

Parashah #18
(Updated 2.21.09)

Mishpatim ~ **מִשְׁפָּטִים** ~ Rulings

Torah: Sh'mot/Exodus 21:1~24:18

Haftarah: Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 34:8-22 & 33:25-26

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 5:38-42 & 15:1-20

Mark 7:1-23; Acts 23:1-11; Ivrim/Hebrews 9:15-22 & 10:28-39

Here I am again with WAY more information than I can assimilate this week. I guess that's one reason we get to keep doing this year after year, halleluyah!!!

Before I get to the "meat" of what I want to spend some time on, I have another thing or two I want to share with you.

First: The Hebrew phrase for "the Ten Words" is (ah-seh-reht ha-dee-broat) **aseret ha-dibrot**. **Dibrot** is plural of (dee-behr) **diber**, which means a **wise saying**, denoting the revealed word of HaShem.

Second: I have one other item **AND** I am so in agreement with these words that I want to quote them exactly.

"It is crucial for us to understand theologically, that the primary purpose in HaShem giving us the Torah, as a way of making someone righteous, only achieves its goal when the person, by faith, accepts that Yeshua is the promised Messiah spoken about. Until the individual reaches this conclusion, his familiarity of the Torah is only so much intellectual nutrition. Only by believing in Yeshua will the person be able to properly understand HaShem and consequently, his Word." *Torah teacher, Ariel Ben-Lyman HaNavy*

Our Parashah reading is entitled **Mishpatim** which is translated **ordinances, instructions** or more adequately **rulings**, primarily concerning social justice.

According to First Fruits of Zion, this Torah portion can be divided with the following outline:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Judicial Requirements | Sh'mot/Exodus 21:1-21:17 |
| • Making Restitution | Sh'mot/Exodus 21:18-22:16 |
| • Safeguards for True Worship | Sh'mot/Exodus 22:17-19 |
| • Safeguards for the Vulnerable | Sh'mot/Exodus 22:20-26 |
| • Miscellaneous Instructions | Sh'mot/Exodus 22:27-23:19 |
| • Renewal of G~d's Promises | Sh'mot/Exodus 23:20-33 |
| • Covenant Ratification | Sh'mot/Exodus 24:1-18 |

CHAPTER 21

How does your translation begin in **verse 1**? The original Hebrew begins with the word "**And**" which is reflected in The Chumash and Tanakh. However, several other translations I checked do not reflect it.

Since the "**original language**" begins with the word "**And**", it indicates to me that it is directly associated with what came before it. "**AND**" (pun intended) the subject just before this was the Decalogue, so it would stand to reason that what follows, is equally as important.

I want to emphatically state that Torah is **NOT** "Law"!!! It actually comes from the root word (shah-faht) **shaphat** which means **to establish, reduce, bring, ordain, and set on**. There are a few other Hebrew words that come from this root word also: (show-faht) **shophat** means **judge** and its plural form is (showf-teem) **shoftim/judges**. The name (Y'hoeh-shah-faht) **Y'hoshafat/ Jehosaphat** is a combination of this root word and one of the Hebrew names of G~d, "Yah". In (Ah-lehf M'lah-keem) **Alef M'lakim/ 1st Kings** we learn that Y'hoshafat is king of **Y'hudah/ Judah** and **Mattityahu/Matthew 1:8** tells us he is in Messianic genealogy.

I believe it is important, as we study Torah, to realize where different words stem from. Knowing the root word can help us better determine the correct meaning of subsequent words.

When I began this Parashah reading, as in the past, I was tempted to read through it very quickly. Actually, I was even tempted to skip over most of it. After all, who cares about what happens to the oxen, the donkeys, the slaves and such? How applicable is that for us today, anyway? But then, HaShem got my attention, as He usually does!

Upon closer examination, I came to realize that these instructions of Torah are standards of godliness. HaShem's instructions are the very definition of right and wrong, righteousness and sin. No matter how irrelevant the rulings of Torah might **seem** to us, we must always remember that these are the true words of the Living G~d. They are the standards of righteousness.

