



Parasha Mishpatim

February 10, 2024

Torah: Exodus 21:1-24:18

Haftarah: 2Kings 11:17-12:17

Ketuvim Shlichim: Hebrews 9:15-22; 10:28-39

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Our *parasha* for today is *Mishpatim*, meaning “ordinances.” It begins with this: *1 “Now these are the ordinances which you will set before them.”* (Exodus 21:1 TLV). We have talked about ordinances recently and so will not be speaking about them today. In *Parasha Yitro* last week, we saw that ADONAI’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt was completely an act of grace on His part. They accepted His grace, His deliverance from their enslavement. Now, He will enter into covenant with Abraham’s descendants, the people whom He has chosen, and begin to carry out His eternal plan. They are camped at Mount Sinai and ADONAI has presented an opportunity to them, but one which involved making a choice.

Imagine the scene, a huge crowd of people camped around the base of a mountain: *37 Then Bnei-Yisrael journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 men on foot, as well as women and children. 38 Also a mixed multitude went up with them, along with the flocks, herds and heavy livestock.* (Exodus 12:37-38 TLV). The usual estimate is that counting women, children and the mixed multitude, there were about 2 million people. Then, there were their livestock, their flocks and herds. But, some authorities have a problem with this, the possibility of a column of people more than ten miles long, plus all of the cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, dogs and birds. The question is, could ADONAI have cared for that huge crowd and all their animals? We know the answer. Yes, of course He could have, but did He? Would it have been any less of a miracle if there were not 2 million people delivered from Egypt? The defeat of Egypt’s gods was the most impressive thing. Water provided for 2 million people, one quart per person, would have been 500,000 gallons. That’s 500,000 gallons every day not including the water needed for the animals, probably at least that much more, a million gallons per day. Israel was provided manna and quail to eat, but what would their livestock eat in the desert?

The Bible is true, I have no doubt of it. But, it’s also true that we don’t always know how to interpret what *Torah* says. Hebrew words sometimes have more than one meaning. According to author Philip Ryken: “There’s another possibility, however—one that may also be faithful to the biblical text. The Hebrew word *eleph* can mean “thousand.” (אֶלֶף My insertion). “However, early in the Old Testament, it may also be used as an inexact term for a sizable cluster of people. Some scholars think it means something like “clan.” Or it may be a military term for a fighting unit, like a platoon. Exodus 12:37 could then be read as follows: “There were about six hundred clans” or “There were about six hundred military units.” On this reading, the total population of the Israelites would have numbered in the tens of thousands, not in the millions.” (Philip Ryken, TGC, US Edition, July 19, 2023). Then, we have the very similar number following the census in Numbers chapter 1, 603,550 fighting men, not including the men of the Tribe of Levi and women and children. We read first about counting the Tribe of Reuben: *21 those counted from the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.*

(Numbers 1:21 TLV). But, the *Mechon Mamre Bible* shows us that the thousands and hundreds are counted separately: **21** *those that were numbered of them, of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand and five hundred.* (Numbers 1:21 *Mechon Mamre Bible*). The word thousand is translated from אֶלֶף, *eleph*, and hundreds from מֵאוֹת, *me'ot*. This could mean 40 clans or 40 fighting units with the total given of 603,550 given in verse 46 meaning 603 fighting units. That would mean that the ancient IDF would have been in the tens of thousands and not millions. According to authorities, at the time of Rameses II in 1300 BCE, Egypt had an army of about 100,000. This is not to say that Rameses was the pharaoh of the Exodus, but just an example of the size of Pharaoh's army in that approximate time. Taking *eleph* to mean thousands, this would mean that Israel's army that fled from Pharaoh was six times larger than his, over 600,000. I am not a Hebrew scholar, and if I was, I could not prove that my explanation was the only correct one. The same is true for all of the other interpreters, we all see through a glass darkly. *Sha'ul* was right. On this earth, we will never have the answer to every question. We receive it by faith. For me personally, whether it was 600,000 or 10,000, is not a problem. I receive the Scriptures, Genesis through Revelation, by faith as being true as originally written. I don't have to know the answer to every mystery of the Bible. I do find it very satisfying when archeological finds in Israel prove one more thing written in Scripture to be true. I am confident that it is true even though I don't understand it all and am willing to wait until Yeshua explains it in person.

There is another conundrum in this *parasha*. A conundrum is defined as: "a confusing and difficult problem or question." We read in Exodus: *9 Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up. 10 They saw the God of Israel, and under His feet was something like a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the very heavens.* (Exodus 24:9-10 TLV). They saw the G-d of Israel. How could they look upon the holy *Elohim* of *Yisra'el*? Later, when Moses was alone on the mountain ADONAI said: *20 ... "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live."* (Exodus 33:20b TLV). We know that they saw ADONAI's feet, but not necessarily His face because: *11 Yet He did not raise His hand against the nobles of Bnei-Yisrael. So they beheld God, and ate and drank.* (Exodus 24:11 TLV). They ate and drank in G-d's presence, but the verse does not say that He ate and drank. What happened is that they beheld Him only as He wished them to see Him and it was in a way that protected them from the mighty power of His glory emanating from Him.

