

February 16, 2020 - Deut. 18:14 – 20:9 - Prophets, Witnesses and Warfare
Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 18:14 – 20:9 - Prophets, Witnesses and Warfare
Psalm 124 - 128
Haftarah: Micah 5:11 – 6:8

Prophets, Witnesses and Warfare

Deuteronomy 18:14 - "For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do."

Targum Jonathan - "He caused His Divine Presence to rest upon the prophets and upon the Urim and Thumim."

‘The Prophet’ and True Prophecy

Instead of occult methods to know and control the future, God will provide a Prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:15-17 - "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desired of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken."

See **Exodus 20** and **Deuteronomy 5:28** for this incident at the giving of the Law on Sinai. The people feared, and asked that God not speak to them directly, but to speak through Moses. Thus, Moses became a mediator between them and God.

This singular Prophet "like unto Moses" is the Messiah, who like Moses was a Mediator between God and Israel, and the Redeemer of His people. Jesus was that Prophet - both of them performed miracles. Both were transfigured. Both delivered the Law in unique ways.

- **Deuteronomy 34:10** - "There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt; and in all that mighty hand and great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

According to Midrash Kohelet, fol. 63. 2. - "as was the first redeemer, so is the second."

The Promise is Repeated

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 - "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."

Targum of Jonathan adds "like unto me, in the Holy Spirit"

Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan - "my Word shall require it of him, or take vengeance on him"

Jesus was Confirmed as this Prophet at the Transfiguration, when He is flanked by Moses and Elijah:

- **Matthew 17:5** - "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

- **Hebrews 12:25** - "See to it that you do not reject the one who speaks. For if they did not escape when they rejected him who warned them on earth, even less will we if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven."

Jews in Jesus' day were still looking for this Prophet:

They questioned John the Baptist:

- **John 1:21** - "And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No."

And they asked Jesus:

- **John 1:45** - "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

- **John 6:14** - "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."

- **John 7:40** - "Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, 'This certainly is the Prophet.'"

- **John 5:45-46** - "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."

Peter specifically applies this verse to Jesus:

- **Acts 3:22** - "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you." (also Stephen - **Acts 7:37**)

Regarding God said He "will put my words in his mouth":

- **John 12:49** - "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."

'The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy'

Not only is Jesus "that Prophet" who was promised, but all prophecy ultimately points to, glorifies and informs us about Jesus.

- **John 16:13-14** - "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

- **1 Corinthians 2:12** - "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

- **Revelation 19:10** - "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

False Prophets

Although the promised Prophet speaks of a particular person, at the same time God laid down guidelines on how to discern between any true prophet of God and a false prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:19-22 - "But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

The Targum of Jonathan says the false prophet should be killed by the sword, but the Jews (Misn. Sanhedrin, c. 10. sect. 1.) generally understood it to mean execution by strangling.

Rashi illustrates this judgment by the case of Hananiah (**Jeremiah 28**) who prophesied that Jeconiah, and all that went with him to Babylon would return within two years. He was sentenced by Jeremiah to die that year; and he died accordingly, within two months.

Isaiah identified this Prophet with the Redeemer:

See **Isaiah 59:20-21** - "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever."

The "thee" is referring to Israel, not the prophet Isaiah alone. This was fulfilled in Christ, and we participate in it as we are "in" Christ, and He is in us.

Cities of Refuge and Accidental Manslaughter

This section returns to the description of judicial procedures and justice in the Promised Land.

[The Cities of Refuge were commanded previously in **Numbers 35**. We repeat some of the notes from that discussion here.]

"refuge" = *miqlat* - asylum, a place of refuge; from a root that means "to receive a fugitive to oneself"

The actual establishment of the Cities of Refuge is described in **Joshua 20-21**.

Roads were to be built, wider and smoother than other roads, to each city of refuge to assist those fleeing. Clearly marked signposts were found at crossroads which read "*Miklat*" meaning "Refuge." The Cities of Refuge also offered asylum to foreigners.

As population increased, eventually all the Levite cities were considered Cities of Refuge.

Deuteronomy 19:1-3 - "When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses; Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it. Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither."

Rashi - "Prepare for yourself the way": "Refuge! Refuge!" was inscribed at each crossroads [directing the way to the nearest refuge city]. — [Mak . 10b] [The distance] from the beginning of the border to the first refuge city should be the same as the distance from this first city to the second, and so from the second to the third and from the third to the opposite border of Israel. — [Mak. 9b]

Example of Accidental Killing

Deuteronomy 19:4-5 - "And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbor ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; As

when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbor to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbor, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:"

Even an accidental or unintended loss of life must be investigated, and even so, there are still consequences.

