

### DEUTERONOMY

#### Lesson 26 - Chapter 21

Today we begin Deuteronomy chapter 21, and this chapter begins with a very odd ritual that Jewish Rabbis and ancient Hebrew sages have had a hard time explaining. Christian scholars don't even bother to try. We'll explore that ritual and see what sense we can make of it.

This chapter is really divided into two parts: verses 1-9 that discusses the problem of an unknown assailant who murdered someone; and then the remainder that begins a 4-chapter section that deals with several miscellaneous laws for Israel.

The key to understanding the first part of chapter 21 is that it revolves around the subject of **bloodguilt**.

Let's read Deuteronomy chapter 21 together. We'll only read the 1<sup>st</sup> section.

#### **READ DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 21: 1-9**

The typical approach to this chapter of scholars and teachers is to focus on trying to make meaning out of each of the ritual elements involved in this mysterious breaking of the neck of a Heifer (a female cow) that is done in response to the problem of an unsolved murder being committed in the local community. Certainly we will do the same however the much larger subject that we'll begin with today deals with the terribly serious negative spiritual effect that unsolved murder has upon the town closest to the place where the victim's body was found, and more correctly how this affects Israel as a whole.

The problem is that the sin of bloodguilt (or better, the condition or status of having bloodguilt) has been laid upon Israel as a result of this unsolved murder.

Let's talk about blood and bloodguilt for a little while, because Believers (especially Western cultural Christians) know very little about what bloodguilt is and why blood is so important in God's system of justice and jurisprudence. In a nutshell bloodguilt is a serious condition of defilement and sin that is brought upon a person who violates God's laws that concern blood. I would like to begin by offering a rather sweeping statement that I hope by the end of today I will have explained in sufficient depth to give you a better perspective on this touchy subject: blood lies at the center of God's justice system in the way that a fulcrum lies at the center of a teeter-totter. As it swings fully one direction there is one effect, and as it swings back to other there is an opposite effect. On one end of the spectrum the misuse of blood is the **cause** for the Lord seeking retribution from a man, but on the other end the proper use of blood is the **remedy** for the blood-crime. As Americans living in a carefully sanitized society, we know almost nothing about the necessity and role and centrality of blood in the Scriptures because it offends our ears, causes us to avert our eyes, and it turns our stomachs merely to talk about it anymore than to sing a few Christian ditties about our Savior's blood that make us white as snow.

Yet as we've studied Torah, we find that the Bible has this fascination with blood and at the same time holds the value and necessity of blood in the highest regard. As Christians we have scores of songs that both celebrate and lament "the precious blood of Jesus". Non-Believers, particularly atheists, like to point out what they regard as this gruesome and barbaric thread of blood letting and blood spilling that runs from Genesis through Revelation. Christians avoid the Old Testament largely because of the all the blood letting and at the same time somehow sort of mentally minimize the role of blood in the New Testament and especially in the book of Revelation.

When one studies the Bible carefully we find that blood is the main required element to make covenants as well as to atone for trespasses. It is forbidden to eat and it is forbidden to take the blood (the life) of an innocent person. Blood causes defilement on the one hand, and on the other it is the supreme purifier of defilement on earth. For the ancient Hebrews and for most other ancient cultures as well, blood was central and indispensable in worship.

The Bible wastes no time in bringing us to the subject of blood because in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis the Lord's own hand brings about the first recorded death in history when he kills an animal and uses its skin to cover Adam and Havah's nakedness. Why did God kill an innocent animal in order to provide clothing when there were other possibilities such as leaves or wool? Because from this point forward the case will be made that only blood can atone for sins against the Father. So God had a choice: He could take the life of the criminals (Adam and Eve) OR He could provide a substitute and accept that substitute's life as both reparation and atonement for the criminals' sins.

Another God-principle concerning blood is also presented early on in the Scriptures: organic life that is filled with blood is different than organic life that exists without blood. That is, animal

life is wholly different than plant life. Plant life, though valuable, is of lesser value in God's eyes than animal life. Plant life can be offered to God for thanks and as an offering of firstfruits, but NEVER can plant life atone for sin. And this is demonstrated in that when Adam and Eve felt shame, they used plant life (fig leaves) to cover themselves. From a physical rational point of view, those fig leaves worked perfectly fine in its role as clothing. So why did God replace those fig leaves with animal skins? God didn't find those fig leaf garments unacceptable because they somehow offended His fashion sensibility nor did He think that animal skins were more durable; rather it was that the shame Adam and Eve felt was the result of their guilt, and their guilt was the result of trespassing against the Lord. And trespassing against the Lord can only be paid for with blood, never by plant life. Therefore the Lord had Adam and Eve WEAR the result of their offense; over their physical nakedness was the physical remains of the innocent animal whose blood was taken to atone and pay for their sin. The blood of the animal spiritually satisfied God's demand for justice.

