

A Messianic Jewish commentary on Parshah

Ki Tetse (When You Go Out)

Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19, Isaiah 54:1-10, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

“When you go forth (ki tetse) to battle against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands...” (Deuteronomy 21:10)

Shalom from Israel! The title of this week’s Torah portion (parashah), Ki Tetse, (when you go out) is derived from the Hebrew root word for ‘to leave’. This refers to the children of Israel who have left Egypt and now find themselves standing at the brink of entering the Promised Land.

Various moral laws are outlined which are intended to build a just community of people, not only concerned with their own well being but also with demonstrating mercy and kindness to all people, especially those who are powerless, helpless or oppressed.

These include female captives of war, strangers and foreigners, destitute laborers, refugee slaves, children of an unloved wife, and the poorest of society – orphans and widows.

For Israel to show friendship and display righteous conduct especially towards non-Jews is considered an act of holiness, since the goodness of the God of Israel is then revealed to the outside world.

The concept of friendship is very important in Judaism. The Hebrew word for friend, chaver, comes from the word chibbur, meaning to be attached or joined. It can also mean to be a member of a club, society or group; therefore to become a chaver means we find a place of belonging and acceptance.

In order to translate this ideal of a caring, moral community into reality, God’s word defines regulations on a diversity of situations from the ban on cross gender dressing to respect for even birds and animals.

This week’s parashah (Torah portion) begins with God’s expectations that we treat people, even female captives of war, with kindness, respect, and human decency.

If an Israelite warrior happened to see a beautiful woman among those taken captive in battle, and desired to take her for himself as a wife, he was first required to respect her need for time to grieve the bitterness of her captivity for a full month. Even if he did not find her desirable afterwards, he could not sell her or treat her as a slave.

When we hear of the brutal raping and inhumane treatment of some conquered women, even today in some parts of the world, it is such comfort to hear of the duty of every Israelite warrior to show kindness and respect to women, even those of the enemy.

In this instance, we see the kind, compassionate, merciful nature of God in His instructions regarding the humane treatment of female captives of war. In a later issue, however, we see God's justice in dealing with stubborn and rebellious children.

God commands the mother and father of a son who refuses to listen to them, despite much chastening, one who is a drunkard and a glutton, to take him to the men of the city to be stoned to death.

“So shall you put away the evil from the midst of you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.” (Deuteronomy 21:21)

The word *'fear'* used here is not 'awe' or 'respect' but actual 'fear'. The penalty for a grown son being completely stubborn and rebellious towards his parents and God was so severe that it was meant to serve as a strong warning to wayward children.

I am by no means advocating that we stone our 'prodigal sons' to death! Chas v'chalilah! (God forbid)! And the rabbis tell us that this law was never carried out. However there is an important principle involved here. The presence of this law in the Torah was to emphasize how seriously God takes the sin of disobedience to parents.

Other sins also carried death by stoning penalty including adultery. Yeshua (Jesus) told those standing with stones in their hands, ready to carry out this punishment upon the woman caught in adultery, **“Let he who has no sin cast the first stone.”** (John 8:7)

Yeshua taught us through this example, that before we think about hurling that first 'stone' at our stubborn and rebellious kids, we need to examine our own hearts and our own lives. Where have we been stubborn, rebellious, lazy, selfish, and out of control?

We need to model righteousness to our children. Most of what they learn is not *taught*, but *caught*, by example. Of course we can't wait until we are perfect to discipline our children; but we can repent and ask forgiveness when the Holy Spirit reveals sin in our own lives.

As parents, we may have been blessed with compliant, obedient, eager to please children. These are a joy and a delight. We may also have been blessed with extremely strong-willed children who are a colossal challenge. But these children are also a blessing, because when we get to the absolute end of ourselves, these children force us to the foot of the cross to cry out for God's mercy.

They may seem to bring out the absolute worst in us and in everyone around them, but this is also good, for it reveals the darkness that already lays hidden in our hearts.

The Prodigal Son

Yeshua taught us the meaning of the word mercy. In the case of a stubborn and rebellious son, Yeshua told us the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) to show us how God perceives our rebellious children through the cross:

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

Although the father loved his rebellious son and was filled with compassion for him, we may notice that he did not rescue him from the consequences of his sinful choices. He patiently waited for the son to ‘come to his senses’ and return home.

The Return of the Prodigal Son (1773) by [Pompeo Batoni](#)



Although we must diligently discipline our children when they are young, we can also allow them to learn through suffering the consequences of their actions, especially as they grow older.

God’s word states that if we fail to discipline our children promptly, then we are not actually ‘loving’ our children, but hating them. We really don’t do our kids any favors if we don’t teach them to obey authority, apply restraint to their passions, and consider other people; but we must take care we do not abuse our authority and thereby provoke them to wrath.

This is a special word for fathers: “You fathers, **don't provoke your children to wrath**, but nurture them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4)

The Word of God tells us to use both the rod and rebuke to give wisdom to our children.

