

REFUGE IN KENTUCKY C. O. O. L. J. C.

# That One Where...In the Desert...Tribes...

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Numbers 30:2(1)-32:42; Jeremiah 1:1-2:3;  
Matthew 5:33-37

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## Teaching Lesson

עלייות; aliyot: “ascent” or “going up”. An aliyah is a subdivision of the Torah portion. There are seven aliyot in each portion. Each one is read by a different person and the last aliyah contains the maftir (concluder).

(>1443 B. C.) Numbers 30:2(1) – 32:42, Mattot - משות

### Aliyah i 30:2(1)-17(16)

The word here for “vow” is actually the word, *neder* and is (1) “a promise made to God to perform some deed (e.g., Gen. 28: 20)” in contracts to *nedavah* [free will offering]. (2) “A prohibition which a person imposes upon himself to abstain from something which is otherwise permitted” contrast with *shevu'ah* (oath). One should observe a *neder* with the same importance as one would the collective body of Jewish law.<sup>1</sup>

Tractates [Nedarim](#) and [Shevuot](#) in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and [Babylonian Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of vows in [Exodus 20:7](#), [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) and [19:12](#), [Numbers 30:2–17](#), and [Deuteronomy 23:24](#). ([Mishnah Nedarim 1:1–11:11](#); [Tosefta Nedarim 1:1–7:8](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 1a–](#); [Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 2a–91b](#); [Mishnah Shevuot 1:1–8:6](#); [Tosefta Shevuot 1:1–6:7](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Shevuot 1a–](#); [Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 2a–49b](#).)

[Rabbi Akiba](#) taught that vows are a fence to self-restraint. ([Mishnah Avot 3:13](#).) But the [Jerusalem Talmud](#) asked whether it was not enough that the Torah had forbidden us things that we should seek to forbid yet other things to ourselves. ([Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 9:1](#).) The [Gemara](#) discouraged vows. [Rabbi Nathan](#) taught that one who vows is as if he built a high place, and he who fulfils a vow is as if he sacrificed on that high place. And the [Gemara](#) deduced from [Rabbi Nathan's](#) teaching that is meritorious to seek absolution from vows. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 22a](#), [59a](#).)

The [Mishnah](#) taught that the law of the dissolution of vows hovers in the air and has nothing on which to rest in the Biblical text. ([Mishnah Chagigah 1:8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 10a](#).) [Rab Judah](#) said that [Samuel](#) found the Scriptural basis for the law of the dissolution of vows in the words of [Numbers 30:3](#), “he shall not break his word,” which teaches that “he” — the vower — may not break the vow, but *others* might dissolve it for him. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 10a](#).)

[Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) told of how an Arab merchant took him to see Mount Sinai, where he saw scorpions surround it, and they stood like white donkeys. [Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) heard a Heavenly Voice expressing regret about making an oath and asking who would annul the oath. When [Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) came before the [Rabbis](#), they told him that he should have annulled the oath. But [Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) thought that perhaps it was the oath in connection with the Flood, where in [Genesis 8:21](#), God promised never to destroy the world again with another flood. The

<sup>1</sup> Vow and Vowing – Jewish Virtual Library:

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0020\\_0\\_20519.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0020_0_20519.html)

Rabbis replied that if that had been the oath, the Heavenly Voice would not have expressed regret. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 74a.](#))<sup>2</sup>

*And Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying: This is the thing which G-d has commanded (Numbers 30:2)*

This verse can also be interpreted as follows: Moses spoke to the children of Israel regarding the heads of the tribes, that they must follow their instructions as one follows the word of G-d.

(*El*, "to" can also mean "about "; *le* which in this context translates as "of", usually means "to"; thus *el rashei hamatot le'benei yisrael* ("to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel") can also read, "[And Moses spoke] about the heads of the tribes to the children of Israel, [saying: This is the thing that G-d has commanded]...")

(Alshich)

*And Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes (30:2)*

This was the procedure with all the laws that Moses taught: first he would teach them to Aaron and the heads of the tribes, and then he would instruct the people, as described in Exodus 34:31-32.

Why are the tribal heads particularly mentioned by the laws of vows? To teach us that an expert Torah scholar has the ability to annul vows like a tribunal of three laymen.

(Talmud; Rashi)

*A man who shall vow a vow (30:3)*

Vows are a means to asceticism.

