MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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DOCUMENT 268

The Right of the Firstborn Is His

A Covenant Deep Dive into Deuteronomy 21:15–17 and the Firstborn's Double Portion in a House of More Than One Wife

Who Is the Firstborn When a Man Has Sons by More Than One Wife, What Is the Double Portion, May Love Move It, Can It Be Lost, and How Is the Law Applied Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
The rabbinic codes still apply **Deuteronomy 21:17**: the father's first son, by any wife, takes a double share of the father's estate, and a will that strips it is void (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:5). Plural marriage was later banned for Ashkenazi Jews, and Israel's 1965 Succession Law divides estates equally. The written text comes first.	The New Testament gives no new inheritance law, and Western law now divides estates equally or by will. Christian Europe once went the other way: primogeniture gave land wholly to the eldest son. The Tanakh measures both against one verse — a double share, not the whole and not an equal share.	The Qur'an permits up to four wives on condition of justice (Q. 4:3) and fixes the heirs' shares: sons share equally, the male twice the female (Q. 4:11). There is no firstborn's double. The Prophet's word to Bashir — ***"be just between your children"*** — stands close to the purpose of **Deuteronomy 21:16**.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection,

or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**'s own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**'s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to five questions about **Deuteronomy 21:15–17**: who the firstborn is when a man has sons by more than one wife, what the double portion is and how it is measured, whether a father's love may move it, whether it can be lost, and how the law is applied today. **Yahweh** (**יהוה**) and **Elohim** (**אֱלֹהִים**) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations and their English meanings appear together in ***bold italic***. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Rabbinic literature, the New Testament, the Qur'an and hadith, ancient Near Eastern law, and modern civil law are cited as historical and comparative reference only. This is a covenant study, not legal advice; a father arranging an estate should also consult an attorney in his own jurisdiction. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The governing law; the houses of Abraham and Jacob; the womb-opener; the rights of wives; Zelophehad's daughters; dedicated property
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, Judges, 1 **Samuel**, 2 **Samuel**, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, **Jeremiah**, **Ezekiel**, **Zechariah**, **Malachi**	Joseph's two tribes; Jephthah; Elkanah's two wives; David's sons; **Elisha**'s double portion; the right of inheritance; the prince's gifts; the wife of one's youth
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles	The beginning of strength; inheritance and conduct; daughters among brothers; witnesses at the gate; Reuben's forfeit; the houses of Rehoboam and Jehoshaphat

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Ancient Near Eastern law	Laws of Lipit-Ishtar §24–25; Laws of Hammurabi §165, 167, 170–171; Middle Assyrian Laws B §1; Alalakh and Ugarit family texts (I. Mendelsohn, 1959)	How Israel's neighbors divided estates among sons of different wives
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Bava Batra 8:4–5; Mishnah Bekhorot 8:1; Talmud Bava Batra 122b; the ban attributed to Rabbenu Gershom (c. 1000 CE)	How Judaism applies the double portion and plural marriage today
New Testament	Luke 12:13–14; 15:11–32; Galatians 4:30; Hebrews 12:16–17; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15	Inheritance and the firstborn in Christian scripture
Qur'an and hadith	Q. 4:3, 4:11–12, 4:129; Sahih al-Bukhari 2587, 2742; Sahih Muslim 1623; Sunan Abi Dawud 2870	Plural marriage, fixed shares, justice between children, the limits of bequest

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Modern civil law	Israel Succession Law (1965); Kenya Law of Succession Act, s. 40; United States intestacy and paternity rules (general)	Where the covenant meets the state

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ONE HOUSE, TWO WIVES, ONE FIRSTBORN

I-A. The Question as It Is Asked

A covenant father who has sons by more than one wife faces a question the Torah answers in three verses. The question has several parts:

First: when a man has sons by two or more wives, which son is the firstborn?

Second: what is the ***double portion (pi shenayim)***, and how is it measured when there are three, four, or five sons?

Third: may a father give the firstborn's place to the son of the wife he loves more?

Fourth: can the right of the firstborn be lost, moved, or set aside — and by whom?

Fifth: how does a covenant father apply this law today, in a world where the state records one wife, divides estates by its own rules, and has no tribal land to allot?

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 267** (*Bless Me, Even Me Also*) examined the blessing and the birthright in Genesis, including Esau's sale of the birthright and the difference between the two. The April 2026 study *Who Is the Firstborn Son of Yahweh?* examined the national firstborn. The May 2026 study *Covenant Inheritance: Two Wives and a Family* applied **Deuteronomy 21:15–17** to one household. **Doc 205** (*The Promised Land and the Inheritance*) examined the ***nachalah (inheritance)*** of the Land. The present document gives the law itself a full verse-by-verse treatment, tests how it was kept in the houses of Israel, and corrects five points in the earlier material (Section IX).

I-B. The Law in Its Setting

Deuteronomy 21:15–17 stands in the middle of three household laws. Before it was the law of the captive woman taken as a wife, who may not be sold or treated as a slave if her husband no longer delights in her (**Deuteronomy 21:10–14**). After it is the law of the stubborn and rebellious son,

whose case goes to the elders at the gate (**Deuteronomy 21:18–21**). All three protect the weaker party in a household from the will of its head: the foreign wife, the less-loved wife's son, and — through public judgment rather than private anger — the house itself.

The Torah does not command a man to take more than one wife. It assumes the case and regulates it.

1. When a man takes another wife, he may not reduce the first wife's food, clothing, or marital rights (**Exodus 21:10–11**).
2. He may not take his wife's sister as a ***rival (litsror)*** while his wife lives (**Leviticus 18:18**).
3. The king may not multiply wives so that his heart turns away (**Deuteronomy 17:17**).
4. And when a man has two wives and sons by both, he may not move the birthright by his affection (**Deuteronomy 21:15–17**).

Finding — the Torah regulates a house of more than one wife and protects its weaker members; it does not command plural marriage. **Corroborated** (**Exodus 21:10–11**; **Leviticus 18:18**; **Deuteronomy 17:17**; **Deuteronomy 21:15–17**).

