West is imploding upon itself.
24. Interesting because, as we will see, men are likened unto trees; John and Y’shua said:

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree (man) which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” – Matthew 3:7-10

“Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” – Matthew 7:17-20

“He answered and said, ‘Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.’ ” – Matthew 15:13

CHAPTER 17: THE SAN HEDRIN

1. Verse 1: “You shall not sacrifice...wherein is a blemish, even any evil thing.”
 - a. The logic of following these other passages is:
 - b. Proper justice sustains the integrity of God’s House and what occurs within.
2. Perversion of justice will lead to breakdown in holiness of God’s people.
 - a. They will sacrifice integrity for the sake of beauty, conformity and appeal.
 - b. That leads to “improper” tainted sacrifices – mixed message and belief.
3. People will say and teach things that are palatable for all kinds of people.
 - a. Consequently, unclean, profane and unacceptable doctrines will be propagated.
 - b. The perpetrators will insist this is right and “God’s will.”
 - c. We remember that “righteousness” and “justice” are the foundation of Kingdom.

4. Verse 2: “If there be found a man or woman...that does evil.”
 - a. The word is literally, “the evil” which is understood to be idolatry.
5. Verse 6: “At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses” – to render righteous judgment.
 - a. The testimony must agree and be unimpeachable.
 - b. In case of death penalty, the accusers must be first to participate in execution.
 - c. Reminded of the men who brought the adulterous woman to Y’shua.
 - d. This in order to put away the evil “from your midst” (verse 7).
6. The death penalty was not regarded as revenge but to purge evil from the nation.
 - a. Evil, unchecked, will affect nation as certainly as leaven will spread through the dough.
 - b. Death penalty was for the good of the nation – not cruel but compassionate.
 - c. Those who consider it cruel pervert justice and allow mingling which renders death.
7. Judaism holds that cases where San Hedrin made this determination to execute were rare.
 - a. Caiaphas found it necessary to rid Judah of Y’shua for the “good of nation” (Jn. 11).
8. Verse 8: “If there arise a matter too hard for you ... bring it to the priests in Jerusalem.”
 - a. In this we see that God allowed for qualified men to render decisions.
 - b. Judges who ministered at the Holy Place, who could make halachic decisions.
 - c. Primary reason for the idea that Oral Torah was ultimately of Divine origin.
9. San Hedrin needed because if every opinion were considered legitimate, would be “torahs.”
10. San Hedrin was, thus, authorized to resolve disputes about these difficult matters:
 - Accidental or intentional killing.
 - Property rights.
 - Bodily injury.
 - Anything where the local magistrates were in dispute.
 - Any matter where Torah was not specific.
11. Worked in accordance with the Temple to sustain the integrity of the Torah.
 - a. Was not a court of appeal.
12. Understood that these judges were to be true to God’s standards of justice and truth.
 - a. The people were to adhere to these halachic rulings.
 - b. That is why it was so important for these men to be of the highest integrity.
13. Verse 9: “Unto the judge that shall be in those days ... and they shall declare the sentence.”
 - a. Even if they are considered inferior to judges who have preceded him, he declares.
 - b. Must trust that God would raise men up for their appointed time and circumstance.
14. Verse 10-11: “You shall do according to what they shall teach...and not turn aside from it.”
 - a. Their decisions were to be obeyed even, so say the Rabbis, if you thought it wrong.
 - b. Rabbinical commentary (Sifri) interprets this to mean:

“Even if in your eyes they seem to tell you that right is left, and left is right, hearken unto them.”