**“The rod and rebuke give wisdom,
But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. ..
Correct your son, and he will give you rest;
Yes, he will give delight to your soul.** (Proverbs 29:15,17)

The high priest, Eli, lost the privilege of the priesthood because of his rebellious sons. A curse was placed on the lineage of Eli forever that his descendants would die an early death and none would live to old age. This troubled me for quite some time. Obviously, Eli rebuked his sons over their sins, so why would God judge Eli so harshly? (1 Samuel 2:22-25)

Later I came to realize that although Eli rebuked his sons, there were no consequences applied. He did nothing to stop his sons from continuing in their wicked ways. In today's language we might say that he 'enabled' them to continue in their sin. Do we sometimes do the same?

Often words are not enough to administer correction. We talk and talk and talk, trying to reason with our children about their sins, but it is the *rod and rebuke* that give wisdom.

Perhaps Eli had failed to use the rod as well as rebuke when they were younger. This is a serious matter. If we want to be used fully by God, we need to bring our children under control and into obedience.

The rod is a symbol of authority. The word for rod in Hebrew is '**shevet**'. The word is not 'makef' in Hebrew which would mean a 'stick'. It is the same word, shevet, which is used by the shepherd.

Every shepherd of Israel had a rod (shevet) which he used it to guide, protect, and set boundaries for the sheep. The shepherd used the rod to scare off and drive away any coyotes or wolves, enemies of the sheep. He did not use his rod to beat his sheep.

Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...**Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**"



Jesus said, 'I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep. (John 10:11)

Yeshua is the Good Shepherd who watches carefully over the welfare of his flock. He gave his very life for his sheep. His rod (shevet) is our comfort when walking through the valley of the shadow of death. He brings us to the green pastures and still waters of eternal life.

This Psalm is still traditionally read at Jewish funerals. May more and more Jewish people, Yeshua's brethren, come in to this eternal peace through knowing His love.

Surely disciplining our children is a serious matter and we need to heed God's word on the subject. However, if God would institute laws that ensured kindness and fairness be shown even to captive women from enemy camps, surely God would expect us to also treat our own children with love, respect, and dignity.

Sheep are stubborn creatures who get themselves into all kinds of ridiculous situations from which the shepherd must often rescue them. Young children are also in need of this kind of sacrificial shepherding from their parents in order that they would not stray off into paths that would hurt or destroy them.

Members of this righteous community under the Torah are to be careful of what they say, keep their word, show fairness to workers and carry out business with integrity. Laws are outlined about divorce, borrowing and lending money, and the penalty for kidnapping.

“If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling them as a slave, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you.” (Deut. 24:7)

Several other laws are discussed in this parashah including instructions regarding restoring lost property, the prohibition against exchanging men and woman's apparel (cross gender dressing), and laws regarding burying criminals promptly after execution.

“You must not leave his body on the tree overnight. **Be sure to bury him that same day**, because **anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse**. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 21:23)

For this reason, the Jewish custom is to bury the dead as soon as possible. The Messiah became a curse for us when he hung, crucified, on the execution tree – in order that we may become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21) Halleluyah!

When Yeshua wore the crown of thorns on his head, he showed us in a graphic word picture that he was taking the curse of all mankind upon his own head. The thorns in the Bible, represent the original curse that God placed upon man for the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." (Gal. 3:13)

(Note: Read the article, Kotzim (Thorns)
www.voiceforisrael.net/articles)



A Personal Parapet

Laws written in this parashah form the basis of modern construction safety codes. Homeowners and builders are commanded to construct a railing or parapet on a flat roof to prevent accidents. Failure to do so would be considered a criminal act of negligence.

It is this regulation which has been extended to the concept in Judaism that we must construct a personal parapet around ourselves to ensure that we do not fall into sin. For example, a man may refrain from spending personal time alone with a woman other than his wife so that the possibility for careless temptation cannot occur.

Similarly, a person who has a tendency towards alcoholism may choose to avoid situations or places where alcohol is served; or a parent may insist that their child use the internet in an open space of the home rather than a private bedroom.

Setting these kinds of boundaries is both prudent and Biblical. The book of Proverbs is full of warnings such as the admonition to young men to avoid even walking past the home of a woman with loose morals.

The laws written in this parashah may seem disconnected and unrelated but in fact they collectively constitute the expected behavior of a community under God's authority. It is of the utmost importance that all which is unclean, impure and capable of defiling is kept outside of the camp.

Even the covering of excrement is dealt with in the Torah:

“For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.” (Deuteronomy 23:14)

God's laws command kindness towards all people, even slaves, and also towards animals. Abraham's servant even chose a wife for Isaac based on her kindness to animals in offering to give drink to the camels when he asked for water from the well.