Who was it that the elders of Israel saw? The temptation to interpret who this is, is huge for most of us. We have been told that ADONAI, the Father, has no physical form, but He, Himself, says that He has a face, eyes, nose, arms, hands and fingers. (Proverbs 15:3; Psalm 18:9; Isaiah 40:10; Psalm 110:1; Exodus 31:18). I realize that these verses are metaphors in part, but the Father must look something like a human because we were created in His image. Yeshua said: *24 "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:24 TLV). But yet, the temptation is in us to want to say that because G-d is Spirit and this individual could be seen, that it must be the pre-incarnate Yeshua. This is faulty reasoning. I submit my opinion. We do know who this individual is. The Scripture tells us. They saw "the G-d of Israel." According to Exodus 24:10, it was אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Elohei Yisra'el*. Who is *Elohei Yisra'el*? He is *Yod Heh Vav Heh* who spoke His name to Moses at the burning bush on Mount Sinai and He is *echad*. I searched the five books of Moses and found that the word *echad* was used in them a total of 400 times. But, of these 400 usages of *echad*, this word was only used one time to say that ADONAI is *echad*. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4: *4 "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."* (Deuteronomy 6:4 TLV). The Hebrew word *echad* in the *Mechon Mamre Bible* is אֶחָד. The *dalet*, with the sound of d, is written much larger than the other letters. Why is that? According to the

Chabad website, “If the ך (dalet) of the word אחד (echad) was mistaken for a ר (reish), the sound of r, since the two are very similar, then *echad*, meaning “one,” would be read *acher* meaning “other.” This would make our belief in one G-d look like a belief in two gods. In a similar manner, if the word שמע (shema) was read with an א (aleph), which sounds very similar to the י (ayin), both of which can have an “ah” sound, the meaning of the word would change from “hear” to “maybe,” changing a firm declaration of belief into an expression of doubt.”

Yes, *echad* does mean one as Chabad states, but in the *Shema* it is not a single one, a unity. It is a compound one which was explained by Yeshua when He said: 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Ruach ha-Kodesh...” (Matthew 28:19 TLV). Yod Heh Vav Heh, the consonants of the Hebrew name of the One whom we call ADONAI or HaShem, is Himself HaAv, the Father, HaBen, the Son and Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, all of these, a compound unity, the meaning of *echad* with regard to the G-dhead. It’s a mystery. We don’t understand how this is. But, not every compound unity refers to ADONAI. The earliest example of a compound unity in the Scriptures is found in the Creation story: 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness He called “night.” So there was evening and there was morning—one day. (Genesis 1:5 TLV). “One day” is יום אחד, *yom echad*, a compound unity. Night and day are separate things, but taken together they are *echad*, making one complete day. In the next chapter, after Eve was taken out of Adam, ADONAI said: 24 “This is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife; and they become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24 TLV). “One flesh” is בשר אחד, *basar echad*, a compound unity. But, the word *echad* is also frequently used to mean a single one as we see in this verse: 21 Adonai Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on the man and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. (Genesis 2:21 TLV). One in this verse is *echad* and it’s used to mean a single one. But, how can that be if *echad* is a compound oneness? It is true because *echad* is used in a number of different ways. In the King James Version, it is used in all these ways: one (687x), first (36x), another (35x), other (30x), any (18x), once (13x), every (10x), certain (9x), an (7x) and some (7x). It is used as “a single one” more times than any other way. How can that be if ADONAI is *echad* and it refers to more than one individual? It’s because He only refers to Himself as *echad*, one time in the five books of Moses: 4 “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4 TLV). Nowhere else in the *Torah* does ADONAI refer to Himself as *echad* so there is no problem.

If He had wanted to describe Himself as a single one, He could have used the word *yachid*. *Yachid*, meaning only, only one, solitary or unique is found in the whole of the *Tanakh* a total of only twelve times. Of these, three are in Genesis, the only place in which the word *yachid* is found in the five books of Moses. ADONAI did not use *yachid* to refer to Himself because He is not a single one, but is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But, *yachid* is also an important word for us to learn. It is found first in this verse where ADONAI said to Abraham: 2 ..., “Take your son, your only son whom you love —Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains about which I will tell you.” (Genesis 22:2b TLV). This whole passage is known in Judaism as “the *Akeidah*,” the binding of Isaac. The two other times that *yachid* is used in the five books of Moses are also found in this chapter, Genesis 22, also referring to Isaac.

