

We're All Responsible

Every member of the Community is responsible. The elders are responsible, the parents are responsible, and every individual is responsible, in the Community.

The Elders are Responsible

¹ *If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him,* ² *then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities.* ³ *And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke.* ⁴ *The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley.*

⁶ *And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley.* ⁷ *Then they shall answer and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it."* ⁸ *Provide atonement, O LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel."* *And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood.* ⁹ *So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you when you do what is right in the sight of the LORD. (Dt 21:1-9)*

What is happening there, in Deuteronomy 21? Someone was killed, even murdered. So, who is responsible?

Zerubbabel — "The elders of the city nearest the slain man."

That's right. They were responsible. So, you can see that the elders are responsible for everything, even if they're not guilty. You can see in Dt 21:2 that the elders bore the responsibility of the murder, even though they weren't personally guilty. It was up to them to seek atonement. The elders had to *break a heifer's neck, there in the valley*. They had to seek atonement for the murder; it was up to them. In breaking the heifer's neck, did it provide atonement equal to a man's death?

Zerubbabel — It represented the execution of the murderer.

But what if the elders hadn't taken responsibility and broken the heifer's neck?

Shoer — They would have been guilty.

Yes, and all Israel would have suffered. Even though the heifer's death was only symbolic of the terrible crime that happened, what did our Father do? Did He forgive them?

Zerubbabel — Our Father commanded Israel, saying that through this way they would “*purge the guilt of innocent blood*” from their midst (Dt 21:9).

Right. So, you can see that the elders were the ultimate responsible ones. They had to provide atonement; they had to clear the guilt of Israel for that murder.

The Parents are Responsible

¹⁸ *If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, ¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. (Dt 21:18-19)*

I am sure that *all* parents read this verse to their children. I'm sure that all parents *do*, because if they don't, they're probably guilty. Elders are responsible *for* the community, but parents are responsible *to* the Community for their children. Parents are responsible for the actions of their children.

[The parents] shall say to the elders of his town, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.” (Dt 21:20)

The parents are responsible to present the charge against their own child. What kind of child? What kind of child is to be stoned? A “glutton and a drunkard” means he is absolutely good for *nothing*. That child can't keep on living in the Community. Back then, they would stone such children to death. But we send them out into the world. Then they may bring shame to our Master's name if they do certain things. “*Oh, look! This is one of the children of the Twelve Tribes, out in the world.*”

ha-êmeq — The child talked about here is a “stubborn and rebellious child who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, he will not listen to them” (Dt 21:18).

So, the parents are responsible to present the charge to the elders, and the elders present the judgment to the Community. The elders are the judges, and they are

responsible for everything. That's why you shouldn't strive to be an elder. The elders are totally responsible for everything – even inadvertence.

⁶ *Appoint elders in every town as I directed you — ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Tit 1:5-9)*

This describes what an elder needs to be like. If the elders are not like that in any location, then everything is going to be hectic — it will produce a hectic community. Elders are not hectic people; they're not that way. We haven't yet laid hands on elders as we're going to in the future. Right now we're just finding out who they might be.

Everyone is Responsible

¹ *You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. ² And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. ³ You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself. ⁴ You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again. (Dt 22:1-4)*

What does *hide* mean? It refers to ignoring or covering something up by not saying anything when you see something wrong. *Hide* means to ignore the problem. We cannot be those who “ignore the problem” — and that means *anything* in community, not just “your neighbor's sheep.” You have to report it; you have to tell somebody. You have to make sure you put a note in the “Sexton's Box” or go to one of the leaders and say, “There's something wrong here.” *Hide* means to ignore the problem or turn away from it.

An Israelite does not ignore problems or the misfortunes of his brother, or his fellow man, or his neighbor. An Israelite won't ignore his brother if he sees him in need. He won't ignore his need (1 Jn 3:17-19). If we see our brother going through something, we don't ignore it. We must see to it that he gets help; if we can't do it, we find someone else who can. "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God" (Heb 12:15).

Every person in the Community bears the responsibility to uphold justice within the Community. Everyone is responsible — *everyone*. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due" (2 Cor 5:10). We will have to answer on the Day of Judgment as to what we did in the Body — good or bad. So, if you don't "see to it," you will form a "bad" community; but if you *do* "see to it," you will form a "good" community. You can't just say, "That's just how it is in community."

If there is trash around, don't think, "It's not my responsibility to pick up trash; that's someone else's responsibility." If you see a dying plant, don't just ignore it. We will be judged by our attitudes. We need to have the same attitude as Messiah.

So, an Israelite won't ignore the problem or misfortune of his neighbor, brother, or fellow man. Every person is responsible to uphold justice within the community.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Messiah. (Gal 6:2)

It's the Law: "*Bear one another's burdens*" — a brother who doesn't is good for nothing.

³ *For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.* ⁴ *But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. (Gal 6:3-4)*

So then, everyone bears his brother's burdens; they bear the responsibility to uphold justice in the community. Everyone in the community is responsible for taking care of whatever is lost. If someone borrows something and doesn't return it, and it's just left somewhere, who is responsible? Of course, you're not supposed to borrow anything if you don't bring it back. I borrowed a pen from someone, and when I got back over to

the house, I noticed that I still had it. It alarmed me, so I got up, came back over to him, and gave him his pen back. That is everyone's responsibility to do that. Each one in the community is responsible for taking care of lost items, or animals... or children.

So that's just a little hint in the Law; it's *instruction* to us since we live together as Israelites. It doesn't apply to Christians; they say, "*The Law is nullified; we don't have to do that anymore...*" — because they *can't* do it anyway, because they don't live next door to one another; they don't even live in the same neighborhood. The *Instruction* only applies to Israelites. *Torah* means *Instruction* — we learn from it and agree that "the Law is good" (Rom 7:14-16). This is just a little bit of what we all talk about in our communities from the Law. The elders are responsible for making sure that everyone in the community knows this, because they are continually reading it, and even sharing it with their children.

Shoer — If we don't put into practice all the things we heard, then what our Master spoke is true of us: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." (Mt 5:13)

There it is, "good for nothing."

Shoer — "*Good for nothing...*" That's what happened to the first century Edah: it became "good for nothing." But it probably started with just one person here, one person there, one family here, one family there, and then the breakdown was inevitable. The salt lost its savor and became "*good for nothing, but to be thrown out and trampled under foot.*"

This made me want to take seriously the charge of not ignoring the problems, nor hiding myself from the situations I see. It is so easy to have a wrong attitude, like, "That's not realm, that's not my problem." Somehow, you think you can excuse yourself from taking responsibility, but just the fact that you see it makes you responsible to do something about it. You have to deal with it, or at least report it if you don't have the grace to solve the problem yourself. If you don't even do that much, then it just shows that *you're* guilty. Really, it is the whole spirit of this age: "*That's not my problem.*" It is a self-centered attitude that would destroy our tribes.

“Elders are problem-solvers,” we used to say. Parents are responsible *to* the community for their children; elders are responsible *for* the community.

Responsible = response + able

What if you're not *able* to respond? You are still able to *respond*, regardless of whether you can fix the problem or not. But what if you're not able to respond? What's the matter with you? Some kind of paralysis has set in if you're not able to respond. Apart from a few people who have mental problems, we have a *responsibility* to respond. Everyone has the ability to respond. The fact that they *don't* respond reveals an attitude problem.

ha-êmeq — I liked hearing that our Father is worried about the things people lose, that we're commanded to return “*any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found*” (Dt 22:3). Anything! Our Father is interested in the big things, like a cow, right down to the little barrettes that someone leaves somewhere. He wants us to be that way, too.