15. It must be presumed that they have hearkened unto God’s voice and understand their role.
 - a. Therefore the people were to obey their decisions.
16. It would seem that Y’shua validates this when He says to His disciples:

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.” – Matthew 23:2

17. In other words, obey their judgments but do not behave as they do.
 - a. These things they tell you to do, they don't do it.
 - b. They put on a show to be seen of men, nevertheless, observe their official decisions.
 - c. You observe them even if they don't; your righteousness must exceed their's.
18. If there were a breakdown in adherence, the Torah would be "fragmented into many Torahs."
 - a. Would create a great deal of division among the people.
 - b. In my opinion, this is happening today – the Name, the calendar, etc.
19. There is no San Hedrin and, because some things are considered to be wrong, many are making determinations of what is right and what is wrong.
 - a. This has created confusion and division within the Body.
 - b. Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 3.
20. Verse 12: "The man that does presumptuously in not hearkening unto the priest..."
 - a. Refusing to comply is breaking the law of the land; that man was to die.
 - b. He is the evil one, not the one who rendered the decision.
 - c. We would presume that if rendered faulty judgment, God will deal with them.
 - d. Perhaps this is the logic used to execute Y'shua.
21. If there was a "rebellious elder" who did not comply, he was put to death.
 - a. Tradition says, he was executed at next festival in front of masses of people.
 - b. This might have played a role (or given excuse) in Caiaphas decision toward Y'shua.
22. Outside of this context, are we to obey the "laws of the land"? – yes unto a certain point.

"Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work" – Titus 3:1

23. Yet, we also see there is a time to disobey man:

" 'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!' But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.' "
 – Acts 5:28-29

24. Peter doesn't challenge their authority to interpret torah in pursuit of righteousness.
 - a. Draws the line when it comes to disobeying God.
 - b. Three Hebrews obeyed Nebuchadnezzar until commanded to disobey God.
25. Must also consider that when people didn't discern this distinction, coupled with unprincipled judges, it would have led to a skewed interpretation of Torah.
 - a. In Y'shua's day, some of those in power wished to rule by strict justice.
 - b. A justice based on their own ideals rather than on the Torah's.
 - c. However, they didn't follow their own dictates.
 - d. They were taskmasters - severe to others, but very indulgent to themselves.

"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." – Matthew 23:4

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.

These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!” – Matthew 23:23-24

26. Weightier matters include “justice” - judgment tempered by mercy because one believes!
 - a. When there is perverted justice, sanctity of God’s House is compromised.
 - b. Unclean things begin to infiltrate that which is holy.

CHAPTER 17: THE KING

1. Verses 14-20: defines the selection, qualifications and duties of the king.
 - a. Must be a native Israeli and govern according to the Torah.
2. He was commanded that he:
 - Should have no standing cavalry to keep people in subjection.
 - Should have no harem lest his heart be turned away from God.
 - Should study and obey the laws given to Israel.
3. Verse 14: “And you say: ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations around me.’”
 - a. Obviously nothing wrong with having a king; i.e. David.
 - b. Problem is to be “like all the nations around me.”
4. When Israel came to Samuel and asked for a king to be like the surrounding nations, he said:

“Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you. But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, ‘No, set a king over us!’ Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.”

– 1 Samuel 10:18-19

5. If, perhaps, they had asked for a king who would lead them to follow God’s ways.
 - a. Yet, they wanted to imitate the nations around them – rejecting imitating God.
6. Verse 15: “You shall in any wise set him king over you” (lit. “you may certainly set”).
 - a. Suggesting monarchy was not commanded but permitted.
 - b. The 12 spies were not commanded by God but permitted – bad result.
 - c. Saul was God’s answer to their request “to be like the nations around us.”
7. Verse 15: “God shall choose” – through His prophets.
 - a. Yet, in Saul we see possibility He gave them what they asked for to teach them.
 - b. God gives us what we “want” to teach it was not what we needed.
 - c. He gave them quail to eat in the wilderness not because they needed but they wanted.
8. In this verse, no foreigner was to be king over them.
9. If you want change and ask for a “king” might you get what you ask for and end up with a foreigner ruling over you?
 - a. In days of Second Temple, Herod the Edomite was made king over Judah.
10. Verse 16: King was not to multiply horses for war and be consumed with military conquest.
 - a. Would have instilled reliance on Egypt.
11. Verse 17: He was not to multiply wives that his heart be turned away from God.
 - a. Adversary has consistently used women to turn the hearts of the “sons of God.”

