

A Land Set Apart

Yahweh called out Abram from the mass of humanity to create of him a separate people through whom He would reveal His plan for the salvation of the whole world. That part is relatively easy to comprehend. What's less obvious is why God, from the very beginning, set apart a piece of *land*—a tiny piece, as these things go—as a stage upon which to play out this drama. Why did he tell Abram to go to a place he'd never even heard of, and then say, **“All the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.... Arise, walk in the land?”** (Genesis 13:15, 17) Even more puzzling, why did God move Abraham's descendants in and out of the land like chess pieces over the centuries if this place was their permanent possession, their inheritance? Careful reflection leads us to the inescapable conclusion that the Land of Promise is a symbol of something much more fundamental and far reaching than it appears on the surface. It is a metaphor for something universal in mankind's spiritual experience.

The key to understanding what the Promised Land signifies is latent in the story of the exodus. After spending four hundred years in bondage in a land not their own, Israel was led through miraculous means out of that world and toward another. But moving into their new home—the same land originally promised to their father Abraham—wasn't expected to be a picnic. Canaan was populated by seven evil and warlike nations, all of them prepared to defend themselves. The Israelites had been slaves; now they would have to be soldiers. Egypt for Israel had been metaphorical of something we all experience: slavery in the world—living in bondage to sin. But the Promised Land doesn't represent heaven—a place beyond sin's reach. There are giants in the Land, leading armies fierce and innumerable. Yes, it's a land “flowing with milk and honey,” but there are also pitfalls, temptations, and battles to be fought. To one unprepared to trust Yahweh completely, it looks like a “land that devours its inhabitants.” The Promised Land represents the life we face as believers.

And so it is that Yahweh teaches through example and command what we are to do in the “Land,” this new battleground we face as we begin to trust Him. This place is fundamentally different from the world we left. We are no longer slaves here: our chains (and our defeatist mentality) must be left behind. Our Emancipator has made astonishing promises to us, some of which we can envision in our mind's eye and some that are too wonderful for the human imagination. Amazingly, our willingness to believe these promises, to choose to unreservedly trust in Yahweh's ability to bring them to fruition in our lives, is

what He considers virtue—perhaps the only righteous act we are capable of on our own. It is this righteousness, borne of trust, that keeps the lines of communication open between us and our Creator.

This ability to communicate is essential if we are to be successful in the wars we must constantly wage here in the Land of Promise. The enemy is as sneaky as he is strong: we need the best intel we can get. Yahweh is happy to provide it, and happier still when we follow His instructions. Our adversary, of course, would like to confuse us, distract us, or turn us from the truth, and his agents of disinformation can seem attractive and credible if we lose our ability to communicate with our God—our Commander in Chief. His perfect and unobstructed view of the battlefield will be of no use to us if we don't follow His orders, and it makes no difference whether our disobedience is due to lack of clear communication or to rebellion or laziness on our part. The consequences are the same: we'll lose ground on the front line. If we wish to gain ground in this war, we must stay in constant contact with "headquarters," praying without ceasing, studying to show ourselves approved. We must also be very careful to transmit our orders precisely as we received them, neither editing nor embellishing them, for our fellow soldiers' lives depend upon accurate communication just as much as ours do.

It bears repeating: the Promised Land represents the life we face as believers. Strangely enough, this battleground of ours isn't very big. It has well-defined borders, beyond which we have no mandate for waging war: we are neither equipped, trained, nor authorized to fight other peoples' battles for them. Nor is it our job to force our neighbors in the world to obey the orders we've been issued in the Promised Land by our Commander in Chief. We may (and should) invite them to follow our Leader, but only after they've chosen to do so are they to be welcomed as allies and brothers. Our battle, however, lies before us: eliminating the false gods that seek to deceive us, cleansing our lives of the things that defile us, and slaying the forces that would drag us back into bondage.

FAITHFUL PATRIARCHS

(688) *Forsake your old life in favor of Yahweh's new life.* "Now Yahweh had said to Abram: 'Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Genesis 12:1-3) God *didn't* tell Abram, "Honor me with sacrifices and offerings and I'll make you the richest man in Ur." No, the promised blessing was predicated upon separation, a total break with his

past. Abram was asked to leave the only world he knew, trusting in a God whose name he didn't even know to keep His end of the bargain. We rightly laud Abraham as a man of faith, but often forget that he dragged his feet for years before he finally did what God had told him to do. He didn't actually "leave his father's house" until papa Terah was toes up, and even then didn't make a complete break: he took his nephew Lot (the son of his deceased brother Haran) along with him. Though Lot was also a worshipper of the true God Abram was following, he never quite left the world behind him. His failure to disengage (as uncle Abe finally did) precipitated one disaster after another throughout his life—and beyond.

We, too, are instructed to disengage from the world, to leave it behind, to separate ourselves from its influence. If separation to Yahweh entails "getting out from our father's house," forsaking our family, then we need to do so. Of course, some (myself included) are fortunate enough to have been born to godly parents who tried to raise me in the nurture and admonition of Yahweh. Abram was not so lucky. But even under the best of circumstances, our love for our earthly families must fade to insignificance in comparison to the brilliance of God's love. As Yahshua put it, **"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."** (Luke 14:26) This "hate" is only in contrast to our overwhelming love for Yahweh, of course. The reality is that in our love for Him, our comparative "hatred" for our families becomes, in fact, the deepest bond of human compassion imaginable.