(Ethics of the Fathers 3:13)

Ascetism leads to purity, purity leads to holiness, holiness leads to humility, humility leads to fear of sin, fear of sin leads to saintliness, saintliness leads to the [possession of] the holy spirit, and the holy spirit leads to eternal life.

(Talmud, Avodah Zarah 20b)

[more](#)<sup>3</sup>

*According to all that proceeds out of his mouth shall he do (30:3)*

<sup>2</sup> Matot – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matot>

<sup>3</sup> Does G-d Want Us to Enjoy Ourselves – Chabad.org: [http://www.chabad.org/global/popup/default\\_cdo/aid/2243/jewish/Does-G-d-Want-Us-To-Enjoy-Ourselves.htm](http://www.chabad.org/global/popup/default_cdo/aid/2243/jewish/Does-G-d-Want-Us-To-Enjoy-Ourselves.htm)

Better that you not vow, than that you should vow and not fulfill.

(Ecclesiastes 5:4)<sup>4</sup>

Raba employed [Numbers 30:3](#) to interpret [Exodus 32:11](#), which says: “And Moses besought (*va-yechal*) the Lord his God” in connection with the incident of the [Golden Calf](#). Raba noted that [Exodus 32:11](#) uses the term “besought” (*va-yechal*), while [Numbers 30:3](#) uses the similar term “break” (*yachel*) in connection with vows. Transferring the use of [Numbers 30:3](#) to [Exodus 32:11](#), Raba reasoned that [Exodus 32:11](#) meant that Moses stood in prayer before God until Moses annulled for God God’s vow to destroy Israel, for a master had taught that while people cannot break their vows, others may annul their vows for them. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 32a](#).) Similarly, Rabbi Berekiah taught in the name of [Rabbi Helbo](#) in the name of Rabbi Isaac that Moses absolved God of God’s vow. When the Israelites made the Golden Calf, Moses began to persuade God to forgive them, but God explained to Moses that God had already taken an oath in [Exodus 22:19](#) that “he who sacrifices to the gods . . . shall be utterly destroyed,” and God could not retract an oath. Moses responded by asking whether God had not granted Moses the power to annul oaths in [Numbers 30:3](#) by saying, “When a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, *he* shall not break his word,” implying that while he himself could not break his word, a scholar could absolve his vow. So Moses wrapped himself in his cloak and adopted the posture of a sage, and God stood before Moses as one asking for the annulment of a vow. ([Exodus Rabbah 43:4](#).)

Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) taught that just as the texts “He shall not break his word” in [Numbers 30:3](#) and “Defer not to pay it” in [Ecclesiastes 5:3](#) apply to vows, so they also apply to valuations, and thus Moses exhorts the Israelites in [Leviticus 27:7](#): “When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons to the Lord, according to your valuation . . . .” ([Leviticus Rabbah 37:2](#).)<sup>5</sup>

## Chapter 31

### *Aliyah ii* 31:1-12

*Avenge the vengeance of the children of Israel upon the Midianites (31:2)*

Why only upon the Midianites, but not the Moabites (who also sent their daughters to cause Israel to sin)? Because the Moabites got involved because they feared Israel (cf. Numbers 22:2-6); but the Midianites entered a fight that was not theirs.

Another explanation: G-d said to spare the Moabites because of "two fine creatures which I shall extract from them" -- Ruth the Moabite and Naamah the Ammonite (wife of King Solomon).

(Rashi)

*Avenge the vengeance (31:2)*

<sup>4</sup> Matot – Chabad.org: [http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody\\_cdo/AID/296688](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody_cdo/AID/296688)

<sup>5</sup> Matot – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matot>

The double terminology indicates that before the nation of Midian can be defeated, its supernal "minister", which embodies the spiritual essence of Midian, must be vanquished.

(Keli Chemda)

The Hebrew word *midian* means "strife". Midian is the essence of divisiveness, which is the root of all evil.

Thus our Sages speak of "groundless hatred" as the greatest of evils. In truth *all* strife is groundless hatred: the so called "grounds" that people and nations have for hating and destroying each other are but the various façades of the divisive "I" of Midian -- the ego that belies the common source and goal of humanity and views the very existence of others as an encroachment upon the self.