In the **B'rit Hadashah/Renewed Covenant**, (Hah Mah-she-ahk) **HaMashiach/The Messiah** is referred to as (Ha Tzah-deek) **HaTzadik/the Righteous One**. First Fruits of Zion (FFOZ) had some great commentary concerning this! Yeshua was not merely righteous, He was **THE** Righteous One. He was more than just a good and lawful man, He was without sin. That means His life was not only completely submitted to the will of the Father but His life was completely consistent with the rules of the Torah. His life and His teachings were consistent with even the seemingly "nitpicky" matters of "what happens to the oxen, the donkeys, the slaves and such" that dealt with civil law. If He had transgressed any of the commandments of G~d, He would have failed to remain sinless. His death would have been sad and unfortunate. We can't have it both ways. Either He kept the **WHOLE** Torah and was sinless or He broke the Torah and was sinful. **1st John 3:4** (NIV) "Everyone who sins breaks the Torah; in fact, sin is lawlessness."

Consequently, the "laws", rules, regulations of the Torah teach us about the life of our Messiah. He is a perfect, living example of G~d's Law lived out. This is why we can refer to Him as the "Living Torah". Just as Torah revealed G~d's righteousness in written form, Yeshua revealed it in human form. This helps explain why the Apostle (Yoe-kahn-ahn) **Yochanan/John** called the Messiah the "Word made Flesh". It's as if G~d wrapped His Holy Torah in flesh and bone and sent it/Him to walk among us.

For me, this casts a new light on the laws about "the oxen, the donkeys, slaves and such". This really isn't skip-over material! When we study the Torah, we are learning the revelations of G~d, the expression of His righteousness and the very nature of **HaMashiach/The Messiah**.

Verses 12-17 address the death penalty and the five capital offenses it covers:

- Criminal homicide
- Premeditated murder
- Hitting one's parents
- Kidnapping
- Parent abuse

Before we leave this chapter I want to visit **verse 24**. We have all heard this expression, primarily taught to us from **Mattityahu/Matthew 5:38** about an "eye for an eye . . ." etc. The Sages tell us "that this term was always known to mean that the responsible party must pay the "monetary value" for an eye, in restitution for the eye that he had blinded. Never was there a Jewish court that ever blinded or otherwise inflicted a physical injury in revenge or retribution."

CHAPTER 22

As I was reading some of the commentaries from the Stone Edition of the Artscroll Chumash and Tanakh, I found some information that is not only interesting but very important to remember and I will quote what is written.

"The fact that all editions of the Chumash list this as a new chapter illustrates a problem that came into being many centuries ago. In the Torah scroll, there are no chapters. The division of the Torah into the commonly used chapters is a Christian device introduced into printed editions of the Torah by non-Jewish Italian printers. The Bible scholars responsible for the divisions did not take into account the interpretations of the Torah as it was transmitted from Sinai. Consequently, one often finds new chapters that should have been continuations of the previous ones and long chapters that should have been divided into two."

As I read through these chapters, it appeared to me that most of these commandments relate to interpersonal relationships. If time would allow, we could probably comment on each of these guidelines. Perhaps one or two will suffice for now. For instance . . .

- In **21:33** “If a man shall uncover a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit and not cover it . . .” teaches us that we need to be mindful of others at all times.
- If **22:15 (16)** were in effect today, I believe we would have fewer abortions and out-of-wedlock babies.

In **verses 20-26**, concern for the disadvantaged of society is discussed. Four social groups, which are especially vulnerable, are singled out as being the object of HaShem’s special concern. They are . . .

- The stranger
- The widow
- The orphan
- The poor

One of the things we need to remember concerning these (mish-pah-teem) **mishpatim/rulings** is the fact that they are the standards set up for the judicial system. It is my belief, if society, in general, would adhere to these principles, we wouldn’t have overcrowding of our jail and prison systems across this nation.

CHAPTER 23

“You are not to repeat false rumors . . .” (**verse 1**). In today’s age, this is called gossip and in Biblical times it was referred to as (Lah-shone Hah-rah) **LaShon Hara/slander/evil tongue**. A good rule of thumb concerning this matter is . . . if you were not there; if you did not hear it first hand, and furthermore, if it does not concern you, don’t repeat it. You are not supposed to!!!!