- (689) *Look at God's promises from where you are. "And Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.'*" (Genesis 13:14-17) It was only after Abram's final break with his old world—his separation from his nephew Lot, who was really more like a son to him—that Yahweh told him, "Okay, *now* you can open up the gift I've got for you." You can sense the eager anticipation in Yahweh's words, like a doting father giving his only child something really wonderful—I think God was more excited about this than Abram was. Yahweh wasn't content to merely give Abe the deed to the land and call it a day. He wanted him to experience the whole thing, to walk through it, to comprehend its scope, to know what his descendants could look forward to.

At this point, of course, Abram had no children, making the gift of promised Land a good news-bad news story. So in the same breath, Yahweh also promised him that there would indeed be somebody to whom he could leave this wonderful inheritance—and not just a few, but eventually an innumerable multitude.

This is where faith entered the picture. The Land he could see. There it was, laid out before him, as far as the eye could see. It wasn't much of a stretch to envision the scattered peoples living there displaced before the inroads of Abram's ever expanding family tree. No, what took faith was visualizing this family tree itself. Abe and Sarai had been trying to have a child for decades. Now he was getting along in years, and her biological clock was winding down. Yet God said, "Trust Me," and Abram did. His faith consisted in being grateful for what he could see and honestly trusting God for what he could not. His personal reality had less to do with his perceived circumstances than with the Word of his God. And so it should be with us.

(690) *Live in the land of promise.* "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then Yahweh appeared to him and said: 'Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.'" (Genesis 26:1-5) Fast forward one generation. Not much progress has been made in the "great nation" department. Abraham's son Isaac has fathered twin boys by this time, though his wife Rebekah had been barren for the first twenty years of their marriage. So in language very similar to the promise He had made to Abram, Yahweh repeats the promise to his son Isaac. We have already seen that Yahweh sometimes asks us to take detours (see Precept #658), but these side trips never change the ultimate goal—living in the Land of Promise. And where is that? Somewhere other than Egypt (a.k.a. the world). It's the land of which Yahweh has "told us." The Land of Promise is *being in communication with Him*.

Note something remarkable at the end of this passage. Yahweh tells us why He has made these promises to Isaac: "**because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.**" Wait a minute! Abraham preceded Moses, the "great lawgiver," by half a

millennium. How then could he have kept Gods commandments, statutes, and laws? (And yes, in case you were wondering, the word translated “law” here *is* “torah.”) Abraham never performed ninety-nine percent of the deeds required in the “Torah” (that is, the “Law of Moses”), and the other one percent was mostly kept out of sheer coincidence. Even the rite of circumcision was performed only *after* Abraham had been declared “righteous” by virtue of his faith. Clearly, Yahweh had something else in mind when He said this.

As I’ve said until I’m blue in the face, virtually the entire Torah is an elaborate picture of Yahweh’s plan for our redemption, ultimately to be fulfilled in the sacrifice of His Messiah, Yahshua. That’s why Maimonides and his ilk have so much trouble seeing past the letter of the law, which is inherently un-keepable—they refuse to open their eyes to the larger truth. But what did Abraham do to earn these lofty accolades—being hailed as a keeper of God’s commandments statutes, and laws? It wasn’t obeying Yahweh’s original instruction, **“Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.”** As we have seen, Abe took half a lifetime doing this, and even then he messed it up by bring Lot with him. He also botched God’s “child of promise” prediction by taking matters into his own hands with Hagar.

No, it was his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, the very son of promise, at God’s command on Mount Moriah (recorded in Genesis 22). It was his stubborn and unyielding trust in God, his unreasonable, counterintuitive faith that even if he slew Isaac as instructed, Yahweh would somehow restore the boy to life. It was the ultimate dress rehearsal of the crucifixion of the Messiah precisely two thousand years later—at the very same location—and Abraham played his part to perfection. *This* was how Abraham could be said to have “kept the torah” five hundred years before Moses delivered it. In fact, this one statement, that **“Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws,”** *proves* beyond a reasonable doubt that Yahshua is Yahweh’s Anointed One. The Torah, at its core, says exactly the same thing Abraham’s actions did.

CREATING A HOMELAND

- (691) *Heed Yahweh’s messenger.* **“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 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 23:20-23) An “angel” (a word transliterated from the Greek *aggelos*—Hebrew: *malak*) is a messenger sent from Yahweh. These are spirit beings, created to implement Yahweh’s directives on our behalf in the world. We are given rare glimpses of their activities throughout scripture, but I get the feeling their presence is far more prevalent than we realize (e.g. II Kings 6:17). Yahweh assigned one of these messengers (*one* was apparently enough) to lead 600,000 Israelite soldiers into battle against the Canaanite tribes. He makes it quite clear here that angels speak in Yahweh’s name and with His authority—we are to obey them as they obey God. But Yahweh has not directed them to “pardon our transgressions.” That’s not their job; it’s His. Therefore, it’s a really bad idea to “provoke” an angel by willfully flouting the instructions he has been tasked to carry out by Yahweh.

There is a preview here of the famous line, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” (Sun Tzu: *The Art of War*). This may be quite true when the enemy of your enemy is an angel of Yahweh, but I hasten to point out that there is no universal, causal truth to the maxim. It is altogether possible—even probable—to have two enemies at the same time who also hate each other. American foreign policy is a total shambles because we have systematically pursued this patent prevarication, supporting the lesser of two evils as if they were our friends. We feared Hitler, so we supported Stalin. Then we hated the Soviets, so we supported Osama Bin Laden’s Afghan Mujahideen rebels. We despised Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini, so we supported Iraq’s dictator Saddam Hussein. On a more personal level, we distrust Democrats, so we vote Republican, or *vice versa*. When are we going to learn that we can’t effectively fight evil by supporting an opposing evil? Yahweh calls us to be set-apart from the world—to *flee* from Babylon, not to fight it by throwing in our lot with Nineveh.

