



Only the trees
which you know are not trees
for food you may destroy and cut
to build siegeworks
against the city
that makes war
with you, until
it is subdued.
Deuteronomy 20:19

11 July 2021
YALLERSON

Deuteronomy 20:10-20
Conduct for War, Part II
July 11, 2021

¹⁰ "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. ¹¹ And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. ¹² Now if the city will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. ¹³ And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD your God gives you. ¹⁵ Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations.

¹⁶ "But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, ¹⁷ but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, ¹⁸ lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

¹⁹ "When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's food. ²⁰ Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

In today's passage, we will finish up Moses' words of this chapter concerning proper conduct for war. What is stated in the Old Testament is for Israel to conduct their affairs according to the dispensation in which they lived.

These rules for warfare, however, actually extend into our dispensation in their own way. The day before typing this sermon, Jim opened the church and mentioned messianic believers. At times, there is a difference between messianics and Hebrew Roots.

In other words, there are some good messianic congregations that completely get God's offer of grace as is revealed in Yeshua (the Hebrew name of Jesus). And then, there are messianics who are exactly who Paul was referring to in the book of Galatians. They are no different than those of the modern Hebrew Roots movement.

I got an email about Jim's comments from a nice lady, but one who was being led down the wrong path in this regard – "Dear Charlie, The gentleman who gave opening comments, yesterday, made a rather uninformed remark, re: messianic Jews. Their entire basis is to live as first century Christians did. THAT is WHY they keep G-D's seven Holy Feasts. Moses tells us these are The Lord's feasts, not "the Jews feasts" Here is a post you might want to share with your friend. Sincerely, and with Love, XXX (a messianic Jew.)"

First, it is irrelevant if she is a messianic Jew or not. That means nothing. Adherence to Scripture is what identifies a right believer who is in Christ. Secondly, I didn't bother sending

the post on to Jim. The verses were completely out of context. One of them was our text verse for today...

Text Verse: *“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:8, 9*

My response to her was as you may expect – “There is a difference between a person observing the feasts as a cultural expression, meaning as a Jew might within the culture, and a person who is attempting to merit the Lord’s favor through adherence to the Law of Moses.

The Feasts of the Lord are fulfilled in the Lord. They are no longer to be observed as a part of faith in Christ because Christ is the fulfillment of them. (Hebrews 7:18, 8:13, and 10:9). The Law – in its entirety, is annulled, obsolete, and set aside. It is nailed to the cross (Col 2:14).

The feasts, the Sabbath, the dietary laws – all are set aside through the work of Christ (Colossians 2:15, 16). If you are attempting to merit God’s favor through Law observance, you are exactly who Paul is writing about in Galatians 1:6-8. He is not arguing for law observance, he is saying it is anathema.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:19 –

“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.”

Circumcision is a mandate of the Law of Moses (Leviticus 12:3). Therefore, Paul cannot be speaking of the Law of Moses when he refers to “keeping the commandments of God.” Christ died in fulfillment of the law. What do you intend to add to that for your righteousness?

If this is what you are trying to convey to me, I wish you well in your efforts. It is an infinite ladder to climb, and you have a very short life to attempt to get to the top. You will not make it. Rest in Christ (Hebrews 4:3) and give up on your attempts at self-righteousness. Charlie”

She came back and was very gracious, promising to watch the sermons I linked to her concerning the Feasts of the Lord. I hope she will take them to heart. She, and her doctrine, are typologically seen in our verses today. It was great that I didn’t have to even think of an opening for the sermon, it came right to me in an email from someone whose email fits the typology.

Important things like keeping things in context and resting solely in the grace of Jesus Christ rather than on one's own righteousness are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Cities Which are Very Far from You (verses 10-14)

The words now assume that everyone in the army is acceptable for battle. The first nine verses were given to prepare the army for the engagement by removing any who had cause to not wage war.

Those who had built a new house and not dedicated it, those who had planted a vineyard and not eaten of it, those who were betrothed and who had not married the woman, and those who were fearful and fainthearted and who would thus discourage the other soldiers were all given exemption from service.