However even though the sinful ACT was paid for, the entire nature of Adam and Havah was now infected with sin; they had broken God's one and only commandment to them: do NOT eat of that fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve inherently knew that their sin nature had to be covered; they tried to do it with plant life, but God said that was insufficient. Only blood can cover sin. Of course Adam and Eve weren't consciously thinking in terms of sin; they only knew that they felt shame and thought that it must be because of their physical nakedness. So they sought a physical remedy by covering it up. Blood is physical of course and all flesh requires blood to exist; however **spiritual** beings like angels and Cherubim, even Satan and his demons, do not require blood in order to exist. Even so physical blood does have a spiritual effect and it is this spiritual effect that matters to God and so it ought to matter to us.

The Bible uses a term to describe the ritual taking of the life of an animal as a substitute for the death that is rightly due to the human who has trespassed against God: sacrifice. I just mentioned that early on in the Bible the blood principle was established that life with blood is distinct from life that exists without blood (animal versus plant life); and we find just as early on that mankind (while recognizing the need to sacrifice to God) would usually rather do it in a way each man prefers than to do it according to God's principles. Thus we have the example of Havel and Kayin (Abel and Cain) who are told to bring a sacrifice to God and Abel brings an animal and Cain brings produce. The produce is, of course, rejected because this is apparently an offering that involves atonement and so plant life is not acceptable for that purpose. This rule so infuriates Kayin that he decides to kill Havel and thus we have the first recorded murder. Let me put it in another sense; we have the first unlawful killing of a human by another human. The Bible also calls this act of murder ***the taking of blood***.

So we now have another principle about blood that is established: the unlawful, unjust killing of a human being creates bloodguilt upon the perpetrator. And bloodguilt is so serious that it can ONLY be satisfied by the blood of the guilty party as reparation. Bloodguilt is such an extreme defilement of the person who committed the crime that it causes instant separation between

that person and God.

To be clear there are other sins involving blood that also cause bloodguilt and one of them is for a human to ingest blood of any kind. We find later on in the Bible that it wasn't permissible until the time of Noah, after the Great Flood, to take the life of an animal for FOOD; up to then the only authorized source of food was plants. In other words until the time of the Great Flood for a man to kill an animal and eat it was a crime against blood (a crime against God's laws concerning blood), which therefore incurred bloodguilt. And out of this also came the prohibition against eating blood, which is different than eating meat. Eating blood means to either directly drink the blood of an animal or to kill an animal by strangulation or some other means that does NOT permit its blood to drain out, and then eating its flesh. Or it can mean to use blood as an ingredient in food.

So then, simplistically speaking, bloodguilt arises when a person violates any of the Lord's laws regarding blood: from the eating of it, to the unjust killing of a human, to a misuse of it (or the neglect to use it) in a ritual procedure. The story of Cain and Abel though gives us a strong hint of another negative aspect of bloodguilt. Bloodguilt defiles not only the perpetrator but also it defiles the land on which it occurred; it even defiles the community of people within which it occurred. Listen to Genesis 4 as to one of the unintended results of the murder of Abel:

**<sup>RSV</sup> Genesis 4:10 *And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."<sup>11</sup> And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.<sup>12</sup> When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.***

Here we have perhaps the most well-known Biblical case of bloodguilt and the result is that the land itself is affected. It's NOT that Abel's blood necessarily "touched" the soil (although it certainly must have) and so the contact between Abel's blood and the dirt caused that dirt to become contaminated with a curse. Rather the guilt on the soil resulted from its proximity to the act of murder. It produced a negative spiritual effect; bloodguilt brought with it both a physical AND spiritual consequence. This murder had the spiritual effect of cursing the ground because the land bore the effect of the bloodguilt that was committed upon it thus causing the physical effect of the land to degrade and thus not produce crops as well (or as easy) as it did before the bloodguilt occurred.

