

# Parashah #18 Mishpatim (Rulings - Ordinances)

10 Feb 2018 – 25 Shevat 5777

## Scripture Readings

Torah : Exodus 21 v 1 – 24 v 18

Prophets: Jeremiah 34v 8-22, 33v 25-26

Brit Hadashah (New Covenant) : Matthew 5v38-42,15v1-20,(Mark 7v1-23 Repeat), Acts 23v1-11, Hebrews 9v15-22, 10v28-39

Last week – Parasha Yitro (Jethro), Adonai Elohim (God) prioritised family as being near the top of the importance charts and for leaders they must have their house in order as an example to His people. Its also essential to be open to and recognize good sound advice especially from someone who will be honest and straight with you. Often they can be close to you. Be humble enough to see it just like Moshe. Listen for the Ruach HaKodesh confirmation and guidance. God met with His people and spoke out the Aseret haDebarim, the Ten WORDS / Commandments so they could rightly represent Him as his specially chosen people and priesthood - a kingdom of priests (mamlechet cohanim) and a holy nation (v'goy kadosh) for the whole world to see Him. In the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant), all Believers in Yeshua (Jesus) are sons and daughters of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; therefore, we are all royalty—kings and priests unto Adonai - the Lord. Yeshua (Jesus) summed up these 10 mitzvot (commandments), indeed the entire Torah, with these words from the Shema : “Love the Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27). He gave His disciples a further 10 Words, the Beatitudes which flow out of the 10 Words / Commandments and are to written on our hearts. A new way of living.

This week –**Parasha Mishpatim (Rulings – Ordinances – Instructions -Judgements)** readings cover many important instructions given by YHVH (Adonai) Elohim (God) to formalize a new way of living or returning to a code by which He always intended people to live. A guide for the daily lives of His holy nation (B'nei Yisrael) to be people after His own heart, showing love, justice and righteousness firstly to their own people and then as an example for the world to follow. It was a starting point to get the worlds lawless ways out of their system. These rulings provided the ultimate foundation for living as God’s people; a way of life that glorified God and made Him known to all nations; a way of life separate from all other peoples; a way of life that ensures a viable, safe society; a way of life we will not know fully until Yeshua’s return. Those commandments deal with our relationship with God and our relationship with each other. The Mishpatim clearly show that God wants to be involved in our relationships. Parasha Mishpatim contains 53 mitzvot (commands)—23 does and 30 donts. This series of instructions, are also called “The Covenant Code” by some Bible scholars. Many of the western country’s status and regulations are based on the ordinances defined in the Torah and originally included many of the associated punishments. The presentation of Jewish civil law, which pertains to personal damages, lending, manslaughter, kidnapping, etc., begins with the laws concerning slavery.

Its interesting that the instructions commence with how to treat Hebrew servants (slaves effectively) followed by family and neighbourly matters. God is all about relationship, freedom and loving ones neighbor as ones self and so wanted to focus his people, the Israelites, that they had just been released from slavery and to learn from the experience.

As an aside in the reference to the releasing of the servant after 6 years and made free in the 7<sup>th</sup> year, according to the rabbis, the six years represent the 6,000 years that we will work to serve the Lord. The seventh year of freedom represents the Messianic age—the thousand years when we will rule and reign from Jerusalem with Messiah, who will sit on the Throne of His father David. Those of us who are Yeshua’s disciples can confidently look forward to that.

God perhaps begins with slavery because slavery had been Israel’s primary national experience. It was etched into the very fabric of their being and as we mentioned last week that we need to get Egypt’s ways out of our system. Although slavery and forced servitude is repulsive to most of us today, at that time, it was a widely accepted practice, and God desired to place in its proper perspective. In that day, slavery could be beneficial or harmful, depending upon the nation where it was instituted and the character of the slave owner. Indeed, a slave owner who followed the Torah would be much more considerate of the welfare of their slaves than many employers who dishonor and disrespect their employees.

