



## The land of YAH is not for sale

*Parashat matot (42) – Tribes / Parashat mas'ei (43) – Stages/Journeys*

**Torah:** Bemidbar 30:1 to 32:42

**Haftarah:** Yirmeyahu 1:1 to 2:3

**Apostolic Scriptures:** Mattithyahu 5:33-37

**Torah:** Bemidbar 33:1 to 36:13

**Haftarah:** Yirmeyahu 2:4-28; Yonah 4:1-11

**Apostolic Scriptures:** Ya'aqob 4:1-12

In a previous year we treated these two *sidrot* or *parashot* separately, because there was a thirteenth month which gave us more time to gain deeper insight. Now, with fewer weeks at our disposal, we sometimes combine *parashot*, but the content remains the same and we just have to work through and grasp it a little faster. We also did a fairly extensive study on the origin of tribes, so this year, also because of limited time, we can concentrate more on other aspects.

With the study of *parashat b'chuqotai*, we learned of various commands in *Wayyiqra* 27 how the people of *Yisra'el* were to handle vows. Today's *sidrah* will teach us when and under what circumstances these vows could be revoked or ratified. One of the most important questions we might need to ask would be: "Why is it important to fulfill or keep a vow?"

People are under the impression that a vow is something made to YAH, while a promise is made to a human being. In reality, there is no real difference and we may use different words to excuse ourselves – that dear self-excuse! Man was created in YAH's image and if we profess to walk the Way of Truth, we must view promises and vows in the same light. When a promise to a human being is not kept, YAH's Character suffers serious damage and we find ourselves guilty of violating the third word (commandment). The same rules apply to parents and their children, as parents are the representation of YAH and must set an example of integrity for their children.

The spiritual relationship between YAH and *Yehudah/Yisra'el* is similar to the physical relationship between a man and a woman – the two are like a mirror. Our relationship with YAH is a direct reflection of how we understand our husband/wife relationships and how it plays out. A man who does not take leadership over the woman YAH placed under his protection, who does not protect, cherish and provide for her, proves that he does not understand the relationship between YAH and *Yisra'el*. If he treats her unjustly, it is proof that he does not understand how our Messiah treats his congregation. For the same reason, a woman who is not submissive to her husband, or does not seek protection in any way like *Tamar*, *Na'omi* or *Ruth*, will never be able to understand what Scripture means regarding shame and reproach. She does not understand the role YAH has in place for her.

Leaders should also know better and have a greater responsibility to keep promises. A leader can be seen as the representative of YAH and must always act in honesty and integrity. Some vows made by people may be declared null and void because they may have been made carelessly. However, there were time limits

attached to them and declaring them void could only be made by a father or married man; the vows of widows and divorced women could not be altered or nullified.

*Mosheh's* time on earth is now running short and he receives his last assignment: *Midyan's* misdeeds (cf. *Wayyiqra* 25) need to be avenged. He sends 12 000 men with *Pinehas*, 1 000 men from each tribe. In *parashat b'ha'alotcha* we were taught that only the priests were allowed to make *t'ruah* (alarm) with the silver trumpets and this is why *Pinehas* has to go along. However, he must also guard the ark of the covenant, because it is *YAH's* war and He is represented in this way. This war would be entirely successful, and also the war in which *Bil'am* would be killed, as well as *Tzur*, the father of *Kozbi* (cf. 25:15). Not one of the men of *Yisra'el* would perish, as we will see later.

Normally, women and children of the enemy would be spared during war, but in this case *Mosheh* is angry, because it was these women who seduced the men of *Yisra'el* (cf. 25:1). He orders that all boys be killed, as well as women who had known men. This causes everyone to be unclean because of their contact with the corpses of the enemy. Everything has to be purified with fire and what can't go through fire has to be purified with water. The spoils are divided equally between the 12 000 men who went out as well as all those who stayed behind, thus again teaching us about *YAH's* justice towards every person. As a sign of gratitude for their safe keeping, all 12 000 men give a large amount of gold and other spoils to *YAH* as a memorial for the children of *Yisra'el*.