Verse 5 encourages us to take care of another’s concerns, even if that someone hates us. Rather recently, I was made aware of some very dire circumstances of a couple who lives in our town. My husband suggested that we help in a small way financially, even though we had been maligned by them. Reluctantly, I agreed to do so and felt better about it after the fact. Although they did not thank us, I was blessed when reminded of this scripture, knowing that I was walking Torah. That is my heart’s desire . . . to walk out His word.

“. . . do not cause the death of the innocent and righteous; for I will not justify the wicked” (**verse 7**). It doesn’t get much clearer than this. Woe be unto the United States for its role concerning abortion. I believe that falls under the category of “death of the innocent”! And just think, our Federal Government is sending money to countries around the world for just such a purpose. Oh, Abba Father, please forgive us!!!!

Verse 8 states that “**Bribery blinds the wise.**” Torah warns us “**Do not take bribes**” and is another example of the importance of knowing the root word. The Hebrew word for **bribe** is **shochad** (pronounced show-kahd) and the root word is **echad** (say ay-kahd) meaning **one**. If you take a bribe from someone, you become “one” with him and cannot be objective.

The Sages were very self-critical in this respect. A woman’s tears, a helpful hand extended to cross a bridge or the bringing of rental payment one day early, were all considered as slight bribes that caused the judge to disqualify himself.

There is even a Sabbath rest for the land as described in **verses 10 & 11**. If that practice had been continued in the United States, our land wouldn’t be robbed of its natural nutrients and there would be no need for all of the chemicals that abound today, which are destroying our bodies along with prescription medicines. Unfortunately, this matter isn’t affecting just the United States, it is world wide. Just recently I received an email concerning this matter. Should you be interested, here is the information for you.

Global Food Catastrophe 2009

February 10, 2009

By Eric deCarbonnel ~ Market Skeptics

<http://www.marketskeptics.com/2009/02/2009-global-food-catastrophe.html>

“For 6 days you are to work. (**verse 12**) But on the 7th day . . .”

The commandment to keep Shabbat is repeated several times throughout the Torah highlighting its unique importance. Just a few of those places are:

- Sh'mot/Exodus 16:23
- Sh'mot/Exodus 20:8-11
- Sh'mot/Exodus 23:12
- Sh'mot/Exodus 31:14-16
- Sh'mot/Exodus 35:2-3
- Vayikra/Leviticus 16:31
- Vayikra/Leviticus 23:3 & 32
- D'varim/Deuteronomy 5:12-15
- Nechemyah/Nehemiah 10:31
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 56:2 & 6
- Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 58:13
- Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 17:21-22
- Luke 23:54-56

HaShem Himself chose Shabbat as a sign of the eternal covenant between Himself and His people. If it is that important to Him, it should be that important to us also. Don't you agree?

The latter part of **verse 12** says “. . . that your ox and donkey may rest . . .”. One of the commentaries I read said that the ox is a symbol of strength and energy while the donkey is a symbol of stubbornness and obstinacy. According to this commentary, this verse is talking about MORE than your farm animals. It is talking about us!

As I pondered on this, I thought, “yes, we all have strengths and we all know how to be stubborn.” Shabbat is a time to remember that our strengths come from HaShem and IF we are going to be stubborn, let us be stubborn regarding spiritual matters; let us be stubborn in . .

- Prayer
- Reading Torah
- Meditating on scripture
- Walking in kindness (to others and ourselves)
- Disciplining our tongue
- Obeying the mitzvot (commandments i.e. keeping Shabbat)
- Not harming others (physically, verbally, psychologically)

Unfortunately, some church people imply that the Ten Words of Adonai in **Sh'mot/Exodus 20** are really just nine instructions and a suggestion. The suggestion is to observe the Shabbat. In the past, you have heard me say that “were I not involved in a “Sunday” ministry, I would choose to observe Shabbat and Shabbat only.” Baruch HaShem, I have been delivered from that and I am so thankful that I no longer have to observe a man-made tradition. While I am grateful to HaShem for providing me a wonderful opportunity to work in ministry those eight years, I am thankful, after having my eyes open to the Truth of the Sabbath rest that I no longer have to do the “Sunday” thing. Should I choose to attend a service on that day, so be it. But nothing, absolutely nothing compares to Shabbat!