Cities of refuge were meant to curtail the practice of kinship vengeance and the cycle of vendettas that result in most other ancient (and some modern) cultures.

God Himself "requires" the death of the murderer, after a trial, instead of leaving it up to the private retaliatory vengeance from the victim's relatives or clan.

Deuteronomy 19:6 - "Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past."

The Cities of Refuge would protect only the unintentional manslayer. The willful murderer was to be evicted, tried, and punished. What was revolutionary was the assertion that inner intention determines the meaning of an action.

Also, punishment in Israel is not based on status. Murdering a free man, woman, child, slave, or foreigner, rich or poor all resulted in the same penalty, no matter who you were.

Until the Death of the High Priest

But if someone throw a large stone but didn't see that it would hit someone, then he can go to the city of refuge and "abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil." (**Numbers 35:25**)

Why?

Because such was the general mourning for such a public loss as a high priest, that all private revenges would subside, and the cause of them be buried, in grief and forgetfulness. Thus the mothers of the priests used to supply with a sufficient quantity of food and raiment such who fled to the cities of refuge, that they might not pray for the death of their sons. (Misn. Maccot. c. 2. sect. 3. and 7.)

17th-century rabbi Jacob Abendana (Not. in Miclol Yophi in ver. 25.) observes that the death of the high priest atoned for the offense (of manslaughter), which was the reason the manslayer continued in the city of refuge till the high priest's death.

(This detail of the death of the High Priest is not repeated here in the description of the Cities of Refuge in **Deuteronomy 19**.)

Spiritual Meaning

The cities of refuge were an imperfect type of the perfect Rock of Refuge we have in Christ. As High Priest, His death atones for all sin. At the same time, after His resurrection, He is a High Priest who will never die.

David says (**Psalm 32:7**) "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

"hiding place" = *cether* - a different word from refuge, but a similar idea implying a covert or shelter for protection.

- **Psalm 27:5** - "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret (*cether* - "hiding place") of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock."

Other words are more commonly used to mean "take refuge" = *chacah* - to trust in, to make someone or something your refuge

- **Ruth 2:12** - "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust (*chacah*)."

machaceh - refuge, shelter, the person to who one flees (usually God)

- **Psalm 46:1** - "God is our refuge (*machaceh*) and strength, a very present help in trouble."

- **Psalm 62:8** - "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge (*machaceh*) for us. Selah."

- **Psalm 59:16** - "But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defense and refuge (*manowc*) in the day of my trouble."

This is another word, *manowc* - refuge, place of escape, a way to flee

- **Jeremiah 16:19** - "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge (*manowc*) in the day of affliction"

We have fled to Jesus Christ, and He is our eternal "refuge." As our High Priest, He will never die (**Hebrews 7:23-25**); and we have eternal salvation. No avenger can touch us, because He has already died and arisen from the dead.

These cities of refuge are beautiful types of Christ, to whom we "have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (**Hebrews 6:18**).

- **Romans 8:33** - "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

- **Psalm 34:22** - "The Lord will rescue his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned."

Moses the Manslayer

From *Legends of the Jews* -

God gave Moses the law concerning the cities of refuge in accordance with Israel's wish. For the people said to God: "Lord of the world! Thou didst promise us a long course of life as a reward for fulfilling the commandments, but supposing now that a man hath slain another unintentionally, and the avenger of the blood slays him, he will die before his time." God then said to Moses: "As truly as thou livest, they speak wisely. Appoint therefore several cities for cities of refuge, that the manslayer might flee thither, which slayeth his neighbor unawares." Moses rejoiced greatly at this statute, and instantly set about its execution, for "he that hath tasted of a food knoweth its flavor," and Moses who had erstwhile been obliged to flee on account of having slain an Egyptian, knew the feelings of the man who is pursued on account of a manslaughter that he had committed unawares.

Three More Cities

Deuteronomy 19:9-10 - "If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three: That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee."

Rashi - Thus, [altogether you will have] nine: The three on the other side of the Jordan, the three in the land of Canaan, and three more in the future [when God will expand your boundary]. — [Sifrei]

But that time never came: the Jews expect the addition of these three cities in the days of the Messiah (Maimonides, Hilchot Rotzeach, c. 8. sect. 4.) Christ is the fulfillment of the type of refuge.

Judgment on the Convicted Murderer

Deuteronomy 19:11 - "But if any man hate his neighbor, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die."