Besides the rules regarding promises, whether or not to swear an oath, and how the *Midyanites* are defeated, we also see here how at least two tribes do not want to accept the promise made to them:

*Bemidbar* 32 <sup>1</sup>And the children of *Re'ubēn* and the children of *Gad* had much livestock, a large number. And they saw the land of *Ya'zēr* and the land of *Gil'ad* and saw that the place was a place for livestock. <sup>2</sup>So the children of *Gad* and the children of *Re'ubēn* came and spoke to *Mosheh*, and to *El'azar* the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, <sup>3</sup>"*Ataroth*, and *Dibon*, and *Ya'zēr*, and *Nimrah*, and *Heshbon*, and *El'alēh*, and *Sebam*, and *Nebo*, and *Be'on*, <sup>4</sup>the land which *יהוה* had stricken before the congregation of *Yisra'el*, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock." <sup>5</sup>And they said, "If we have found favour in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants as a possession, and do not let us pass over the *Yardēn*."

This is almost a form of rebellion again, as we experienced in the previous *parashot*. The word we see here is *מִקְנֵה* (*Miq-neh*), which translates as cattle, or livestock. The root word is *קָנָה* (*qa-Nah*) which translates as purchase, even acquire. As Jonathan Davidson explains in his book "*The Analytical Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon*", wealth at that time was mainly expressed in livestock. There was a minimum of coins; what was available did not mean much and could not 'grow' on its own, while livestock naturally increased and multiplied.

What we observe here, however, with sadness, is that at least two tribes distanced themselves from the goal of taking possession of the promised land. They allowed themselves to be deceived by their earthly possessions and the wonderful nourishment their livestock could get east of the *Yardēn*. They were completely shortsighted about the "here and now", while also removing themselves from the framework and ultimate protection of *Torah*. *YAH* had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey; they refused to settle in a place that was not meant for them and would possibly be unclean:

*Yehoshua* 22 <sup>19</sup>And indeed, if the land of your possession is unclean, then pass over to the land of the possession of *יהוה*, where the Dwelling Place of *יהוה* dwells, and take possession among us. But do not rebel against *יהוה*, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves a slaughter-place besides the slaughter-place of *יהוה* our *Elohim*.

We therefore see two tribes, along with a portion of *Menashsheh*, who caused a division to begin; they chose to put their wealth above the protection and promise of YAH. This reminds us of the rich young man:

*Marqos 10* <sup>17</sup>And as He was setting out on the way, one came running, and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit everlasting life?" <sup>18</sup>And יהושע said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One – *Elohim*. <sup>19</sup>"You know the commands, '**Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not rob,' 'Respect your father and your mother.'** " <sup>20</sup>And he answering, said to Him, "Teacher, all these I have watched over from my youth." <sup>21</sup>And יהושע, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One *matter* you lack: Go, sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me, taking up the stake." <sup>22</sup>But he, being sad at this word, went away grieved, for he had many possessions. [emphasis original]

We also hear the words of Yeshua:

*Luqas 16* <sup>13</sup>"No servant is able to serve two masters, for either he shall hate the one and love the other, or else he shall cling to the one and despise the other. You are not able to serve *Elohim* and *mammon*."

These quotes are not directed against people who have a lot of money, but rather about how they view their wealth, how they use it, and in Whom they put their trust. This is all that Scripture teaches us about this young man. Some claim that it was *Sha'ul*, but no evidence can be found for this. It is possible, as with *Zakkai*, that this young man returned the next day, or later, and made amends – we want to believe that is the case. Yeshua did not say that it is impossible to enter the Kingdom, only that it is difficult:

🕯 *Marqos 10* <sup>23</sup>And יהושע, looking around, said to His taught ones, "How hard it is for those who have money to enter into the reign of *Elohim*!"

🕯 *Marqos 10* <sup>27</sup>And looking at them, יהושע said, "With men it is impossible, but not with *Elohim*, for with *Elohim* all is possible."