This is a good rabbit trail to run, because ADONAI’s reference to Isaac as Abraham’s “only son,” has special meaning. It is a picture of Yeshua, in fact the whole *Akeidah* is a picture of Yeshua. We see Yeshua foreshadowed in Isaac and ADONAI’s call to Abraham, his

father, to sacrifice him to test his faithfulness. Abraham was willing and ADONAI relented when He saw that Abraham really would have obeyed Him and sacrifice his son. Although Yeshua was actually sacrificed, in effect, sacrificed by His Father because of His love for mankind, His creation, His death did not end there because He rose from the dead. But, the main point that we are making here is that Isaac was Abraham's *yachid* son. *Yachid* is a solitary one, the only one. But, we know that Ishmael and the sons of Keturah were also Abraham's sons. But, Isaac was his *yachid* son, his special son, whom ADONAI chose to continue Abraham's line. Yeshua said: 16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 TLV), we are immediately reminded of Abraham and Isaac. Isaac was Abraham's *yachid* son and Yeshua is ADONAI's *yachid* Son. *Yochanan* also made a similar statement: 9 The love of God was revealed among us by this—that God sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (1John 4:9 TLV). There are many other "sons of G-d," even the males sitting in this room today, but Yeshua is G-d's only *yachid* Son, *monogenace* (mon-og-en-ace') in the Greek of John 3:16. But, the truth is that *yachid* in Genesis 22:2 is not *monogenace* in the *Septuagint*, the Greek language translation of the *Tanakh*, but *agapetos* (ag-ap-ay-tos') meaning beloved. That doesn't change the fact that the *Torah* says *yachid*, meaning only. *Agapetos* meaning "beloved" is a word placed there by the Jewish translators of this verse into Greek. But, *yachid* meaning "only" in the Hebrew and *monagenace* meaning "one and only" in the Greek are the correct comparison.

Getting back to what we were discussing earlier and how we should try and understand the Bible, we should develop a strategy for reading. If you are reading it in English, you can only understand what that particular translator has written. If you say that you believe by faith what that translator has written, you are taking his (their) word for it. Many times, that is perfectly all right, but there are many places within Scripture where there are differences of opinion about what is being said. How should you approach it? *Sha'ul* said that we should: 15 Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth. (2Timothy 2:15 TLV). The implication here is that if you're not looking more deeply into the meaning of Scriptures, then you're not an "unashamed worker." From Strong's Online Concordance, the word translated "cutting a straight path" in this verse is *orthotomounta* (or-thot-om-own-ta) from *orthotomeó* (or-thot-om-eh'-o) meaning "cut straight, handle correctly, or teach rightly." Are we doing that?

What does it mean to be "a nominal believer?" You've heard that term haven't you? Nominal Believers are those whose "faith" does not go beyond being identified with a congregation, a faith group, or a denomination. They are believers in name only and Yeshua has no bearing in their lives. Nominal believers may attend services and related functions, and may identify themselves as "Believers," but it is just a label. They view religion primarily as a social group and they do not allow it to require much of them in terms of morality or responsibility. Nominalists take a minimalist approach to their faith. In saying this, I'm not saying that people who don't rightly divide the word are nominal followers of Yeshua. But, as you know well, there are plenty of nominal believers all around us. However, we're not nominal believers and each of us must take inventory of our faith life. How much study, how much prayer, how much good works, and so on and so forth, is required to be a faithful follower of Yeshua. We know that the life of a faithful follower of Yeshua is much more than belief. We must have action. *HaSatan* believes. He knows that ADONAI is the all-powerful G-d and that Yeshua, the Lion of Judah will eventually defeat him. He believes this because he knows it is true, but he does not follow what he knows to be true because his nature is

completely evil. But for us, it has to be much more than just believing. Our desire is to walk according to Scripture commands with ever-increasing faith day by day as we seek to serve Yeshua. How much of our time should we devote to G-d? Is it like tithing? Should it be 2.4 hours per day, 16.8 hours per week? Or, should it be more? I don't believe that there is a set answer and it's probably different for different people. But, the truth is, if you're primarily serving yourself and only giving a pittance of your attention and time to G-d, you're in danger.

This is where we find the Body of Messiah today. Many people say they belong to Jesus, but in reality are His in name only. There is a term, "rino," r-i-n-o, meaning "Republican in name only." In the Body of Messiah, we could call the totally backslidden person, "bino," b-i-n-o, believer in name only. They have chosen to walk away from actively serving Yeshua or perhaps they never really did truly serve Him. The faithful core group of Yeshua's followers is shrinking badly. But today, one of our spiritual purposes is to pray for those who have fallen away and to witness to them if the opportunity arises.

