

שֹׁפְטִים

Shophtim

(judges)

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 16:18-21:9

Judges and Officers You Shall Appoint

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 16:18-20

18 “Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your gates, which YHWH your Elohim gives you, according to your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

19 You shall not distort justice; you shall not respect persons; neither shall you take a bribe; for a bribe does blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

20 Righteousness, righteousness you shall run after, that you may live, and occupy the land which YHWH your Elohim gives you.”

YHWH appoints the judges and officers in all Israel. He is actually the one that is selecting the judges and officers, not man.

It is the task of all Israel to live righteously. However, it is the special task of the judges - shophtim – שֹׁפְטִים, and the officers - shotrim – שֹׁטְרִים, to make sure that when there is a difficulty, the people are judged with righteousness according to Torah. This is what they are to pursue so that YHWH can bless us and allow us to continue to live in His Land.

One of the reasons that YHWH removed us from His land in the first place, was for not following Torah and for perverting justice.

False Worship is an Abomination

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 16:21-17:1

21 “You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of YHWH your Elohim, which you shall make yourself.

22 Neither shall you set up for yourself a pillar; which YHWH your Elohim hates.

17:1 You shall not sacrifice to YHWH your Elohim an ox, or a sheep, which has a blemish, or anything evil (defect); for that is an abomination to YHWH your Elohim.”

YHWH hates all worship that He Himself has not commanded; even if that worship is directed towards Him. He is only pleased with our worship when it is done in accordance with His commandments and His will.

If we take to imagining anything that is not found in Torah and then act upon that imagination to do it, to worship YHWH our Elohim in ways that He has not commanded, He views that as an abomination. For example, above in verse 1, YHWH says that to sacrifice an animal to Him that has a blemish is an abomination. Here is something that we need to truly consider.

When we offer up praise to YHWH with our words, it is considered as a sacrifice to Him.

Ivrim [Hebrews] 13:15

Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to Elohim continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His name.

Hoshea also declares this same concept.

Hoshea 14:2

“Take with you words, and return to YHWH; say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good;’ so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.”

Notice that in each case, we are to offer up praise with our lips to the name of YHWH. However, when we offer up praise to YHWH but do not use His name, then the praise has a blemish. And a sacrifice with a blemish is an abomination to YHWH in His eyes.

If we in Ephrayim could just learn the full significance of this portion of Torah, it would revolutionize our worship of YHWH and the fulfilling of prophecy in our returning back to the land.

Please note in verse one above, what YHWH has commanded us, is that He wants, expects and commands us to give to Him our very best. If we give less than our very best, YHWH our Elohim views that as an abomination.

Now you might think and say that those are pretty strong words, but go back and please reread those three verses. Is this not what they say? Is this not the plain meaning of these verses? To be sure, it is!

The following verses also come to mind.

Yeshayahu [Isaiah] 65:11-12

11 “But you that forsake YHWH, that forget My set-apart mountain, that prepare a table for Fortune (ἄλ - god), and that fill up mingled wine to Destiny;

12 I will destine you to the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not hear; but you did that which was evil in My eyes, and chose that which I did not delight in."

YHWH is calling you, do you hear His call?

He is calling you to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

He is calling you to worship Him according to His commandments.

Unfortunately, many people are still worshipping G-d and setting their table for him.

YHWH is very clear in this passage: if you do not heed His call and turn and worship Him and obey His Torah commandments, but rather do evil in His eyes, then the result will be that He will set you up for the slaughter.

That may seem like pretty strong words; however, they are His words and not mine. Please read the passage above again.

False Worship Will Not Be Tolerated

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 17:2-7

2 "If there be found in the midst of you, within any of your gates which YHWH your Elohim gives you, man or woman, that does that which is evil in the sight of YHWH your Elohim, in transgressing His covenant,

3 and has gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, or the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;

4 and it be told you, and you have heard of it, then shall you inquire diligently; and, behold, if it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel,

5 then shall you bring forth that man or that woman, who has done this evil thing, to your gates, even the man or the woman; and you shall stone them to death with stones.

6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

7 The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you."

Please, please, please get this passage fixed solidly in your mind. This is a matter of life or death.

When His people enter into His Land He expects obedient behavior, especially concerning the worship of Himself. This was true then and it is true now in our day.

False worship, which certainly includes mixed worship of any kind, carries the death penalty. This is His Torah commandment.

We just need to get this concept in our mind and begin now, rooting out any and all things that do not conform to the way He has commanded for us to worship Him. Right now, while we are outside the Land, Ephrayim cannot carry out the death penalty for wrong worship. Now is the period of grace which we should be utilizing to purify our worship of YHWH our Elohim by removing all those things that He has not commanded.

If you take the wrong attitude of thinking that, “Surely, our benevolent heavenly Father will understand that I am worshipping Him no matter what I choose to call Him, and that what I am doing is to worship Him.” This attitude and mindset will surely lead a person to death!