With that accomplished, the battle was to be engaged with those who remained and were brought forth in order to battle a city. However, instead of just arbitrarily destroying cities, the sanctity of human life – even the lives of non-Hebrew people – was to be considered first and foremost. As it now says...

¹⁰ “When you go near a city to fight against it,

ki tiqrav el ir l'hilakhem aleha – “When you approach unto city to wage war.” The words now will be further explained in verses 16-18 as meaning any cities not found within the borders of Canaan. This would be war for the sake of expansion, as retaliation against aggression, and so on. The Old Testament is filled with references of such instances of battles outside of Canaan.

Israel was not limited to Canaan alone, and they were given the right to wage warfare as they saw fit. In such instances where they were specifically drawn up against an enemy within a city...

^{10 (con't)} then proclaim an offer of peace to it.

Once arranged for the battle, and once the enemy was fully aware of what lay ahead, an olive branch was to be first extended to that city. As it says, *v'qarata eleha l'shalom* – “and you have called to it to [with regard to] peace.”

Such offers were not limited to the people of Israel in their waging war, but are also seen as Israel's enemies came against them. An example of this is found in 2 Kings 18 when the Assyrians came against Jerusalem. Before attacking the city, peace was offered to the people –

“Then the Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: “What confidence is this in which you trust? ²⁰ You speak of having plans and power for war; but they are mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? ²¹ Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. ²² But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?’” ’ ²³ Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses—if you are able on your part to put riders on them!” 2 Kings 18:19-23

Such an offer of peace was not without conditions, though. In the case of Jerusalem, if they accepted the offer, they would be subject to the Assyrians. In that subjection, they would eventually be exiled from their land, as they are told in advance of the coming battle...

“Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, ‘Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! ²⁹ Thus says the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; ³⁰ nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, “The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” ’ ³¹ Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; ³² until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.”’ 2 Kings 18:28-32

As can be seen from this and other such instances interspersed throughout the Old Testament, it was more advantageous to all to avoid the battle if possible. There would be less chance of death to the soldiers, more plunder for the victors, and so on. Even Jesus refers this general sentiment in one of His discourses –

“Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. ³³ So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:31-33

For these other nations, this offer was optional, and it was not always used. However, for Israel, it was mandatory. By their law, they were required to first offer peace to the city they

were about to engage in battle. Once that offer was made and accepted, the benefits of it would be immediate and they would be highly favorable – to both person and to property.

As I said, the first and most immediate benefit would be that the soldiers would not face any chance of death during the siege. And more, sieges were costly. Supplies would have to be brought in for extended periods of time, and during times of attack, even the weaker of the city could use the fortifications to their advantage –

“Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it. ⁵¹ But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and women—all the people of the city—fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower. ⁵² So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire. ⁵³ But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech’s head and crushed his skull. ⁵⁴ Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer, and said to him, “Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his young man thrust him through, and he died. ⁵⁵ And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.”
Judges 9:50-55

In conducting warfare, death is the anticipated and accepted result. In conducting siege warfare, it could come even from the hands of someone who would not otherwise participate in a battle. Such an offer of peace, therefore, provided benefits beyond the plunder inside the city. Therefore, it is both the smart choice for any army, but it was also the precept of law for Israel...

¹¹ And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace,

It is certainly the favored option. For Israel, it meant no extended siege, no chance of losing soldiers, and a free hand in what would come next. For those who accepted the offer, and for the Lord who created them, it meant their lives would be spared, the certain intent of the command in the first place.

¹¹ (con’t) and open to you,

Obviously, the condition of peace means free reign for the victors. The goods of the city would be under the authority and disposition of Israel. The people would be subject to them, and they would face a much different life than they faced moments before, but they would have life. The results of the choice are...

¹¹ (con’t) then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.

The word translated as tribute is *mas*. It does not signify a payment by one kingdom to another. It deals with subjection of the individuals. As a noun it more rightly signifies a forced slave. It is derived from *masas*, meaning “to dissolve,” or “to melt.”