On the cosmic level, G-d is the ultimate oneness, and everything G-dly in our world bears the stamp of His unity. All evil derives from the distortion of this oneness by the veil of divisiveness in which G-d shrouds His creation.

So before the people of Israel could conquer the "seven nations" that inhabited the Land of Canaan -- which represent the seven negative traits of the heart -- they first had to destroy Midian, which is their source and cause. This is also why the destruction of Midian could only be achieved under the leadership of Moses, who embodied the traits of utter self-abnegation, (and thus) harmony and truth.

(Maamar Heichaltzu 5659)

*And Moses spoke to the people: "Arm yourselves... to take G-d's vengeance on Midian" (31:3)*

G-d had said to Moses, "Avenge the vengeance of the children of Israel upon the Midianites"; yet Moses said: "To take G-d's vengeance on Midian"!

G-d said to Israel: It is you who have an account to settle with them, for they caused Me to harm you. But Moses said: Master of the worlds! If we had been uncircumcised, or idol-worshippers, or had denied the mitzvot, the Midianites would not have hated us. They only persecute us on account of the Torah and the precepts which You have given us! Consequently the vengeance is Yours; and so I say: "To take G-d's vengeance on Midian."

(Midrash Tanchuma)

"To take G-d's vengeance on Midian" -- for whoever stands against Israel, stands against G-d.

(Rashi)

G-d sees the war on Midian as avenging Israel, for G-d's foremost concern is for His people; the people of Israel see the war as avenging G-d, for they are concerned only with the honor of G-d.

(The Chassidic Masters)

*A thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war (31:5)*

Moses wanted to demonstrate to them that it is not the number of troops or their arms that determines victory or defeat, but their worthiness. For Zimri had caused the death of 24,000 without a single sword or armament; while they, numbering only 12,000, will defeat the far more numerous Midianites, "and not a single one of them was lost" (Numbers 31:49), even though in ordinary wars, there are casualties also on the victorious side.

(Me'am Loez)

*And Moses sent them to the war... them and Pinchas the son of Elazar the priest (31:6)*

G-d charged Moses with the mission, yet he sends others! But since Moses had grown up in the land of Midian, he thought: It is not right that I should punish one who has done good to me. The proverb says: "A well from which you drank, cast not a stone into it."

(Midrash Rabbah)

*And Moses sent... Pinchas the son of Elazar the priest (31:6)*

Why did he send Pinchas? He said: "The one who began the mitzvah shall finish it." It was Pinchas who turned away G-d's wrath from Israel and smote the Midianite woman; let him finish the sacred task.

(Midrash Rabbah; Rashi)

*And they warred against Midian, as G-d commanded Moses (31:7)*

When laying siege on a city to conquer it, we do not surround it from all four sides, but only from three sides, leaving a way to escape for anyone who wishes to flee for his life. As it is written: "And they warred against Midian, as G-d commanded Moses"; it has been handed down by tradition that this is what G-d had commanded him.

(Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings and their Wars 6:7)

*Also Balaam the son of Beor they slew with the sword (31:8)*

What was Balaam doing in Midian? Rabbi Jonathan said: He went to receive his reward for the twenty-four thousand Israelites whose destruction he had caused [by his advice to entice them with the daughters of Moab and Midian] ... This is what people say: "When the camel went to demand horns, they cut off the ears he had."

(Talmud, Sanhedrin 106a)<sup>6</sup>

A midrash deduced from the proximity of the report in [Numbers 31:9](#) that “the children of Israel took captive the women of Midian . . . and all their cattle” with the report of [Numbers 32:1](#) that “the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle” that God cast the Midianites down before Israel so that the Reubenites and Gadites might grow rich. The midrash cited this turn of events as proof of the words of [Psalm 32:1](#) that “God is judge; He puts down one, and lifts up another.” ([Numbers Rabbah 22:8](#).)