We are not to do what is right in our own eyes!

Rather, we are to do what is right in His eyes!

And what is that?

Well, we just need to read and understand Torah! Then we will know what that is. Following the ideas and dictates of a man, which certainly includes self, will most assuredly lead to death.

Mishle [Proverbs] 14:12

***There is a way which seems right to a man;
But the end thereof are the ways of death.***

The choice that YHWH has placed before each and every one of us, is which path we will walk on – the path of life or the path of death. We cannot walk on both of them! Which path we walk on, will be determined by whether a person obeys His commandments or does his own thing – what is right in his own eyes.

We are Commanded to Listen to and to Obey our Leaders

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 17:8-13

8 “If there arise a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates; then shall you arise, and get you up to the place which YHWH your Elohim shall choose; 9 and you shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge that shall be in those days; and you shall inquire; and they shall show you the sentence of judgment.

10 And you shall do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show you from that place which YHWH shall choose; and you shall observe to do according to all that they shall teach you;

11 according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand, nor to the left.

12 And the man that does presumptuously, in not hearkening to the priest that stands to minister there before YHWH your Elohim, or to the judge, even that man shall die; and you shall put away the evil from Israel.

13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.”

When a matter arises that is too difficult for the brothers to settle themselves, then they take it to the judge over them, and if it is still too difficult, then it just goes up the ladder of authority until it is settled. If it goes to the high priest who is then officiating, and he rules on the dispute, then they must obey the ruling. If they do not obey the ruling judgment, then those disobeying the judgment come under the death penalty; for to disobey at that point is disobeying a direct command from YHWH. Not a wise thing to do, to be sure!

The idea is that YHWH will not tolerate rebellion. In His eyes this is a grievous sin and needs to be dealt a death blow by removing the rebellious one from Israel.

What is Ephrayim guilty of doing for the last three millennia? He is guilty of false worship and rebellion, both of which constitute the death penalty. So this is where we find ourselves in these days: all of us are facing the death penalty.

However, YHWH will show mercy to those to whom He will show mercy, and compassion to those to whom He will show compassion (Devarim 7:9). So the question for each one of us is this, “Will we allow Him to show us mercy, or will we remain under the sentence of death?”

If we want to remain under the sentence of death, then all we need to do is simply to remain where we are in our spiritual walk and understanding. Thus, just keep on rebelling against His Voice and worshipping according to whatever makes us feel good and is right in our own eyes.

However, if we want to enter into His mercy, then we need to hear and obey (shema) His Voice. That means we stop rebelling against Him and fall in line and get in step with His Spirit.

Setting a King Over Us

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 17:14-17

14 “When you are come to the land which YHWH your Elohim gives you, and shall occupy it, and shall dwell therein, and shall say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me;’

15 you shall surely set a king over you, whom YHWH your Elohim shall choose; one from among your brethren shall you set king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

16 Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses; forasmuch as YHWH has said to you, 'You shall henceforth return no more that way.'

17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold."

These are the commandments concerning the setting of a king over the Nation of Israel when in the Land.

In verse 15, in the Hebrew text the verse actually begins with the Hebrew words שׁוּם תַּשִּׁימ - sum tasiym. This is the same word twice, and is to be understood as an emphatic command, which is translated in this case as "you shall surely set".

YHWH commands us to set a king over us, the king that He chooses.

Here is where many people in Messianic and Nazarene circles really misunderstand this passage and concept. What we need to understand is that we already have a King. His Name is Yeshua! He is our King whether He is here on earth or He is in heaven. No matter where He is at, He is our King. Furthermore, He is currently reigning as our King. That is, provided that we make Him our King and serve Him!

Now here is what we need to understand. Yeshua set up to watch over His affairs while He was absent, twelve men. One man was set as the head of each tribe, a tribal leader! When we go back into the land as Northern Israel, we need to set up things in just exactly the way that Yeshua showed us to set them up, with twelve men who will answer directly to Yeshua our King. This is to be done until such time that He returns. When He returns, then those twelve men place the kingdom at His feet.

However, since Northern Israel consists of only ten tribes, then until such time that the southern house and the northern house are reunited and become one again, it seems logical and Scriptural that Northern Israel have as their leaders only ten men, rather than twelve. The other two will be added when the two kingdoms are reunited.

Then under these men will be the leaders of thousands, the leaders of hundreds, the leaders of fifties and the leaders of tens. When we set this up the way that He has directed us to set it up according to His Torah and according to what He did before He left, then He will bless. Anything else will not be blessed.

The King's Life is Torah

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 17:18-20

18 "And it shall be, when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of the Law (Torah) in a book, out of (that which is) before the priests the Levites;

19 and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear YHWH his Elohim, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; 20 that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.”