The tribes of *Re'ubēn*, *Gad* and part of *Menashsheh* were the first to be taken away during the exile, simply because they were outside YAH's protection, literally outside the boundaries that He had set. Their material life was more important than their spiritual life. Just as YAH set a boundary to announce the end of the day when the sun sets, so He set boundaries for our protection. Where there are no fences, potential transgressors walk freely through a piece of land. The enemy, *hasatan*, does the same. If you move outside the boundaries of *Torah*, you do not enjoy YAH's protection and the enemy walks all over your life with his dirty feet. You may have good intentions in wanting to help your fellow countrymen within their new boundaries, but you yourself are in danger of being exterminated, just like with these rebellious tribes.

Material things have their advantages, but we came into the world without them and will leave without them again:

*Timotiyos Aleph 6* <sup>7</sup>For we brought naught into the world, and it is impossible to take any out. <sup>8</sup>When we have food and covering, we shall be satisfied with these. <sup>9</sup>But those wishing to be rich fall into trial and a snare, and into many foolish and injurious lusts which plunge men in ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>For the love of silver is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some, by longing for it, have strayed from the belief, and pierced themselves through with many pains.

The tribes of *Re'ubēn*, *Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manasseh* relied on their assets, not on YAH's loving care and protection, and were therefore the first tribes to be taken into exile. George Williams, in his textbook, "*The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*", writes the following as a serious criticism of these tribes:

"The path of self-will is never as smooth as that of faith and obedience. God's plan for Israel was first to conquer Canaan, and then, the vast region between the Jordan and the Euphrates. Reuben and his

allies elected to reverse this; the result was present suffering and future loss. They immediately had to bid farewell to their wives and children and march away to a seven years war, in which many of them would probably lose their lives; and later on, they were the first tribes to be carried into captivity and exile...”

The tribes obviously also mixed with other nations and the tribe of *Gad* even supplemented their livestock with pig farming! We see this in the account of *Marqos* 5:1-20, but we would especially like to note the following:

*Marqos* 5 <sup>1</sup>And they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the *Gadarenes*. <sup>2</sup>And when He came out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

Note that this “on the other side of the sea” is therefore the part to the east of the land of *Kena'an* where, among others, the tribe of *Gad* settled and hence the name ***Gadarenes***. This “unclean spirit” proved to be much more than just one (v 9) and then we read:



*Marqos* 5 <sup>11</sup>Now a great herd of pigs was there, feeding near the mountains. <sup>12</sup>And all the demons begged Him, saying, “Send us to the pigs, so that we enter into them.” <sup>13</sup>And He gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered into the pigs – they were about two thousand – and the herd rushed down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

Ironical that the evil spirits would so easily enter into unclean animals! The biggest problem we see here, however, is that nobody from the tribe of *Gad* recognised *Yeshua* for who he was! They were afraid and instead chased him out of the area. Only the evil spirits, who had possessed a young man’s body, knew who *Yeshua* was and the man realised that in the loving care of *YAH* he could be cleansed and healed by *Yeshua*:

*Marqos* 5 <sup>15</sup>So they came to **יהושע**, and saw the demon-possessed one, him who had the legion, sitting, and dressed, and in his right mind. And they were afraid.

The sad lesson we learn from this is that, outside the boundaries of *Torah*, we are not only outside *YAH*’s protection, but we also no longer recognise our Salvation. We rely on what the enemy offers: worldly pleasures, wealth, and a wrong lifestyle. The decline that occurs when we bid *Torah* farewell may in some cases never be reversed – we become blinded to the truth, just as christianity and Judaism today are blinded to *YAH*’s miraculous power. May we strive in every way to follow *Torah*, as *Yeshua* lived and fulfilled it – day after day.