- (692) *Follow Yahweh while leading His people.* **“And Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.’ So Yahweh plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.”** (Exodus 32:33-35) I love a parade: Yahweh leads, followed by His angel, followed by Moses, followed by the people. A parade is supposed to follow a route and direction and pace set by the leader. But Moses discovered early in the game that the people don’t always follow the parade plan. They’ve been known to stop dead in their tracks, duck down alleyways, even turn around and go in the wrong direction. Moses told Yahweh that he was willing to

take responsibility for those who refused to follow Him, but God, as always, let each individual choose his own fate—Moses couldn't pay for the sins of the others. His job was to lead in the footsteps of Yahweh, not to force people to follow.

This passage contains the first Biblical mention of a “Book of Life” that contains the names of Yahweh's redeemed. Note that our names are all apparently written there to begin with; they are only “blotted out” because we sin against Yahweh, that is, we fall short of His standards, we miss the target of perfection. The rub, of course, is that we've all done that, we've all fallen short of the glory of God. But notice the future tense: “I *will* blot him out; I *will* visit punishment upon them.” They had already sinned, but punishment had not yet fallen and their names has not yet been removed. We have our whole lifetimes (admittedly unpredictable in duration) in which to figure things out. If during that time we elect to receive the garments of righteousness Yahweh freely offers us—garments of light that obliterate our sins—then our names remain in the Book when we die. In the end, one has to *choose* to be taken out of Yahweh's register of the living. If we elect not to avail ourselves of His grace, or worse, if we align ourselves with the spirit of the adversary, then the end of mortal life also marks the end of the privilege of remaining in the Lamb's Book of Life, the *Who's Who* of heaven.

(693) *Don't be a stiff-necked people.* “Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “To your descendants I will give it.” And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.’” (Exodus 33:1-3) Here we see why Yahweh assigned the angel to go before Israel into the Promised Land. It's because they were stubborn and “stiff-necked,” prone to rebellion and ungratefulness. It was as if Yahweh said to Himself, “If I remain in close proximity to these people, I'm going to lash out at their ridiculous antics until they're all dead. And that won't do: they're my covenant people.” So He assigned to an angel the task of leading them into Canaan. One wonders if angels secretly groan when they get jobs like this.

We should ponder what Israel gave up by their disobedience. Yes, they were still Yahweh's chosen people, the recipients of the unilateral promises of God, but for their own sakes, He distanced Himself from them. One wonders how different the conquest of Canaan might have been

if the entire nation had approached the task with the enthusiasm of Caleb and the faithfulness of Joshua—following Yahweh directly instead of getting their directions via their angelic middleman.

Ancient Israel had nothing on today's believers in the “stiff-neck” department, I'm afraid. Here we are, with the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and we *still* stumble our way through life, seemingly powerless to win the slightest skirmish with the world. We can't force the world to love Yahweh as we do, of course, but with all that power available to us, you'd think we could at least stand up to the occasional temptation. Our failures are good for one thing, though: they teach us what we've been saved *from*. Yahshua, who knows what we're up against, wrote these encouraging words to this final generation: **“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.... Behold, I come quickly (i.e., suddenly). Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”** (Revelation 3:8, 11)

What's the real problem with having a stiff neck? It's the inability to look around us, to see what's going on. If we remain stuck in our traditional religious ruts, eyes forward, neck rigid—if we never look up to see how close we are to the Kingdom of Heaven—we'll never appreciate or utilize the power we possess as Spirit-indwelled believers.

- (694) *When Yahweh promises miracles, expect miracles.* **“And He said: ‘Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of Yahweh. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.’”** (Exodus 34:10-11) Twice here, Yahweh tells us to “Behold!” The Hebrew word *hinneh* is an interjection demanding attention: *look at this, see what I'm showing you, pay attention!* Pay attention to what? To Yahweh's promise to do the impossible for Israel: allow them to defeat seven nations (these six plus the Gergashites) who were all militarily superior to the Israelites and well entrenched in the land (see Mitzvot #601 and #602). He Himself describes this feat as an unprecedented “marvel,” an “awesome thing.” Those familiar with the conquest of Canaan tend to focus on the failures of Israel, their unfaithfulness and compromise that in the end got them thrown out of the Land like their predecessors. While that's true, we often forget that the seven nations disappeared so completely that “scholars” in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries declared for sheer lack of physical evidence that such mighty nations as the Hittites never existed except in the minds of Jewish fictioneers.

Archeology has since proved their foolishness in doubting God's word. Meanwhile Israel, against all odds (if you don't countenance Yahweh's covenant), is back in the Land as a nation. That indeed is an "awesome thing," something we all need to "behold."

The other imperative here is, **"Observe what I command you this day."** We'll take a closer look at the specific commands in the following precept. Note for now that the verb "observe" means more than merely looking at something. The word is *shamar*: "To keep, guard, observe, give heed; have charge of, to watch for, wait for; to retain, treasure up (in memory); to celebrate (sabbath or covenant or commands), or perform (vow), to preserve, protect; to be on one's guard, take heed, take care, beware." (S) This definition makes it a pretty good match for the Greek verb *tereo*, used in a passage referenced in the previous Precept: **"Because you have kept (*tereo*) My command to persevere, I also will keep (*tereo*) you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."** (Revelation 3:10) The ekklesia at Philadelphia is being told that because they have heeded Yahweh's instructions (like the one in Exodus 34, explained below), they will not be required to endure the crucible of the Tribulation.