In **verses 14-17** we are told about the three times each year we are to observe the festivals of HaShem. These are the three major festivals of (Pay-sahk) **Pesach/Passover**, (Shah-voo-oat) **Shavu'ot/Feast of Weeks** (Spring Harvest) and (Sue-coat) **Sukkot/Feast of Tabernacles** (Fall Harvest). Although not specified here, we will learn later that this observance was to be in **Yerushalayim/Jerusalem** and we will learn more about these and other feasts of HaShem in **Vayikra/Leviticus 23**.

Before we continue, there is an often read over verse here that needs our attention. **Verse 15** clearly states “**No one is to appear before me empty-handed.**” Since it is in the middle of the above verses and right after Pesach, I assume that it is referring to when B'nei Israel went to Jerusalem for the feasts at the Temple. A number of years ago, HaShem caused me to realize that anytime I go anywhere to worship Him, I was not to go empty handed. I believe this is where (core-bah-note) **korbanot/offerings** come into play. The tithe is the tithe, regardless of when it is delivered but, as I read this verse, we should never come into His presence without offering Him something. There is a saying “the gift without the giver is bare” and I can certainly agree with that but I might add that “a giver without a gift is bare” as well. These offerings should be taught to our children as

well. They should not come before their Heavenly Father empty handed either. I don't care how small the gift, a nickel or a penny, should be brought when they come to worship so they learn the importance of **giving**.

And we can't let this study go by without visiting **verses 20 & 21**. Do we have a picture of Yeshua here or what? What do you think? Who is this "angel"? HaShem says His name resides in Him. I know of none other whose name HaShem resides in other than Yeshua! I love this stuff!!! Interestingly enough, it's not only the eyes of the Jews who are blinded to the mysteries of the original covenant. Have you ever seen Yeshua in this passage before? Furthermore, did you really read HaShem's directives in **verse 21** to B'nei Israel? He told them to . . .

- Pay attention to him (Hear ~ Shema)
- Listen to what he says and do not rebel against him (Obey)

Then comes the reward for obedience . . .

- If you listen to what he says and do everything I tell you, then I (HaShem) will . . .
 - Be an enemy to your enemies and . . .
 - A foe to your foes . . . and I will make an end of them.

Verse 25 says, if we obey HaShem, he will bless our food and water. We don't have to ask Him to bless it or pray for Him to bless it. If we obey Him, it is already blessed. We need to thank Him for His provision. We will learn more when we get to **Vayikra/Leviticus 11**.

"You are not to make a covenant with them or with their gods. **They are not to live in your land**; otherwise they will make you sin against me by ensnaring you to serve their gods." (**verses 32-33**) The Word of the L~rd is very clear, since Mt. Sinai, concerning Eretz Israel. During the last few years, it seems that Israel had done just the opposite and is trading off parts of their inheritance to nations HaShem wanted out of His Land!!!

Pray, pray, pray for the continued process of the Israeli elections. Under the leadership of Kadima and Tzipi Livni, Israel is bound to lose more territory. Under the leadership of Likud and Benjamin Netanyahu, we are likely to see a much more stable government with less concessions of HaShem's chosen land.

CHAPTER 24

The Hebrew for **verse 7** of this chapter is (Nah-ah-she Veh Neesh-mah) **Na'aseh VeNishma** which means **everything that HaShem says, we will do and we will hear**. In the normal realm of things, one usually doesn't agree to do something without hearing first what is in the "agreement", the fine print, if you will. However, when the Creator of the Universe is doing the offering and He knows that you are capable of accepting it, it would be a slap in His face not to agree. After all, if you weren't capable of accepting it, He wouldn't be offering it to you.