As if in a history lesson, *Mosheh* gives an overview of all the places where the people camped, 42 in total. This list is not exhaustive, but the pattern we see here is to show the people their failure to learn from their mistakes and also to explain *YAH*’s faithfulness to them. Interestingly, this number, like many others in Scripture, is divisible by 7! While one factor, 7, indicates completeness, the other factor, 6, indicates the number of man and anything that is incomplete. It even indicates enmity against *YAH*:

-  *Dani’el* 3 <sup>1</sup>*Nebukadnetzar* the sovereign made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of *Dura*, in the province of *Babel*.
-  *Dibrei haYamim Aleph* 20:<sup>6</sup> And there was fighting again at *Gath*, where there was a man of great size, with twenty-four fingers and toes, six and six. And he too was born to the giant.

Man was created on the sixth day, one day before the completion of Creation. Although man was created perfect, *YAH* knew that it would not remain so. We see:

*Hazon* 13 <sup>18</sup>Here is the wisdom! He who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is six hundred and sixty six.

A journey that should have taken about two weeks took almost 40 years. The reason for this is summarised in one word: disobedience. After the miracle at the Sea of Reeds, the people travelled for three days and arrived at *Marah*. We also see many other names that help to enable historians and geologists to determine finer details, things that are of tremendous value to us as followers of *Yeshua*.

It is here that *YAH* teaches men, the heads of the household, a very serious lesson. Although we mentioned this briefly earlier, it is necessary to expand on it a little. Every man is responsible before our Messiah for his family entrusted to him. We are primarily held responsible for everything that takes place in our area, our 'domain'. The sons of *Yisra'el* are given a task to establish a kingdom, a place where they will rule under the rule and authority of *YAH*. We have already learned of various blessings and curses and will come across them again in *Debarim* 27 and 28.

We learn of corporate blessings and curses when the fathers act obediently or rebelliously. Compare *Abraham*, *Lot*, *Ya'aqob* and *Qorah*, as well as several others. As is the root, so is the tree and therefore it is important that people pay attention to what they learn in Scripture, as well as to what they see happening to people as a result of their actions.

This lesson is especially for men, husbands, and fathers: we must learn from *Yisra'el*, individually and corporately, from the examples set before us in Scripture. We are equipped with broad shoulders and a strong back to bear the burden, to steel ourselves against what the world offers us. We are responsible to teach our families and apply what Scripture teaches us:

*Bemidbar* 6 <sup>6</sup>All the days of his separation to יהוה he does not go near a dead body. <sup>7</sup>He does not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to *Elohim* is on his head.

However, we must do this in love and gentleness, unless circumstances require stronger measures, but then only to the extent that the necessary compliance is achieved. This is not only a great responsibility, but also a very great challenge, as we need to keep the descendants in mind. The enemy will become more and more cunning, especially when he cannot get access to whom he wants. Also keep in mind that the sins of the fathers are passed on to the third, even fourth, generation. You, as a father, grandfather and perhaps great-grandfather, may be held responsible for what you did or did not do. It may be your fault if you do not meet any of your descendants in the afterlife. Men of *Yisra'el* failed tests, they died in the wilderness and as a result many people may never enter eternal life. May *YAH* grant that you are not one of those who has to bear the blame for this.

As we approach the last *sidrah* of *Bemidbar*, we learn of several aspects. A summary of the encampments of *Yisra'el* teaches us that they were not chosen at random, but that *Ruach HaQodesh* carefully selected each location. The people of *Yisra'el* sometimes returned to a previous encampment on their journeys. Through all these tests and trials, *YAH* continued to demonstrate His omnipotence, so that *Yisra'el* could enter the promised land in the manner He had planned – as a set-apart nation and in a way in which all their needs would be met.

The names of all the camps reveal all of *Yisra'el's* exploits, victories, and defeats, how they fell into idolatry, the *man* that continued until shortly after their arrival in the promised land, even how *Mosheh* was cursed and almost forced to take them back to *Mitsrayim*. The list also includes how the nation of *Yisra'el* returned to *YAH* in repentance and finally put their trust in Him to accomplish what He had planned for them. They finally decided to willingly follow the path *YAH* had laid out for them, burying their fears and doubts. After a long time, they learned not to judge, but to rest in the trustworthiness of *YAH*. The narrative of the journey through the wilderness also gives us a prophetic glimpse of future events:



*Yehezqël 20* <sup>35</sup>“And I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and shall enter into judgment with you face to face there.

