

48: August 15, 2026

Shabbat Message

Shoftim / Judges / שופטים

Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9

Seeds of Life Series: Torah the Seeds for Life

The Set Apart Warrior

Introduction

In this section we see a major Messianic Prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 where Yehovah will raise up a prophet like Moshe and He will put His words in His mouth and whoever does not listen to Him shall be cut off from His people. The name of Yehovah will also be upon Him so you know that Yeshua is the one that fulfills this prophecy.

Priests Prepare Israel for Battle

Deuteronomy 20:1-4

1. War is an unfortunate result of human depravity and in certain forms was sanctioned and even commanded by Yehovah in the Tanakh.
2. Deuteronomy pays special attention to the king traditionally called holy war (7:1-6).
3. Primarily conducted against the Canaanite nations, certain forms of battle could also be waged against more distant nations and still be viewed as holy war. The enemies referred to here were distant ones as verse 15 makes clear. Reference to Yehovah as the leader in battle is probably an allusion to the ark of the covenant, the symbol of Elohim's presence with His people, since the priests would have carried it with them. (Josh 3:1-4; 8, 11; 1 Sam 4:3, Ps 132:6-10).

Reasons for Exemption of Battle

Deuteronomy 20:5-8

1. Israel had a conscripted army, but there were a number of reasons for deferment as I will share.
2. The draft law clearly was not rigid and inflexible but revealed sensitivity to human feelings and needs.
3. The last reason for deferment affected not just the individual himself but the entire army and is thus separated from the others. Anyone afraid of going to war must be excused because his cowardice would undermine the morale of his fellow soldiers.

Conquered Cities could be and Inheritance

Deuteronomy 20:10-11

1. Cities outside the areas promised to Israel as an inheritance may be approached with an offer of peace but which is meant terms of surrender though other cities could not. H
2. However even the cities that surrendered peacefully must be reduced to servitude as illustrated later by Joshua's defeat of the Gibeonites who professed to be for a distant land .
3. Another example of this would have been King David's treatment of enemies outside of Israel (2 Samuel 8:2, 6, 14).

Other Cities Which Did Not Surrender

Deuteronomy 20:12-14

1. Any city that would not surrender could be plundered and its citizens either killed or taken as prisoners of war.
2. The treatment accorded the enemies in these distant cities presupposes some kind of provocation against Israel and not likely a desire for Israelite imperialism.
3. David's famous campaign against the Ammonite city of Rabbah is a case in point (2 Sam 10:1-19).

Under the Ban and Saving Trees

Deuteronomy 20:16-19

1. Every living thing in the cities of Israel's inheritance must be put under the cherem (Hb: "The Ban") and utterly destroyed.
2. This was in line with what the Yehovah had commanded and with had already been carried in Transjordan (Num 21:24, 33-35; Deuteronomy 2:31-3:7). Such harsh measures precluded the possibility that these irredeemable inhabitants of Canaan might teach Israel abominations, and Israel might thereby sin against Yehovah.
3. Preservation of food producing trees assured that the productivity of the land could be restored quickly after conquest.

Take Away

1. The Priests were the first ones onto the Battlefield.
2. Holy War that was only ordained by Yehovah is the only war that is acceptable.
3. Anyone who was fearful could leave the battlefield so as not to hurt the morale of the other soldiers.

Application

1. I will continue to strive to be bold as I am part of the Army of Yehovah.

2. I will conduct myself as always being ready to fight a spiritual battle.
3. I will be ready for when the battle comes to have the full armor of Yehovah on me before I go out and fight.

Beth Ohr Messianic Congregation

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