This ordinance was also for the eved ivri (Hebrew indentured servant) who is working off a debt incurred by theft. It also applied to those who fell into poverty and could not pay their creditors. Indentured servanthood provided a compassionate form of help. Therefore, God instituted rules of social justice over slavery that protected human

dignity and individual rights. Apostle Shaul spoke about this in Ephesians 6:5-9 (TLV). “5 Slaves, obey your human masters, with respect and reverence, with sincerity of heart, as you would the Messiah— 6 not just under your master’s eye as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Messiah doing God’s will from the soul. 7 Serve with a positive attitude, as to the Lord and not to men— 8 knowing that whatever good each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Stop using threats, knowing that the Master—of them and of you, too—is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.”

The Haftarah Mishpatim emphasizes the seriousness with which God regards the limits of slavery outlined in the Torah portion, as well as His compassion for the slave. When the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, Israelite slave owners made a pact with King Zedekiah, agreeing to release their Jewish slaves. One year later, however, when the Babylonians retreated, the slave owners (feeling now safe and secure) set about to forcibly re-enslave those they had previously set free. (Jeremiah 34:8–11). Because they once again transgressed Parasha Mishpatim’s commandment concerning slavery, Jeremiah prophesied God’s judgment—the complete destruction of Jerusalem. As result of that judgment, many were carried off as captives to Babylon and many never returned. Thankfully, this destruction is not the end of the story. We read God’s promise to restore the fortunes of the Jewish People and have compassion on them.

The ordinances given here were intended to create a profound respect for every human being. It is told that a 13th century Jewish sage, Hillel, was challenged to sum up the entire Torah while standing on one leg. Hillel responded with *ve’ahavta l’reacha kamocho* (and you shall love your neighbor as yourself). This is echoed by Apostle Shaul “For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:14). Yeshua (Jesus) responded to a similar challenge in like manner:

“One of the teachers of the law (Pharisees) came and heard them [Yeshua and the Sadducees] debating. Noticing that Yeshua had given them a good answer, he asked Him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

“The most important one,” answered Yeshua, “is this: ‘Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad (Hear, O Israel :The Lord our God, the Lord is one) and Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28–31)

Yeshua emphasized that our primary service in this life is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. If we want to sum up all of the Torah in one word, it would be this: love.

“This one commandment I give unto you—that you love one another.” (John 13:34)

Yeshua stated in Matthew 5:17 he did not come to abolish the Torah, but to fulfill and complete it. He came to show us what the Torah is all about and live it out perfectly. And this He did while emphasizing the Torah’s foundation is love for God and our neighbour. We can be trying so hard to keep all the ordinances to the letter and totally miss the spirit of the Torah if we are doing it all without love. The apostle Shaul went as far as to say that if we have not love, we are nothing (1 Corinthians 13).

What about one of the well known ordinances found in this Torah portion which at times is also mentioned by non believers: “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” (Exodus 21:23–24). What do we do with that?

This verse expresses the point that in the execution of justice, the punishment should fit the crime. Punishments were to be neither too harsh nor too lenient. Other cultures of the day had punishments totally disproportionate to the crime.

Yeshua also shed light on this passage in such a way that showed it was not to be used as grounds for personal revenge and retribution on our enemies:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,’ But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.... love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. That you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:38–45).

Yeshua wasn’t changing God’s Torah infact we know he was involved in the giving of the mishpatim. So what was he saying. He understood that the mishpatim not only shine a light on how we are to conduct ourselves, they shine

a light on our heart and our motives. Our mindset should not be one of keeping score and getting revenge. While justice is to be pursued, we are also to love those who have wronged us by praying that they be released from bondage to sin and by asking God to touch their spirits with the knowledge of Him.

Abba, our Father in Heaven, has treated us in the same way by blessing us with His Son, Yeshua, even though we were living in rebellion to Him.

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Messiah died for us.”

Walking with God is not about rule keeping –even though God does have clear guidelines by which we need to live once we have accepted Yeshua as our Lord and saviour; it is about knowing Him. And we can all know God.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold a New Covenant where ALL will know God, from the least to the greatest.

Whether we are male or female, Jew or Gentile, young or old, through the Brit Chadashah (New Covenant), which was sealed in the blood of Yeshua, we can all have free access to God.

Moses ratified the Original Covenant ordinances by sprinkling blood on the two contractual parties: half on the people of Israel and half on the altar that represented God. (Exodus 24:6–8)

All the covenants were sealed in blood; and hence likewise when Yeshua shed His blood on the Roman execution stake, He entered the most Holy Place, not with the blood of bulls and goats but with His own precious blood.