One final note. For the majority of my life I have been taught that no one has ever seen G~d. Would you read **verses 9-11**? **Verse 10** ". . . and they saw the G~d of Israel" and again in **verse 11** ". . . they saw G~d, even as they were eating and drinking." According to this, they **"SAW"** G~d! As we "take and eat" his Word, we discover that in His presence is "fullness of joy" (**TeHillim/Psalm 16:11**) and, taking that one step further . . . "the joy of the L~rd is our strength". (**Nechemya/Nehemiah 8:10**)

As I read different commentaries concerning this event, First Fruits of Zion, I believe offered the best information, which I will try to do justice in passing on. As I mentioned last week, we observed a Jewish wedding ceremony with regard to the Decalogue being given to **Am Yishra'el/the People of Israel**. Now, in **verse 11** we have the covenant meal. You know, after the wedding when the bride's family and friends and the groom's family and friends all gather together to acknowledge the union that has just taken place. This is what was taking place on Mt. Sinai with Moshe, Aharon, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders.

According to Torah, covenants were often sealed with a shared meal. For instance . . .

- **Yitz'chak/Isaac** and Abimelech (**B'resheet/Genesis 26:30**)
- **Ya'akov/Jacob** and **Lavan/Laban** (**B'resheet/Genesis 31:54**)

. . . to name just a couple and there are more . . . many, many more.

This covenant meal idea, I believe, has filtered down through the ages even into our business world. Having come out of corporate banking, I believe I truly understand the essence of many business luncheons, as well as the corporate dinners. Those were the “covenant meals” concerning the agreement, either contractual or by handshake that took place. Once again, most people have no idea how much our lives are impacted by Torah. I love it!!!

And of course, there is one more covenant meal yet to come. We know from the writings in Revelation by **Yochanan/John** that there will be the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. That covenant meal is one which will eclipse all the others!!!

How many times have we read **verse 12** and not really read it or taken into account what it has to say? If there was/is EVER any doubt as to Who provided the Torah and the mitzvot, this verse alone should cause it to be removed. “Adonai said to Moshe, “Come up to me on the mountain, and stay there. **I will give you the stone tablets with the Torah and the mitzvot I have written on them,** so that you can teach them.”

The mark of a good leader is to be sure matters are taken care of in his/her absence. Here, in **verse 14**, Moshe tells the leaders to remain where they are and if there should be a problem of some type, Aharon and Hur are to be consulted. What a guy! He’s on top of it!!!!

Verses 16-18 tell us Moshe went inside the cloud and ascended the mountain and Moshe remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. That was one L-O-N-G wedding service, my friends!!!

Mishpatim ~ מִשְׁפָּטִים ~ Rulings Haftarah: Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 34:8-22 & 33:25-26

The opening verses of **Sh’mot/Exodus 21** give us the connection between our Torah portion and this haftarah.

In **Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah’s** day, some 600-800 years after the Exodus (depending on which date for the Exodus one follows, according to First Fruits of Zion), the Israelites were abusing this teaching in Torah and were not following it according to their covenant agreement with HaShem. So in our haftarah, this prophet, Jeremiah, conveys HaShem’s anger at the blatant disregard for this particular **mitzvah/ruling**.

Zedekiah was the last of the three sons of King Josiah. Actually, his Hebrew name was (Mah-than-yah) **Mattaniah** which, with my limited knowledge of Hebrew names, means **gift of G~d**. As I understand it, King Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Babylon, changed his name to (Tzid-kee-yah-hoo) **Tzidkiyahu/Zedekiah** and he became a “puppet king” of the Babylonians. Although there was a lot of unrest during his reign, beginning in **34:8**, we learn about the covenant Zedekiah convinced his leaders to make with the people. The covenant was for the people to follow the instructions found in Torah about freeing the Hebrew slaves or servants during the seventh year.

Verses 18-19 leave no doubt about the traditional practice which was used by the people in the ancient Near East, when certain covenants were made. The ones making the covenant would sacrifice an animal, cut it in half and walk between those pieces. This well known symbolism declared that what was done to the animal should also be done to me if I fail to keep my part of this covenant. Apparently, this took place at the Temple in Jerusalem because **verse 15** says “. . . and you made a covenant before me in the house bearing my name.”

