The Prophet Ezekiel states very specifically that "the son will not share the guilt of his father." This prophecy uttered later is in no way contradictory with what Moses wrote in the Law concerning the sins of the fathers being visited upon subsequent generations. He is simply saying that the parents' behaviour patterns will deeply affect their children's behaviour patterns.

This should forever settle the controversial and misapplied passage in the Book of Deuteronomy that addresses pregnancy out of wedlock. It says that "those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted into the assembly of the Lord," even to the tenth generation.

Some have interpreted this to mean that God has doomed an illegitimate child to failure all his life, deprived of the benefits of a normal family structure and with no hope of redeeming the situation.

But it is clear from the overall picture in Scripture that the real issue here is to safeguard the Holy Assembly from the infiltration of ungodly influence.

The story of Jephthah clearly reveals that full participation for anyone with such a complex and difficult background could be granted simply by exhibiting true faith in God.

The Book of Ruth provides another powerful example. It tells of a Moabite woman who entered into the congregation of Israel and was even allowed to marry into the Royal Tribe of Judah.