In other words, an unconditional surrender has taken place. As such, the people would be under the heavy burden of forced labor because they had become slaves of Israel. Thus, it would be as if they were melting from their efforts. As the old saying says, “To the victor goes the spoils.”

The life had been spared, but it would be a difficult one. Because of this, some may opt for another avenue when offered such terms. For them, Moses gives instruction...

¹² Now if *the city* will not make peace with you,

When a city decided that they may prevail for whatever reason, the offer of peace would be rejected. This could be for any number of reasons. One that was innovatively brought about was by Hezekiah. When the Assyrians came to attack, the water was diverted away from the besieging army –

After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them over to himself. ² And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, ³ he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him. ⁴ Thus many people gathered together who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying, “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?”

2 Chronicles 32:1-4

However, this wasn't Hezekiah's main area of confidence. Rather, it was one way of depriving the enemy of its ability to effectively engage in siege warfare.

Another reason for declining an offer of peace was a reliance on the stronghold itself, as well as the abilities and capabilities of the defenders. In the case of Hezekiah, he not only was set in a well-fortified city with well-suited men, but he ultimately had confidence in the Defender of Israel –

“And he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised it up to the towers, and built another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo in the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. ⁶ Then he set military captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying, ⁷ ‘Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor

dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. ⁸With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles.’ And the people were strengthened by the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.” 2 Chronicles 32:5-8

For Hezekiah, turning down the offer of peace proved the right choice. The Lord Himself intervened and destroyed one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrians in a single night. At other times, Jerusalem was out of favor with the Lord, and they suffered at the hands of those they failed to yield to.

Likewise, those cities that failed to accept Israel’s offer of peace would have to face their own bad choice as well...

¹² (con’t) **but war against you, then you shall besiege it.**

The decision had to be weighed by those inside. It is certain what the consequences of turning down the offer of peace would be, and that would surely weigh heavily upon the people inside. But it would also further the resolve of them as well. The battle, on either side of the walls, would not be an easy one. An example of a city being besieged in this manner is found in 2 Samuel 11 –

“Then David said to the messenger, ‘Thus you shall say to Joab: “Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.” So encourage him.’” 2 Samuel 11:25

Rabbah, was east of the Jordan, and thus outside of Canaan proper. Therefore, it would not be subject to the laws coming in verses 15-18. Despite what is said by Moses in the coming verses, it appears that the law was not exactly adhered to. For now, the actions taken by David against Rabbah were –

“Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. ²⁷ And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, ‘I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city’s water supply. ²⁸ Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name.’ ²⁹ So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it. ³⁰ Then he took their king’s crown from his head. Its weight was a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was set on David’s head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance. ³¹ And he brought out the people who were in it, and put them to work with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.” 2 Samuel 12:26-31

From this account, it appears that the law was not adhered to exactly, unless those who were put to work with saws, iron picks, and iron axes were women and children. This is because...

13 And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword.

It is the Lord who ultimately brings the victory. The people refused the offer of peace, the law is written, and the penalty mandated by the law was to be upheld. Therefore, when a city refused the offer of peace, the law called for every male (ostensibly every male of age, but maybe even the young ones) to be struck down.

The Hebrew reads *l'pi kharev* – “to mouth sword.” It is the normal description used, and it signifies that the sword is a devouring instrument. As it cuts, it is as if the soul of the person is eaten up. This was the prescribed doom for the males, however...

14 But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself;

The verse begins with *raq*. It is an adverb that gives a limiting sense. Thus, it signifies something like “Only.” It is a way of separating the previous group from that which is to be spared.

Despite what happens to the men, who took the challenge, lost, and thus forfeited their lives, these others were to be spared and become plunder for the people. An example of the disposition of these groups is found in Numbers 31 when Israel fought against Midian. The plunder of people and other spoil was to be divided among all of Israel as defined in that passage.

14 (con't) and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD your God gives you.

The spoils of war would become food for the people. And again, Moses makes a point of noting that it is plunder given to them by the Lord. The obvious implication is that without the Lord, such a victory would not be possible. Therefore, the people were to be obedient to the precept.