- (695) *Make no covenants with evil.* **"Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods."** (Exodus 34:12-16) As He has so many times in so many ways, Yahweh is telling us to remain separate—Holy—set apart from the world and its influences. Since we today are not mandated to physically make war on Canaan, we can't physically "destroy, break, or cut down" the appurtenances of the false gods that plague our world. But that doesn't mean we should make peace with them, either. The core principle remains: we are to make no covenants with the idolaters where we live. We are not to make deals with the devil.

This can be more complicated than it looks. It entails more than merely refusing to participate in overt idolatry, like sacrificing a goat to Satan in the rotunda of the capitol building. The adversary's inroads are subtle and ubiquitous in our society. They permeate our educational, governmental, commercial, and even religious institutions. Our most basic

cultural traditions are either pagan or secular; they almost never honor Yahweh unless we make a conscious effort to make them do so, and even then we are invariably clumsy and inept in our efforts to honor God in our public institutions. That's because belief is a personal matter. It is as individuals that we must maintain a state of constant vigilance, filtering everything we see and hear through the lens of the knowledge of Yahweh, sifting out the worthless chaff and accepting only the truth.

I'm not calling for a monastic existence, however. We are supposed to be part of the solution, an impossible task if we never face the problem. The Israelites had to go into Canaan in order to deal with its evil, and we in turn are counseled to be "*in* the world but not *of* it." Yahshua's instructions were to "Occupy till I come," and "Feed my sheep." Yes, we are to "flee from Babylon," that is, avoid any compromise with the world's counterfeit schemes promising "salvation." But we are not to retreat from the world until Yahweh Himself takes us out of here. We still have a job to do. The timing is His alone.

(696) *Know that disobedience carries consequences.* "Now Yahweh said to Moses: 'Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes.' (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)" (Numbers 27:12-14) In Exodus 17, Moses had been instructed to strike the rock to bring forth living water, and he had done so. But later, in similar circumstances (Numbers 20, the incident being referred to here), having been told by Yahweh to *speak* to the rock, Moses instead angrily struck it twice with his rod, ruining the picture God was so patiently painting for us.

The meaning of the metaphor, this side of Calvary, is easy to see: Yahshua the Messiah (the Rock) would be struck down once for our sins, and His death would bring life to a thirsty, dying world. But after that singular sacrifice, further atonement would never be necessary. From that moment on, the waters of life and cleansing would flow from Christ our Rock—and all we'd have to do is *ask for it*. Moses' angry action was, as Yahweh put it, a "rebellion" that left the impression that God was something less than holy—that He, like the false gods of Egypt and Canaan, required constant and repeated appeasement. The truth, which Moses had obscured, was quite the opposite: Yahweh would require *one* perfect sacrifice (one that He Himself would provide), and that sacrifice would thenceforth enable open communication between God and man.

It's true that Yahweh's instructions on the matter are sufficient to tell us what He meant to happen. But (and this is the lesson here) that doesn't let Moses off the hook: his "rebellion" would have personal consequences; in this case, his permission to enter the Promised Land to which He had led the Israelites was rescinded. Bear in mind that he was 120 years old at this point: he couldn't have been a particularly effective warrior—or farmer, for that matter. Even his "young" protégé Joshua was now one of the oldest guys left in the nation. So Moses' death on the east side of the Jordan (instead of the west) was for all intents and purposes symbolic. And that makes perfect sense. That is, if Yahweh had said and done nothing when Moses goofed up the metaphor at Kadesh, we might never have figured out what His picture was supposed to have shown us. For that matter, we might not even have realized that it *was* a picture.

Lest we yawn and conclude that this is all historical and theoretical minutiae, I hasten to point out that we today are still tasked with acting out Yahweh's pictures. For their part, Israel was supposed to keep the precepts and statutes of the Torah for all time, because these things are invariably symbolic of the eternal Messiah and the redemption He provides. Thus we see the introductory formula repeated over and over again: "And Yahweh said to Moses, speak to the children of Israel, and say to them...." And the inevitable conclusion is every bit as significant: "...It shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations." Israel, in other words, was to continue rehearsing the symbols Yahweh instituted in the Torah as long as they walked the earth—symbols that are precise, focused, and detailed snapshots of Yahweh's plan for our salvation. Like Moses, Israel failed in their task, and like Moses, their disobedience has brought symbolically significant consequences—no less real because we can still figure out from the instructions themselves what Yahweh wanted to teach us.

And what about the Ekklesia, the called-out assembly of Yahshua? What pictures are we to reflect in our lives and walks? They are far less detailed or specific, and more fundamental, even visceral, but they exist nevertheless. We, as human beings who honor Yahweh through His "Son," humbly appreciate that we are "made in the image and likeness of God." This is the key to the symbolic role we are to play in His world. God is love; we too are to love—unconditionally, unreservedly. Yahweh is holy; we too are to be set apart, called out from the world. His Spirit dwells within us, comforting, consoling, and convicting; we, then, are to walk the earth as salt and light, preserving and illuminating mankind. Yahshua gave His life for the Church; thus we are to pick up our crosses daily and follow Him.