- b. e.g. Gen 6, Bila'am's advice to Moab, Delilah.
 - c. King was not to multiply silver and gold.
12. He was to write a copy of the Torah and keep it near him at all times.
 - a. Original being the one kept by ark of the covenant.
 - b. This would lead to righteous judgment and effective leadership.
 - c. 2 Kings 22: In Josiah's day, Torah was found and had not been read by kings.
 13. When the kings of Israel did not obey the Torah, the evil inclination of kings was unchecked.
 - a. Torah (law) doesn't impede life but preserves it.
 - b. It does impede the evil inclinations of mankind to bring it under "bondage."
 14. Verse 20: His heart was not to "be lifted up above his brethren" – not his "subjects."
 15. With all his wisdom, Solomon failed to comply with these commands; he:
 - Multiplied horses bringing people back to Egypt.
 - Multiplied wives who turned his heart to idols (1 Kings 11:4).
 - Multiplied silver and gold at expense of the people.
 16. After his death, the nation divided into north and south all because:

**“His heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.”
– 1 Kings 11:4**

17. “Grandeur is God's alone” – Men, even kings, are not designed for fame and fortune.

CHAPTER 18: PRIESTS AND PROPHETS

1. Verse 1: “The priests and Levites...shall have no portion.”
 - a. Compare with the situation in medieval Europe where clergy had vast control of land.
 - b. In Israel the priests received “first-fruits” of their harvests.
2. Just because someone was a priest didn't mean they were righteous or evil; had a choice.
 - a. Levi had a tremendous responsibility to properly lead the people in righteousness.
 - b. Through the prophet, God said this to the priests of Israel:

“My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear me; so he feared me and was reverent before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But you have departed from the way; you have caused many to stumble at the law. You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts. Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept my ways but have shown partiality in the law.” – Malachi 2:5-8

3. Verses 9-22: Before describing the position the prophet holds in Israel, Moses warns against divination, soothsayers and wizards. – also found in Lev.19:26, 31.
 - a. It is human nature to want to know the future.
 - b. The nations that would surround consulted such to discern future events.
 - c. Israel's God is the One who “declares the end from the beginning” (Isa. 46:8-10).

4. God established that Israel could discern these things but not by these methods.

“Surely there is no enchantment with Jacob; neither is there any divination with Israel.”

– Numbers 23:23

5. Sorcery and wizardry typically leads to occultism and crime – consider the Nazis.

a. God refers to these customs as “abominations” (verse 9).

6. God established the prophet as the one Israel could discern what God was saying to them.

a. The office of prophet may be Heaven’s method of checks and balances.

b. Prophet was not to give a ruling in matters of Torah; He is bound by the Torah.

c. The prophet is to declare the Divine Will and “His secrets” (Amos 3:7).

d. In some cases predicting what would occur in the future if it served God’s purposes.

e. Although this was not the primary duty of the prophet.

“The mere foretelling of future events is the lowest stage of prophecy, and in the eyes of the great Prophets of Israel it was of quite secondary importance. Their aim was to fathom the secrets of holiness; and their striving, by means of admonition and moral suasion, to guide the peoples in the paths which lead mankind to spiritual well-being.” (Shemtov ibn Shemtov).

7. A prophet was to lead the people to repentance and obedience to God’s commands.

a. Not so much a foreteller but a teacher and spiritual guide for his age.

b. Sons of Issachar discerned the times so Israel would know what to do.

c. Moses prophesied in large part based on what had already taken place (father/child).

d. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign (omen).

8. This where the soothsayers and wizards typically find an audience.

9. Verses 10-11: Moses groups soothsayers (one who reads omens), enchanters, sorcerers, charmers and mediums with those who perform human sacrifice.

10. Verse 12: These abominations are why God is driving them out of the land.

a. Don’t mimic customs of people doomed to exile and destruction.