The sanctity of life must be observed by you
I set the guidelines which you must live by
Do all of the things I tell you to do
If you think on the reasons for each, you will understand why

But even if you don't understand
You are to obey that which you are told
Things are to be done based on what I have planned
And for you, things will properly unfold

I am the Lord Your God and what I instruct is right
So be obedient to the word and do as you are told
In this, you will find favor in My sight
And for you, things will properly unfold

II. Cities of Canaan and Trees for Food (verses 15-20)

¹⁵ Thus you shall do to all the cities *which are* very far from you, which *are* not of the cities of these nations.

The meaning of this is that such warfare, as has just been described in the previous verses, was to be conducted on any nation outside of the land of Canaan. In contrast to them are the "cities of these nations," meaning all cities within the borders of Canaan as described in Numbers 34. For them, something different was expected...

¹⁶ "But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you *as* an inheritance,

Again, the word *raq* is used. Only. This is to make a complete distinction between what has been said, and what will now be said. A limitation is being imposed.

The inheritance is Canaan. Thus, all the cities within Canaan fall within the parameters of Moses' words now. And as such, all people within those cities are included in what is commanded. This is something that has already been commanded by Moses in Chapter 7. And that is...

¹⁶ (con't) you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive,

lo te-khayah kal neshamah – "no you shall let live all breath."

The words here are as clear as crystal, but they do need to be qualified. The mandate is upon the people. Every man, woman, and child was to be included and no exceptions are given.

At the word of the Lord, it could include all the animals as well. Such was the case with the city of Jericho –

"So the people shouted when the priests blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout,

that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. ²¹ And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.” Joshua 6:20, 21

However, exceptions for the animals were made for other cities –

“Now the LORD said to Joshua: ‘Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. ² And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it.’” Joshua 8:1, 2

The circumstances were totally up to what the Lord determined, but the circumstances never gave exceptions for sparing the people of the cities. Despite this, Adam Clarke incorrectly states –

“After all, many plausible arguments have been brought to prove that even these seven Canaanitish nations might be received into mercy, provided they,

1. Renounced their idolatry;
2. Became subject to the Jews; and,
3. Paid annual tribute: and that it was only in case these terms were rejected, that they were not to leave alive in such a city any thing that breathed.”

It is true that Israel failed to exterminate the inhabitants, and such things came about. It is also true that Israel made agreements not allowed under the law with various people, such as Rahab the harlot, and people groups, such as the Gibeonites. However, these are instances of failing to uphold the law as it is spoken forth.

The mandate was for extermination. Despite Israel’s failure in this, good came forth, such as Rahab entering into the line of David and ultimately that of the Lord Himself. The original mandate, however, is set forth clearly and unambiguously...

¹⁷ but you shall utterly destroy them:

ki hakherem takharimem – “for accursing them, you shall make them accursed.” The word is *kharam*, and it signifies to devote to destruction as an offering to God. When *kharam* is pronounced, whatever the Lord included as *kharam* was to be utterly destroyed. It is the same words spoken in Chapter 7 –

“When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, ² and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.” Deuteronomy 7:1, 2

^{17 (con't)} **the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite,**

Unlike Chapter 7, Moses leaves off the Girgashites, naming only six, instead of seven, nations. It is actually a sweet note of authenticity because anyone adding stuff into the word would have been careful to ensure the list was always the same. Moses felt no such constraints. This mandate is, as Moses says...

^{17 (con't)} **just as the LORD your God has commanded you,**

This takes the reader all the way back to Exodus 23 –

“For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.” Exodus 23:23

The Lord said He would cut them off, but he then said just a few verses later that Israel would do so –

“For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. ³² You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.” Exodus 23:31-33

This synergistic (working together) task of exterminating the inhabitants is seen time and again. Interestingly, the list of nations Moses gives here in Deuteronomy 20 is the same as that just noted from Exodus 23, except the order is different. Again, it is a sweet touch of authenticity that the words are original.

