

MORDEKAI'S DRASH — מִשְׁפָּטִים



Torah: *Mishpatim* (Rulings/Judgments), *Sh'mot* (Exodus) 21.1-24.18
Haftorah: *Melakhim Bet* 2 Kings 11.17-12.17
Suggested Messianic Writings: *Mattityahu* (Matthew) 17.1-11

Shalom,

We come to a special section of Torah now. Israel had just been given the Ten Commandments (as we read in the last parashah), the guidelines on how to live in obedience to HaShem, and now begins the explanation of those rules – the commentary, the expansion, as it were. As the ArtScroll Commentary points out, in Torah HaShem does not make a separation between “Church and State.” In HaShem’s economy, there is no difference; i.e., all that we do – whether in worship or in work – should be done to honor Him, and everything should include Him. The reason for all of Torah is summed up in a statement that Moshe’s father-in-law told him in *Sh'mot* 18.20, and which we looked at last parashah: “You should teach them the laws and the teachings, and *show them how to live their lives and what work they should do*” (emphasis added). This people had just been delivered from a pagan culture, which had imbedded itself into their own way of life, and they were pretty clueless about how to live HaShem’s way. None of us are any different today, and that is why we must constantly be in Torah, and all of the Word of HaShem. That is the purpose of Scripture. When left on our own without the guidance and wisdom of the Creator, we really don’t know how to live properly or behave in a righteousness manner. Witness the state of the world. Torah is our *foundation of living*; Yeshua is our *foundation of faith*.

A rather oxymoronic thought is that in true service to Yeshua, every one of us is *free to be a slave*. When *Sha'ul* (Saul/Paul) points out in Romans 6.14 that we are not *under law*, in context he is saying that we are not under *the condemnation of law*; or as David Stern translated in the CJB, “not under legalism but under grace.” The point is that we are not saved *just by obeying the law*, but neither are we saved in order to do *whatever we feel* like in the name of grace. *Sha'ul* declares that we are not to sin *because we are under grace*. He continues by pointing out that we are slaves to the one whom we obey. The nature of humanity is to abuse even a concept such as slavery. A dictionary definition of slave is, “A person completely controlled by a dominating influence.” A magnificent obsession, if you will. The paradox of our walk is that we are *free to obey sin*, or we are *free to obey HaShem*. “Free to be a slave.” *Sha'ul* explains in 1 Corinthians 7.22-23 that *Mashiakh* (Messiah) has paid a price for us and has set us free from whatever we were enslaved to; so now *we are His slave*, and we are not to return to being a slave of our former nature. The purpose of Torah is to set us free from former slavery; that is what grace is all about. There really need not be a law-grace debate; rather, they are intended to go hand in hand. An FFOZ¹ drash for this parashah began with the thought, “Things get backward if we start to believe that we must keep God’s Law in order to be saved. Instead, we should keep God’s Law *because we are saved*.”

If we desire to be a slave to THE Master, Yeshua, here is what we are to do, per *Sh'mot* 21.5-6. If we love our Master and want to stay with Him, we need to let Him “pierce our ear on the doorpost,” so that we will be His slave for life. What does that mean? This is a spiritual picture. *Yesha'yahu* (Isaiah) 50.4-5 gives us a clue: “Each morning He *awakens my ear* to hear like those who are taught. Adonai Elohim has *opened my ear*, and I neither rebelled nor turned away” [emphasis added]. In a very real spiritual sense He *pierces our ear* to symbolize our permanent “slavery” to Him. This passage in *Yesha'yahu* 50 is a Messianic portion, as well as these verses in *Tehillim* (Psalms) 40.7(6)-9(8), “Sacrifice and grain offerings you don’t want; burnt offerings and sin offerings you don’t demand. Instead, you have given me *open ears*; so then I said, ‘Here I am! I’m coming! In the scroll of a book it is written about me. Doing your will, my God, is my joy; your Torah is in my inmost being.’” Yeshua’s joy was obeying His Father. Our joy should be the same, if we are His “slave for life.”

In *Mattityahu* 5.38, Yeshua expands upon the concept of *eye for eye and tooth for tooth*: “You have heard it said... but I say unto you...” According to Biblical scholar David Bivin, the Hebrew understanding of what Yeshua said is that one is not to get “even” with evildoers. Bivin explains, “Not ‘competing’ with evildoers is very different from not ‘resisting’ evildoers. [Yeshua] was not teaching that one should submit to evil, but rather that one should *not seek revenge*. His statement has nothing to do with something like confronting a murderer or facing an enemy on the field of battle... loving and praying for one’s enemies in no way precludes defending oneself when in danger... however, one must forgive

and *not seek revenge* against those who have insulted or wronged them.”² In instances in the Tanakh where this commandment – *eye for eye and tooth for tooth* – is given³, it has to do with dealing with a murderer or someone who has done malicious harm to another. But by Yeshua’s time, the commandment was being taken out of context.

The people of Israel made a curious statement to HaShem in Sh’mot 24.7. Moshe had given the commandments to the people, and they declared, “Everything that ADONAI has spoken, we will *do and obey*” (emphasis added). The last word, obey, in Hebrew is נִשְׁמָע, *neesh’mah*, the root of which is שָׁמַע, *sh’ma*, which means, “to hear intelligently, with implication of obedience.” In other words, their response essentially was, “We will do and [then] we will hear.” Actual servitude means serving HaShem even *before* He tells us what He wants us to do.

Although well-known as an anti-missionary, the late Aryeh Kaplan made a good observation about the above verse in his book, *Waters of Eden*: “Our sages stress the fact that their first statement was, ‘we will do,’ and only then did they say, ‘we will hear.’ This indicates that when the Torah was given, we were ready to keep the commandments and ‘do’ them, before we ‘heard’ any reason or logic for them.” That is true “slavery,” and bears little resemblance to the slavery system than mankind has abused for their own evil purpose. In Yeshua we are indeed “free to be a slave.” Yeshua, may we all learn to *do and [then] hear*.

שְׁאַלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם – *Sha’alu shalom Yerushalayim* – Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

B’rakhot v’todah rabbah
(Blessings & thank you very much)

Mordekhi

This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven.
(Acts 1.11 CJB)

¹ First Fruits of Zion ministry, ffoz.org

² David Bivin, *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus (Insights from His Jewish Context)*, En-Gedi Resource Center Publishing, 2005

³ Ex 21.24, our verse here; Lev 24.20; Deut 19.21