

MORDEKAI'S DRASH — מִשְׁפָּטִים



Torah: *Mishpatim* (Rulings/Judgments), *Sh'mot* (Exodus) 21.1-24.18

Haftarah: *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. Well, they're all special, but there is just a lot in this one. 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 we do 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 of Israel had just been delivered from a pagan culture, and they now needed clear instruction about how to live HaShem’s way. None of us are any different today, needing instruction on how to truly live, and that is why we must constantly study Torah, including all of the Word of HaShem. That is the purpose of Scripture. If we trudge out 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. We see this just by observing the general state of the world. Torah is our *foundation of living*; Yeshua is our *foundation of faith*.

The portion begins by giving some rulings regarding slavery. In a nutshell, “you remember how the Egyptians mistreated you; that was wrong, so here is how I want you to treat others, whether they are a peer or whether they serve you.” A Biblical paradox is found in our serving Yeshua, in that 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 translates in the CJB, “not under *legalism* but under *grace*.” It is not obedience to the Law (better translated as Torah, or Teachings) that saves us; we are saved by grace. However, the Hebraic understanding of grace is not “freedom to do *what I want* in the name of Yeshua;” rather, it is, “the power to do *the right thing*”.

Thus, *Sha'ul* states that we are to sin not, *because* we are under grace. He continues by pointing out that *we are slaves to the one whom we obey*. A dictionary definition of slave is, “A person completely controlled by a dominating influence.” In most of the world’s economy, that dominating influence, or person, has evil tendencies; but that is not the intention of Heaven. 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 our former slavery to evil and bondages; that is what grace is all about. There really need not be a law vs grace debate; rather, they are intended to go hand in hand. An FFOZ 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. *Yasha'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 *Yasha'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.”

As we get near the end of this parashah, we see that 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’mah*, which means, “to hear intelligently, with implication of obedience.” In other words, their response essentially was, “We will do and [then] we will hear.” Although well-known as an anti-missionary (one who tries to convert Messianic Jews from believing in Yeshua as Messiah), 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.”

Thus, actual *slavery* to HaShem means serving Him even *before* He tells us what He wants us to do. In Yeshua we are indeed “free to be a slave”.

שְׁאֲלוּ שְׁלוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַיִם – *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)