11. Verse 13: To the contrary, be “wholehearted” with the LORD.

a. The Hebrew term is **תמים** *tamim* – “undefiled, pure.”

b. Israel is not permitted to turn to these abominable practices.

12. Consider that, at the end of his life, Saul consulted a medium.

a. He took his own life and had desired to kill David.

b. The occult leads to crime.

13. The prophet “like unto Moses” is highlighted.

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me **from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, **according to all you desired** of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘**Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.**’ And the LORD said to me: ‘What they have spoken is good.’ I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him.” – Deuteronomy 18:15-19**

14. Verse 15: Interpreted that every generation would see a prophet raised up to guide the people.
 - a. He comes from the midst of you – the place the Adversary wants to invade.
 - b. Israel is to “hearken” or שמע *sh'ma* to him.
 - c. Moses being the prototype, he would be bring redemption and salvation.
15. Verse 16: This was done because you asked for it – didn't want to hear from me directly.
 - a. So, the “prophet shall be the intermediaries in their generation.” [Soncino, p.827]
16. Consider that this prophecy was also considered to be speaking of a particular prophet.
 - a. Jews considered “the prophet” to come before or at Messiah's coming.

“And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’ ” – John 1:21

- b. Some, including Stephen in Acts 7, considered Y'shua to be “the prophet.”

“Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Y'shua did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” – John 6:14

17. Consequently, if Moses speaks of “the Prophet” and he was to be intermediary with God's Words in His mouth, does this not speak to Messiah Y'shua?
 - a. Didn't want to hear Him from midst of fire; took on form of man to speak with them.
18. The prophet speaks those things that God commands him and those who do not listen, God will “require” it of him; i.e. be judged for rejecting his words.
 - a. Y'shua said:

“And if anyone hears my words and does not believe, **I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him— **the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day**. For I have not spoken on my own authority; but the Father who sent me gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told me, so I speak.”**

– John 12:47-50

19. Verse 20: On other hand, one who speaks “presumptuously” or in name of other gods is punishable by death.
20. Verse 21-22: When they wondered “how can we be sure?”: everything the true prophet speaks will come to pass – even if it takes thousands of years.
 - a. Still, true test of a prophet is the substance of what he says – does it agree with Torah.
 - b. Never spoke against Torah or for the abolition of Torah.
 - c. He worked in concert with it.
21. All these offices played an important role in Israel's national life.
 - Righteous judges sustained moral stability among the people.
 - King ensured stability in national and social life.
 - Priesthood provided stability in religious life.
 - Prophet inspired and secured spiritual progress and averted stagnation.
22. All of these were to play their role in pursuit of holiness.

- a. When any position compromises, it opens door to others following suit.
23. When there is wide-spread corruption, true prophets like Jeremiah are incarcerated while the lying prophets are embraced (Jeremiah 27).