Cruelty towards animals is forbidden in Judaism, although we have seen some tragic cases of animal abuse here in Israel. ¹

“A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.” (Proverbs 12:10)

People may be cruel, but God is kind. His lovingkindness is better than life! (Psalm 63:3)

¹ See article, Charlie and the Rabbi www.voiceforisrael.net/articles

Marriage & Divorce

A variety of marriage relationships are discussed in this parashah including the marrying of women captured in conquest, Levirate marriages, and marriages with two wives.

Although the laws of Moses allow for more than one wife, monogamy and faithfulness is still considered the ideal and most satisfying marriage relationship.

A man who is recently married is not to be sent to war or have any duties laid upon him but he is to stay home and make his new bride happy. What newlyweds would not want a year-long honeymoon? This shows the lovingkindness of the God we serve.

With regards to laws concerning marriage, we see that God considers the marriage bond holy and sacred, however, He also in His mercy makes provision, for our humanity. God hates divorce, but in some instances, such as in cases of adultery, Yeshua also gave consent to divorce the unfaithful partner.

Despite the ease with which the marital vow may be dissolved according to Jewish law, divorce statistics are much lower amongst the Jewish population than other people groups. This may be due to the strong sense of community amongst the Jewish people that stand with and support the couple and family, as well as the low incidence of drunkenness, substance abuse or domestic violence among Jews.

God has every right to divorce Israel, since she has been stubborn, rebellious and unfaithful towards Him by turning to other gods and idols. In His mercy, however, God has chosen not to divorce His Bride, but keeps covenant with her. Who can fathom this kind of love?

This is what the LORD says:

**“Only if the heavens above can be measured
and the foundations of the earth below be searched out
will I reject all the descendants of Israel
because of all they have done,”**

declares the LORD. (Jeremiah 31:37)

The corresponding haftarah (prophetic portion) also discusses marriage through the prophet Isaiah's poetic portrayal of God and Israel as a husband-wife metaphor.

**“For your Maker is your husband— the LORD Almighty is his name—
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”**
(Isaiah 54:5)

Jerusalem is called a 'barren woman'; Israel is compared to the wife who is left abandoned and broken-hearted whom the Lord will call back to intimacy.

“The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God.” (Isaiah 54:6)

In the haftorah (Prophetic portion of Scripture) God also speaks of His **everlasting kindness** towards us. “Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King, His love and mercy endures forever! {Hodu L’Adonai ki tov, ki l’olam chasdoh.}

These very words, sung in the Temple, ushered in the glory of God. If we would but thank the Lord continually for his love and mercy we would also see more of the glory of God in our lives.

God’s anger is momentary but His kindness is forever! Just as He swore that the flood (waters of Noah) would never occur again, so does He swear that He will always have mercy on His people. (Isaiah 54:8-9)

“For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall My covenant of peace (shalom) be removed, says the Lord that has compassion on you.” (Isaiah 54:10)

The Hebrew word for peace is **shalom**, but it means so much more than peace. It also means **wholeness, completeness and prosperity**. Peace is vital to our entire being – spiritually, emotionally and physically. One cannot live without peace for very long without suffering serious detrimental effects.

In my personal journey, I have experienced much chaos and turmoil, which has resulted in a lack of peace in my life. Over the past ten years, I have developed degenerative arthritis which has now reached a point where, at times, it affects the quality of my life. I have been crying out to the Lord for healing, but instead, He has given me wisdom, which is more precious than anything else we could desire.

He has shown me that it is the lack of peace in our lives and most of all in our hearts, that causes the chronic inflammation, sickness and disease that so many struggle with. God has called us to live in a state of peace!

Yeshua said, **“Peace I leave with you...”** (John 14:27) He spoke these words to his disciples just before his death. It is his last will and testament – peace is our inheritance in Yeshua! We need to simply receive it with thanksgiving and walk in it.

Although God is slow to anger, compassionate and generous in mercy, however, there is one people group so wicked that He does not extend this grace to them – the Amalekites. Although we are never to hold a grudge against people personally, God warns Israel to never forget what Amalek did to them when they left Egypt.

“Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God.” (Deuteronomy 25:17-18)

It may not be considered ‘politically correct’ in our modern society, but there are still today people groups controlled by the same spirit of Amalek who have no fear of God and who are still attacking the children of Israel in our Land.

The Word of God exhorts Israel then, as today, to blot out the name of Amalek forever and never forget!

“When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!” (Deuteronomy 25:19)

This motto, ‘*never forget*’ has been the slogan of the Jewish people ever since the Nazis tried to destroy all the Jews of Europe in their cruel concentration camps. This spirit of Amalek lives on in all those who attempt to attack, destroy and annihilate the Jewish people.

And yet, we need to pray for our enemies, as Yeshua commanded us. Even those who have made themselves enemies of God by attacking His people can be reconciled to Adonai through the blood of Yeshua.

God has provided for this eternal covenant of peace for anyone of any race, tongue or tribe, through Yeshua’s death on the cross.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; **the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.**” (Isaiah 53:5) Halleluyah!

Shabbat Shalom in the Prince of Peace (Sar Shalom)!

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“For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:3)

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