

Second Mosaic Speech: Specific Covenant Stipulations – Part 4 (February 1406 BC)**Deuteronomy 19–20****Cities of Refuge**

19:1 “When the LORD your God cuts off the nations, whose land the LORD your God gives you, and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and in their houses,
2 you shall set aside three cities for yourself in the midst of your land, which the LORD your God gives you to possess.
3 “You shall prepare the roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there.
4 “Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously—
5 as when *a man* goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron *head* slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live;
6 otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger, and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously.
7 “Therefore, I command you, saying, ‘You shall set aside three cities for yourself.’
8 “If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers—
9 if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always—then you shall add three more cities for yourself, besides these three.
10 “So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and bloodguiltiness be on you.
11 “But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities,
12 then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.
13 “You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.

Private Property Rights

14 “You shall not move your neighbor’s boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess.

Witnesses and the Protection of the Accused

15 “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. [[John 8:17](#); [2 Cor 13:1](#); [1 Tim 5:19](#)]

Punishment for Perjury

16 “If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing,
17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days.
18 “The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely,
19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

20 “The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.

21 “Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. [[Matt 5:38–42](#)]

The Conduct of War—Introduction

20:1 “When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.

2 “When you are approaching the battle, the priest shall come near and speak to the people.

3 “He shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them,

4 for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’

The Conduct of War—Exemptions from Military Service

5 “The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it.

6 ‘Who is the man that has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use its fruit? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would begin to use its fruit.

7 ‘And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.’

8 “Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, ‘Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers’ hearts melt like his heart.’ [cf. [Judg 7:3](#)]

9 “When the officers have finished speaking to the people, they shall appoint commanders of armies at the head of the people.

The Conduct of War—Distant Enemy Cities

10 “When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace.

11 “If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you.

12 “However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it.

13 “When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword.

14 “Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you.

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

The Conduct of War—Local Enemy Cities

16 “Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.

17 “But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you,

18 so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God.

The Conduct of War—Proper Siege Practices

19 “When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy

its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?

20 “Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, that you may construct siegeworks against the city that is making war with you until it falls.

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