

מִשְׁפָּטִים

Mishpatim

Exodus 21:1-24 end: Different laws

Haftarah: II Kings 12:1-17. Starting from 11:17 for Sephardic rite: fixing of the Temple

These are the rulings, *mishpatim* מִשְׁפָּטִים you are to present to them. Exodus 21:1

Mishpatim, the laws made for a better society...¹ The Parasha *Mishpatim*; the judgments; the laws; this Parasha comes right after the receiving of the Torah and has an important place because of it.

These commanded laws concern all the laws ruling between men within a society, and incorporate the practical application of the 10th *Mitzvah* (commandment), which commands not to covet what belongs to ones neighbor. The practice of this commandment is linked to the first one, that of loving G-d: it is because we love and serve G-d that we love our neighbor and don't harm him.

But *Yeshua* said to him, "What is written in the Torah? How do you read it?" He answered, "You are to love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your understanding; and your neighbor as yourself." {De 6:5 Le 19:18} "That's the right answer," *Yeshua* said. "Do this, and you will have life." Luke 10:26-28

A variety of laws follow with an obvious teaching purpose: to reeducate a people that were stripped of free will, but the reeducation process needs to be done progressively; the previous Parasha, *Yithro*, ends with the description of the ramp to ascend to the altar; this speaks to us of steady progression to reach the full stature of a priest before Adonai.

¹ This text is an excerpt from the book on *Shavuot* we are currently working on.

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Sefer Shemot

Initially, our Parasha begins with the law on the Hebrew slave. How important this law is in the eyes of a people who just came out of captivity and has yet to experience the taste of freedom; a people who have only known the behavior of a slave, whose head is voluntarily kept under a yoke, preventing him from seeing the shining light of hope. Many are the steps yet necessary to obtain the renewed mind and glory of the children of G-d.

Then, within the middle of these laws, we find the laws on Shabbat and the Feasts. What could be the link?

Perhaps a Hebrew has stolen or damaged something and cannot return it or pay for it. He must then sell himself to his brother to pay back what he owes and will work for six years and then be released the seventh year. If he decides to stay after those six years (a possibility because the laws for the Hebrew slave were to the advantage of the slave rather than to his master) he will have his ear pierced against the doorpost.

This doorpost, *mezuzah*, alludes to the blood of freedom that was set the night of the coming out of Egypt. The Hebrew slave attests then that he doesn't want this freedom that G-d granted the sons of Israel thus, he will remain a slave till the year of the Jubilee, *Yovel*. (Lev. 25:41.)

If you purchase a Hebrew slave, he is to work six years; but in the seventh, he is to be given his freedom, *chofshi*, חֲפְשִׁי without having to pay anything. Exodus 21:2

The word used here is *chofesh*, which differs from the one used for the freedom given by the *Yovel*, the Jubilee:

And you are to consecrate the fiftieth year, proclaiming freedom, *dror*, דְּרוֹר throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It will be a *yovel* for you; you will return everyone to the land he owns, and everyone is to return to his family. Leviticus 25:10

There is a deep teaching from the use of these two words. The word *dror*, דְּרוֹר, has different meanings: He is associated with the composing of the incense that was to be pure with no artifact:

Take the best spices – 500 shekels of (pure) *dror*, דְּרוֹר myrrh, (12 1/2 pounds) half this amount (250 shekels) of aromatic cinnamon, (6 1/4 pounds) 250 shekels of aromatic cane...

It is not to be used for anointing a person's body; and you are not to make any like it, with the same composition of ingredients--it is holy, and you are to treat it as holy. Exodus 30:23; 32

This word *dror* is also used for the redemption and salvation:

The Spirit of ADONAI ELOHIM is upon me, because ADONAI has anointed me to announce good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim freedom, *dror*, דְּרוֹר to the captives, to let out into light those bound in the dark. Isaiah 61:1

It is also the name of a bird which symbolizes freedom and no yoke.

We see then that there are two degrees of freedom. The first one, *chofshi*, is the freedom from bondage and oppression, the primary freedom that man can receive when his basic needs are provided; however, G-d is calling us to another degree of freedom, the one that will give us the necessary faith and anointing to step over the material and untie the bonds of materialism.

In our Parasha, we see this Hebrew slave who willingly refuses the spiritual freedom G-d wants to give him, preferring instead the comfort of a house and food. Herein is the difference between the slave and someone like *Yitzchak*, who was willing to give his own life in sacrifice to G-d.

The *Shofar* sounding on Mount Sinai, proclaiming the freedom for the "one who observes my laws and rulings will have life through them,"² is directly linked to *Yitzchak's* sacrifice and *Avraham's* obedience which gave him the promise of spiritual descendants rooted in faith.