Another parallel to what the Lord said in Exodus 23, and which Moses now repeats in Deuteronomy 20, is seen in the next words...

¹⁸ **lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods,**

The Hebrew is more specific: *l'maan asher lo yelamedu etkem laasot kekol toavotam asher asu lelohehem* – “to end purpose which no they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done to [with regard to] their gods.”

The Hebrew, in this one verse of the entire passage, has gone from the second person singular (you Israel) to the second person plural (you all). The idea is that each person is liable to be infected by any person that is spared. Once that person is, he can then spread the infection to others.

Thus, the mandate is complete annihilation of all of the inhabitants. This is the great reason. Not only have they done these things, but they will then infect Israel and cause them to do these things. In such a state, Moses says...

¹⁸ (con't) **and you sin against the LORD your God.**

v'khatatem l'Yehovah elohekem – “And you sin to [with regard to] Yehovah your God.” The thought here is not that they would serve the gods of these people groups, but that they would incorrectly serve Yehovah. The contrast is seen in the words *lelohehem* and *l'Yehovah* – “to their gods” and “to Yehovah.”

It is true that Israel would, and did, serve the other gods of Canaan. But this is dealing with incorrectly serving the Lord. This then follows in type to proper service of Jesus. He is the same Lord, but we now have the Substance of Whom Israel's shadow only anticipated.

To improperly serve the Lord meant that they were not fulfilling the typology of Christ to come. For us to improperly serve the Lord means that we are failing to honor Christ who has come. For Israel only one means and mode of worship was acceptable. For us, only one gospel is acceptable –

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” Galatians 1:6, 7

Though the circumstances have changed, and though the dispensation is different, the overall message of unity of worship remains the same. There is one proper path, and there are all others. With that understood, the most complicated verse of the chapter now arrives...

¹⁹ **“When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it,**

The words are plain and obvious. The passage has been speaking of warring against cities and how to conduct such warfare. In this case, Israel is besieging a city during a war for an extended period of time in order to take the city. In such a case...

19 (con't) you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them;

This has to be taken in relation to what is said in the next clause concerning eating, and in verse 20 where trees for food are spoken of. Moses is not referring to all trees, but of food trees here. Israel is told they are not to destroy food trees by cutting them down in order to conduct war. That they are fruit trees is next stated...

19 (con't) if you can eat of them,

ki mimenu tokel – “For of them you can eat.” There is benefit to be derived from the trees apart from building siege works. The siege is long, and these trees can serve a purpose in this extended siege. Therefore...

19 (con't) do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's food.

The difficulty of the Hebrew here has caused a multitude of possible translations. The words say, “and them no do you cut down for the man tree the field to come in from your face in the siege.”

Some suggestions are:

- “for the tree of the field is man's food.”
- “for (the life) of man is the tree of the field.”
- “for is the tree of the field a man to come before you in the siege?”
- “for the man, the tree of the field cannot offer resistance.”
- “it is there for this, namely, your support, that it (the city) may be besieged by you.”

The interrogative seems to be the best way of looking at this: Is the tree of the field a man that it should come before you in the siege? You are benefitting from it, it will not join the enemy and fight against you, so do not cut it down.

The point is that a battle is being fought, there is an extended siege against a strong city, and the trees that are for food, meaning that which bears fruit, are to not be cut down.

Without taking the typology too far, it must be noted that trees are equated with people at times. There are those who bear fruit, and there are those who do not. An example of this is found in Psalm 1 –

“He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.” Psalm 1:3

From a New Testament perspective, one might look at this verse in relation to Paul’s words concerning warfare in 2 Corinthians 10. While we are waging war and pulling down strongholds, we shouldn’t destroy the work of those who are bearing fruit.

They are productive even if they are not actively engaged with us in our own battle. As Jesus said it succinctly, “For he who is not against us is on our side” (Mark 9:40). Moses’ words concerning trees certainly extends to this spiritual application in our Christian warfare. With this in mind...