(697) *Dispossess idolatry.* “Now Yahweh spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.’” (Numbers 33:50-53) “Crossing the Jordan” is often mistakenly seen as a metaphor for “going to heaven.” It is nothing of the sort, but rather a picture of leaving the world’s bondage to enter a new life under Yahweh’s sovereignty. We are no longer slaves: now we are soldiers. We have been freed from oppression, but we still have enemies, adversaries, those who would separate us from God’s love, endeavoring to repeal the holiness to which we have been called.

The appurtenances of spiritual falsehood are no longer obvious, physical artifacts like “engraved stones” or “molded images.” We can no longer attack its “high places” with weapons of war. These days, the inroads of satanic influence are so subtle and pervasive, we won’t even recognize them unless we are firmly grounded in Yahweh, and at the same time mentally set apart from the world. Speaking for Americans, our entire culture is based on what Paul called “having a form of godliness but denying its power.” That is, we are constantly told by our media, politicians, educators, scientists, commercial interests, and even some of our clergy that we can (and will) build a “perfect” society without paying heed to Yahweh.

Our media subtly promotes a philosophy of “if it feels good, it must *be* good,” which quite by accident aligns our actions (if not our motivations) with God’s word occasionally. Our politicians publicly extol “doing the right thing” while carefully avoiding any specific reference to the One who set the standards of righteousness in the first place. Our educators teach our children that we are just animals—highly evolved beings that are only at the top of the food chain because we happen to be more “fit” to be there than other species. Ironically, they get upset when bullies advance their theories on the playground. Our scientists, who witness evidence of an omnipotent Creator in every new discovery, nevertheless refuse to acknowledge Him, whether out of pride, shortsightedness, or fear of losing their funding. Our commercial interests blatantly advertise that life will become wonderful if only we’ll buy their products—drive their cars, use their deodorant, drink their liquor, and clean our impossibly expensive homes with their gadgets, all procured with money we’ve borrowed from them. And our clergy, as often as not, are busy encouraging us to do good works and write large checks instead of introducing us to Yahweh (who

sees our best works and most charitable contributions as pointless rubbish if done without a personal relationship with Him). The myth of “good without God” is as deceptive and damning as any pagan idol.

What will happen to us if we fail to identify and eliminate the influence of these ubiquitous wolves in sheep’s clothing? **“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them.”** (Numbers 33: 55-56) Yeah, that sounds bad. So how can we “drive out the inhabitants of the land” these days? Basically, by doing the same things the Israelites were instructed to do: (1) Honor Yahweh alone, for He alone has freed us from our chains; (2) Worship and serve nothing other than Him; (3) Don’t associate anything worthless or harmful with the name of Yahweh; (4) Celebrate Yahweh’s timeline for the redemption of mankind, revealed as scripture’s ubiquitous six-plus-one pattern; (5) Give Yahweh’s instruction all the weight it deserves, and be receptive to the voice of the Holy Spirit within you; (6) Never prevent another person from establishing a personal relationship with Yahweh; (7) Love Yahweh with all of your heart, soul, and mind, and receive His Messiah, Yahshua; (8) Trust Yahweh to provide for your needs, including providing the means to provide for your own needs; (9) Be truthful; and (10) Be content with what Yahweh has given you, without regard to what others may possess. Does all of that sound vaguely familiar? It should: it’s a paraphrase of the Ten Commandments, fine-tuned for Yahshua’s ekklesia at the end of the age. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying.

- (698) *Divide the Land equitably.* **“And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone’s inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.”** (Numbers 33:54) Once we get past the obvious underlying principle that “Yahweh is fair-minded,” we need to figure out what He’s telling us today, since at this late date the division of Canaan under Joshua is but a distant and hazy historical footnote. If, as I have proposed, crossing the Jordan is a metaphor for leaving the world’s servitude to dwell in Yahweh’s kingdom, then our “inheritance” there, our temporal circumstance in this mortal life, is a matter of chance, history, and expended effort in an overall matrix of God’s sovereignty. Whether we happen to come from a big, powerful “tribe” or find ourselves a citizen of a small, weak one—in other words, whether we find ourselves privileged and materially blessed in this life or humbled by our

circumstances—our opportunities for *spiritual* success are fundamentally equal. God is no respecter of persons. Put into modern terms, a poor inner city kid may not have the same temporal advantages as an Ivy League blue blood scion, but their *spiritual* opportunity—their potential for greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven—is identical. That is why we are warned throughout scripture to pay no heed to differences in wealth, influence, or status in this world. Yahweh doesn't measure greatness the way men do. Yahshua admonished us: **“Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.... Indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”** (Luke 13:24, 30)

How, then, are we to “divide the land equitably” in today's world? By loving people, not things. By using things, not people. By heeding truth, not peer pressure. By rewarding character, not clout. By being fair minded, not calculating. By dispensing mercy, not justice. By loving our neighbors as ourselves. In short, by learning to see things through the eyes of God.

BOUNDARIES AND BORDERS

(699) *Know Israel's boundaries: the southern border.* **“Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Command the children of Israel, and say to them: “When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance—the land of Canaan to its boundaries. Your southern border shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom; then your southern border shall extend eastward to the end of the Salt Sea; your border shall turn from the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, and be on the south of Kadesh Barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon; the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and it shall end at the Sea.”’”** (Numbers 34:1-5) I can't figure out why the world has such a hard time figuring out where the borders of the Jewish state of Israel ought to be. No less a personage than Almighty God told us where their borders are, with landmarks as precise as if He had given us GPS coordinates. Put another way, if asked where the Palestinian state should be, the answer according to Yahweh is: somewhere outside these borders. I realize nobody wants to hear it, but the Palestinian Arabs already have a state of their own, one in which they are the majority ethnic population. It's called Jordan.