How much more significant the sacrifice of this True (real) Lamb that was offered instead of *Yitzchak*: the Living Torah Who gave us

² Leviticus 18 :5

access to the *Kodesh Hakodashim* and the Father. If we grab this truth we will then enter more closely as free men and women.

The following parable taken from the Midrash wonderfully summarizes what is a stake in this freedom offered to us:

For what reason did this procedure have to be done at a doorpost? Hashem said: "In Egypt, before the plague of the death of the first born, the *Bneh Israel* had put the blood on the posts and the lintels of their doors. Thanks to the merit of this *Mitzvah*, I spared them so that they would live and become My servants. From that time on, when a Jew out of his own will chooses to be enslaved to a master of flesh and blood, he must receive a mark at the threshold of a door!"

Some went so far as to choose a door that was on the street side so that those passing by would reprimand him by crying: 'Why then do you want to be a slave, when the Torah grants you freedom?'³

This search for material security, the quest for survey that preoccupies man since the fall is the main obstacle to our faith.

The L-rd offers us spiritual freedom given by His Word and His Spirit, Who operates in us the transformation of the new birth which can give us the required faith and vision to be set free from materialism. Not a false religious and monastic detachment that would push to preach a "Gospel of Poverty" or an exclusion of the world, but this freedom to untie the donkey of materialism and bring it to the Master Who rode it for us, giving us true deliverance from our slave mentality. This then is true freedom with no artifact:

"Therefore, I tell you, don't worry about your life - what you will eat or drink; or about your body - what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? Matthew 6:25

For a person is slave to whatever has defeated him. 2 Peter 2:19

We have been set free from Egypt, from the devil, to serve the L-rd "at the mountain of G-d," in order to live fully the revelation of the Torah given on this day of fire and thunder. On this day when "tongues" of fire came to crown the heads of the worshippers in truth and in spirit of G-d in order to become this "cherished" people, a nation of priests first looking for His kingdom and His Justice.

³ Translated from Kiddushim 22, Le Midrash Raconte, Rabbi Moshe Weissman

The gathered disciples received the spiritual fire of the Torah and the great privilege to be filled by this wind, the *Ruach*, the renewal of this divine breath blown into Adam at the beginning and they were able to witness this non-burning fire, the fire of the burning Bush, the fire of holiness.

The Covenant with the people was fully renewed that day by the holy blood of *Yeshua* and the *Torah* fully unveiled by the *t'bilah*, the promised baptism of the *Ruach Hakodesh*, the Holy Spirit.

What was the consequence of this?

“And you shall love Adonai, your G-d from all your heart, your soul and your strength.” This commandment burst powerfully with a new strength and a sanctified love and the second one “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” was birthed and fulfilled in a new way with the sharing of all the properties:

All those trusting in *Yeshua* stayed together and had everything in common; in fact, they sold their property and possessions and distributed the proceeds to all who were in need. Acts 2:44-45

The true freedom, the *dror* of the Jubilee, which abolishes all value of owning and property, gives men the ability to appear as free and equal, in front of the One Who redeemed them.

In the Parasha *Mishpatim*, the commandments for the keeping of the Shabbat and Feasts find their full meaning in the midst of the rulings, which regulates the respectful relationships between men. They are the link that unifies men together and men with G-d, all one to celebrate His goodness.

As we are daily purified by the fire of His Torah, as we obey the Truth and the unique Way He is, then we will be able to love one another with a sincere love!

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have a sincere love for your brothers, love each other deeply, with all your heart. You have been born again not from some seed that will decay, but from one that cannot decay, through the living Word of G.od that lasts forever. 1 Peter 1:22-23

Then the text (23:11) speaks of the year of *shmitah*, the year of release when all the fields are to remain open, and further still in the same chapter, the L-rd asks for the bringing of first fruits, but from which land? Isn't it the year of release? What is the link between these two commandments?

Here we need to understand what Paul (*Shaul*), quoting from this verse, was trying to tell us, in referring to the need to start eating meat rather than still drinking milk:

You are to bring the best first fruits of your land into the house of Adonai your God. You are not to boil a young animal in its mother's milk. Exodus 23:19

For although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the very first principles of God's Word all over again! You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who has to drink milk is still a baby, without experience in applying the Word about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by continuous exercise to distinguish good from evil. Hebrews 5:12-14

It is by obeying this unique Truth of the Living Torah that we will be able to bring the first fruits of our deeds, which will then belong to the whole people of G-d, because they will come from a common and holy worship of the Unique G-d, manifested in *Yeshua*. All united in Him, through Him and for Him, we will offer Him a celebration in truth and in spirit and He will be King over all the earth!



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Sefer Bereshit