CHAPTER 19: TAMPERING WITH BOUNDARIES

1. Verses 1-3: Discusses the three cities of refuge to be designated in the land.
2. Verses 8-9: Addresses the borders of Israel that were promised to Abraham would be given to Israel IF “you shall keep all this commandment.”
 - a. This will come to fruition in the Messianic age.
 - b. Yet three more cities of refuge were to be added.
3. Verse 11-13: Cities of refuge were not to be sanctuary for someone who intentionally killed.
 - a. Even if there, elders were to take him and deliver him to the avenger of blood.
 - b. He could not be ransomed as in some Arab nations.
 - c. To execute the murderer insured it “would go well with you.”
 - d. The innocent blood had been put away.
4. Verse 14: “You shall not remove your neighbor’s landmark” – line of stone marking property.
 - a. Deut 27:17 – the person who does this is cursed.
 - b. To blur the established boundary is the equivalent of theft.
 - c. They “of old time” set the boundary – i.e. Joshua and Elazar.
 - d. Homiletically means not to encroach on his honor or livelihood unfairly.
5. Speaking in terms of the boundary the Creator has established – moving landmark would be equivalent to “taking away” from “His field” and “adding to” your own.
 - a. The result of disobedience – moving the landmark – is a curse.
6. Verses 15-21: One witness cannot condemn a man; must be two or three witnesses.
 - a. Torah and prophets are “two witnesses” testifying that Y’shua is Messiah.
 - b. This is personified as Moses and Elijah in Matthew 17.
7. Verse 16: “If an unrighteous witness...bear perverted witness” – lit. “a witness of violence.”
 - a. Hebrew is *עד חמס* *ed chamas* - a witness who intends to do harm.
 - b. Verse 19: What he intended to do other is to be done to him.
8. Within the context of “moving your neighbor’s landmark” in order to steal property from him.
 - a. An unrighteous (*chamas*) witness moves the landmarks established long ago.
 - b. In effect, claiming land deeded to Israel is actually his.
 - c. Intending to destroy Israel to claim the land – that is what is to happen to him.
9. Hamas is Palestinian (Edomite) organization bent on Israel’s destruction.
 - a. Therefore, Esau must be destroyed and eradicated from “their midst.”
10. Verse 20: After proven, public announcement that this “person” was a false witness.
 - a. Verse 21: No pity; life for life, eye for eye, etc.

CHAPTER 20: WARFARE

- 1: Even in war, Israel’s conduct is to be just – considerate of others:
 - The newly betrothed exempted from battle.
 - Offering peace to opponent in battle.
 - Preserving that which preserves life.

2. Verse 1: When you go to battle against... a people too great for you” – don’t fear.
 - a. Seems that God purposely brings them into difficult situations.
 - b. Always enemies that are greater than they are.
 - c. This simply proves He is above all and they are to fear, love and trust Him.
3. Verse 5-9 makes allowances for those who can’t or shouldn’t fight:
 - One who built a house but hasn’t lived in it.
 - One who planted a vineyard but hasn’t eaten its fruit.
 - Newly betrothed man.
 - The fearful and faint-hearted.
4. Suggests that those whose mind would give into fears – of not returning to house, vineyard or wife – are exempted.
 - a. Perhaps all summed up in “fearful and faint-hearted” – that fear would spread.
 - b. People would end up fearing the enemy more than God.
 - c. Repeat of the sin of the 10 spies.
5. Like Israel lamenting over the evil report, the army would be infected with the other’s fear.
 - a. If Israel were to walk upright and observe justice, there would be no need for fear.
 - b. David went up against Goliath; he was defeated as well as Philistines.
 - c. On other hand, Joshua lost men at insignificant village called Ai.
6. Verse 10: When coming against enemy cities, offer peace first.
 - a. If they accept, they must pay tribute and obey laws of the land.
 - b. Many traditions that this offer was made to all enemies including Canaanites.
7. Verse 12-15: If peace rejected by cities far away from you:
 - All males killed.
 - Women and children taken as servants.
 - Livestock and other spoil taken.
8. Verse 16: If peace rejected by the nations in Canaan, nothing that breathes is to remain.
 - a. Were so wicked that if they did not accept Israel’s laws, Israel would be vulnerable.
 - b. Verse 18: “That they do not teach you their abominations.”
9. Consequently, no Canaanite who remained pagan was to be spared because their beliefs would invade and spread through Israeli culture.
 - a. Even if didn’t worship their gods, they would employ their methods in worship of God.
 - b. Danger of this would grow with each passing generation.
 - c. This is exactly what happened.
10. What may seem cruel to some has to be viewed from this perspective: the moral and future well-being of mankind was dependent on Israel being a “holy nation.”
 - a. Israel’s preservation from moral decline was tantamount to Moses.
 - b. In many countries, preservation of the state supersedes everything including its laws.
 - c. Israel’s covenantal duties would be supreme in this situation.
 - d. Maintaining its sanctity justified destruction of what could cause it to falter.
11. As far as their conquest of the land – most countries inhabit lands wrested in war from others.
 - a. In many cases the original inhabitants were destroyed.
 - b. In Israel’s case, the land has been deeded to them by One who created it.
12. That land, Israel, had been consistently defiled by Canaanites.
 - a. Time had come for the land to vomit them out.
 - b. Israel warned to be careful not to imitate them or else land will vomit you out.