I cannot stress enough that this is not some ancient superstition recorded in the Bible. If the laws of blood were nothing but the products of men's fertile imaginations then Yeshua's sacrifice was totally unnecessary. So please understand that while we may find these principles of blood and bloodguilt strange, they are not only still fully in effect they are also the reason that the route of redemption history has proceeded along a very purposeful path. And I

have the deepest regret that those of us in Messiah's church who are responsible to teach you about this principle of blood have instead chosen to take the more genteel approach, and to simply ignore speaking the truth about the terrible consequences of bloodguilt that pile up on our shoulders hour by hour. I'd like to remedy that and we'll talk about that more in a little while.

With that understanding let's continue with Deuteronomy 21 and dissect those first 9 verses. The one and only case that is being discussed here has to do with someone discovering a murder victim but no one seems to know who committed this act. The assumption is that since the killer has not been identified, then he cannot be punished according to the Law (which is that he be executed). Notice that the issue is NOT about finding the killer and bringing him to justice; rather it is about what to do about the very serious problem of the bloodguilt that now rests upon the land and upon the people of the local community.

Notice that this case is further defined as having discovered the body "out in the open". This corpse was found in a field, or alongside a road. Technically this does not cover what to do in situation whereby someone was found dead inside of a city or a village. However since there is nothing in the Torah that specifically addresses that nuance, Rabbis and Sages have assumed that certain portions of this law) could be applied to an unsolved killing that took place inside of a town.

Verse 2 speaks of elders and magistrates (actually the Hebrew is **shofet**, judges) who are to come to where the victim was discovered and begin a legal procedure. Since this law envisions that era when Israel is settled in the Land of Canaan, and the land has been divided up into 12 territories (one for each of the 12 tribes), then these governmental officials (elders and judges) are of course the ones who preside over matters in their own territory.

So if the crime occurred within the territory of Judah then it would be the elders and judges who are members of the tribe of Judah who would officiate over the matter.

Their first job is to carefully measure the distance from the location of the body to the nearby towns and determine which town was closest to the murder scene. Great care has to be taken because whichever town is closest is assigned the bloodguilt brought about by the crime. Now let that sink in for a minute because this is not some procedure that Hebrew men thought up. This is the procedure that the Lord has created. Notice how real and vital is the principle that Yehoveh created human government to administer His laws on earth, and that their authority to determine WHERE BLOODGUILT LIES is completely valid in His eyes. These governmental officials are being counted upon to determine, as God's earthly agents, which community is going to be held responsible to deal with the bloodguilt caused by this unsolved murder. The town that was nearest not only **bore** the guilt, they became responsible to **purge** the guilt (to atone for it). If they did NOT do this they remained in their bloodguilt before God in perpetuity.

The ritual procedure to absolve this bloodguilt begins in verse 3. And it is that the elders of the town located nearest the crime scene are to provide a Heifer that has never been used for fieldwork or for any work purpose in general. They are to bring the Heifer to a nearby wadi and there break its neck, killing it.

A wadi is a riverbed; one that is usually dry part of the year and has flowing water at other times. The instruction about the wadi is a little uncertain. The typical translation is that this must be a wadi “that is overflowing”, or one that is “flowing strong”. This is an oxymoron in Israel because there are few known wadis that flow strongly at predictable times (it is very rare a least in modern times). So the logical question is since the ceremony must be done nearby the murder victim’s body, in local proximity to the designated village, and certainly within the confines of the tribal territory, what happens in the MOST usual case where there IS no wadi that is strongly flowing? Most new scholarship agrees that the translation of the Hebrew word **‘eitan** as “overflowing” or “strong flow” is not correct. In other contexts in Scripture the word tends to indicate “strong” like in the sense of “hard”. In the Bible for instance, when it speaks of a king (or even the Lord) reigning with a “strong hand” a better translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century sense of words would be a “hard hand”. It means ruling without tolerance, unbending and unyielding. Therefore more likely this is referring to bringing the Heifer to a typical Israeli wadi, one that is unyielding, meaning that it is so rugged and rocky that it cannot be cultivated and that it does not provide any useful water. Those who have been to Israel can picture this rather easily. The wadis there are dry most of the year, and only occasionally have water in the form of a momentary flash flood. You’ll find a line of scrub bushes and Acacias (in Hebrew, **Shittim**) trees along these wadis, but they are also rock strewn and the soil is generally inorganic sand. If you tried to remove the rocks to plant things, the next flash flood would simply bring more rocks. If you planted a crop, a flash flood would destroy it in a few seconds. Not only that, the water that is present beneath a wadi is usually in the form of moist soil several feet down and rarely is it suitable for a well.