II. THE TEXT — DEUTERONOMY 21:15–17 PHRASE BY PHRASE

The three verses in a literal working translation:

"If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other hated, and they have borne him sons, both the loved and the hated, and the firstborn son is of the hated one —" (**Deuteronomy 21:15**)

"then it shall be, on the day he causes his sons to inherit what is his, he is not able to make the son of the loved one firstborn over the face of the son of the hated one, the firstborn." (**Deuteronomy 21:16**)

"But the firstborn, the son of the hated one, he shall acknowledge, by giving him a mouth of two in all that is found with him; for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." (**Deuteronomy 21:17**)

II-A. "The One Loved and the Other Hated"

The words are ***ahuvah (loved)***, אֲהוּבָה, and ***senuah (hated / less loved)***, שְׂנוּאָה. In a house of two wives, ***senuah (hated)*** does not have to mean hostility. The Torah has already used the same pair for the same situation:

"And he also loved Rachel more than Leah... And Yahweh saw that Leah was hated, and He opened her womb" **(Genesis 29:30–31)**

Jacob did not hate Leah in the modern sense; he loved her ***less*** — the text itself says ***"more than."*** Leah named her first son Reuben, saying ***"now my husband will love me"*** (**Genesis 29:32**). The law of **Deuteronomy 21** is written in the vocabulary of Jacob's tent. Its first reader would hear Leah and Rachel, Reuben and Joseph, in the words ***ahuvah*** and ***senuah***.

Two further details of verse 15 matter. The sons are born ***"to him"*** (*ve-yaldu lo*) — to the father. And the verse ends with an unusual form, ***la-seni'ah (of the hated one)***, Strong's H8146, found only here, as if the text lingers on the disfavored wife.

Finding — in a house of two wives, ***senuah (hated)*** describes the wife loved less, not necessarily a wife despised. **Corroborated** — the same pair describes the same household situation in **Genesis 29:30–33** and **Deuteronomy 21:15–17**.

II-B. "On the Day He Causes His Sons to Inherit"

The phrase is ***be-yom hanchilo (on the day he causes to inherit)***, **בְּיוֹם הַנְחִילוֹ**, from ***nachal (to inherit / to give as inheritance)***, H5157, in the causative stem. The father is the actor. The text does not say ***"when he dies."*** It names the day the father distributes, and the Tanakh records fathers who distributed while living: Abraham gave all he had to Isaac and gave gifts to the sons of his concubines ***"while he was still living"*** (**Genesis 25:5–6**); Jehoshaphat gave his sons gifts and gave the kingdom to the firstborn (**2 Chronicles 21:3**).

II-C. "He Is Not Able to Make Firstborn"

The Hebrew is ***lo yukhal le-vakker (he is not able to make firstborn)***, **לֹא יוּכַל לְבַכֵּר**. The verb ***bakar (to make or treat as firstborn)***, H1069, appears here in the intensive stem. The Torah does not merely say ***"he shall not"***; it says ***"he is not able."*** The same expression appears in the laws that protect a wife from being sent away: ***"he is not able to send her away all his days"*** (**Deuteronomy 22:19**, 29), and in the law of the king, ***"you are not able to set a foreigner over you"*** (**Deuteronomy 17:15**). In each case the Torah removes a power from a man's hand. A father who names the loved wife's son as firstborn has not changed anything; he has attempted what the law says he cannot do.

The phrase ***al-penei (over the face of)***, **עַל־פְּנֵי**, is read two ways. Most translations render it ***"in preference to."*** It can also mean ***"in the lifetime of"*** or ***"in the presence of,"*** as in **Numbers 3:4**, where Eleazar and Ithamar served ***"in the presence of Aaron their father."*** On either reading the result is the same: **while the true firstborn lives, the younger son may not be put in his place.**

Finding — a father has no legal power to transfer the firstborn's status by preference. **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 21:16**, with the same ***lo yukhal (not able)*** construction in **Deuteronomy 17:15**; **22:19**, 29).

II-D. "He Shall Acknowledge"

The verb is ***yakkir (he shall acknowledge / recognize)***, **יַכִּיר**, from ***nakar***, H5234. The word order is emphatic: ***"But the firstborn, the son of the hated one — he shall acknowledge."*** Elsewhere the same verb marks a public act of recognition that carries consequences. Judah, showing his own seal, cord, and staff, ***"acknowledged them and said, She is more righteous than I"*** (**Genesis 38:25–26**). Levi, in **Moses**' blessing, ***"did not acknowledge his brothers"*** when judgment required it (**Deuteronomy 33:9**). To ***yakkir*** the firstborn is to own him openly as the father's first son before the household — an act, not a feeling.

II-E. "A Mouth of Two in All That Is Found With Him"

The double portion is ***pi shenayim (a mouth of two)***, **פִּי שְׁנַיִם**. ***Peh (mouth)***, H6310, is used here as a measure — a ***"mouthful,"*** a portion. The same phrase appears twice more in Tanakh. **Elisha** asks **Elijah**, ***"Let there be a mouth of two of your spirit upon me"*** (**2 Kings 2:9**) — the request of the leading disciple to be counted as the firstborn heir among ***"the sons of the prophets."*** And in **Zechariah 13:8**, ***"a mouth of two in it shall be cut off... and the third shall be left"*** — where the phrase plainly means two parts out of three. Section V weighs both readings.

What is divided is ***"all that is found with him"*** (*be-khol asher yimmatse lo*), **בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּצֵא לוֹ**: <u>the father's estate as it stands on the day of distribution</u>.

II-F. "The Beginning of His Strength"

The reason the Torah gives is ***reshit ono (the beginning of his strength)***, **רֵאשִׁית אֹנוֹ**. ***On (strength / vigor)***, H202, is the father's. Jacob says the same over Reuben:

"Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength" (**Genesis 49:3**).

The Psalms use it twice of the firstborn of Egypt:

"the beginning of their strength in the tents of Ham" (**Psalms 78:51**), ***"the beginning of all their strength"*** (**Psalms 105:36**).