All of us have gone through various experiences of highs and lows. However, there are those who choose to come out on top, to survive. Past mistakes and problems do not determine who or what we are and may not influence our future, although it is important that we learn from our mistakes and not create new problems. How we go through lows determines how we will experience the highs. Future salvation calls everyone to overcome any problem. Persistent trust produces fruit. When we see ourselves as *Yeshua* sees us, we are made complete in him. This is not just about physical liberation, but more importantly about a set-aside lifestyle in what *Yeshua* came to teach us:

*Ya'aqob 1* <sup>2</sup>My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup>knowing that the proving of your belief works endurance. <sup>4</sup>And let endurance have a perfect work, so that you be perfect and complete, lacking in naught.

As we have already learned, the priests were not to wage war, as it would be left to the rest of the people. Yet here we see that *Pinehas* is to lead the people into war. When 12 000 men of the nation are sent to carry out *YAH's* vengeance on *Midyan*, the man with the zeal of *YAH* goes with them. It is also interesting that he takes with him certain set-apart items from the tabernacle, among them the silver trumpets with which to make *t'ruah*, alarm. According to *Rashi*, the ark of the covenant and the golden plate of the high priest were taken to counteract the spirit of impurity of the *Midyanites*. This was a set-apart war, nothing common like against other nations, at the command of *YAH*, in which His Presence and also messengers would all wage war together.

Through the set-apart items, *Pinehas* would activate the supernatural powers of *YAH* at the time of the skirmish. When the silver trumpets are blown, *YAH* sends orders to His messenger to protect and strengthen the 12 000 soldiers. Only in this way would the entire mission be successful. This teaches us the important lesson that we should never engage in any confrontation with the enemy on our own, but only when commanded by *YAH*, when His Presence will be with us and that we will also act in a set-apart way. This is the only way we will prevail.

We learn that the war is a huge success, to the point that no one is missing (31:49). As a token of gratitude, each commander brings various items from the spoils with which they cover themselves before the Presence of *YAH*: arm chains, bracelets, finger rings, earrings, and necklaces. With the war behind them, everything seems to return to normal, until two tribes and half of another tend not to accept favourably what *YAH* has in store for them.

*Re'ubën* acted strangely when the brothers were told by *Yosëph* to take *Binyamin* to *Mitsrayim*. His attitude towards his own children is extremely disturbing:

*Berëshith 42* <sup>37</sup>So *Re'ubën* spoke to his father, saying, “Take the lives of my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I myself bring him back to you.”

This attitude trickled down to all his descendants. The tribe was more concerned with their livestock than their children:

*Bemidbar 32* <sup>16</sup>Then they came near to him and said, “Let us build sheep-enclosures here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones,

The very fact that they mention the sheepfolds first and children second, makes us realise that they value their business more than their own families! Any society where career and status are valued above raising children is doomed to failure. The same is true where a woman is forced to enter the labour market and leave her children with strangers. On the contrary, it comes close to criminal behaviour when family life is

neglected to such an extent that discipline cannot be applied as prescribed by *Torah*. While there are exceptional cases, this should not be the norm. We must cherish and value our children. We must not allow them to be taught by people who do not uphold the same spiritual values as ourselves. We must spend time with them on every level possible. A child needs the attention of a parent much more than money.

In his calm manner and with the insight of *YAH*, *Mosheh* tries to teach the sons of *Re'ubēn*, the sons of *Gad*, and the half-tribe of *Menashsheh* a lesson:

*Bemidbar 32* <sup>20</sup>And *Mosheh* said to them, “If you make this promise: if you arm yourselves before יהוה for battle, <sup>21</sup>and all your armed ones pass over the *Yardēn* before יהוה until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, <sup>22</sup>and the land has been subdued before יהוה, then afterward you shall return, and be guiltless before יהוה and before *Yisra'el*. And this land shall be your possession before יהוה.