So probably this is speaking about bringing the Heifer to a place that cannot and will not be used to grow crops or obtain water. It is there that the town’s elders are to break the Heifer’s neck. Let me point out a couple of things about this procedure. First of all, it is rather cruel. You don’t just easily break the neck of a cow. The process would be painful and it would take a little time. Second, this method of ritual killing is spoken of in the book of Exodus (chapters 13 and 34) as the means to slaughter the firstborn of unclean animals (animals that due to their species are not suitable for sacrifice OR they are disqualified for sacrificial use because of imperfections). There is nothing about this Heifer used in this ritual that would indicate it was NOT suitable for ritual sacrifice or that it was in any way impure.

Then during this ritual we see that the priests come forward; what their role is we don’t know. They appear to be there mainly to just officiate and assure that the procedure is done properly. This brings up a very important point: the killing of the Heifer in response to the discovery of an anonymous murder victim is NOT a sacrifice. It has already been established by God that a

sacrifice can ONLY occur at the Tabernacle (later the Temple), on holy ground, and of course this particular ritual procedure we're studying can occur at any number of places. Further the priests do not do the killing, there is no altar, and the animal is not burned up with fire. Therefore this is by no means a sacrifice and rather is something else.

Next is another curious aspect of the ritual. The elders of the town assigned with the bloodguilt wash their hands (with water) over the body of the Heifer and they recite the declaration as outlined in verses 7 and 8. Many Bible translators say that those words spoken by the elders are a vow to God; I disagree with that. Not only is God's name not invoked (an absolute must in vow) but the structure of the sentence does not employ the Hebrew participle *'im* at the beginning of the sentence, which makes it a vow. In other words, with the *'im* included the translation becomes "I swear", but without the *'im* it is simply "I declare". This verse in Deuteronomy 21 does NOT have the *'im* and so we have no reason to conclude that what the elders pronounced was a vow or an oath.

The hand washing is probably a symbolic indication of the innocence of the elders in the whole matter and that they are telling the truth. They are saying that they shouldn't bear the bloodguilt because they were not involved with the killing, did not know the identity of the killer, and they could not reasonably have anticipated or prevented it. This hand washing was so common in its meaning in the ancient Middle East that this is almost certainly what it meant. Recall that a long time later the meaning of that hand washing gesture was still in existence as we read in the Gospel of Matthew of Pontius Pilate doing a similar thing in the kangaroo court convened to sentence Jesus to death, when (as he washes his hands) he says to the crowd, "I am innocent of this man's blood". To this very day it is a common saying almost everywhere in the world that we "wash our hands of the matter" indicating our innocence.

Now back to the town elders' declaration of innocence. Rather than a vow what their statement amounts to is more than anything else a PRAYER to God. A declaration to God that is NOT a vow is by definition a prayer. In this prayer the elders are directly asking the Lord to absolve them from bloodguilt CAUSED by the death of the innocent person (the murder victim). See here's the thing: since this ritual procedure is NOT a sacrifice it can have no **atonement** quality; its purpose can only be one of illustration and demonstration for the people, but also of obedience to the Lord's commands. The reality is that it was this **prayer** that was the key for forgiveness in this situation. And the elders lean on their redeemed status for absolution. It is quite literally in the same mold that every Believer asks God for forgiveness: we are redeemed and our redeemed status gives us the right to ask Our Father for forgiveness and mercy (the unredeemed have no such thing available to them).

Note the ending words of verse 8: "and they will be absolved (forgiven) of bloodguilt".