<u>The Torah's stated reason is about the father, not about the son's merit or duties. Much modern teaching says the firstborn receives double because he carries double responsibility for the family. That may be wise, but the text does not give it as the reason</u>.

Finding — the firstborn's portion rests on his being the beginning of his ***father's*** strength. **Corroborated** (**Genesis 49:3**; **Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Psalms 78:51**; **105:36**).

That the double portion is given ***because*** the firstborn bears double responsibility is **Not in the text**.

II-G. "The Right of the Firstborn Is His"

The closing words are ***lo mishpat ha-bekhorah (the right of the firstborn is his)***, **לוֹ מִשְׁפַּט הַבְּכֹרָה**. ***Mishpat***, H4941, here means a legal entitlement — a right that belongs to a person. **Jeremiah** uses the identical construction when his cousin Hanamel offers him the family field:

"for the right of redemption is yours to buy it" (**Jeremiah 32:7**) and ***"the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours"*** (**Jeremiah 32:8**).

A ***mishpat*** of this kind is not a favor the father grants; it is a right the son holds.

Finding — the firstborn's portion is a legal right belonging to the son, not a gift in the father's discretion. **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Jeremiah 32:7–8**).

II-H. The Word Study

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
bekhor (firstborn) **בְּכוֹר**	H1060	The first son; in **Deuteronomy 21** the father's first son	**Deuteronomy 21:15, 17**; **Genesis 49:3**
bekhorah (birthright) **בְּכֹרָה**	H1062	The firstborn's right and portion	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Genesis 25:31–34**; **1 Chronicles 5:1–2**
bakar (to make firstborn) **בָּכַר**	H1069	To treat or appoint as firstborn — the act the father may not do	**Deuteronomy 21:16**
ahuvah (loved) **אֲהוּבָה**	H157	The favored wife	**Deuteronomy 21:15**; **Genesis 29:30**
senuah (hated / loved less) **שְׂנוּאָה**	H8130	The wife loved less	**Deuteronomy 21:15**; **Genesis 29:31, 33**
nachal (to cause to inherit) **נָחַל**	H5157	The father's act of distributing the inheritance	**Deuteronomy 21:16**
nakar (to acknowledge) **נָכַר**	H5234	Public recognition with legal effect	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Genesis 38:26**; **Deuteronomy 33:9**

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
pi shenayim (double portion) **פִּי שְׁנַיִם**	H6310 + H8147	"A mouth of two": a double share, or two parts of three	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **2 Kings 2:9**; **Zechariah 13:8**
reshit (beginning / first) **רֵאשִׁית**	H7225	The first of a series; the firstfruits	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Genesis 49:3**
on (strength / vigor) **אוֹן**	H202	Generative strength — here, the father's	**Psalms 78:51**; **105:36**
mishpat (right / judgment) **מִשְׁפָּט**	H4941	Legal entitlement belonging to a person	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Jeremiah 32:7–8**
peter rechem (opener of the womb) **פֶּטֶר רֶחֶם**	H6363 + H7358	The first issue of a mother's womb — sanctified and redeemed	**Exodus 13:2, 12–15**; **34:19–20**
tsarah (rival wife) **צָרָה**	H6869	A co-wife as rival; also distress	**1 Samuel 1:6**; compare **Leviticus 18:18**
mattanot (gifts) **מַתָּנוֹת**	H4979	Gifts given during life, apart from the inheritance	**Genesis 25:6**; **Ezekiel 46:16–17**
nachalah (inheritance) **נַחֲלָה**	H5159	Hereditary possession passing within the family	**Numbers 27:7–11**; **1 Kings 21:3**

III. WHO IS THE FIRSTBORN IN A HOUSE OF MORE THAN ONE WIFE?

III-A. The Firstborn of the Father

Deuteronomy 21:15 speaks of one firstborn across two wives: ***"and the firstborn son is of the hated one."*** If each wife's first son were a firstborn for inheritance, the law would have no case to decide; the loved wife's first son would simply be firstborn of his own line. The law exists because there is only one ***bekhor (firstborn)*** in the father's house, and the question is which wife bore him. The reason the Torah gives — ***"the beginning of his strength"*** — points to the same thing: the first son of the ***father's*** strength, whichever wife bore him.

Finding — for inheritance, the firstborn is the father's first son, by whichever wife. **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 21:15, 17**; **Genesis 49:3**; and the house of Jacob, where Reuben alone is called Jacob's firstborn among the sons of four women, **Genesis 35:23**; **46:8**).

III-B. The Firstborn of the Womb — a Different Law

A second firstborn law runs through the Torah and is often confused with the first.

"Sanctify to Me every firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel" (**Exodus 13:2**).

This is the ***peter rechem (opener of the womb)***, counted by the ***mother***, and it concerns sanctification and redemption: the firstborn son is redeemed (**Exodus 13:13, 15**; **34:20**), at five shekels (**Numbers 18:15–16**), because **Yahweh** spared Israel's firstborn in Egypt (**Exodus 13:15**; **Numbers 3:12–13**). It says nothing about the double portion.

QUESTION	FIRSTBORN OF THE FATHER	FIRSTBORN OF THE WOMB
Governing text	**Deuteronomy 21:15–17**	**Exodus 13:2, 12–15**; **34:19–20**; **Numbers 18:15–16**
Counted by	The father: ***reshit ono (the beginning of his strength)***	The mother: ***peter rechem (opener of the womb)***
How many in a house of two wives	One	Up to one for each wife whose first child was a son
What it carries	The double portion of the father's estate	Sanctification to **Yahweh** and redemption
If daughters came first	Unaffected — the father's first son is still his firstborn	The womb was opened by the daughter; a later son is his mother's first son, not the womb-opener

The last row follows from the wording itself. **Exodus 13:2** and **34:19** define the sanctified firstborn as ***"whatever opens the womb."*** A son born after his mother's daughters is her first son, and that is an honor in its own right, but by the text's own definition he did not open the womb.