(Hebrews 9:18–22)

When He died, the veil separating the people from the Most Holy Place was torn from top to bottom. (Mark 15:28; Matthew 27:51; Luke 23:45)

In a similar way as a grieving Jewish person tears their garments, this could have been an expression of the Father’s grief over the death of Yeshua. The result, however, is that we can now come boldly to the Throne of God all by ourselves to find help and grace in time of need.

Are we taking advantage of this privilege?

God is the same today, yesterday, and forever. If we no longer feel close to Him, then perhaps it is we who have moved away. But God is waiting and yearning for us to draw near to Him. Could there be any better moment than now to draw near and be refreshed?

Talking about being refreshed, this week’s Parasha also reiterated the 4<sup>th</sup> Word “the Sabbath”, which is more than just a Sabbath rest for people every seventh day.

Every seven years, the land is to enjoy a Sabbath rest called the Shemitah. “Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat.” (Exodus 23:10–11)

As well, the three pilgrimage festivals are mentioned as the appointed times when all adult Jewish males are to appear before the Lord: Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost) and Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles). God certainly knows what people need – plenty of rest, celebration days and times to reflect on and honour Him publicly.

The last part of today’s Parasha I found fascinating as I’m sure we would all love to know what Abba Elohim (Father God) actually looks like. “Moshe, Aharon, Nadav, Avihu, and seventy of the leaders went up; and they saw the (alef-tav) God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a sapphire stone pavement as clear as the sky itself. He did not reach out his hand against these notables of Israel; on the contrary, they saw (alef-tav) God, even as they were eating and drinking.”

This event takes place soon after the people accept the covenant; the 10 Words and ordinances-the Scroll of the Covenant, given verbally by God and written by Moshe, the people are then sprinkled with blood as a sign of being consecrated to YHVH -Adonai. God is about to call Moshe up to the mountain to receive the 10 commandments written in stone. Our questions about this passage might include:

1. How did these men see God and not die? Didn’t God tell Moshe that to see His (God’s) face would mean certain death? (Ex. 33:20 “But He also said: ‘You cannot not see My face, for no man can see Me and live’”). Conversely, because this was said after the event in question, does it mean man was allowed to see God and not die in this instance?
2. What form did God take at this time for humans to see Him?
3. What is the significance of the sapphire stone pavement appearing substance beneath God’s feet?

Let us examine the first question. In the Hebrew Scriptures we see before the word “God” the alef-tav – meaning the beginning and the end. As Messianic believers we understand the alef-tav represents Yeshua. The passage clearly indicates these humans saw God’s feet. It mentions nothing of His face. They had to stand at a distance, and an emblem of His glory was distinctly, displayed before those chosen witnesses. Many think, however, that in this private scene was discovered, amid the luminous blaze, the faint foreshadowed form of the humanity of Yeshua in carnate. Ezekiel 1:26

There is no doubt that God’s allowing these humans to see His feet was an extraordinary privilege. This indicates that as glorious as this experience was, there was something missing or incomplete in the encounter. This was not a “face-to-face” encounter with God. These elders of Israel could see God but there was no direct communication between them and God. This direct communication and fellowship would be reserved for Moshe. However seeing God, looking into the eyes and soul of the Creator Abba Elohim, understanding and knowing God as we want to know another and be known—these are not possible with God, to whom we are not equal. The 74 do not look directly at God but see God from below; they look up at God. The focus of their gaze is on the pavement under God’s feet. They are aware of seeing God, but the center of their attention is on the path that leads to the Eternal. By following that path, we, too, can catch a glimpse of Abba Elohim (Father God ) through Yeshua.

Even more was the fact that they saw Him even as they ate and drank. This scenario represents the close fellowship God seeks with humankind. This is also a foreshadowing of the great wedding supper described in Revelation 19:9-10.