**Aliyah iii 31:13-24**

**Aliyah iv 31:25-41**

**Aliyah v 31:42-54**

## Chapter 32

**Aliyah vi 32:1-19**

A midrash deduced from [Numbers 32:1](#) that the Reubenites and Gadites were rich, possessing large amounts of cattle, but they loved their possessions so much that they separated themselves from their fellow Israelites and settled outside the Land of Israel. As a result, they became the first tribes to be taken away into exile, as [1 Chronicles 5:26](#) reports, “[Tillegath-pilneser](#) king of Assyria . . . carried . . . away . . . the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.” ([Numbers Rabbah 22:7](#))<sup>7</sup>

*So did your fathers... (32:8)*

If Moses initially saw their request as the equivalent of the Spies' shunning of the Holy Land, why did he, at the end, agree to their proposal, and even expand on it, by adding half the tribe of Menasseh to the tribes of Reuben and Gad?

(The fact that they pledged to participate in other tribes' conquest of the Land only answered the first part of Moses' complaint to them -- "Shall your brethren go to war, and you sit here?" -- but not the other, seemingly more grave accusation, namely that they are repeating the sin of the Spies in spurning the Land, which had caused that entire generation to die out in the desert!)

The explanation is to be found in the first words of the response given by the men of Reuben and Gad to Moses: "We will build sheepfolds here for our sheep, and cities for our young."

Chassidic teaching explains the sin of the Spies as resulting from a reluctance to assume the mission of "settling the Land". Though they knew that the very purpose of creation is to "Make for G-d a dwelling in the lowly (i.e., physical) world", they believed themselves incapable of carrying out this mission. "It is a land that consumes its settlers!" the Spies cried upon their return from their survey of the Land. How could they be sure that once they involved themselves with the land, they would not be overwhelmed by its corporeality? How could they know

<sup>6</sup> Matot – Chabad.org: [http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody\\_cdo/AID/296688](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody_cdo/AID/296688)

<sup>7</sup> Matot – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matot>

whether they would indeed exploit its lofty potential and not instead sink into the morass of material life?

When the people of Reuben and Gad came forward with their request, Moses thought that he was again meeting with a refusal by a group of "spiritualists" shunning the Divinely-ordained mission to develop the Land.

In truth, however, it was not the dread of the material that motivated these two tribes to remain east of the Jordan. On the contrary: they wanted to *settle* these lands, to build cities and ranches, to raise their sheep and cattle on its pastures. Their plea, "Do not take us across the Jordan" did not express a reluctance to seek out the potential for holiness contained in the Land, but an attraction to even more remote -- and thus even loftier -- "sparks of G-dliness."

After all, the land west of the Jordan, though material, was the "Holy Land" -- a land where even the most mundane pursuits are touched with a spiritual glow. Outside of the Holy Land, the physical world is *more* lowly, and thus contains sparks of Divinity that derive from an even higher source. The tribes of Reuben and Gad were convinced that their mission in life was to pursue, extract and elevate the "sparks" inherent in this more spiritually distant corner of creation.

When they said to Moses, "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle and cities for our children," Moses understood that what they were seeking was not an escape from the Land, but the opportunity to "make a home for G-d" in an even lowlier domain -- in the territories that lie beyond the borders of the most sacred of lands as defined by Israel's present mandate from G-d.

(From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, a midrash taught that the Reubenites and the Gadites cherished their property more than human life, putting their cattle before their children when they told Moses in [Numbers 32:16](#), "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones." Moses told them that their priorities were wrong and that they should rather do the more important things first, when Moses told them in [Numbers 32:24](#), "Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep." The midrash saw in their different priorities application of the words of [Ecclesiastes 10:2](#), "A wise man's understanding is at his right hand" — applying to Moses — and "A fool's understanding at his left" — applying to the Reubenites and the Gadites. God told the Reubenites and the Gadites that as they showed greater love for their cattle than for human souls, there would be no blessing in it for them. The midrash thus saw in their fate application of the words of [Proverbs 20:21](#), "An estate may be gotten hastily at the beginning; but the end thereof shall not be blessed," and the words of [Proverbs 23:4](#), "Do not weary yourself to be rich; cease from your own wisdom." (Numbers Rabbah 22:9.)