I covered the whole subject of Israel's permanent borders in some detail of Chapter 6 of *Future History*: “Ground Zero.” So I'll just hit the high spots here. Israel's southern border forms a curve dipping about twenty miles south from the southern shore of the Dead Sea, arcing south, then west, then north, and finally ending at the Brook of Egypt (today's

Wadi el-Arish), which empties into the southwestern corner of the Mediterranean Sea. Note that because of the faithlessness of the spies sent into the promised land right after the exodus, the tongue of the southern Negev reaching down to the Gulf of Aqaba (including the port of Eliat—the ancient Ezion Geber) was not included in Israel’s tribal territory (though the original promise extended all the way from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River).

- (700) *Know Israel’s boundaries: the western border.* **“As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea for a border; this shall be your western border.”** (Numbers 34:6) Nobody seems to dispute this one, except of course for a billion Muslims who would like to see the Mediterranean as Israel’s *eastern* border. For the geographically challenged, this means they’d like to see the Jews pushed into the sea, and they’ve been working toward that goal off and on ever since Israel’s May 1948 declaration of independence. They’ve already negotiated the gullible Israelis out of the Gaza Strip, which according to Numbers 34 should never have been surrendered. Politicians today who would like to carve up Israel into “Jewish” and “Palestinian” states ought to listen more carefully to the Palestinians themselves: their published maps of the Middle East show no Israel at all, only Palestine. They have no intention of “sharing” the land. The Muslims will not be satisfied until they can finish what Adolph Hitler started. (No, that’s not right: they will *never* be satisfied. But ridding the world of Israel is their primary goal.)
- (701) *Know Israel’s boundaries: the northern border.* **“And this shall be your northern border: From the Great Sea you shall mark out your border line to Mount Hor; from Mount Hor you shall mark out your border to the entrance of Hamath; then the direction of the border shall be toward Zedad; the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and it shall end at Hazar Enan. This shall be your northern border.”** (Numbers 34:7-9) Allow me to quote from *Future History*: “This is obviously not the famous Mount Hor on the border of Edom where Aaron was buried. It is rather the mountain known later as Tavros Umanis, mentioned in Song of Solomon 4:8 as Amanah. It is located near the ancient seacoast town of Byblos—slightly north of the 34th parallel, near Lebanon’s northern border, midway between Beirut and Tripoli. The entrance of Hamath is the southern end of the valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains that leads north to the present Syrian city of Hama. It’s about forty miles inland from Byblos. Zedad I take to be the town of Sadad, about the latitude of modern Tripoli, perhaps sixty miles inland. Northeast of Damascus lies a mountain called Djebel Sefira, whose name is likely derived from Ziphron. The border then moves west a bit: Hazar Enan is probably the Arab village of Dar Anon (the Arabic *Dar*, or

Hebrew *Hazar*, means “dwelling;” *Anon/Enan* means “spring”), about twenty-five miles northwest of Damascus.”

In other words, almost all of Lebanon belongs to Israel, along with a big chunk of western Syria, north of Damascus. If you don’t like it, don’t blame me; take it up with Yahweh. And note as well that these borders are still over a hundred miles shy of reaching the northern border of the original promise: the Euphrates River.

(702) *Know Israel’s boundaries: the eastern border.* “**You shall mark out your eastern border from Hazar Enan to Shepham; the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; the border shall go down and reach to the eastern side of the Sea of Chinnereth; the border shall go down along the Jordan, and it shall end at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land with its surrounding boundaries.**” (Numbers 34:10-12) Quoting again from *Future History*: “The line continues south. Targum Jonathan identifies Shepham with Aphmia, which is Baniyas, about four miles east of Laish, a.k.a. Dan. Ironically, this area was traditionally reckoned as the northern tip of Israel: the idiom ‘from Dan to Beersheba,’ meant the whole country.... Ain is apparently *Ein al Malcha*, or ‘salt spring,’ located between Kedesh and the Sea of Semechonitis, the small body of water upstream from the Sea of Galilee later known as Lake Huleh. Riblah must have been just east of this, i.e., on the northern shore of Lake Huleh. The Sea of Chinnereth, or Galilee, was included in Israel’s territory. The rest of the borderline simply follows the Jordan River south to the Dead Sea.”

The obvious bone of contention here is what’s erroneously known as the “West Bank,” that huge bite of Israel’s backside that was “occupied” by Jordan from the 1948 war until Israel was able to win it back in 1967. Yahweh *didn’t* deed it to Ammon (the northern component of modern Jordan). Every geographical description of the Land in Scripture names the Jordan River as Israel’s eastern border at this latitude. I believe that this territory (along with the disposition of Jerusalem) will be the heart of the issue that’s “settled” with the Antichrist’s “covenant with many,” the confirmation of which is the starting gun for the Time of Jacob’s Trouble, a.k.a. the Tribulation.