Answering the second question is somewhat more difficult. We weren’t there. The description is limited to His feet. This may indicate our relationship as servants of God privileged only to look upon the feet of Adonai Elohim (Lord God) at this point in history. Recall the statement by John the Baptist as he conveyed his perceived relationship to his cousin Yeshua as his Lord in Matthew 3:11. Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear – According to Barnes Commentary on the Bible, the word translated here as “shoes” has a signification different from what it has in our language. At first, in order to keep the feet from the sharp stones or the burning sand, small pieces of wood were fastened to the soles of the feet, called “sandals.” Leather, or skins of beasts dressed, afterward were used. The foot was not covered at all, but the sandal, or piece of leather or wood, was bound by thongs. The people took these off when they enter a house, and put them on when they leave it. To unloose and bind on sandals, on such occasions, was formerly the business of the lowest servants. The expression in this place, therefore, denotes great humility, and John says that he was nor worthy to be the servant of him who should come after him. That the 74 chosen individuals saw only the feet of God reinforces the idea that we are certainly not equals with or to God. In His unmerited kindness, He allowed these men to see his feet to reinforce the fact of his presence. In today’s academic circles this would be called establishing his validity; his reliability to be proven at the close of the Tribulation (Rev. 1:14-15) This passage references Yeshua (One like the Son of man) ; God manifested as Messiah ben David and talks about his feet.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> question:

“...something like a sapphire stone pavement as clear as the sky itself.” Sapphire is one of the most valuable and lustrous of the precious gems—of a sky-blue or light azure color and frequently chosen to describe the throne of God (see Ezekiel 1: 26, 10:1). Not surprisingly, the stone representing Judah was called a nofech in Hebrew. This is generally translated as turquoise. The Jewish Study Bible interprets the blue pavement as the base of God’s “palace,” adding that this is why the sky is blue. The color was a sky blue (Heb. – Techelet). The blue of the sapphire may suggest that the elders saw the sea of glass before the throne of God (Revelation 4:6), although they could not have been aware of it at the time. What was the significance of allowing the 74 men to see this physical manifestation? Was this a preview / glimpse of things to come? Would any of these individuals describe what they saw to their children who might be witness to the events in Revelation? If so, will they make the connection between this event, Yeshua’s return as Messiah ben David, and the appearance of Yeshua in this future event? This may be a far stretch but one we cannot rule out. Is this narrative for our benefit in order that we may make the connection between the God of Israel and Yeshua as God himself manifest as a human form? Often I wonder if believers to day think that the God of the Original Covenants is retired or dead replaced by Yeshua a more compassionate and loving Son of God ie two different rulers. This is followed by concepts that Yeshua (Jesus) changed the rules “mid-Bible” from grace and justice to “grace only, “totally abrogating God’s commands, rulings, and statutes. In Revelation 4:6, the emblem was designed to represent the pure worship of heaven without reference to any other symbolic design, and hence, the sea is wholly clear and pellucid, similar to the description in our narrative. As God was standing on this sapphire-colored base, its presence clearly indicates God standing on

the throne as the King; the One true God on the mountain above all others. How much of this information was available to the men who saw God? Did they understand its significance? Only God Knows but what a privilege and taste of Glory.

Regardless of what these individuals perceived, they must have been totally awestruck. Although we have yet to have the privilege of physically seeing YHVH Elohim, who intercedes on our behalf to Abba Elohim, one day if we persevere and win the race, we will see God and dwell together. We can know and experience the awe, fear, and love of God every time we enter His courts with praise, supplication, thanksgiving, meditation, or study as the Ruach Hakodesh(Holy Spirit) is always with us. The very fact that we are allowed such a privilege should cause us to humble ourselves as we spiritually bow at Gods feet and prostrate ourselves before His throne. Perhaps this narrative was meant as a teaching for us on the benevolence, tenderness, and unmerited kindness of God in his role as Adonai, even as the people would soon see the glory of Adonai as a raging fire. Once again we see the inextricable duality of grace (the beautiful clear blue base at His feet) and His requirements (the raging fire of judgment and power) manifest throughout the Original and "New" Covenants.

In readiness for his return we need to ensure we are ready and waiting as part of the bridal body of believers. We need to show evidence that we continue to being made Holy. Yeshua reiterated that its not what goes in that makes one unholy rather its what comes out. Mark 7:21 –23"Out of the heart comes....."Hebrews 10:22 "So let us draw near with a true heart...."26 -31 being constantly renewed into His likeness.

Hu Ya Vo Yeshua – Yeshua is coming.

Shabbat Shalom