

Dr. Cynthia Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Deuteronomy 16-18 Leadership Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Deuteronomy 16-18 Leadership, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Cynthia Parker examines leadership structures in Deuteronomy 16-18, contrasting the Israelite model with those of other ancient Near Eastern societies. **The emphasis is on God's sovereignty**, with leaders—judges, priests, and the king—chosen by God and accountable to God's law, not above it. **The system promotes mutual responsibility**, involving both leaders and citizens in maintaining justice and righteousness. **City gates and the chosen place** function as interconnected centers of leadership and communal participation. Finally, the lecture connects the concept of a prophet like Moses in Deuteronomy 18 to the figure of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 9 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Deuteronomy).



**Parker_Deut_Session
n09.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Deuteronomy 16-18 Leadership

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided source, "Parker_Deut_Session09_Dt16_18.pdf," focusing on Deuteronomy 16-18.

Briefing Document: Deuteronomy 16-18 on Leadership

Introduction:

This session examines Deuteronomy 16-18, focusing on the establishment of a leadership structure for the Israelites as they enter the promised land. Dr. Parker emphasizes that the system is not introduced until *after* the people are exhorted to adhere to God's statutes (ch. 5-11), the place of worship is chosen (ch. 12), and the need to eradicate detestable things is established (ch. 13-15), including removing false prophets. This indicates that proper worship, adherence to God's law, and a morally pure society *precede* the establishment of leadership roles.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. God's Reign and Choice as Foundational:

- The entire system of leadership is subservient to God's reign and is based on His choice. This emphasis on God's selection is paramount throughout the text. As Parker puts it, "This whole system of leadership is subservient to or falls under the reign of God. So, this is God's choice."
- The focus is on *who* God is choosing and *why*, rather than a system of hereditary power.

1. City Gates and the Chosen Place:

- Leadership roles are established in both the city gates and the chosen place, creating a dynamic and interconnected system. The city gates are not only entryways but function as the heart of the community, where various activities, including justice administration, occur.
- The chosen place is where the Levites and judges have a role; this is the place where the more difficult disputes are taken for further consideration. There is an ebb and flow between the two places.
- Both the city gates and the chosen place have to maintain a standard of holiness.

1. **Mutual Responsibility:**

- Despite the designated roles of judges and priests, there is an emphasis on mutual responsibility among all citizens. Every person is actively involved and responsible for the integrity of the community.
- Citizens must report wrong-doing, they are part of the process when dealing with those who transgress God's law, and they are to act as witnesses.
- This emphasizes that leadership is not just the job of a select few; it's a community effort.

1. **Justice and Righteousness:**

- The Hebrew words *mishpat* (justice) and *sedeqah* (righteousness) are linked. Righteousness is God's character and a standard of uprightness. Justice is the act of bringing things back in line with God's righteousness.
- Deuteronomy 16:20 in Hebrew reads "Sadeq Sadeq", which translates to "righteousness, righteousness," but is often translated as "justice". The emphasis should be on pursuing God's righteousness, not just human justice. Dr. Parker notes that it is interesting the way that most English translations tend to favor "justice" which may be an important point. She says, "Except the emphasis is actually on righteousness, God's character. So, the emphasis is not necessarily the action, by bringing everyone in line, but pursuing God's righteousness."

1. **Judges in the Gates:**

- Judges are appointed in each town's city gates to administer righteous judgment. The location of the gate is a societal hub of activity.
- The text provides specific warnings against bribery, which can cloud judgment, referencing that, "a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous."

1. **Citizen Involvement in Eradicating Evil:**

- Every citizen is responsible to identify and act on wickedness in the community. This includes reporting idolatry, investigating allegations, and participating in the judicial process as witnesses. This again illustrates the mutual responsibility in the community.

- For more difficult cases they are to go to the Chosen Place, "then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses...and they will declare to you the verdict of the case."

1. **The King: Distinct from Other Ancient Near East Kings:**

- Unlike other ancient Near Eastern kings, the Israelite king is not viewed as above the law or as semi-divine. Instead, he is chosen by God, must be "from among your brothers," and is subject to God's law.
- The king cannot accumulate horses, multiply wives, or amass wealth. All these things are done by other kings, and they represent power, military might, and political power, which the King is not to focus on in the same way. As Dr. Parker says, "the king is supposed to be God's choice of king. And we're focusing again on the fact that the king is from among their brothers."
- Crucially, he must write a copy of God's law and read it daily to remain subservient to God's will and not be elevated above others. This emphasizes that the king's authority derives from God's law, not from himself. Parker explains, "This king is not above the law. This king is to write a copy of the law...his mode of behavior, the way that he is going to rule his kingdom with wisdom, comes from the laws God has given his people, not the king given his people."
- Interestingly, the king is not given a specific place of leadership, but is meant to be a model of how all of God's people should live. This shows that the king is not intended to hold a central or elevated position in the community but is a part of it.

1. **The Levites: Living Examples:**

- The Levites, like the king, are not given land as an inheritance. Rather, they are to serve the Lord, as their job is at the chosen place.
- They eat from the Lord's offerings and from the generosity of the Israelites. They are dependent on the people's obedience.
- They act as living examples of how the other Israelites should behave. They are to minister at the chosen place, and their prosperity is linked to that of the rest of Israel.