The Mishnah - "formerly, one that killed another ignorantly or presumptuously, they sent him before to one of the cities of refuge, and the sanhedrim sent and fetched him from thence: he who was condemned to death by the court, they slew him; he that was not condemned was dismissed; he that was condemned to banishment they returned him to his place, according to Numbers 35:25."

But What About Cain?

See 'The Death of Cain. The World's First Murder, Epilogue'
<https://www.aish.com/jl/b/eb/ca/48950551.html>

Cain's murder of his brother Abel (**Genesis 4**) is the archetype of all murders.

Cain purposely murdered Abel, and was delivered over to God, who, as judge, sentences him not to death, but to exile.

Because the commandment against murder had not yet been given, Cain was treated as a manslayer rather than a murderer.

But Cain feared vengeance:

Genesis 4:13-15 - "And Cain said to God, 'My sin is greater than I can bear... anyone who finds me will kill me.' God replied to him, 'Therefore -- anyone who kills Cain will be avenged seven-fold,' and God placed a mark upon Cain, so that all who find him would not kill him."

All mankind are brothers and made in God's image, therefore we are all "kin," all would demand vengeance for Abel's death.

Rashi however says Cain was worried that, in the wake of his act of murder, a beast might devour him.

God instead sentences him to exile, but "set a mark upon Cain" that provided protection.

This is probably the same protective "mark" as in **Ezekiel 9** - the letter "tau" on his forehead.

But the Midrash describes this as a "horn" given as a protection against animal predators and as an indication that he had acted on his animal emotion of anger and rage.

The "horn" could also be a sign or emblem representing the sin offering:

Genesis 4:7 - "Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must subdue it."

One way of translating this is: "Is it not true that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, the sin offering is abiding in rest at the door. [As for your brother Abel,] his obedience toward you as the elder will remain, and you will retain your rights as firstborn."

The mark would remind Cain always of the opportunity of repentance and accepting the sin offering (which was a foreshadowing of Christ's perfect and final offering of Himself for sin). The designation of "horn" in the Midrash would represent that sin offering goat of Yom Kippur, the same goat that was caught in the thicket as a substitute for Isaac at the Akedah, and the same horn that will be blown at the end of time on the Day of Judgment.

Genesis 22:13 - "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

The city of refuge is described in the Mishnah as an exile for the offender. Like Cain, the manslayer - once tried and convicted - would be confined there until the death of the High Priest. Eventually, when the tradition of blood vengeance and vendetta had faded in Israel, the city of refuge was less an asylum from vengeful kinsmen than a place of confinement where the exile could atone for the consequences of his sin.

One message is clear - blood-vengeance, vigilante "justice" and personal retribution were not favored by God.

Removing a Boundary Stone

Deuteronomy 19:14 - "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbor's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it."

"landmark" = *gěbuwl* - the cord by which a limit is measured out, a boundary, the territory enclosed by a boundary or border. Also a coastline, or any limit or space.

Why are landmarks discussed here? The landmark or boundary stone is probably the most ancient way to circumscribe a person's property, inheritance or space. It serves here as a representation of each person's human rights in general - these rights are to be respected and not transgressed.

- **Proverbs 15:25** - "The LORD will destroy the house of the proud: but he will establish the border (*gěbuwl*) of the widow."

To "move the boundary stone" would be to diminish another person whose inheritance in Israel is their's alone. Their personhood - based on their being created in God's image - is never to be lessened, infringed on or denied. Murder is the most egregious example of this, which is why this appears at this point in the discourse.

- **Proverbs 22:28** - "Do not move an ancient boundary stone which your fathers have set."

- **Deuteronomy 27:17** - "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark."

- **Leviticus 19:35** - "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure"

The Talmud comments: " 'In meteyard' or *middah* in Hebrew refers to the measurements of the land, that he may not measure for one in summer [when the measuring line is contracted through the heat] and for another is winter."

- **Psalm 39:4** - "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure (*middah*) of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

Murder, in other words, besides being an assault against the image of God, would be to "do unrighteousness" in "measure" - by shortening someone's days of life.

By Two or Three Witnesses

Deuteronomy 19:15 - "One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

The Hebrew word for truth, *emet*, is formed from the first letter of the alphabet, alef, the middle letter, mem, and the final letter, tav. This trinity of letters according to the Talmud, is "the seal of the Holy One."