The expression “before יהוה” is used here repeatedly. We see the word לְפָנַי (*lif-Nei*), before, which comes from the word פָּנִים (*pa-Nim*), face/presence and can be literally translated as “before the face of”. Here *Mosheh* was trying to teach these two and a half tribes that everything should be done before *YAH*’s face, to His honour and in worship of Him. If these tribes had taken *Mosheh*’s words to heart, they would have had far fewer problems with violence and corruption and would not have been the first tribes to be taken into captivity.

After *Mosheh* recalled their entire route, he also obeyed the words that *YAH* commanded him:

*Bemidbar 33* <sup>50</sup>And יהוה spoke to *Mosheh* in the desert plains of *Mo'ab* by the *Yardēn* of *Yeriho*, saying, <sup>51</sup>“Speak to the children of *Yisra'el*, and say to them, ‘When you have passed over the *Yardēn* into the land of *Kena'an*, <sup>52</sup>then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and shall destroy all their engraved stones, and shall destroy all their moulded images, and lay waste all their high places, <sup>53</sup>and you shall possess the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.

*YAH* knows how the human mind works and how easily deception occurs. His reason for these commands was therefore not out of spite or selfishness, but to protect the people. After this, the land would be divided among the tribes, except for the tribes that chose to receive their territory east of the *Yardēn*. However, the people did not heed these commands and were repeatedly handed over to hostile nations who ruled over them, as we read throughout the book of *Shophetim*. This is where the *haftarah* connects:

*Yirmeyahu 2* <sup>26</sup>“As the thief is ashamed when he is found out, so is the house of *Yisra'el* ashamed – they and their sovereigns and their heads, and their priests and their prophets, <sup>27</sup>saying to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ and to a stone, ‘You gave birth to me.’ For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their calamity they say, ‘Arise and save us.’ <sup>28</sup>“But where are your mighty ones that you have made for yourselves? Let them arise, *see* if they save you in the time of your calamity. Because your mighty ones have become as many as your cities, O *Yehudah*.

The only time *YAH* mentions the land being divided is to establish the boundaries within which the twelve tribes of *Yisra'el* would live. There is never any mention of any part of the land being given away to another people, because the land belongs to *YAH* in any case. Only when the land needed to be cleansed from continual sin were the people of *Yisra'el* exiled from the land for a season, a specific period of time. However, it was never permanently taken away or given away, because *YAH* is faithful to His word to *Abraham* and his descendants (*cf. Galatiyim 3:8*).

We see an incredible amount of metaphor in this section. Trees play a very important role in Scripture. We see the tree of life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree that bears a different fruit each

month, and many more. Trees also represent life, growth, provision, and beauty. Thus, the olive tree is used as a metaphor to represent the family of YAH:

*Romiyim 11* <sup>16</sup>Now if the first-fruit is set-apart, the lump is also. And if the root is set-apart, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup>And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, have been grafted in among them, and came to share the root and fatness of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup>do not boast against the branches. And if you boast, *remember*: you do not bear the root, but the root *bears* you! <sup>19</sup>You shall say then, "The branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup>Good! By unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by belief. Do not be arrogant, but fear. <sup>21</sup>For if *Elohim* did not spare the natural branches, He might not spare you either.

In Hebrew the word for tree is עֵץ, (*`etz*) a masculine word, hence the part in *Yirmeyahu* that refers to a tree as 'father'. The word for stone is אֶבֶן, (*`e-Ven*), pronounced ê-*vên* and is feminine, hence we also see the expression "You gave birth to me". YAH's command was to destroy all places of worship, but here we see it reversed. Both trees and stones are unfortunately used to make idols and therefore not used for the purpose for which YAH had originally created them.