- They serve as an example of righteousness. Parker says, "So, the Levites are actually set up as examples for the rest of Israel for how they should behave. They are a nation of priests, in a way. They're all supposed to be reflecting God's righteousness, the Levites; their inheritance is being able to minister at the chosen place."

1. **Prophets: God's Chosen Messengers**

- The Israelites should not imitate the ways of other nations in how they choose prophets. The prophets are chosen by God. "There will indeed be a prophet, but it depends on God's choice, not the people."
- God will raise up a prophet like Moses, someone from their own countrymen who will speak God's words. A true prophet's words will come true. If the words do not come true, then that person is not a true prophet.
- Dr. Parker highlights the connection between Moses and the later expectation of a prophet like Moses, connecting it to Jesus, who also goes up to a mountain to give a version of the law, much like Moses. This shows that Jesus' role is in line with the prophesied prophet of God.

Summary/Conclusion:

- The leadership model presented in Deuteronomy 16-18 is not a hierarchical system with a single figure at the top. Instead, it is a community-based model where multiple leaders serve as examples of how all Israelites should live.
- Leaders such as the judges, priests, the king, and prophets are all chosen by God, not inherited or earned. The king is not to be elevated above others.
- The community is active and responsible, not passive, and plays a vital role in maintaining righteousness. This model is a critique of oppression and abuse of power.
- The community's ultimate leader is God.
- This is not a system like that found in Egypt, but a new, God-centered order.

Dr. Parker's analysis shows that leadership roles, in the context of Deuteronomy, are not about personal power or privilege but are responsibilities within a community striving to reflect God's righteousness. The emphasis is on mutual accountability and that all aspects of society must adhere to God's laws.

4. Study Guide: Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Deuteronomy 16-18 Leadership

Deuteronomy 16-18: Leadership Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary focus of the leadership structure described in Deuteronomy 16-18, and how does it relate to God?
2. Where are judges primarily located in this structure, and what kinds of activities happen there?
3. Explain the relationship between "righteousness" (sedeqah) and "justice" (mishpat) as described in the text.
4. What is the significance of the phrase "righteousness, righteousness" in Deuteronomy 16:20, and how does it differ from the typical translation?
5. In cases that are too difficult for the city gate judges, where do the Israelites go for further judgment, and who is found there?
6. How does the description of a king in Deuteronomy differ from the kings of other ancient Near Eastern nations?
7. What specific restrictions are placed on the king in Deuteronomy 17, and why?
8. How are the Levites supported since they don't receive a land inheritance?
9. What distinguishes a true prophet from false prophets, according to Deuteronomy 18?
10. How does the leadership structure presented in Deuteronomy emphasize the role of community and mutual responsibility?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary focus of the leadership structure is to maintain God's law and righteousness within the community. All leaders, whether judges, priests, or the king, are subservient to God's reign and chosen by Him to serve the people.
2. Judges are primarily located in the city gates, which are centers of community life. Activities at the gates included buying, selling, begging, and settling disputes.

3. Righteousness (sedeqah) is God's character, the plumb line, and is upright. Justice (mishpat) is the act of bringing things back into alignment with God's righteousness.
4. "Righteousness, righteousness" in Deuteronomy 16:20 emphasizes the pursuit of God's character, rather than the act of enforcing justice. This contrasts with the usual translation, which is "justice," and shifts the focus from action to being.
5. For cases too difficult for the city gates, the Israelites go to the chosen place. Here they seek guidance from Levitical priests and judges who have a deeper understanding of the law.
6. Unlike other ancient Near Eastern kings who were viewed as semi-divine and above the law, the king in Deuteronomy is to be God's chosen and is still subservient to the law, from among his brothers, and is not to accumulate power, wealth, or many wives.
7. The king in Deuteronomy 17 cannot accumulate horses, return to Egypt, multiply wives, or hoard wealth. These restrictions prevent him from mimicking the patterns of oppressive, power-hungry ancient near eastern kings.
8. The Levites are supported by receiving a share of the offerings and first fruits given by the Israelites. Their prosperity is tied to the prosperity and obedience of the whole community.
9. A true prophet speaks only God's words, as commanded by God. If the prophet's words do not come true, the prophet is false and must be rejected.
10. The leadership structure of Deuteronomy is not a hierarchy but is instead composed of pillars that have risen from the community itself, making the community active participants rather than passive recipients of justice and leadership. This promotes mutual responsibility and prevents any leader from becoming elevated over the people.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each essay question thoughtfully and thoroughly. Each answer should be several paragraphs in length.

1. Compare and contrast the roles of the judges at the city gates and the Levitical priests at the chosen place, discussing their responsibilities and the significance of their locations.
2. Discuss the importance of mutual responsibility and community involvement in maintaining justice and righteousness within the Israelite society, according to Deuteronomy 16-18.
3. Explain how the book of Deuteronomy envisions the role of the king in relation to God's law and the people of Israel, and why the text seeks to limit the king's power.
4. Analyze the significance of the Levites' role as a model for the rest of Israel and how their support was connected to the actions of the community as a whole.
5. Explore the concept of a prophet like Moses and discuss its significance both within the context of Deuteronomy and its later interpretations, including in the New Testament.