### **Aliyah vii 32:20-42**

In the Mishnah, [Rabbi Meir](#) noted that [Numbers 32:20](#) and [29](#) stated the same condition in both positive and negative formulations. [Numbers 32:29](#) states the condition in the positive: "And Moses said to them,

<sup>8</sup> Matot – Chabad.org: [http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody\\_cdo/AID/296688](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody_cdo/AID/296688)

if the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan, . . . then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession.” And [Numbers 32:20](#) states the same condition in the negative: “But if they will not pass over with you armed, then they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.” Rabbi Meir deduced that every stipulation must be stated in both the negative and positive formulations, like the condition of the children of Gad and the children of Reuben in [Numbers 32:20](#) and [29](#), or it is not a binding stipulation. Rabbi Hanina ben [Gamaliel II](#) maintained, however, that Moses stated the matter both ways because he needed to do so to be understood; otherwise one might have concluded that the Gadites and Reubenites would receive no inheritance even in the land of Canaan. ([Mishnah Kiddushin 3:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 61a.](#))<sup>9</sup>

*And you shall be guiltless towards G-d and towards Israel (32:22)*

The Sages taught: Always appoint at least two people together as trustees over public funds. Even Moses, who enjoyed the full trust of G-d--as it is written, "In all My house, he is trusted"--figured the accounts of the Sanctuary together with others, as it says: "By the hand of Itamar the son of Aaron" (Exodus 38:21).

Thus the Sages taught: the one who made the appropriation [of the monies donated to the Holy Temple] did not enter the chamber wearing either a hemmed cloak or shoes or sandals or *tefillin* or an amulet (i.e., nothing in which money can be hidden); lest if he became poor people might say that he became poor because of an iniquity committed in the chamber, or if he became rich people might say that he became rich from the monies in the chamber. For it is a man's duty to be free of [blame](#) before men as before G-d, as it is said: "And you shall be guiltless towards G-d and towards Israel."

(Midrash Tanchuma; Mishnah, Shekalim 3:2)<sup>10</sup>

The Sages taught in a [Baraita](#) that they honored the memory of the family that baked the Temple [showbread](#), for they never allowed fine bread to be found in their children's hands. And the Sages honored the memory of the family that made the Temple incense, for they never allowed a bride of their house to go about perfumed. In both cases, the families did so to fulfill the command of [Numbers 32:22](#) that “you shall be clear before the Lord and before Israel” — meaning that people should act so as to avoid even the appearance of transgression. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 38a.](#))<sup>11</sup>

*And Moses said to them... "Build cities for your young, and sheepfolds for your sheep" (32:24)*

They, on the other hand, had said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our sheep, and cities for our young" (v. 16) giving precedence to their cattle over their children. Said Moses to them: Not so! Make the primary thing primary, and the secondary thing secondary.

(Rashi)

<sup>9</sup> Matot – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matot>

<sup>10</sup> Matot – Chabad.org: [http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody\\_cdo/AID/296688](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody_cdo/AID/296688)

<sup>11</sup> Matot – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matot>

*If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan... (32:29)*

Rabbi Meir said: Every stipulation which is not like that of the children of Gad and the children of Reuben is not legally binding. For it is written: "And Moses said unto them: If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan, [... you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession]," and it is also written, "But if they will not pass over with you armed, then they shall have possessions among you in the Land of Canaan." (I.e., both sides of the condition have to be spelled out -- if the condition is fulfilled, then so-and-so will be the case, but if the stipulation is not fulfilled, then so-and so will be the case.)

(Talmud, Kiddushin 61a)

*And half the tribe of Menasseh (32:33)*

Because Menasseh caused the sons of Jacob to rend their clothes by hiding Joseph's goblet in Benjamin's sack (cf. Genesis 44:13), his tribe was rent in two, half receiving its portion in the lands east of the Jordan, and half on the west.

(Midrash Rabbah)

*And Moses gave the Gilead to Machir the son of Menasseh... And Yair the son of Menasseh went and conquered their villages... (32:40-41)*

We learned: Yair the son of Menasseh and Machir the son of Menasseh were born in the days of Jacob, and did not die before Israel entered the Land. (But does it not say, "And there was not left a man of [the generation of the desert], save Caleb the son of Yefuneh, and Joshua the son of Nun"? Said Rav Acha bar Yaakov: The decree was directed neither against those under twenty years of age, nor against those over sixty years of age.)