***20 (fin) Only the trees which you know *are* not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.**

There is a strong emphasis in the words, “Only – tree which you know that not tree for food, it, you may destroy.” The tree which is not for food is set in complete contrast to those that are. Of such trees, they may be chopped down and employed in building siegeworks.

Again, the words here tend to look to the words of Jesus in the coming ministry. Though speaking under the law to Israel, the precept remains the same –

“Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” Luke 3:8, 9

The fact that Jesus brought up Abraham shows that He is referring to righteousness by faith, not through the law. Those who share a false gospel of works-based righteousness, such as the Hebrew Roots movement, can be – as it were – cut down and used in the siege.

In other words, they become the very instruments for defeating the enemy. Using their doctrine as an example of what is useless for man, they are to be cut down – verbally destroyed – in order to provide the proper employment of the gospel to destroy the enemy.

The lesson is that of apologetics, meaning using that which is of no value as an example to argue against in order to defend the faith and to then go on the offensive.

As we close out Deuteronomy 20, it is good to remember that what is presented here concerning warfare is not as it initially appears. Israel is not being given a pass to destroy other nations at will. They are given specific guidelines in order to conduct warfare.

As these guidelines are a part of the law, failing to uphold them brings exactly the opposite of life and prosperity. Those who were set for destruction are because the Lord determined it was to be so. Those who are not were to be treated in the manner set forth by the law.

War is a part of the human experience, and Israel was to be the Lord's executor of judgment at times. And, at times, Israel had judgment brought upon them for failing to properly conduct its affairs. Those Jews of today who use Scripture to demonstrate that they are the Lord's people, and are above His judgment, are self-deluded.

And the people of the world who look at Israel as some sort of horrible group of people because they destroyed the inhabitants of Canaan have simply failed to understand that what they did was in obedience to the Lord.

It is, therefore, not the Jews that they are reviling, but the God of the Jews, the Lord, that they bring accusation against. Everything must be taken in light of Scripture, or it will be tainted. But more, even that which is in Scripture must be taken in its proper context or it will be tainted.

I opened today by mentioning a person who was being misled by exactly the types of people that are being typologically prefigured in the cutting down of the non-fruit-bearing trees. Just because someone says they are of the Lord, it does not mean it is so. Those who are the Lord's, are those who bear fruit to the Lord, believing by faith. And those who bear fruit do so when they live in faith, not by works of the law.

As I said during the sermon, to improperly serve the Lord means that we are failing to honor Christ who has come. For Israel only one means and mode of worship was acceptable. For us, only one gospel is acceptable. There is no other. Be sure to wage your warfare according to the rules set down in the New Testament.

We are soldiers, we are in a war, and we must conduct ourselves with right doctrine and in the means and mode directed by the Lord for those who have been saved by the blood of Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

As an added bonus, I will go over the points of the meme that was sent to me...

CALLING ALL PASTORS

*In Galatians 2, Paul Says that there is only one gospel and those who teach a different one are under a curse. In 2 Peter 3:14-17, Peter warns that many will misinterpret Paul's difficult to understand writings, resulting in lawlessness and destruction. Are you absolutely certain that you're not misrepresenting Paul?

Heading. First point. Paul says there is only one gospel. That is found in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4. It is based on faith, nothing else. He then goes on to minutely detail the heresy of reintroducing the law, using circumcision as a baseline for this in Galatians.

Heading. Second Point. Peter's words in 2 Peter 3 concerning Paul are exactly what Paul speaks of when he rebukes Peter in Galatians 2. It is as clear as crystal what Paul says to Peter there –

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹² for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? ¹⁵ We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

*1. Paul always kept the Sabbath (Acts 17:2, Acts 18:4).

- Paul did not "always keep the Sabbath" as claimed by the meme. He went into the synagogues on the Sabbath because that is when Jews met, not because he felt it necessary to observe the Sabbath. In fact, he argues for the EXACT opposite in Romans 14:5, 6, Colossians 2:16, and elsewhere. Hebrews (certainly written by Paul) says, in the middle of several chapters of discussing the Sabbath, that in Christ we find our rest. He meticulously demonstrates that Christ is the fulfillment of the Sabbath and those Jews who have not come to Christ have not found their rest. They are still living out the shadow, of which Christ is the Substance.