Finding — in a house of more than one wife there may be several womb-openers for redemption, but only one firstborn for the double portion. Corroborated (**Exodus 13:2**; **34:19**; **Numbers 18:15**; against **Deuteronomy 21:15–17**).

III-C. The Son of a Concubine or Servant-Wife

The Tanakh treats the sons of secondary wives as sons. Bilhah and Zilpah, given to Jacob by Rachel and Leah, are called ***"his father's wives"*** (**Genesis 37:2**). Their four sons received full tribal portions with the rest (**Genesis 49**; **Joshua 13–19**).

When the sons of Gilead's wife drove out Jephthah, saying ***"you shall not inherit in our father's house, for you are the son of another woman"*** (**Judges 11:2**),

the text records it as wrong: ***"Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father's house?"*** (**Judges 11:7**). And **Yahweh** raised Jephthah to deliver them (**Judges 11:29**).

Abraham's house is the one case where the father's first son, the son of a servant-wife, did not inherit with the son of the primary wife:

"the son of this slave woman shall not inherit with my son, with Isaac" (**Genesis 21:10**).

But the outcome there rests on **Yahweh**'s word — ***"in Isaac shall your seed be called"*** (**Genesis 21:12**; compare **17:19–21**) — given before the law, and even then Abraham provided for his other sons with gifts (**Genesis 25:6**).

Finding — the sons of secondary wives are full sons of the house. **Corroborated** (**Genesis 37:2**; **Genesis 49**; **Judges 11:2, 7**). Whether **Deuteronomy 21:15–17** governs a firstborn born to a slave-wife is not addressed by the verse, which speaks of ***nashim (wives)***; the Torah's pattern favors his full sonship.

IV. LOVE MAY NOT MOVE THE BIRTHRIGHT — THE LAW AND THE HOUSES OF ISRAEL

IV-A. Jacob's House: The Case Behind the Law

Jacob's house is the household **Deuteronomy 21** describes. Leah was ***senuah (loved less)*** (**Genesis 29:31**); Rachel was loved. Reuben, Leah's son, was the firstborn (**Genesis 29:32**). Joseph was the firstborn of the loved wife (**Genesis 30:22–24**).

Jacob loved Joseph more than all his sons and made him a distinguished coat, and his brothers ***"hated him and could not speak peaceably to him"*** (**Genesis 37:3–4**).

In the end Joseph did receive the double portion. Jacob took Joseph's two sons as his own:

"Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon" (**Genesis 48:5**),

and gave Joseph ***"one portion above your brothers"*** (**Genesis 48:22**).

In the Land these became two tribal allotments: ***"the sons of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim"*** (**Joshua 14:4**).

Read alone, Jacob's act looks like the very thing **Deuteronomy 21:16** forbids: the loved wife's son placed over the firstborn of the less-loved. The Chronicler addresses this directly:

"Reuben the firstborn of Israel — for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; yet he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. For Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the ruler, but the birthright was Joseph's" (**1 Chronicles 5:1–2**)

Three things are settled by this text.

First, the birthright moved because of Reuben's sin (**Genesis 35:22**; **49:4**), not because Jacob loved Rachel.

Second, the ***bekhorah (birthright)*** and leadership were divided: the double portion went to Joseph, the rule to Judah (compare **Genesis 49:10**).

Third, the Tanakh itself felt the need to explain the transfer, which shows that a transfer by affection alone would not have stood.

Finding — a father may not move the birthright by love; the only transfer in Israel recorded with a stated cause was Reuben's, for grave sin against his father. **Corroborated** (**Deuteronomy 21:16**; **Genesis 49:3–4**; **1 Chronicles 5:1–2**). That the birthright (double portion) and headship of the family can be separated is **Corroborated** (**1 Chronicles 5:2**; **Genesis 49:10**; **1 Chronicles 26:10**, Section IV-D).

IV-B. Elkanah's House: The Rival Wife

Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah; Peninnah had children and Hannah had none (**1 Samuel 1:2**). He loved Hannah, and at the festival he gave her ***"one portion, appayim"*** (**1 Samuel 1:5**) — a phrase translators render either ***"a double portion"*** or ***"a single portion, though he loved her."*** Both readings are held; the text does not settle it. Peninnah is called Hannah's ***tsarah (rival wife)***, **צָרָה**, who ***"provoked her sorely"*** (**1 Samuel 1:6**). The household tension **Deuteronomy 21:15** assumes is on full display, and the law's purpose is plain: whatever a husband's heart, the children's rights are not to be decided by it.

IV-C. Rehoboam and Jehoshaphat: Two Fathers, Two Patterns

Two kings of Judah show the two ways a father with many sons can go. Rehoboam took eighteen wives and sixty concubines. His first sons were by Mahalath (**2 Chronicles 11:18–19**).

But ***"Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines,"*** and he ***"appointed Abijah the son of Maacah as chief, to be leader among his brothers, for he intended to make him king"*** (**2 Chronicles 11:21–22**).

He also ***"dealt wisely"*** in placing his other sons in the fortified cities with provision (**2 Chronicles 11:23**). The office in question was the throne, not the family estate, but the pattern is the very pull **Deuteronomy 21:16** guards against: the loved wife's son raised over his elder brothers.

Jehoshaphat went the other way: ***"Their father gave them great gifts of silver and gold and precious things, with fortified cities in Judah, but the kingdom he gave to Jehoram, because he was the firstborn"*** (**2 Chronicles 21:3**).

Every son was provided for; the firstborn was honored as firstborn. The text is honest about what followed — Jehoram killed his brothers when he took the throne (**2 Chronicles 21:4**). Keeping the law of the firstborn does not guarantee a righteous firstborn. It guarantees a just father.

IV-D. David's Sons and Hosah's Sons: When Office Is Not Birthright

David's firstborn was Amnon (**2 Samuel 3:2**). Solomon, a younger son, received the throne — not by David's affection for Bathsheba, but by **Yahweh**'s declared choice: ***"of all my sons... He has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne"*** (**1 Chronicles 28:5**; compare **22:9–10**).