Something to think about: have you ever heard of an idolater exchanging one of his idols for another? He may add to his collection, but he does not easily exchange what he already has. Why then would we, who serve the only Creator *Elohim*, want to exchange Him for something He created, something that is dead and cannot add any value to our lives? We see the reason for this:

*Yirmeyahu 2* <sup>19</sup>"Your own evil instructs you, and your backslidings reprove you. Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter that you have forsaken יהוה your *Elohim*, and that My fear is not in you," declares the Master יהוה of hosts.

The commands we read about here apply not only to the people of *Yisra'el* who are given a new land to live in, but also to you and me. When we have come to the conviction to serve YAH, when we walk the Way of Truth in *Yeshua*'s footsteps, it is as if we are going to live in a new 'land'. You and I, my brother and sister, if we do have that respectful fear of YAH within us, should then banish from our lives everything that has nothing to do with YAH. This includes physical things in our homes, which we will come to later. Most importantly, however, we say goodbye to all forms of idolatry. Scripture contains rules from YAH that are completely contrary to what we encounter in everyday society. When we enter the spiritual land of *Kena'an*, there must be no place where anything destructive can take hold or grow, only love for YAH.

We read of boundaries in *Bemidbar* 34:1-15 and it must be pointed out at once that these are different from what is described to *Abraham* in *Berëshith* 15:18-21. The boundaries described here are for actual habitation, while the other boundaries, as we also read in *Yehezqël* 47:15-48:35, are the areas that will be assigned to the entire *Yisra'el* when *Yeshua* returns to restore *Tsiyon* during the Millennium. During that time *Yerushalayim* will be the center of the earth and will be renamed יהוה שָׁמָּה (יהוה *shamah*), which translates as "יהוה is there". That promise has yet to be fulfilled, while the boundaries we read about in this *parashah* would only be the local area where the people were to live under the leadership of *Yehoshua*. To connect with what we read earlier, we see:

*Romiyim 4* <sup>13</sup>For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to *Abraham* or to his seed through the *Torah*, but through a righteousness of belief.

In the above quote, *Sha'ul* refers to a passage from *Torah*:

*Berëshith 15* <sup>3</sup>And *Abraham* said, "See, You have given me no seed, and see, one born in my house is my heir!" <sup>4</sup>And see, the word of יהוה came to him, saying, "This one is not your heir, but he who comes from your own body is your heir." <sup>5</sup>And He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward the heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So are your seed."



This is yet again proof that the ultimate boundary of the ultimate *Yisra'el* will encompass the entire world – also another proof that no one goes to heaven!

We learn of 42 cities in which the *Lěwites* were to live, to which were added six additional cities to be used as a refuge for people who had committed murder. The number 42 comes up again! Three of these cities of refuge were to be established, one on each side of the *Yarděen*. Only if someone actually killed a fellow human being by mistake could he flee to one of these cities for safety. This would protect the person from the avenger of blood, but if the suspected criminal were found outside such a city, the avenger of blood could legally kill him without being prosecuted.

The number 42 is most often associated in Scripture with suffering; it may also be for a period of time of how long suffering can last. It can be represented as the kinetic struggle between good and evil. We see that the *m'norah* had 42 knobs; we read of 42 months, three and a half years, in *Hazon* 11:1-2; three times 14 is 42 generations of which we read in *Mattithyahu* 1:17 with the genealogy of *Yeshua*. There are several others, but not really important to this teaching.

It should be made clear, however, that these cities were not established to house or protect wilful murderers. The death penalty required the testimony of at least two reliable witnesses without any mitigation or redemption. This case would then be brought before a court at which the guilty person, if a wilful murderer, would be found guilty and executed.

The suspected criminal had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest, after which he would be automatically pardoned. The sages report that refugees could hardly wait for the death of the high priest, for then they could be released and reunited with their families. Here we see once again the favour that *YAH* shows to His followers, through *Yeshua*. Only the death of *Yeshua* could bring about our deliverance from sin – He who is now the High Priest according to the example of *Malkitsedeq*!