Because they reneged and brought their “brothers” back into bondage, HaShem is very angry and tells them through Jeremiah that He will not only hand them over to their enemies but will allow their city to be captured and burned to the ground.

Not wanting to end the haftarah on a negative note, the Sages chose to end this haftarah with **Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 33:25-26**, which is a sacred promise to His wayward children. “I will return their fortunes and will have mercy on them.”

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 5:38-42 & 15:1-20
Mark 7:1-23; Acts 23:1-11; Ivrim/Hebrews 9:15-22 & 10:28-39

Mattityahu/Matthew 5:38-42 These verses directly parallel **Sh'mot/Exodus 21:24** and for some would fall under the category of "retaliation". However, I believe these verses really show that HaShem was not commanding revenge; rather, He was controlling and limiting it. Furthermore, for those who believe the "eye for an eye" matter, it needs to be made clear that this is an idiom used to mean adequate compensation for the damage that has been done. In other words, "Let the punishment fit the crime."

Mattityahu/Matthew 15:1-20 Both these verses and **Mark 7:1-23** in some translations are "sub-titled" as Tradition of Elders. In these verses the (P'rue-sheem) **P'rushim/Pharisees** are condemning Yeshua and his (tahl-meh-deem) **talmidim/disciples** for not observing (n'tee-laht-yah-dah-yeem) **n'tilat-yadayim/ritual handwashing** before meals. First of all, this matter is a tradition of the Elders and does not appear in the Written Torah. It is, however, a part of the Oral Torah. The rationale behind it has nothing to do with hygiene. It is based on the idea that . . .

- · a man's home is his Temple
- · the dining table his altar
- · the food his sacrifice
- · and he is the **cohen/priest**.

Since the Tanakh requires the **cohanim/priests** to be ceremonially pure before offering sacrifices on the Temple altar, the Oral Torah requires the same before eating a meal. As a tradition, and considering the parallel made here, personally, I think it's a great idea!!! But this is where "legalism" creeps into our lives. No where is this matter in the Written Torah.

This is just one of many matters addressed in Matthew and Mark. Another is the matter concerning ritually clean foods. We have neither the time nor the space to address what some people call "Jewish Dietary Laws". Actually, they are HaShem's Dietary Guidelines to keep us healthy. HaShem loves us and has given us loving instructions, since the days of Moshe, to help us remain healthy. Because we have ignored His instructions and are rebellious children we have incurred, not His wrath, but the wrath of our own decisions, which is why we have such a scourge on our health these days.

Acts 23:1-11 Remember, **Sha'ul/Paul** most probably was a member of the Sanhedrin and he more than likely recognized many faces. The exchange between Sha'ul and the **P'rushim/Pharisees** and the (Z'due-keem) **Tz'dukim/Saducees** is quite interesting! In fact, his tactic of diverting the Sanhedrin's attention away from himself and his supposed crime, to a long-standing dispute among themselves succeeded.

I found David Stern's commentary on **verse 5** interesting. Sha'ul says "I didn't know, brothers, that he was the cohen hagadol." "It has been suggested that this line drips sarcasm, that Sha'ul knew perfectly well who the cohen hagadol was but means that he wasn't acting like one!"

The parallel of these verses to our Torah portion occur in the latter part of **verse 5** when Sha'ul quotes **Sh'mot/Exodus 22:27(28)** "You are not to speak disparagingly of a ruler of your people."

Ivrim/Hebrews 9:15-22 These verses address the blood of the covenant. **Verse 20** actually quotes **Sh'mot/Exodus 24:8**. "This is the blood of the covenant which G~d has ordained for you." "In fact, according to the Torah, almost everything is purified with blood; indeed, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (**verse 22**).

Ivrim/Hebrews 10:28-39 As in the verses above "the blood of the covenant" from our Torah portion of **Sh'mot/Exodus 24:8** is addressed here in **verse 29**. I believe Sha'ul is using these verses to encourage the Messianic Jews who have endured a lot for the sake of the Gospel. He is encouraging them to continue to have **faith/trust** in Yeshua's once-for-all sacrifice rather than returning to the familiar Levitical system they have known in the past.

The corresponding Psalm for this Torah portion is: Psalm 72