Even Adonijah conceded it: ***"the kingdom... became my brother's, for it was his from Yahweh"*** (**1 Kings 2:15**).

Among the Levitical gatekeepers, Hosah's son Shimri was made ***rosh (head) "for though he was not the firstborn, his father made him head"*** (**1 Chronicles 26:10**).

The Chronicler records it without censure. A father may appoint a capable son to lead a work. That is the office, not the ***bekhorah (birthright)***.

Finding — headship, office, and kingship are distinct from the firstborn's double portion; office may go to a younger son by Yahweh's choice or by appointment, but Deuteronomy 21:16 forbids moving the birthright by preference. Corroborated (**1 Chronicles 5:2**; **26:10**; **28:5**; **1 Kings 2:15**).

V. THE DOUBLE PORTION — WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT IS MEASURED

V-A. Two Readings of "A Mouth of Two"

The majority reading. The firstborn receives twice the share of each of his brothers. The estate is divided into one more share than there are sons, and the firstborn takes two. This is how the rabbinic codes apply it (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:4), how most modern translations render it, and how **2 Kings 2:9** is usually read — **Elisha** asking for the heir's double share among the sons of the prophets, not two-thirds of all **Elijah**'s spirit.

The minority reading. The firstborn receives two-thirds of the whole, as ***pi shenayim*** means two parts of three in **Zechariah 13:8**. Some scholars have proposed this; it would give the firstborn two-thirds however many sons there are.

A detail of the law narrows the gap. The case **Deuteronomy 21:15** pictures in its simplest form — two wives, each with a son — has two sons. With two sons, both readings give the same result: the firstborn takes two-thirds, his brother one-third. The readings differ only when there are three sons or more.

SONS	FIRSTBORN — DOUBLE SHARE	EACH OTHER SON	FIRSTBORN — TWO-THIRDS READING
2	2 of 3 shares = 66.7%	1 of 3 = 33.3%	66.7% (same)
3	2 of 4 shares = 50%	1 of 4 = 25%	66.7%; others 16.7% each
4	2 of 5 shares = 40%	1 of 5 = 20%	66.7%; others 11.1% each
5	2 of 6 shares = 33.3%	1 of 6 = 16.7%	66.7%; others 8.3% each
6	2 of 7 shares = 28.6%	1 of 7 = 14.3%	66.7%; others 6.7% each

Finding — the double portion means at least a double share of the father's estate relative to each brother. **Corroborated** as the reading of **Deuteronomy 21:17** and **2 Kings 2:9**. The two-thirds reading has the support of **Zechariah 13:8** alone and is a **Single witness**. Where there are two sons, the two readings agree.

V-B. What Is Counted

The measure is ***"all that is found with him"*** (**Deuteronomy 21:17**) — what the father holds on the day he distributes. The verse concerns the father's estate; it says nothing of a mother's property. Rabbinic law draws further limits — for instance, that the double share applies only to property already in hand, not to debts not yet collected — but those are later rulings, not the text.

V-C. What the Double Portion Is Not

It is not the blessing. Isaac's blessing (**Genesis 27**) and Esau's birthright (**Genesis 25:29–34**) are distinct; **Doc 267** treats them in full.

It is not the kingdom or headship. The birthright was Joseph's; the ruler came from Judah (**1 Chronicles 5:2**).

It is not the priesthood. **Yahweh** took the Levites in place of Israel's firstborn for service at the sanctuary (**Numbers 3:12–13**, 41, 45). The firstborn of a family received a double share of his father's goods; he did not receive a priestly office.

It is not the whole estate. English primogeniture once gave the land of an intestate father wholly to the eldest son. The Torah gives the firstborn a double share and keeps every brother's share.

V-D. Elisha's Request — the Double Portion as Inheritance of a Calling

Elisha's ***"mouth of two of your spirit"*** (**2 Kings 2:9**) uses the inheritance law's own term for the transmission of a calling. **Elijah**'s answer — ***"You have asked a hard thing"*** (**2 Kings 2:10**) — shows that this inheritance was not **Elijah**'s to distribute; it depended on **Yahweh**. The prophets took over the language of the firstborn's portion for something no father can bequeath. A father passes on goods; only **Yahweh** passes on a spirit.

VI. CAN THE RIGHT BE LOST, MOVED, OR SET ASIDE?

VI-A. Lost by the Firstborn's Own Act

The Tanakh records two firstborns who lost the birthright, and in both cases the loss came from the son's own act.

Reuben ***"went up to your father's bed"*** (**Genesis 49:4**; **35:22**), and the Chronicler names that as the reason (**1 Chronicles 5:1**).

Esau sold his birthright for a meal, and ***"Esau despised the birthright"*** (**Genesis 25:34**). In neither case did the father take the birthright away for preference.

Finding — a firstborn can lose the birthright by his own grave wrong or contempt. **Corroborated** (**Genesis 25:29–34**; **Genesis 49:3–4**; **1 Chronicles 5:1**).

VI-B. Moved by the Word of Yahweh

Yahweh repeatedly set a younger son over an elder:

Isaac over Ishmael (**Genesis 17:19–21**; **21:12**),

Jacob over Esau (**Genesis 25:23**),

Ephraim over Manasseh in the blessing (**Genesis 48:19**),

Solomon over his elder brothers (**1 Chronicles 28:5**).

In every case the choice is announced by **Yahweh**'s word, not reached by the father's heart. **Deuteronomy 21:16** binds the father; it does not bind **Yahweh**. A father today has no prophetic word of this kind to appeal to, and the law speaks to him.

Finding — Yahweh may choose a younger son; a father may not move the birthright by his own preference. **Corroborated** (**Genesis 21:12**; **25:23**; **48:19**; **1 Chronicles 28:5**; against **Deuteronomy 21:16**).

VI-C. What the Text Does Not Give

The Torah gives a father no private procedure for disinheriting a son. Its one law for a son in open rebellion sends the case to the elders at the gate, where it is judged publicly (**Deuteronomy 21:18–21**) — placed, deliberately, right after the firstborn law. Wisdom observes that conduct does change outcomes:

"A servant who acts wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully, and will share the inheritance among the brothers" (**Proverbs 17:2**; compare **20:21**).