While the *Lěwites* who lived in these cities were not on duty in the tabernacle (later the temple), they would teach the people about *YAH's* rules, the *Torah*. In this way, *Torah* teachers were appointed throughout the land. According to the sages, each of these 48 cities would serve as a hub for a centre of instruction as well as *t'shuvah*, to return to their good ways. The cities would also serve as places of assembly on *Shabbat*, if the *Shabbat* were to be observed.

One of the most important lessons we can learn from this *parashah* is that we must remain entirely within *YAH's* will and destroy every idol in our lives; that we will manifest the necessary respectful fear of *YAH* and stay within the boundaries He sets for us.

Is everything you do, the way you do it, a fragrant offering to *YAH*? What do you have in your home that might remind you of something from your past life? Perhaps a photo or clothes (that may not even fit you anymore!) that you want to keep as a memento; crosses, pictures or images on the walls or on furniture that you began to collect while you were in the throes of christianity; even items passed down from your parents or ancestors, occult activities they were involved in such as Freemasonry; all of these are bindings on your life that can bring serious illness and even early death. We cannot try to show how 'holy' we are with worldly items in our home; our lives must be entirely set apart, otherwise it means nothing. Some people like to keep something for sentimental reasons, but when that item has no future value, when it causes division between you and *YAH*, when it may convey the wrong message to visitors to your home, it should be thrown away or even burned. We should not just bring "fragrant offerings" to *YAH*; we ourselves must be those fragrant offerings:

*Romiym* 12 <sup>1</sup> call upon you, therefore, brothers, through the compassion of *Elohim*, to present your bodies a living offering – set-apart, well-pleasing to *Elohim* – your reasonable worship. <sup>2</sup> And do not be

conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you prove what is that good and well-pleasing and perfect desire of *Elohim*.

*Yeshua* obediently offered His own body, His entire life, to free us from sin. He was the High Priest who died so that we could *t'shuvah*, return from the city of protection, to the love of *YAH*. How much more should we also, in obedience, make ourselves available as living sacrifices to *YAH* – not only our bodies, but also our time, our entire lives!

From *Ya'aqob* 4:1-12 we see a summary of what happens in *parashat mas'ei*: the half-brother of *Yeshua* warns us here against various desires that people cherish, things they consider higher than *Torah*:

*Ya'aqob* 4<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask evilly, in order to spend it on your pleasures.

Most people sometimes look askance at adulterers, people who are divorced, even murderers, without realising that they are just as guilty before *YAH* when they break the fourth commandment. So you too are guilty before *YAH* by divorce or murder as you are guilty before *YAH* when you do not honour *Shabbat* – there is no difference! *YAH* gave us one law, one set of rules with many subdivisions. When any one of this set of rules is broken, the whole law is broken. This is how we are guilty before Him and why we must make atonement daily – daily 'slaughter' of those lambs.

We talked about humility a week or two ago and here *Ya'aqob* confirms it once again. This is also confirmed by *Kefa*:

*Kĕpha Aleph* 5<sup>5</sup> In the same way, you younger ones, be subject to elders. And gird yourselves with humility toward one another, for "*Elohim* resists the proud, but gives favour to the humble." [emphasis original]

*Yeshua*'s half-brother teaches us one of the most beautiful promises by which we should live:

*Ya'aqob* 4<sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to dejection.<sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Master, and He shall lift you up.

May this be part of your lifestyle on the Way of Truth.

As is customary, at the end of a book from *Torah*, we all say aloud together:

חֲזַק! חֲזַק! וְנִתְחַזַּק!

This is in the original "*Chazaq! Chazaq! Venitchazeq!*" and translates as: Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!

*Shabbat* shalom!

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## **Sources:**

We prefer to not use the word 'God', because of personal conviction. In most cases, unless quoted from another source, it will be replaced by '*Elohim*' or inflections of the same word.

All citing of Scripture is taken from The Scriptures 2009, unless indicated differently.

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