- c. Canaanites were destroyed completely not because of doctrine but depravity.
13. A quote from Jewish commentator:

“Here is no partiality of a merely national God befriending His worshipers at the expense of others without regard to justice; here rather is a Power making for righteousness and against iniquity; yes, a Power acting with a beneficent regard to the good of humanity, burying a putrefying carcass out of sight, lest it should taint the air.”

14. Israel was to refrain from devastating land they were to conquer.
- a. Verse 19-20: Were to spare trees that were good for food.
15. “For is the tree of the field man that it should be besieged?” – why kill it in other words.
- a. Survival of man is synonymous with survival of his food supply.
 - b. Moreover, why destroy anything that is useful?
 - c. Trees that were not bearing fruit can be cut down if the siege would benefit.
16. Ibn Ezra renders the verse, “for a man is the tree of the field.”
- a. Actually the Hebrew says אדם *ha'adam*, literally “the adam or “the man.”
17. If “man is the tree of the field” then has significant ramifications.
- a. Trees must produce branches, flowers and fruit to survive.
 - b. Men must produce “fruit” – works or good deeds – that reflect the seed.
 - c. Yet, when “trees” (men) don’t produce fruit, they can be cut down.

“Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” – Matthew 7:17-20

“He answered and said, ‘Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.’ ” – Matthew 15:13

18. Thinking in prophetic terms: two branches of a tree come together in Ezekiel 37.
- a. This is describing the restoration of all things – restoring the Kingdom to Israel.
 - b. This is when Israel is being re-gathered to possess the Land.
19. Of this time Isaiah says:

“So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

– Isaiah 55:11-12

20. Perhaps saying that, at the restoration, men will clap their hands in rejoicing.
- a. Two verses later, he writes:

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Keep justice, and do righteousness, for my salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed.’ ” – Isaiah 56:1

CHAPTER 21: SANCTITY OF LIFE

1. These verses speak to the sanctity of life and respect to be given to individual lives.
2. In Israel, murder is not only a crime against fellow man but against God as well.
 - a. God initially created mankind in His image and likeness.
 - b. Therefore, a murderer couldn't pay ransom to the victim's family.
 - c. Family didn't own the soul of victim; it came from God.
3. When the blood was spilled, the blood calls out to God from the ground (Gen. 4:10).
 - a. When innocent blood was spilled it defiles the land and must be atoned for.
4. If a body was found and the murderer was not identified, closest city had to atone for blood.
 - a. Heifer that had not been used for common use had its neck broken with axe by elders.
 - b. Took place in a "rough valley" – one uncultivated.
 - c. Some translations suggest was never to be worked in future.
5. Rabbinically this is explained as "a heifer that has not produced life should be killed in a spot that has never produced life to atone for a person who has been barred from producing life."
6. After washing their hands over the heifer and claiming innocence for this blood, ask God to forgive and not allow the innocent blood to remain in their "midst."
 - a. Blood is forgiven and innocent blood put away.
 - b. This is upright in the eyes of the LORD.
7. Otherwise, the blood would have been upon them – possibly someone they never knew.
 - a. Possible that leaders to have blood on hands if they neglect proper action.
 - b. Action that is right in the eyes of the LORD.
8. Interesting that Judas hung himself by the neck, traditions says, in the field bought with blood money to bury strangers in.
 - a. Hinting these "strangers" were people whose identity was unknown and were dead.
 - b. This field was to be desolate and no one was to live in it.
 - c. Pilate washed his hands of "innocent blood."
9. Finally, considering that innocent blood defiles the land, our land is defiled and corrupt.
 - a. The world is corrupt because justice has been perverted.
 - b. Will remain that way until Messiah returns and Torah goes forth.

"In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness." – Isaiah 16:5