Forgive me for repeating something I have tried to emphasize so many times, but invariably

someone doesn't get it: over and over again in the Torah when the Lord lays out these atoning ritual procedures the passage ends with the Lord saying, "and they will be forgiven". Folks this means exactly what it says; these ritual sacrifices (and in our case today a prayer spoken within a ritual procedure that is NOT a sacrifice) bring actual, real, complete, unequivocal forgiveness. Not partial forgiveness, not something-like forgiveness. I have heard so many times preachers say that in the OT sins were "covered", but they weren't actually forgiven. That real forgiveness only happens the New Testament. That is completely FALSE. This issue about "covered" sins versus "absolved" or "forgiven" sins is a red herring. There is no such concept as a sin covered but not forgiven in the Bible, Old or New Testaments. Saying that a sin is **covered** is just a colloquialism and is simply a word chosen by a translator. Covered, absolved, and forgiven means the same thing and it translates the SAME Hebrew word (*kipper* or *kaphar*) and carries the same weight and has the same effect. Those OT Hebrews who followed the sacrificial system were indeed forgiven for their trespasses; fully. If one is determined to stick with the word "covered" in the OT (and there is nothing wrong with that) then there is utterly no basis to suddenly change the meaning it to "absolve, expiate, or forgiven" in the NT. This switch is done to try and prove, or disguise, an agenda driven doctrine of men.

So what did Messiah's sacrifice bring to the table that was different than what happened with the animal sacrifices? Well at the least His sacrifice was capable of atoning for things the sacrificial system could not. His sacrifice could atone for a murderer. His sacrifice could atone for an idolater. There exists no such thing within the sacrificial system as a ritual procedure to atone for a murderer or an idolater; such a person was simply permanently "karet" (cut off). He was BOTH physically executed and spiritually separated from God. However if one truly confesses and repents and trusts Yeshua, your guilt even for murder is atoned for. That said you are NOT absolved from having your physical life taken to expiate the bloodguilt, nor do you escape earthly justice; only your spiritual life is assured to continue.

Further the Levitical sacrificial system did NOT create a path by which a human could have his evil nature exchanged for a new holy one. The effect of this is that no human could ever find his way to Heaven. Instead in the Old Testament times if he died in a righteous state, under the laws of Torah, then his soul or spirit went to a place the Bible calls Abraham's Bosom. Abraham's Bosom was NOT Heaven, because no man who has not had his nature exchanged for a new holy one can be pure enough to enter Heaven. True enough, the '*Olah* and *Minchah* sacrifices did deal with the sinful **nature** of men to the extent that the sacrifice allowed a man to be in communication with God and at peace with Him. BUT these did NOT actually cleanse a man's unclean nature. Christ's sacrifice paved the way for a man's natural sinful spirit (his nature) to be exchanged for a Holy Spirit (a new and holy nature). With this new holy nature we CAN stand before God in His Heaven.

And of course there was necessarily sacrifice after sacrifice under the Levitical sacrificial system. Every new day required new sacrifices for the nation of Israel, and every new



occurrence of a sin required an additional atoning ritual. However there was but ONE single sacrifice by Yeshua (of Himself) that satisfied a multitude of various sacrifices within the sacrificial system. PLUS His sacrifice acted in a way that additional sacrifices are not needed should you sin again.

Lastly, His sacrifice could (generally speaking) atone for intentional, high-handed sins, while the sacrificial system had no such provision. I remind those who have heard this from me before that the word “unintentional” as concerns unintentional sins isn’t precisely in all its aspects the same as how we think (in modern vocabulary) of the term unintentional; it’s similar but there are subtle yet important differences.

Those were the major differences between what the sacrifice of Yeshua did in contrast to the sacrifice of Bulls and Sheep. But the completeness of forgiveness by God was the same in both cases.

Now back to other aspects of bloodguilt. I hope you’re starting to receive a better picture of what blood means and what bloodguilt amounts to and how serious it is. When I conduct Communion, those of you who have been present know that I always read a certain verse that Paul uttered in 1 Corinthians; and this verse deals with precisely what we’ve been discussing: bloodguilt.

**<sup>RSV</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27 *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.<sup>28</sup> Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.***

Notice that a man will be guilty of the blood of Christ if he partakes in what we have come to call “Communion” but he is unworthy of doing so. By my best understanding of what unworthy means in this context, I think that it means to be a) an unbeliever, and/or b) one who may profess to be a Believer but has fallen so far away from unity with God that Christ’s sacrifice is not efficacious for him.

There is but ONE single exception in all the Scriptures that permits the symbolic drinking of blood (or for that matter, symbolic eating of human flesh); and that is Communion. Jesus’ Passover time connection of drinking wine as symbolic of His blood has absolutely no parallel in the Bible. Wine was always associated with joy, never blood. Real or symbolic drinking of blood to a Hebrew was so horrible and repulsive that I don’t think I have the words to express it. And this revulsion at ingesting blood was ordered and cultivated by Yehoveh, and it is explained in His many laws about blood (several of which we have discussed today). The gravity of this situation as concerns eating blood escapes the average Christian. There is a fascinating story in the Gospel of John that might, now, make more sense to you. Turn your

Bibles to John 6:49 – 69.