That is an observation of how a house goes, not a statute granting the father a power the Torah elsewhere withholds.

Finding — that a son's conduct can affect his place in the inheritance is **Corroborated** (**Genesis 49:4**; **1 Chronicles 5:1**; **Proverbs 17:2**). That a father may move the firstborn's double portion for favor, or over an ordinary disagreement, is **Not in the text**; **Deuteronomy 21:16** forbids the first.

VI-D. Gifts During Life

The Tanakh never condemns a father's gifts during his lifetime. Abraham gave ***mattanot (gifts)***, מַתָּנוֹת, to the sons of his concubines and sent them east (**Genesis 25:6**). Rehoboam and

Jehoshaphat gave their sons cities, provision, silver, and gold (**2 Chronicles 11:23**; **21:3**). **Ezekiel**'s law of the prince draws the line between a gift to a son and a gift to a servant:

"If the prince gives a gift to any of his sons, it is his inheritance; it shall belong to his sons, their possession by inheritance. But if he gives a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, then it shall return to the prince" (**Ezekiel 46:16–17**).

The same passage forbids the prince to take the people's inheritance and drive them from their possession (**Ezekiel 46:18**).

Finding — gifts during life are lawful and were given to sons who were not the primary heir. Corroborated (**Genesis 25:6**; **2 Chronicles 11:23**; **21:3**; **Ezekiel 46:16–17**). Using gifts to empty the estate so that the firstborn's double share falls to nothing is not addressed in so many words; it defeats the purpose of **Deuteronomy 21:16**, and that conclusion is an inference, labeled as such.

VII. APPLYING THE LAW IN A HOUSE OF MORE THAN ONE WIFE TODAY

VII-A. A Worked Example

Consider a father with two wives. The first wife bore two sons. The second wife bore three daughters, then two sons. The table applies the Tanakh's own rules.

CHILD	MOTHER, ORDER	FIRSTBORN?	WOMB-OPENER?	SHARE OF WHAT IS DISTRIBUTED TO SONS
Son A	First wife; 1st child	**Yes** — father's first son	Yes — first wife	2 of 5 shares = 40%
Son B	First wife; 2nd child	No	No	1 of 5 = 20%
Daughters 1–3	Second wife	No	Daughter 1 opened the womb (no redemption for a daughter)	Gifts or a share by the father's choice (VII-D)
Son C	Second wife; 1st son	No	No — the womb was already opened	1 of 5 = 20%

CHILD	MOTHER, ORDER	FIRSTBORN?	WOMB-OPENER?	SHARE OF WHAT IS DISTRIBUTED TO SONS
Son D	Second wife; 2nd son	No	No	1 of 5 = 20%

If the first son had been born to the second wife, he would be the firstborn and take the double share, however much his father loved the first wife. That is the whole point of **Deuteronomy 21:15–17**.

VII-B. When the Firstborn Has Already Received His Portion

The law speaks of ***"the day he causes his sons to inherit"*** (**Deuteronomy 21:16**), and fathers in the Tanakh distributed while living (**Genesis 25:5–6**; **2 Chronicles 21:3**). The text does not say how a portion given early is reckoned at the end.

The plain sense of the law — that the firstborn's right is to a double share, not to two separate inheritances — suggests that what a father has already given his firstborn ***as his inheritance*** counts toward it. That conclusion is reasonable but **Not in the text**; a father who gives early should say in writing what the gift is for.

VII-C. When the Firstborn Dies Before His Father

The text is silent. The closest witness is the case of Zelophehad, whose daughters received the share their father would have had in the Land:

"Give us a possession among our father's brothers" (**Numbers 27:4**), and **Yahweh** answered, ***"you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them"*** (**Numbers 27:7**).

By analogy, a firstborn's share would pass to his own children. Rabbinic law rules the same way (Talmud Bava Batra 122b). In the Tanakh this rests on one analogy and is a **Single witness**.

VII-D. Daughters

The Torah's order is sons, then daughters, then brothers, then the father's brothers, then the nearest kinsman (**Numbers 27:8–11**), and **Yahweh** called it ***chuqqat mishpat (a statute of judgment)***, חֻקַּת מִשְׁפָּט, for Israel (**Numbers 27:11**). When there are sons, the statute does not give daughters a share. But a father is not forbidden to give more: Job ***"gave them an inheritance among their brothers"*** (**Job 42:15**), and the gifts of **Genesis 25:6** show a father providing for children

outside the primary inheritance. A daughter who inherits land marries within her father's tribe so the portion stays in the tribe (**Numbers 36:6–9**) — a rule tied to tribal land in Israel.

Finding — daughters inherit by statute when there is no son (Numbers 27:8; 36:2); a father may also give daughters a share among their brothers (**Job 42:15**). **Corroborated** for the first. The second rests on **Job 42:15** and the gift pattern of **Genesis 25:6** and is permitted, not commanded.

VII-E. The Wife the State Does Not Record

Most modern states record one wife. A second wife's marriage may have no civil standing, and the state may divide an estate without regard to the Torah. The covenant standing of her sons is not affected: Bilhah and Zilpah were ***"his father's wives"*** (**Genesis 37:2**) and their sons received full portions. But civil law will not apply **Deuteronomy 21:17** on its own. **A covenant father who wants his estate divided by the covenant must say so in instruments the state will honor — typically a will or trust, with each child's parentage clear.**

The Tanakh's own pattern for property is writing and witnesses. **Jeremiah** bought the family field with a deed ***"signed and sealed, and called witnesses,"*** and stored it in an earthen vessel ***"that they may last many days"*** (**Jeremiah 32:10–14**).

Boaz settled a family inheritance before the elders: ***"You are witnesses this day"*** (**Ruth 4:9–11**).

Abraham bought Machpelah ***"in the presence of the sons of Heth"*** (**Genesis 23:16–20**).