The statement was made last *Shabbat* that "without repentance, there can be no revival." And, that includes us. We all have our sins. If we believe that we have nothing to repent of, revival will be impossible for us. *Sha'ul* said: *23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23 TLV). Those of us who have sincerely repented of our sins and trusted in Yeshua, continue to sin even after we know Him. There is not much preaching about believers repenting today, but it is necessary, not because you won't receive your eternal reward if you die having unforgiven sin, but because repentance solidifies your relationship with the One who forgives you. Rabbi Eliezer taught "Repent one day before your death." (The Talmud; Shabbat 153a). What he meant was that a person should be in a process of *teshuvah*, repentance, every day since one never knows which will be the day he will die. Repenting every day perfects a person in their relationship with Yeshua and ADONAI. By repenting, a person grows closer to G-d.

None of us has ever seen Yeshua, yet by faith, we believe in Him. We were told about Him or we read about Him and we believed in Him. *Sha'ul* wrote: *17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah.* (Romans 10:17 TLV). When we trusted in Yeshua, His Holy Spirit came into our heart, our spirit, and gave us the promise of eternal life. *Sha'ul* wrote: *13 After you heard the message of truth—the Good News of your salvation—and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach ha-Kodesh. 14 He is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of His possession—to His glorious praise!* (Ephesians 1:13-14 TLV). The author of Hebrews wrote: *1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of realities not seen.* (Hebrews 11:1 TLV). I don't know about you, but substance is hard for me to understand. It is translated from the Greek, *hupostasis* (hoop-os'-tas-is) meaning "a support, substance, steadiness or assurance." Of these, my preference is the word assurance which I believe better explains that about which both *Sha'ul* and the writer of Hebrews are speaking. Faith is our assurance of things hoped for, but it is not completely blind faith. We are called to study the Scriptures that we might better understand what we believe and simultaneously build our faith. Judah, Yeshua's brother wrote: *20 But you, loved ones, continue building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Ruach ha-Kodesh.* (Jude 1:20 TLV). This primarily means prayer empowered by the Holy Spirit, but does not exclude the meaning of praying in tongues. But, it is good to know that we can build our faith by prayer. Prayer in a time set aside just for that purpose is one way that faith can be built. Another way is described by *Sha'ul*. He wrote: *17 pray constantly,..* (1Thessalonians 5:17 TLV). Other versions say "Pray without ceasing." This is something that I find myself doing every day. I have a kind of running dialogue with ADONAI

all day long, mostly in my mind but sometimes aloud, as a person we are praying for comes to my mind or do other things that I have to discuss with ADONAI. Doing this, we are constantly in fellowship with Him and it cannot help but build our faith. Yeshua said to His disciples: 6 ..., *“If you have faith like a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”* (Luke 17:6b TLV). Our faith must be really small, much smaller than a mustard seed.

It was said at the beginning of this message that when Israel was at Mount Sinai, that ADONAI was going to present an opportunity to them, and that it would involve their making a choice. After the ordinances and other commands were given, we read: 3 *So Moses came and told the people all the words of Adonai as well as all the ordinances. All the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which Adonai has spoken, we will do.”* (Exodus 24:3 TLV). The people accepted the covenant which ADONAI offered them and Moses sprinkled the blood of the covenant on them: 8 *Then Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which Adonai has cut with you, in agreement with all these words.”* (Exodus 24:8 TLV). But, as the years went on, Israel became very unfaithful and eventually ADONAI made a New Covenant with Israel because, He said: 31 *“For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.” It is a declaration of Adonai.* (Jeremiah 31:31b TLV). We, who have trusted in Yeshua, have entered into the New Covenant which ADONAI made with Israel, symbolically sprinkled by Yeshua’s blood of sacrifice. We too, said: “Yes, Yeshua, we will obey you.” But, have we? And, does a majority of the Body of Messiah even understand this, that there are ordinances which we are required to obey. The author of Hebrews wrote: 28 *Anyone who rejected the Torah of Moses dies without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severe do you think the punishment will be for the one who has trampled Ben-Elohim underfoot, and has regarded as unholy the blood of the covenant by which he was made holy, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?* (Hebrews 10:28-29 TLV). Think about that. How much do we really understand? The blood of the covenant spoken of here is the blood of Ben Elohim, Yeshua, the Son of G-d. We must not be guilty of the sins of ancient Israel, that we break ADONAI’s covenant. Our relationship with Him is not all grace as many believe. There must also be obedience. Pray that each of us would understand the deeper meaning of “being in covenant with Yeshua” in the New Covenant and how we are to obey His commands.

As Yeshua’s followers, we can all do better and that should be our desire. Make daily repentance a part of your routine. Study the Scriptures faithfully, seeking to go beyond just the English words of the translators. And, pray earnestly for repentance within the Body of Messiah that revival might come. *Shabbat shalom!*