

BE NICE TO YOUR BROTHER

A Devotional Meditation on KI TETZE (WHEN YOU GO OUT)

Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19; Isaiah 54:1-10; Hosea 8:11-12; Matthew 19:1-12, 22:34-40;
John 13:34-35; Galatians 3:23-29; Hebrews 8:8-12; 1 John 4:7-12

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August 22, 2026

Even people who read and study the Bible might think of the Torah as a strange thing when they come across difficult passages like this one from Deuteronomy:

No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. But the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam; instead the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loved you. You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever.



Photo by Annie Spratt, May 30, 2019, [on Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/photos/5YUWw0t0t00).

Deuteronomy 23:3-6 ESV

We remember Balaam as the prophet who wouldn't listen to the Lord until a donkey started talking to him, but that doesn't tell us why we should study this passage. The Moabites and Ammonites disappeared a long time ago, so why do they matter to us?

They matter because the principles behind this Torah passage connect with Messiah Yeshua's commandment to his disciples to love one another. John the apostle explains what that means:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 4:7-12 ESV

Since God is love, everyone who knows him should love. Yeshua tells us that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love others. Every other commandment is an application of those two.

As strange as it may seem, love is the guiding principle in the Torah, even in those commandments we don't like, such as how to treat women taken captive in war, and in

commandments that seem like common sense, such as letting a mother bird go free when taking eggs from her nest. Some parts of the Torah are strange and harsh to our modern ears, and that's not a bad thing.

Our hearts go out to women and girls who seem to have had no rights under the law. Maybe our reaction is evidence that the law is being written on our hearts just as God promised. That was happening even in Yeshua's day. He said, for example, that God permitted divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts. God established the Torah procedures to make sure women weren't completely without protection while his covenant of redemption was working through Israel and the nations like leaven working through a batch of dough.

Maybe we will have opportunity to take part in updating the Torah when Yeshua returns as King of the world and establishes it as the global standard of conduct. In the meantime, we must learn how to be nice to one another—especially to family.

The Ammonites and Moabites didn't learn that lesson. As descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, they were family to the Israelites. They should have realized that by extending kindness to the Hebrews as they journeyed toward their inheritance in Canaan, they would have secured their own inheritance in the lands God had given them. That's part of what God meant when he promised Abraham that he would bless whoever blessed him, and that those who dishonored Abraham would bring a curse upon themselves. That promise applies to everyone who is counted among the seed, or descendants, of Abraham.

We often hear this promise to Abraham in the context of blessing the Jewish people and supporting the Jewish State of Israel. That is a correct understanding. The Jewish people are the visible remnant of God's covenant people of Israel. Their restoration to their indigenous homeland is the greatest evidence that God exists and that he is willing and able to come through on his promises. While we are waiting on revelation of Messiah to dawn on Jewish hearts, it might be wise to avoid the errors of the Ammonites and Moabites and pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

But there's more to it than that. It's not just the Jewish people who are descendants of Abraham. When God promised to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham, he meant that he would provide a way for everyone to take part in the covenant of redemption he established through Abraham. The way he provided is through Messiah Yeshua, which is why Paul tells us that in Messiah we are "Abraham's offspring and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)

What that means is that we should be careful about who we bless and who we curse. If everyone in Messiah is part of the family, then even those denominations and groups and individuals we disagree with or don't like are also heirs according to the promise.

God understands that our disagreements are not trivial matters, but he expects us to deal with those issues in love. Just like our Hebrew ancestors, we are all on a journey to the promised rest in Messiah. It might be better if we learn from the error of the Ammonites and help each other along the way.