"A note fell from Heaven upon which 'Truth' was written. Rabbi Hanina said, 'Learn from it that the signature of God is Truth.'" (Yoma 69b)

'Truth Springs from the Earth'

When God began to create the world, all of the angels began to argue with one another. The angel of *hesed* (loving-kindness) said, "Holy One! You should create humankind, as they are filled with loving-kindness!" The angel of Truth said, "O Holy One! Do not create humankind, as they are filled with lies!" What did God do? God lifted up the angel of Truth and threw it down to the Earth. As it is written, "And Truth was hurled to the ground." (Daniel 8:12) The angels immediately began shouting, "Holy One! What have you done? You have thrown your Holy Seal of Truth to the ground!" And the Holy One replied, "Truth springs up from the Earth" (**Psalms 85:12**). While the angels were arguing with each other the Holy One created the first human being. God then asked the angels, "why are you arguing? Adam has already been made!" (Bereishit Rabbah 8:5)

Thus, Jesus said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Light." He was born into the world into a human "earthen vessel, then fell into the ground like a grain of wheat to die, and then He brought forth much fruit.

- **Matthew 18:20** - "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am

I in the midst of them."

A "trinity" of believers on earth, a community, reflects the Trinity in heaven, and therefore Truth is among them and can be discerned and celebrated.

The Idea of "two or three witnesses" is based on an eternal pattern:

1 John 5 expands this idea of "by two or three witnesses" to show how the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit bear witness of Jesus as the Messiah and God's Son.

- **1 John 5:7-9** - "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

False Witnesses

Deuteronomy 19:16-19 - "If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you."

- **Deuteronomy 13:15** - "You shall enquire and search and interrogate thoroughly and behold if it is true, the fact is established..."

This trinity of methods is the way to determine truth. The classic example of "enquire, search and interrogate" to discover false witnesses is in the apocryphal story of Susanna and the Elders in which Daniel tricks the elders into offering conflicting testimony.

Deuteronomy 19:20 - "And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you."

Rashi - From here, [we derive the law] that a public announcement is required: "So-and-so and so-and-so are to be executed because they were proven by the court to be plotting witnesses." - [San. 89a]

The *Lex Talionis* (The Law of Retaliation)

Deuteronomy 19:21 - "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

See also **Exodus 21:22, Leviticus 24:19**.

The Rabbis later interpreted "an eye for an eye" to mean a reasonable monetary compensation.

There is no evidence anywhere, literary or archaeological, that a literal "eye for an eye" was Jewish practice at any time.

The Talmudic sages bring a number of compelling proofs, both logically and from the inference of other verses, showing one should not even entertain the thought that "an eye for an eye" is to be taken literally. Maimonides, the renowned 12th century sage, further cites the verses in **Exodus 21:18-19** which openly speak of damages in terms of monetary payment. Hence, a few verses later when the Torah speaks of "an eye for and eye..." it is obviously referring to the same sort of payment. Other early sages bring additional proof: if literal, if the perpetrator injures another and minimizes his sight by one third or half, how is it possible to do the same in punishment, no more and no less?

The Torah is teaching that if one causes another to lose his limb, he truly deserves to have the same done to his self. It is not sufficient to simply write a check to the victim. He must truly contemplate the profound damage to the quality of life of his fellow, his pain and suffering he is forced to endure for the rest of his life. He has done a terrible thing and the slate will not be cleared by monetary payment alone. He must also beg forgiveness from the injured party for what he has done, and perform Teshuva, repentance to God, coupled with making serious life changes that will ensure a similar act will not be repeated.

-See <https://www.aish.com/atr/Eye-for-an-Eye.html>

The original idea of the Torah's Lex Talionis, even if taken literally, was actually to moderate vengeance, to prevent people from taking the law into their own hands and exacting disproportionate vengeance for offenses committed against them. And the Hebrew laws were a reduction of severity from Hammurabi's Code and other Ancient Near Eastern punishments. In fact, some scholars assert the Bible's Lex Talionis provides "proof of the unique value of each individual" and that it teaches "equality of all human beings under law." - See Stephen M Wylen (2005), "The seventy faces of Torah: the Jewish way of reading the Sacred Scriptures," Paulist Press. p. 20.

Of course, Jesus turned the idea of personal vengeance upside down:

- **Matthew 5:38–39** - "You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Trusting God in War

Israel was to go to battle as infantry foot soldiers, without horses or chariots, while their enemies often had both.