### READ JOHN 6:49-69

In verse 61, after Yeshua has pronounced the absolute necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He asks a rhetorical question as He watches many of His followers walk away from Him (in disgust I might add). His question is: “does this offend you?” What “this” is he referring to? Of course it was this message of eating his blood that caused absolute revulsion among even those who had dedicated themselves to Him! And then He goes on to say that these words are “in spirit”, indicating what we all inherently know, which is that in NO WAY was He speaking of a literal, physical eating of flesh eating and drinking of blood; it was symbolic of a spiritual decision to come into complete unity with Him.

Long after Christ was dead, Paul warns in 1 Corinthians that those who are unworthy should **not** drink of Yeshua’s blood (take Communion) or else that person will bear bloodguilt. And what is the penalty for bloodguilt? If the perpetrator is known, his life must be taken. A central rule of blood in God’s justice system is that when innocent blood is shed, the blood of the guilty is required by God as payment, no exceptions and no substitution. And this required blood of the guilty is NOT the blood of atonement; it is the blood of retribution. It is the blood of a debt owed to God.

I want to end this lesson by pointing out some additional principles of bloodguilt. And the reason for my pointing this out is as a challenge to us all. We live in a land that is so contaminated with bloodguilt that our national future is completely predictable: destruction right along with the rest of the world. How could we, a supposed Christian nation, merit bloodguilt and where does our bloodguilt lie? In our refusal to take the life of murderers and instead saying it is better to simply jail them until they die at the end of a relatively normal life span. Much of the church (and much of Judaism) calls this humanitarian mercy. We have recently had that horrific case of a non-repentant Muslim terrorist who planned and executed the bombing of the airplane that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland killing almost 300 people, being set free from prison on “humanitarian reasons”. Not only was his life not taken for this massacre, he was set free merely because he was ill (based on some macabre and secular humanistic philosophy of mercy and forgiveness). But God says such a thing is a refusal to obey His commandments. Murder brings bloodguilt upon the land and the community, not just the criminal. The ONLY way for that bloodguilt to be absolved is by means of taking the life of the murderer. That is God’s law. Our own nation has refused to do this in many states, now, for decades. Even states that HAVE the death penalty have found innumerable reasons to spare the life of a premeditated murderer. We all live today in a land soaked in bloodguilt, and the Lord will act.

Again, there is ONLY one prescribed method for dealing with bloodguilt; execute the perpetrator OTHERWISE the entire community bears the guilt right along with him.

A question that any Christian who has been saved for even a few years should have by now asked him or herself is: 'why is the coming Battle of Armageddon, led by Our Savior, so bloody and without mercy?' You see Armageddon is a Holy War of complete and absolute annihilation. In many ways it is very similar to Noah's flood where the ONLY people spared were those on that ark. The ONLY survivors of the War of Armageddon in the entire world will be those who professed Yeshua BEFORE the battle begins. Those who try to convert during the battle get the same treatment as those who do not: destruction.

Christ is called the Blood Avenger in the Battle of Armageddon. Do you now understand what that term means? The Lord has declared the entire world culpable of bloodguilt. We in this room are blood-guilty because (among other things) we're part of a nation that not only doesn't prosecute abortion doctors, but also actually makes it legal and pronounces it good. We in this room are blood-guilty because we have in our nation convicted murderers who are not having their lives taken to absolve the our bloodguilt, and instead they are simply serving long prison sentences; therefore since we won't do what is required to remove bloodguilt the Lord is sending His Blood Avenger, Yeshua HaMashiach, to do what the law has always been: the blood of the guilty is required for spilling the blood of the innocent. And a community or society that refuses to take God's justice upon the blood-guilty is guilty by membership.

Let me point out that this is neither a call nor an excuse for vigilantism. We have a justice system, and we need to work hard to change it. But it also points out one of the prime reasons we need to study the Word of God thoroughly, and also to rush to accept what Jesus Christ has done for us. Those of us who OUGHT to bear the price of our bloodguilt had it paid for by Messiah. But that only applies to those who actually TRUST in who He is and what He has done.

Next week we'll continue in Deuteronomy 21 as it concerns families and the human spoils of Holy war.