I am certain that the past kings of Israel were very busy. However, YHWH absolutely commands him while sitting upon the throne, to write himself his own copy of the Torah.

Then he is to spend every day reading it and studying it. Simply put, the king is to know every “jot and tittle” by heart. But even more importantly than that, he is to know what it means and how to apply it to the Kingdom of Israel in a righteous and just manner.

However, since our King is not with us, it would seem right, good, and wise for His judges to do this as well in order to rule righteously over His people. These men will most surely be filled with His Spirit and understand what it means to rule with humility and compassion.

Priests and Levites

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 18:1-2

1 “The priests the Levites, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of YHWH made by fire, and his inheritance.

2 And they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; YHWH is their inheritance, as he has spoken to them.”

The entire tribe of Levi, which includes the kohenim (priests), does not share in the dividing and assigning of the Land with the other 12 tribes. Rather, their portion of what YHWH assigns to them is YHWH Himself. YHWH does assign them certain cities to possess and a small portion of the land around each of those cities, but the land itself belongs to the other 12 tribes.

Also, YHWH gives them a portion from many of the sacrifices and offerings that Israel brings to YHWH. This is a part of their portion from YHWH.

It is a difficult life, the life of a Levite. When they are ministering before YHWH, they receive no days off, no days of rest. Even on Shabbat they are doing sacrifices and offerings that YHWH has commanded. But as Yeshua Himself stated, they are blameless in this.

Matithyah 12:5

“Or have you not read in the Torah, that on the Shabbat day the priests in the temple profane the Shabbat, and are guiltless?”

Why are the priests guiltless in this matter? Because they are obeying His commandment!

There Shall Not Be Found

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 18:9-13

9 “When you have come into the land which YHWH your Elohim gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

10 There shall not be found with you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that uses divination, one that practices witchcraft, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer,

11 or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12 For whosoever does these things is an abomination to YHWH; and because of these abominations YHWH your Elohim drives them out from before you.

13 You shall be perfect with YHWH your Elohim.”

Please note verse 13 above in which YHWH commands us to be “perfect”. Yeshua gives us this same command.

Matithyah 5:48.

“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

If this were not possible, YHWH would not have given us this command. How can we be perfect when we are so flawed? He is not speaking of an absolute perfection, but rather perfection in function. Okay, so what does that mean?

Let us take the example of the chair you are most likely sitting in. If you examined the chair closely, you would probably find scratches, wear, and other types of imperfections. However, the chair is still fulfilling the purpose for which it was created, to hold you up in a seated position without falling down. In this sense it is perfect.

Likewise, we too can be perfect in fulfilling our created purpose, to love, worship, praise, fellowship with, and obey our heavenly Father, when He has filled us with His Spirit to empower us for life and service to him. In this way alone may we be perfect.

YHWH commands us to live in such a way as to be in harmony with those around us. If a person is practicing some form of manipulative craft, sorcery or the like as listed above, then he is not attempting to live in harmony with YHWH and His people. Rather, he is attempting to manipulate and change circumstances, times and people to his own desire and design.

This is not living in the perfection of Torah. It is only being selfish. YHWH soundly condemns this.

A Prophet Like Moshe

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 18:14-19

14 "For these nations (that you shall drive out) listen to them that practice witchcraft, and to diviners; but as for you, YHWH your Elohim has not allowed you so to do.

15 YHWH your Elohim will raise up to you a prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like to me; to him you shall listen and obey;

16 according to all that you desired of YHWH your Elohim in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the Voice of YHWH my Elohim, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.'

17 And YHWH said to me, 'They have well said that which they have spoken.

18 I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like to you; and I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I shall command Him.

19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.'"

Yeshua was that prophet and the fulfillment of these verses! If we will not listen to Him and obey Him, then we will have to answer to YHWH for not doing so. Yeshua continually directed us to our heavenly Father's Torah, to know it and to keep it.

Have we heard what Yeshua has taught us?

Are we obeying Him?

If not, why not?

What to do with a False Prophet

Devarim [Deuteronomy] 18:20-22

20 "But the prophet, that shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.

21 And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which YHWH has not spoken?'

22 when a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which YHWH has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him.'"

Please note that this is a different type of prophet than explained about in chapter 13. In chapter 13 we learned about a prophet whose predictions actually come to pass and then entice the people away from Torah.

Here this is a prophet that predicts and it does not come to pass.

The solution for both is the same: death!

May we deal such people a death blow by not heeding their words, so that their words fall to the ground and become nothing!

May YHWH give us wisdom in being able to discern when a prophet is speaking His words and when a man is speaking presumptuously!

ABBA YHWH, we desire to worship You in the way that is pleasing to You and is right in Your eyes. Also, please remove our rebellion far away from us as we choose to submit our lives to You and to our King, Yeshua; in the Name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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