

Who we are in Christ as God's chosen people!

In weeks reading, from Parashat Ki Tetze (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19*), Moshe lists 21 Mitzvot spanning a number of topics when the people enter into the Promised Land: (i) Laws relating to a prisoner of war (*21:10-15*), (ii) Inheritance to the first born (*21:15-17*), (iii) Rebellious children (*21:18-21*), (iv) Capital punishment by hanging on a tree (*21:22-23*), (v) Not damaging your neighbor's property (*22:1-4*), (vi) Prevent personal injury (safety/common sense) (*22:8*), (vii) Planting seed (*22:9*), (viii) Don't work two different animals side by side (*22:10*), (ix) Wearing multi-threaded clothing (*22:11*), (x) Tzitzit (*12:12*), (xi) Divorce (*22:13-21, 24:1-4*), (xii) Adultery (*22:22*), (xiii) Fornication (*22:23-29*), (xiv) Incest (*22:30*), (xv) Damaged genitalia (*23:1-3*), (xvi) Finances (interest) (*23:19-20*), (xvii) Stealing from Adonai by neglecting a vow (*23:21-22*), (xviii) Stealing produce from your neighbor's field (*23:25-26*), (xix) Levirate marriage and prohibition on remarrying a divorced wife who had remarried (*24:4*), (xx) Punishment by flogging limited to 40 strokes (*25:2-3*), and (xxi) Correct and fair weights of measure for merchants (*25:14-16*). Throughout this week's Parashah, these mitzvot are written as prohibitions using the imperative conjugation, the most frequently used conjugation (4,288) found in the Tanakh. These prohibitions are written using the negative particles לא and אל and the imperfect verb (יְהִי־הָיָה). The word לא expresses a permanent prohibition and אל expresses an immediate and specific prohibition. These prohibitions were necessary because the text says וְלֹא תִהְיֶינָה לְךָ נַחֲלָה וְלֹא תִהְיֶינָה לְךָ נַחֲלָה to “not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance” (*24:4*).

שְׁדוּקָה יִבְתַּח / The Holy Scriptures

ספר דברים פרק כג

כֹּא לְנִכְרֵי תַשִּׁיף וּלְאֶחָיִךָ לֹא תַשִּׁיף לְמַעַן יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 בְּכֹל מַשְׁלַח יָדְךָ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בָּא-שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ: ֵס כֹּב
 כִּי-תִדְרֹךְ גְּדֹר לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לֹא תֵאָחֵז לְשִׁלְמוֹ כִּי-דָרַשׁ דָּרְשָׁנּוּ יְהוָה
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִמַּעַמְדָּהּ וְהָיָה כִּדְ חֲטָא: כג וְכִי תִחְדַּל לְגִדֹר לֹא-יִהְיֶה כִּד
 חֲטָא:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:21-23

23:21 'When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the Lord your God will surely require it of you. 23:22 'However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. 23:23 'You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God, what you have promised. (NASB)

One particular mitzvah (command) that is of a particular interest to us this week. In *Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:21*, the Scriptures say *23:21 'When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the Lord your God will surely require it of you. (NASB)* What does it mean when making a vow to not delay to make payment? This is related to a matter of integrity and our integrity is a matter of Torah. In this week's reading there is also a discussion regarding honest weights and measures, equity, vows and oaths. According to the Scriptures, integrity is a matter of internal and external consistency. Being deceitful (dishonest) is related to a person's words and on whether what they are saying is actually factual. In addition to this, one's actions are to agree with his or her confessions, this is what it means to live with integrity according to the standard laid out in the Torah. According to *Bamidbar / Numbers 30:2* the Scriptures say: *אִישׁ כִּי-יִדְרֹךְ גְּדֹר לַיהוָה אוֹ-הַשְּׁבַע שְׁבַע לְאִסֹּר אִסְרָהּ עַל-נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא יִחַל דְּבָרוֹ כְּכֹל-הַיֵּצֵא מִפִּי יַעֲשֶׂה: 30:2 'If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. (NASB)* Note how the command is written in a negative formulation “he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” This suggests that any utterance that goes forth from our lips is binding as if it were an oath. The idea is that we are to do what we say we will do. The commandment on keeping one's vow is related to our being honest and teaches us about the nature of our Father in heaven. Yeshua also taught that every word that we speak should be true. In *Matthew 5:33* Yeshua said *5:33 'Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' 5:34 'But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 5:35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 5:36 'Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 5:37 'But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil. (NASB)* In light of Yeshua's words, how significant is keeping a vow, a oath, or every utterance that comes from our mouth and being honest today before God and men? The Aramaic Targum (Onkelos) renders *Devarim / Deuteronomy 23:21* as the following: *כֹּב אִרֵי תִדְרֹךְ גְּדֹר קָדָם יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִנְּפֵה וַיְהִי כִּד חוֹבָא: According to the Targum Onkelos, if one makes a vow before the Lord he is to keep that vow and if he does not, it is a sin. The word used to translate sin חוֹבָא means “hidden or concealed” in Hebrew, note how sin is hidden and concealed by the one who commits the sin. In addition to this, according to the Late Jewish literary Aramaic, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Samaritan Palestinian Aramaic, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, The Testament of Levi Fragments from Qumran Cave 4 - 4QTQah 1,2:6, and Qumran Cave 4 text Q534.2.16, the word חוֹבָא means “sin or guilt” in agreement with the Hebrew text. If God commands us to be true to our every word, should we not be doing so? These Scriptures say that even words spoken casually we are accountable for before God. Today, a man may say words that are not true, but every word spoken by God is the truth. We also know that throughout history, God has kept his vows (His promises), he has been truthful and honest by what He expects of us, and He has given us the living Word, His Son Yeshua the Messiah, to save us from our sins. According to the Torah and Yeshua's words, this is the way we should be living. This week's reading is a sober reminder of who we are in Christ as God's chosen people!*