Finding — covenant transfers of family property were made in writing and before witnesses. **Corroborated** (**Genesis 23:16–20**; **Ruth 4:9–11**; **Jeremiah 32:10–14**). This study is not legal advice; the form those instruments take is a matter for an attorney in the father's own jurisdiction.

VII-F. When Part of the Estate Is Dedicated

The Torah permits a man to dedicate a house or a field to Yahweh (**Leviticus 27:14–24**).

It also shows that the ***nachalah (inheritance)*** normally passes to the sons:

"A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children" (**Proverbs 13:22**);

"House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers" (**Proverbs 19:14**); and Naboth would not give up ***"the inheritance of my fathers"*** even to a king (**1 Kings 21:3**).

Dedication is lawful. Nothing in the text allows it to be used as a way around **Deuteronomy 21:16** — to defeat the firstborn's right out of favor for another son.

VII-G. The Rights of the Less-Loved Wife

The firstborn law protects a son by protecting his mother's place. It belongs with **Exodus 21:10–11**: when a man takes another wife, ***"his first wife's food, her clothing, and her marital rights he shall not diminish,"*** and if he fails in these, ***"she shall go out free."***

Malachi warns the husband who deals treacherously with ***"the wife of your youth... your companion and the wife of your covenant"*** (**Malachi 2:14–16**). **Yahweh** sees the ***senuah***: ***"Yahweh saw that Leah was hated, and He opened her womb"*** (**Genesis 29:31**).

VII-H. A Covenant Father's Checklist

#	WHAT THE LAW ASKS	TEXT
I	Identify the firstborn: the father's first son, by whichever wife	**Deuteronomy 21:15, 17**; **Genesis 49:3**
II	Acknowledge him openly as firstborn, whatever your feelings toward his mother	**Deuteronomy 21:17**
III	Give him a double share of what is distributed to the sons	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Genesis 48:5, 22**
IV	Do not confuse the womb-opener's redemption with the firstborn's inheritance	**Exodus 13:2**; **Numbers 18:15–16**
V	Provide for every son, including sons of secondary wives	**Genesis 25:6**; **Genesis 49**; **2 Chronicles 21:3**
VI	Decide what daughters will receive, and say so	**Numbers 27:8**; **Job 42:15**
VII	Keep each wife's rights undiminished	**Exodus 21:10–11**; **Malachi 2:14–16**
VIII	Put it in writing, before witnesses, in a form that will stand	**Jeremiah 32:10–14**; **Ruth 4:9–11**

VII-I. Where Civil Law Stands Today (Comparative)

In most of the United States, an estate without a will is divided among the children equally, and a child born outside a recognized marriage can inherit from the father once paternity is established; no state recognizes a second concurrent marriage. Israel's Succession Law of 1965 abolished the firstborn's civil privilege and divided estates equally.

Kenya's Law of Succession Act, section 40, is one of the few modern codes written for a house of more than one wife: the estate of a polygamous man who dies without a will is divided among the ***houses***, according to the number of children in each house, with each surviving wife counted as an additional unit. None of these systems gives the firstborn a double share. A covenant father who wants **Deuteronomy 21:17** honored must provide for it himself.

VIII. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION APPLIES THE FIRSTBORN'S RIGHT

The table sets the three traditions against Tanakh's findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only.

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Who is firstborn	For inheritance, the father's first son by any wife; for redemption, the mother's womb-opener — the two are kept apart (Mishnah Bekhorot 8:1).	The New Testament applies "firstborn" chiefly to Jesus as a title (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15) and gives no inheritance rule. Western law sets no firstborn status.	No firstborn status in inheritance. All sons are heirs on equal terms (Q. 4:11).
Double portion	Kept: the firstborn takes two shares of the father's estate (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:4). A will that says "my firstborn shall not take a double portion" is void, because it contradicts what is written (8:5).	Not kept. Historic primogeniture in Christian Europe gave land wholly to the eldest; modern law divides equally or by will.	Not kept. The male receives twice the female's share (Q. 4:11); that is a male-female ratio, not a firstborn's portion.
Favoritism between children	A father may not change the inheritance by preference; the Mishnah permits redistribution by gift, but records the sages' displeasure at passing over one's sons (8:5).	Jesus declined to arbitrate an inheritance (Luke 12:13–14); the parable of the two sons ends with the elder's portion intact: "all that is mine is yours" (Luke 15:31).	When Bashir gave one son a gift, the Prophet asked whether he had given all his children the same, and said, "fear Allah and be just between your children" (Bukhari 2587; Muslim 1623). No bequest to an heir (Abu Dawud 2870); bequests capped at one-third (Bukhari 2742).

ELEMENT	✡ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Plural marriage today	A ban attributed to Rabbenu Gershom (c. 1000 CE) ended it for Ashkenazi Jews; Israel prohibits new polygamous marriages.	Monogamy is the norm in nearly all churches; plural marriage practiced by early Latter-day Saints was ended in 1890.	Permitted up to four wives, on condition of justice (Q. 4:3), with the warning "you will never be able to be just between women" (Q. 4:129).
Covenant strength	Preserves **Deuteronomy 21:17** as written: one firstborn of the father, a double share, and no power to strip it by will.	The elder son's portion in Luke 15 and the refusal to arbitrate both leave the father's house to its own law.	The demand for justice between children in gifts stands close to the purpose of **Deuteronomy 21:16**.
Covenant departure	Allowing gifts that empty the estate can leave the firstborn's right with nothing to attach to.	Primogeniture went beyond the text (the whole, not a double share); equal division falls short of it (no double share).	Abolishing the firstborn's double share departs from **Deuteronomy 21:17**.

IX. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library's own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else's. Five points in the May 2026 study *Covenant Inheritance: Two Wives and a Family* need correction. None of them changes the study's central reading of **Deuteronomy 21:15–17**: the firstborn is the father's first son, by any wife, and his double portion may not be moved by love.