*2. Paul kept the Feasts (Acts 20:6, Acts 20:16).

- This is misleading. Paul observed this feast, and it says he did for a particular purpose. Paul is clear about why he did things in 1 Corinthians 9 –

¹⁹For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; ²¹to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; ²²to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.

The context of what Paul says matters.

*3. Paul instructed us to keep the Feasts (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

- Paul never instructed anyone to keep the feasts. If you read what he says, he is quite clear on this. Christ is our Passover. He then refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a pilgrim feast that anticipated our time in Christ. In this, we are to live out the fulfillment of the feast of Unleavened Bread in “sincerity and truth.”

*4. Paul believed all of the Torah (Acts 24:14).

- Yes, Paul believed all of the Torah. So what? I believe all of the Torah and have taught on it for ten years now from Genesis 1:1. Anyone who doesn't believe all of the Torah and claims to be a Bible believer is a dolt. Are we supposed to build an Ark like Noah? Context matters.

*5. Paul said that we establish the Torah (Romans 3:31).

- Yes, Paul said that we establish the Torah. He also says in the same paragraph that we do so by faith in Christ, not by deeds of the law (vss 27. 28)

*6. Paul taught from the Torah (Acts 28:23).

- Yes, Paul taught from the Torah. The Old Testament was the only Scripture that existed at the time. Jesus is rather clear. It points to Him, and Moses wrote about Him – John 5:39 / John 5:46. This is what Paul so carefully explains.

*7. Paul obeyed the Torah (Acts 21:24, Romans 7:25).

- This point has to be taken in context, and this meme provides no context. Paul says in Romans 6:14 that we are not under law, but under grace. He repeats that in the next verse. He gives the same sentiment in 1 Corinthians 9:21. He also says in Galatians 3:10 that the Law brings a curse. Paul gives an example of the law in Galatians 4 using Sarah and Hagar as a teaching tool. Moses was giving insights into what God would do in Christ. It ain't law observance.

*8. Paul took delight in the Torah (Romans 7:22).

- Paul took delight in the Torah. Of course, he did. So do I. It is the very body of law from Moses that tells us of what God would do in Christ. Anyone who doesn't delight in the Torah is lost in poor theology, or just lost.

*9. Paul told us to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 11:1).

- Paul told us to imitate him. That is what I have been doing since I met Christ – steering people away from this heresy known as Hebrew Roots. It cannot please God because it is contrary to the message of God in Christ.

Closing Verse: *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-6*

Next Week: Deuteronomy 21:1-9 *The matter has been fully decided...* (And Atonement Shall Be Provided) (61st Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Conduct for War, Part II

“When you go near a city to fight against it
Then proclaim an offer of peace to it
And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace
And open to you, to this they do commit...

Then all the people shall be who are found in it
Placed under tribute to you, and serve you
-----to this, they shall commit

Now if the city will not make peace with you
But war against you, then you shall besiege it
-----coming against that horde
And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands
You shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword

But the women, the little ones, the livestock
And all that is in the city, all its spoil – yes, it is true
You shall plunder for yourself
And you shall eat the enemies' plunder which
-----the LORD your God gives you

Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you
Which are not of the cities of these nations, so you shall do

“But of the cities of these peoples
Which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance
You shall let nothing that breathes remain alive
But you shall utterly destroy them – a termination dance

The Hittite and the Amorite
And the Canaanite and the Perizzite too
And the Hivite and the Jebusite
Just as the LORD your God has commanded you

Lest they teach you to do
According to all their abominations, which they applaud
Which they have done for their gods
And you sin against the LORD your God

“When you besiege a city for a long time
While making war against it, it to take
You shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them
If you can eat of them, an exemption you shall make

Do not cut them down to use in the siege; that would be rude
For the tree of the field is man's food

Only the trees which you know
Are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down
To build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you
Until it is subdued, until you have destroyed that town

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...