(Talmud, Bava Batra 121b)<sup>12</sup>

## The Commandments in this Portion

- Not to transgress in matters that one has forbidden oneself ([Numbers 30:3](#))
- The precept of the law of nullifying vows ([Numbers 30:3](#))
- That we should not break our word in vows that we make ([Numbers 30:3](#))<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Matot – Chabad.org: [http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody\\_cdo/AID/296688](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody_cdo/AID/296688)

<sup>13</sup> Matot – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matot>

## Parting Lesson

### (627-6 B.C.) Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

#### The Life and Message of Jeremiah

Despite the greater knowledge of Jeremiah's life than of any other prophet's, no biography of him can be written, for the available facts are too meager. Important background information is found in Scripture in II Kings, II Chronicles, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Obadiah. Other important sources on Jeremiah's times are the Hebrew letters from Lachish, primary documents from Egypt and Mesopotamia, and the histories of Herodotus and Josephus. It is noteworthy that II Kings, which describes events contemporary with Jeremiah in great detail, does not mention the prophet. Inasmuch as there is no direct attestation of the prophet outside the book that bears his name, scholars differ widely in their estimations of the prophet's historicity.

#### Beginnings of Prophecy

He began to preach in 627 with the chastening conviction that his country was under judgment. Even if Josiah's efforts for a cultic reform were already in motion, the evil legacy of Manasseh's reign in Judah and of the Assyrian occupation in the Northern provinces still encumbered the land. As a member of a monolatrous or monotheistic minority, Jeremiah could not tolerate the worship of other gods alongside of Yahweh. He thundered against it, and warned of its dire consequences, as did \*Zephaniah, who was also active at the time. His precise attitude toward the reform, which reached its climax in 622 (cf. II Kings 22–23), five years after he had begun his ministry, is disputed. The most plausible supposition is that Jeremiah, though taking no direct part in its implementation, was in favor of its essential aim of reviving the ancient Mosaic covenant in which he had presumably been nurtured. Some of his oracles addressed to the Northern Kingdom even seem to indicate that he was favorable to the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 3:14–15; 31:10–14; though some doubt these to be genuinely from Jeremiah), while others indicate a critical stance (Jer. 7:4). Jeremiah belonged by sympathy as well as by descent to the Northern Kingdom. Many of his first oracles are concerned with, and even addressed to, the remaining Israelites at Samaria. Accordingly, he is saturated with the thought and teaching of \*Hosea, the finest representative of northern Israelite prophetism. The resemblance between the two prophets appears not only in the use of language and figures: it extends itself to fundamental ideas on God and His relation to Israel. Hosea seems to have been the first prophet to describe the relation of Yahweh to Israel metaphorically in terms of ancient Israelite marriage, whereby a man might be polygynous, while a woman was required to limit herself to one husband. Thus Yahweh might have two wives, Israel and Judah (cf. Ezek. 23), but neither of these could have another husband, i.e., serve another god. Using Hosea's marital image (Jer. 2:2b–3; 3:1–5, 19–25; 4:1–2), Jeremiah urges submission to the Yahweh on His own terms, expressed in the covenantal law. The Covenant required Israel to acknowledge no other god than Yahweh. Its leading principle was that Israel owed everything to the divine love which had brought it into being and without which it could not continue. The only worthy response to this free grace was a love involving submission and loyalty.

However, Israel was unfaithful to its God. Instead of repaying Him with due love, the people betrayed Him as an unfaithful wife betrays her husband for a lover (Jer. 3:20). Jeremiah therefore bids them to worship the Lord with repentance.<sup>14</sup>

In Jewish rabbinic literature, especially the aggadah, Jeremiah and Moses are often mentioned together;<sup>[69]</sup> their life and works being presented in parallel lines. The following ancient midrash is especially interesting, in connection with Deut. xviii. 18, in which "a prophet like Moses" is promised: "As Moses was a prophet for forty years, so was Jeremiah; as Moses prophesied concerning Judah and Benjamin, so did Jeremiah; as Moses' own tribe [the Levites under Korah] rose up against him, so did Jeremiah's tribe revolt against him; Moses was cast into the water, Jeremiah into a pit; as Moses was saved by a slave (the slave of Pharaoh's daughter); so, Jeremiah was rescued by a slave (Ebed-melech); Moses reprimanded the people in discourses; so did Jeremiah."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah – Jewish Virtual Library:

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0011\\_0\\_10076.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0011_0_10076.html)

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah – Wikipedia.org: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremiah>

## **New Covenant Lessons**

**(A. D. 30) Matthew 5:33-37**