Deuteronomy 20:1 - "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Targum of Jonathan - "for all of them shall be reckoned as one horse and one chariot before the Lord your God"

- **Psalm 20:7** - "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

Rashi - Scripture juxtaposes the departure for war alongside this ["eye for eye etc."] to teach us that a person with a missing limb does not go out to war. Another explanation: It teaches that if you execute righteous judgment, you can be sure that when you depart for war you will be victorious. Similarly, David says, "I performed justice and righteousness; do not leave me to my oppressors" (**Ps. 119: 121**). - [Tanchuma]

Deuteronomy 20:2-3 - "And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;"

Rashi - Four warnings, corresponding to four practices in which the kings of the nations engage [during battle]: They hold their shields close together to strike them against one another, thereby producing a loud noise to alarm those confronting them, so that they should flee; they stamp [the ground heavily] with their horses and make them neigh, sounding the beating of their horses' hoofs, and they shout loudly and blow horns and [other] kinds of noisy instruments.

- **1 Peter 4:12-19** - "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Spiritual Warfare

- **2 Corinthians 10:3-5** - "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"

- **Ephesians 6:10-18** - "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye

may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"

- **1 Timothy 6:12** - "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

- **2 Timothy 2:3-4** - "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Deuteronomy 20:4 - "For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

Rashi - They are coming with the victory of flesh and blood, whereas you approach with the victory of the Omnipresent. The Philistines came with the victory of Goliath - What was his end? He fell, and they fell with him.

"the One Who goes with you" - This refers to the camp of the ark (Joshua 6:4). — [Sotah 42a]

Those Exempt from Battle - Deuteronomy 20:5-8

Deuteronomy 20:5 - "And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying..."

The "officers" here were the *shoterim*, the keepers of the genealogical tables who had the list of eligible men.

All Israelites of military age (20 to 50) were expected to report. But some were exempted:

- "He that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it" (or not "perfected it," as the Targum of Jonathan, i.e. not quite finished it) or, not having been used and enjoyed by a man for a full year, according to Josephus.

- "He that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it." For three years the fruit of trees, and so of vines, might not be eaten; in the fourth, they were devoted to the Lord, and might be redeemed from the priest, and so made common; and on the fifth year were eaten.

- "He that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her." Betrothals would typically last a year. This was expanded in **Deuteronomy 24:5** "When a man hath taken a new wife,

he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: [but] he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken."

- "He that is fearful and fainthearted." Targum of Jonathan - "because of his sin"

Rashi - Rabbi Jose the Galilean says that [it means] one who is afraid of his sins [that they will cause him to fall in war, as he is unworthy], and therefore, the Torah gives him the excuse of attributing his return home because of a house, a vineyard, or a wife, to cover up for those who return because of their sins, so that people should not understand that they are sinners. [Consequently,] one who sees this person returning would say, "Perhaps he has built a house, or planted a vineyard, or betrothed a woman." - [Sotah 44a]

See **Judges 7**, at the muster of Gideon's army. The proclamation "Whosoever, is afraid let him depart," sent away 22,000 out of 32,000 on that occasion, or rather more than two-thirds of the army.

There was no punishment for exemption, and this exemption did not mean they could not participate in battle at a future time.

- **Psalm 110:3** - "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power..."

Spiritually these exemptions are similar to the "three rebukes" given to potential converts to Judaism. Naomi told Ruth three different times to "turn" or "return," so early rabbis correspondingly said that a would-be proselyte was to be discouraged three times to test their sincerity.

Everything about serving God is based on our willingness to say "Amen." Like the Priest who determines to serve in Jerusalem "with all the desire of his mind" (**Deuteronomy 18:6**)

These exemptions each represent something that has not yet come to fruition or been completed or solidly connected - loose ends that breed uncertainty and could distract a soldier from the battle. Spiritual babes are in this same condition - they have to complete their growth and training, and solidify their knowledge of God before gaining confidence to go out on their own to battle. Teachers and schoolmasters are still needed on the path from carnal "babes" to spiritual adults (**1 Corinthians 3:1**); the seed of the Word has to take root, the milk of the Word to prepare them for the meat.

- **1 Peter 2:2** - "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby"

Otherwise, disasters can ensue:

- **1 Timothy 3:6** - An elder must not be "a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

Deuteronomy 20:9 - "And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people."

Jewish translation: "they shall appoint officers of the legions at the edges of the people."

Rashi - This means that they place (זקפין) guards in front of them and behind them, with iron arrows (or hatchets) in their hands, and if anybody attempted to retreat, the guard had the authority to strike his legs. זקפין are people who stand at the edge of the battle array to pick up (לקוף) the fallen and to encourage them with words: "Return to the battle and do not flee, for flight is the beginning of defeat." - [Sifrei , Sotah 44a]

Spiritually, this sounds like the spiritual gift of encouragement and exhortation.

- **Hebrews 3:13** - "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

For our companions in battle we can repeat the words of Jesus: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (**John 16:33b**)

- **Thessalonians 5:8-11** - "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort (encourage) yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do."