Israel’s persistent disobedience for the last couple of millennia has not abrogated Yahweh’s promise of territorial sovereignty over these lands. Note that the lands described in Ezekiel 47:13-20—clearly a prophetic passage describing the boundaries of Israel and how the land is to be distributed between the twelve tribes during Yahshua’s coming Millennial reign—are virtually identical to those given in Numbers 34. I am further convinced that the original promises to the patriarchs, that the Land would

stretch from the Red Sea (perhaps meaning only the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba) to the Euphrates, and from the Great Sea (the Med) to the desert, will become a literal reality during the Kingdom age. The outlying areas—those beyond specific tribal boundaries to the north and south—will apparently be held in common trust, perhaps like our American national parks are to us. This theory is admittedly not spelled out specifically in scripture, but I have never known Yahweh to abrogate His promises, even really old ones that haven't been mentioned for a few millennia.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

- (703) *The inheritance of a wife is that of her husband.* **“Now the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the chief fathers of the children of Israel. And they said: ‘Yahweh commanded my lord Moses to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel, and my lord was commanded by Yahweh to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. Now if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance. And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.’”** (Numbers 36:1-4) This is in reference to a situation that was discussed in Numbers 27:1-11. Zelophehad had fathered five daughters but no sons, begging the question of what was supposed to happen to the family lands. There Yahweh had declared, **“You shall surely give [the daughters of Zelophehad] a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.”** (Numbers 27:7)

So far, so good. The principle has been established that a woman is not a second-class citizen or a possession to be owned by a man in God’s economy (the antithesis of the way things are in Islam). She as a child of her father has property rights. The fact remains, however, that in the normal order of things, the *sons* of a family would inherit the land, not the daughters. Why? Because when a woman married, her husband’s inheritance in effect became hers, since they were now “one.” Thus though the inheritance followed the male line, no one was left high and dry. Hence the concern voiced here in Numbers 36: if a woman who had inherited her father’s estate married outside her tribe, the land would

change hands to her husband's tribe when it was left to the next generation—something Yahweh never intended. I'll have more to say about that in the following precept, but first let's pause and reflect on the issue of whose inheritance goes where, and why.

Practically every facet of normal life, if it's mentioned in the Torah, has some symbolic counterpart in Yahweh's plan for our redemption. Thus we see that men and women were ordinarily expected to marry and raise families, taking upon themselves the roles God assigned them to teach the human race about His own nature: the Father is the authority, protector, and provider. The Mother (corresponding to the Holy Spirit) is the One who comforts, consoles, guides, and convicts. People who grow up in functional households (an increasingly rare circumstance, I'm afraid) know this intuitively. The love within this union produces offspring—humanity, the preeminent “firstborn” of which is Yahshua. We who follow Him into the family have an example, a mentor, One who has gone through everything we will as we grow up—yet without sin against the Father, Yahweh. In one respect, then, He is like our big brother. But in another way, He is like our betrothed husband, and we are His bride. (As if to confirm this symbolic duality, the “Beloved” in the Song of Solomon repeatedly refers to his bride as “my sister, my spouse.”)

This is where the inheritance comes into play. Being the “Son of God,” our beloved Yahshua is heir to, well, *everything*. We, by contrast, are able to bring nothing to the marriage but ourselves. Furthermore, while we can see our own faults well enough, our betrothed sees nothing but beauty in us: love is blind. He has not espoused us in order to gain anything we have or do; on the contrary, upon consummation of our vows, everything He owns—the whole universe—will become ours as well. And there's no “pre-nuptial agreement.” Our marriage, you see, is not a partnership. It is a corporation: we are becoming one entity. (Our “vows,” I surmise, will be consummated at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb described in Revelation 19, apparently taking place in heaven while the Tribulation is raging on earth.)

- (704) *The inheritance must not leave the tribe.* “Then Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of Yahweh, saying: “What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right. This is what Yahweh commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, ‘Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the family of their father's tribe.’ So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall

be the wife of one of the family of her father's tribe, so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. Thus no inheritance shall change hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance." (Numbers 36:5-9) Yahweh's solution to the problem was simple: the five daughters of Zelophehad who had inherited their father's land would have to restrict their marriage prospects to the tribe of Joseph—not a big sacrifice, since there were fifty-two thousand able-bodied men in Manasseh (Zelophehad's tribe) and another thirty-two thousand in Ephraim at the time. A target-rich environment, so to speak. Problem solved.

We, however, need to ask a more fundamental question. Why was it so important to keep the inheritance within the tribe? I believe the answer becomes a bit clearer if we think of "the inheritance" as more than just a plot of land or a few sheep. In a larger sense it is the individual destiny of each tribe, their prophetic heritage. On his deathbed, Jacob/Israel called his twelve sons together and gave them his "blessing," telling each of them what, in his words, "shall befall you in the last days." (Genesis 49:1) Each son—through his progeny—had a distinct prophetic destiny.

Reuben was "unstable as water," and would "not excel." Simeon and Levi were grouped together, and both, in different ways, were to be "divided in Jacob" and "scattered in Israel." Judah, in contrast, would have the "praise" of his brothers, ultimately being the tribe from whom the scepter of Israelite royalty would never depart. (Thus keeping Judah set apart was critical to Yahweh's unfolding plan of redemption, for the Anointed King, Yahshua, would descend from this tribe.) Zebulun would become a seafaring people, while Issachar would become "a band of slaves." Dan would be known for its satanic proclivities: "a serpent by the way, a viper by the path." Gad would enjoy military success, Asher would prosper materially, and Naphtali would "give words of beauty." Joseph (since Jacob did not distinguish between Manasseh and Ephraim here) would be blessed of God. (It's therefore significant that the daughters of Zelophehad were told to marry within the tribe of *Joseph*; they were not restricted to their own semi-tribe of Manasseh.) And finally, Benjamin was predicted to become a predator. (Saul of Tarsus, a Benjamite, fairly leaps to mind.) The twelve tribes yielded almost that many utterly diverse prophetic destinies, which, as far as we can tell from the historical record, came to pass just as predicted. No wonder Yahweh desired to keep their inheritances distinct from one another. There was far more to this than a bit of acreage changing hands over time.