Glossary of Key Terms

Asherah: A wooden pole or tree representing a Canaanite goddess, prohibited in Deuteronomy as an idolatrous practice.

Chosen Place: The central location selected by God where the Israelites were to worship and conduct sacrifices.

City Gates: The entrances to cities that served as centers of community life, where people conducted business and justice was administered.

Divination: Seeking knowledge or guidance from supernatural sources other than God, which is prohibited in Deuteronomy.

False Prophet: Someone who claims to speak for God but speaks presumptuously, or in the name of another god.

Justice (mishpat): The act of restoring alignment with God's righteousness, often through legal and communal practices.

Levites: The tribe of Israel chosen to serve as priests, not receiving a land inheritance but instead ministering at the chosen place.

Mutual Responsibility: The idea that every member of the community is responsible for upholding God's law and maintaining a righteous society, not simply the leaders.

Prophet: A person chosen by God to speak his words to the people, distinct from the practices of other nations.

Righteousness (sedeqah): God's character, representing uprightness and a standard of ethical behavior.

5. FAQs on Parker, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Deuteronomy 16-18 Leadership, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About Leadership in Deuteronomy 16-18

1. **Why does the concept of leadership appear so late in Deuteronomy?** The idea of establishing a system of leadership doesn't arise until chapters 16-18 because the foundation must first be laid through the people's commitment to God's laws and their understanding of God as the central source of identity and worship. Before considering leaders, the people need to prioritize the exclusive worship of God, purge detestable practices from their midst, and understand social ethics. Once these foundations are established, then the practical aspects of a functional society, including a system of leaders, can be addressed.
2. **What is the relationship between the reign of God and the system of leadership in Deuteronomy?** The system of leadership is entirely subservient to the reign of God. The text emphasizes that God chooses the leaders and dictates the structure of leadership, which ensures that all power and authority are derived from and accountable to God. It's not about human power but divinely appointed roles designed to help the community live in harmony with God's will.
3. **What is the significance of the "city gates" and "chosen place" in relation to leadership?** The city gates were vital centers of community life where judges administered justice. The chosen place was the central sanctuary, where priests and sometimes judges operated. These locations aren't in opposition, but rather work together. The city gates handled local legal and social matters, while complex or unresolved issues could be taken to the chosen place for more specialized knowledge of the law. This dual structure highlights that God's law and justice are to be pursued in every sphere of life.
4. **How does the concept of "righteousness" (sadeq) relate to the concept of "justice" (mishpat) in Deuteronomy 16:20?** While the English translation often says "justice" in Deuteronomy 16:20, the Hebrew emphasizes "righteousness, righteousness." Righteousness is God's character—upright and true—while justice is the act of bringing things back into alignment with that righteousness. The verse's emphasis on pursuing righteousness shows that living in accordance with God's character is what will allow them to live in the land, not merely striving for corrective actions through justice.

5. **What are the key differences between the Deuteronomic view of a king and the concept of kings in the ancient Near East?** Ancient Near Eastern kings were often seen as semi-divine, creators of laws, and above the law, whereas Deuteronomy portrays the king as God's choice from among his brothers, making him part of the community and not above it. This king must write a personal copy of the law, not be allowed to hoard wealth, collect many horses (for war) or enter into many marriages (for political alliances), all of which are direct counter points to typical Near Eastern kings. Instead of creating laws, the king was expected to be subservient to God's law.
6. **How do the Levites fit into the structure of leadership in Deuteronomy?** The Levites do not receive land inheritance as the other tribes of Israel do. Their inheritance was serving in the chosen place and ministering to God and receiving portions from sacrifices made there. They act as examples for the rest of Israel, and their welfare is tied to the prosperity of the whole nation. Their role and function emphasizes the importance of both worship and the law. They also move between the chosen place and the city gates, linking the religious and civic aspects of life.
7. **What is unique about the prophet described in Deuteronomy 18, and why is the comparison to Moses important?** The prophet described in Deuteronomy 18 is a prophet raised up by God and is to speak God's words, unlike the prophets of other nations who evoke magic and communicate with the gods. He is similar to Moses, a great and righteous prophet who also received and explained God's law. This connection to Moses provides a framework for understanding the role and authority of true prophets, who are not only to speak God's words but also to be examples of righteousness for the community. This passage suggests a continuing line of prophetic tradition which could potentially culminate in a final prophet or Messiah.
8. **How does Deuteronomy's view of leadership challenge traditional hierarchical structures and what is the main point that Deuteronomy seeks to impart concerning leadership?** Deuteronomy rejects a hierarchical power structure with a single leader at the top, like that of Egypt. It presents a community where leadership roles are not to elevate one person over another but to act as examples for how all should live in pursuit of righteousness. All members are responsible for their own actions and for maintaining the covenant, and leaders should be pillars in a community of shared responsibility. Ultimately, God is the true ruler.