Correction 1 — the womb-opener and the firstborn. The study defined the household firstborn by **Exodus 13:2** and assigned standing to a second wife's first son as ***peter rechem (opener of the womb)***. **Exodus 13:2** governs sanctification and redemption, counted by the mother; **Deuteronomy 21:17** governs the double portion, counted by the father (Section III-B). **Doc 267** flagged the first half of this. The second half is new: by the wording of **Exodus 13:2** and **34:19**, a son born after his mother's daughters is her first son but not the womb-opener.

Correction 2 — "an everlasting statute." The study called the ruling for Zelophehad's daughters ***"declared an everlasting statute (Numbers 27:11)."*** The verse says ***chuqqat mishpat (a statute of judgment)***; it does not say ***olam (everlasting)***. The ruling stands as law, but the wording should be corrected.

Correction 3 — "no son" read as a son outside the covenant. The study read ***"if a man dies and has no son"*** **(Numbers 27:8)** to include a living son who is not walking in the covenant. The verse

speaks of a man with no son. The extended reading is **Not in the text**. A father who wishes to give daughters a share, or to place a faithful daughter in a position of stewardship, can rest that choice on **Job 42:15** and the gift pattern of **Genesis 25:6** (Section VII-D), which permit it without stretching **Numbers 27:8**.

Correction 4 — the Islamic "echo" of the double portion. The study said the Qur'anic rule that a male receives twice a female's share is ***"an echo of the Torah's pi shnayim principle."*** It is not: the Qur'anic ratio is between males and females, and Islamic law gives the eldest son no extra share (Q. 4:11). The comparison should be withdrawn.

Correction 5 — lexical and source details. The study gave Strong's H4976 for ***mattanot (gifts)*** in **Genesis 25:6**; the entry is H4979. It also cited Talmud Bava Batra as supporting authority in the body of the study; under the Library's standing rule, rabbinic sources belong in the comparative tables and the Three-Religion Audit only.

X. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE RIGHT OF THE FIRSTBORN

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, each declaration rests on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Torah regulates a house of more than one wife and protects its weaker members; it does not command plural marriage.	**Exodus 21:10–11**; **Leviticus 18:18**; **Deuteronomy 17:17**; **21:15–17**
II	For inheritance, the firstborn is the father's first son, by whichever wife — the beginning of the father's strength.	**Deuteronomy 21:15, 17**; **Genesis 49:3**; **Psalms 78:51**
III	The womb-opener's redemption and the firstborn's inheritance are two different laws; a house may have several of the first and only one of the second.	**Exodus 13:2**; **34:19**; **Numbers 18:15–16**; **Deuteronomy 21:17**
IV	A father is not able to move the birthright by love; the right of the firstborn is the son's own.	**Deuteronomy 21:16–17**; **Jeremiah 32:7–8**; **1 Chronicles 5:1–2**
V	The double portion is a double share relative to each brother; it is not the whole estate, not the blessing, not the throne, and not the priesthood.	**Deuteronomy 21:17**; **Genesis 48:5, 22**; **Joshua 14:4**; **1 Chronicles 5:2**; **Numbers 3:12**

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
VI	A firstborn can lose the birthright by his own grave wrong; **Yahweh** may choose a younger son; a father may not.	**Genesis 25:34**; **49:4**; **1 Chronicles 5:1**; **28:5**
VII	A faithful father provides for every son and daughter, keeps every wife's rights, and settles his house in writing before witnesses.	**Genesis 25:6**; **2 Chronicles 21:3**; **Job 42:15**; **Exodus 21:10**; **Jeremiah 32:10–14**

XI. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE FATHER WHO ASKS

Behind this law there is usually a real house: two mothers, sons and daughters by both, and a father who wants to do right before Yahweh as he grows older. Tanakh's answer is fivefold.

First: know who your firstborn is. He is your first son, whichever wife bore him (**Deuteronomy 21:15, 17**). Your love for one wife does not change it.

Second: acknowledge him openly. ***"He shall acknowledge"*** is a public act (**Deuteronomy 21:17**). Give him his double share and say so plainly, so that no son and no mother is left to guess.

Third: leave no son out. Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines; Jehoshaphat gave every son silver, gold, and cities (**Genesis 25:6**; **2 Chronicles 21:3**). The sons of Bilhah and Zilpah were tribes in Israel. If a son has wronged you gravely, the Tanakh records that conduct has consequences (**Genesis 49:4**; **Proverbs 17:2**), and it also records a Father who says of a wayward son, ***"I will surely have mercy on him"*** (**Jeremiah 31:20**).

Fourth: provide for your daughters by your own word. The statute gives them a share when there are no sons (**Numbers 27:8**); your own generosity may give them a share among their brothers (**Job 42:15**).

Fifth: write it down before witnesses. The state will not apply **Deuteronomy 21:17** for you. **Jeremiah** sealed his deed and called witnesses (**Jeremiah 32:10–14**). Do the same, with counsel who knows the law where you live, so that on the day your sons inherit, the right of the firstborn is his, and peace remains in the house.

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REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 17:19–21; 21:10–12	Isaac chosen; the servant-wife's son	III-C; VI-B
Genesis 23:16–20	Machpelah bought before witnesses	VII-E
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Genesis 49:3–4, 10	Beginning of my strength; Reuben's forfeit; the scepter in Judah	II-F; III-A; IV-A; VI-A
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Numbers 27:4–11	Zelophehad's daughters; the order of heirs	VII-C; VII-D; IX
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REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Proverbs 13:22; 17:2; 19:14; 20:21	Inheritance and conduct	VI-C; VII-F
Job 42:15	Daughters given inheritance among brothers	VII-D; IX; XI
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1 Chronicles 26:10	Shimri made head though not firstborn	IV-D
1 Chronicles 22:9–10; 28:5	Solomon chosen by **Yahweh**	IV-D; VI-B
2 Chronicles 11:18–23	Rehoboam loves Maacah, raises Abijah	IV-C; VI-D
2 Chronicles 21:3–4	Kingdom to Jehoram "because he was the firstborn"	II-B; IV-C; VI-D

"But the firstborn, the son of the hated one, he shall acknowledge, by giving him a double portion of all that is found with him; for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his."

Deuteronomy 21:17 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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