(705) *Do not add or subtract from God's Word.* **"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which Yahweh, God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you."** (Deuteronomy 4:1-2) More than any single precept in the Torah, this one indicts rabbinical Judaism, pinpointing the *modus operandi* whereby it twists scripture into a bloated and misleading caricature of itself. It was no "mistake," no mere oversight, that Maimonides failed to list this among his 613 mitzvot. He purposely avoided this one, for it's a scathing indictment of his own methods.

If you'll recall the "blessings and cursings" passages, the blessings were predicated upon obedience: **"If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and perform them..."** (Leviticus 26:3) or **"If you diligently obey the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe carefully all His commandments..."** (Deuteronomy 28:1). Here we discover that the key to being able to **"keep the commandments of Yahweh your God"** is to neither add to nor subtract from them. We make enough inadvertent mistakes without purposely tampering with God's Word. This principle is so important, it was repeated (and given teeth) at the end of the very last book in the Bible: **"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."** (Revelation 22:18-19) It therefore behooves us to consider carefully what it is to "add to" or "subtract from" scripture.

I, for one, walk on eggshells around passages like this. After all, it is my job to examine the Word and explain what's there—what it means, what its significance is. There's a very fine line between explaining something and embellishing it. Exegesis can, with very little effort, morph into eisegesis. And although I'm careful to put scriptural quotes in a contrasting font so folks can distinguish what Yahweh said from what I said, it's all too easy to equate my ramblings with God's wisdom. Please resist the temptation to do that.

On the other hand, I know for a fact that I miss stuff, even if I'm looking really hard for it. I can't count the number of times I've written about a passage, only to later hear my pastor cover the same territory and come up with a completely different application, no less valid than my own. Have we both therefore "subtracted" from scripture? No, I don't think so, for three simple reasons: (1) We weren't purposely trying to

conceal anything; (2) God's word is an incredibly rich treasury of truth, whose lessons can often be of benefit to us on many different levels; and (3) the Holy Spirit reveals Biblical truths to us as we need them, as we become ready to receive them, and until that happens, they're just words on a page. A classic example: before the signs heralding the end of the age began appearing, the Book of Revelation was a baffling mystery to people (and it still is to many). No less a scholar than Martin Luther was so puzzled by Revelation, he is said to have remarked, "Even if it were a blessed thing to believe what is contained in it, no man knows what that is." The truths of this enigmatic book were opaque in Luther's day. They are becoming more lucid by the minute in ours.

But scriptural subtraction does go on today. Rabbinical Judaism, most significantly, has subtracted the underlying reality that supports and explains the entire Tanach: that Yahweh's Messiah—Yahshua of Nazareth—would fulfill the Torah and become the atonement for our sins, reconciling us to God. But "Christian-dumb" is guilty too. Catholicism subtracts the principle of salvation by grace alone, insisting that works and alms and penance are required as well. Protestants tend to subtract whatever they don't understand, like the Torah's role, God's undying devotion to Israel, scriptural precepts that no longer line up with today's pathetic societal mores, or anything requiring a miracle. There are whole denominations that have subtracted such basic pillars as the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, or His bodily resurrection from their theologies—gutting the Bible in the process. Even Evangelicals can fall prey to the subtraction trap. For them, it's usually in the form of concentrating on one or two narrow doctrines (valid or not) to the purposeful exclusion of everything else in scripture. It could be prophecy, finances and giving, the gifts of the Spirit, praise and worship, or whatever. We need to learn to take the *whole* counsel of God, not just the parts that tickle our fancy.

And what about adding to it? The rabbis have historically made a contact sport out of this. Yahweh says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it set apart." The rabbis say that you can therefore lift only a certain weight or walk a certain distance before you become a lawbreaker. Yahweh says, "Don't boil a kid in its mother's milk." The sages conclude that you can't eat meat and dairy products in the same meal, or you've broken the Law of God. No, you've broken the law *of the rabbis*—which is not at all the same thing. They've added to the instructions that Yahweh gave to Moses, doing precisely what he told them not to do. Christians too add dumb and destructive things to our faith, transforming a personal relationship with Yahweh into a pointless religion. We hold onto our traditions for dear life while clinging to our questionable doctrines out of

sheer institutional stubbornness. And when someone points out where we've erred, we look at him with suspicion and hostility.

As in politics, a revolution in spiritual matters now and then is a healthy thing. We need to shake off the cobwebs of complacency, examine the Word for ourselves, and take action based on what *we* find there—not on what somebody has told us about it (and that “somebody” includes me, folks). We need to be honest with ourselves: does what we find in scripture align perfectly with what we're being taught by men? Does it align with the way we live our lives? If we find that we're doing or believing something that's not supported by the Word, or conversely, if we discover that something we *don't* do or believe is commanded of us in scripture, we need to have the courage to repent, turn around, go the other direction. We need to drop what's been added, and restore what's been taken away from our scriptural experience. Why? So that we **“may live, and go in and possess the land.”**