

בְּחֻקֹּתַי

B'chuqqotai

(in My statutes)

Vayyiqra [Leviticus] 26:3-27:34

הברית החדשה

HaB'rit HaChadashah

(the new covenant)

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:33-42

We have chosen this passage because it reminds us of the last chapter of Vayyiqra [Leviticus], because it is dealing with vows.

While I feel strongly impressed to write and to teach on this passage, because of the situation that I have gone through in the not too distant past, it is a challenging passage for me. I will do my best to be honest and forthright with His written word, and of those places in which I was wrong in the past; YHWH will help me to repent and overcome so as not to repeat the same mistakes again!

Do Not Make False Vows

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:33

“Again, you have heard that it was said to them of old time,

‘You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to YHWH;’”

Apparently, Yeshua is either quoting or making reference to Numbers 30:2. The basic idea, is that we are not to make vows with the intent to deceive. If we say we are going to do something, we should do it. This brings us to ask the question; just exactly what is a vow? Is it only something that we promise to do, or swear to do? Or, is it something much simpler than that?

To help us in our search for the truth, let us examine the passage that Yeshua is making reference to.

B'midbar [Numbers] 30:2

“When a man vows a vow to YHWH, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”

In this passage, we see that YHWH, speaking through Moshe, commands us that we are to do all that comes forth from our mouths.

Ya'aqov [James] 3:2

For in many things we all stumble. If any stumbles not in what he says, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also.

Yeshua taught us this about what comes out of our mouths.

Luqa [Luke] 6:45

“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

It is what comes out of our mouths that will either justify us or condemn us. It is by our own words and actions that YHWH will judge us. The fewer words that we utter, the better off we will be in the Day of Judgment! Is it any wonder why Scripture teaches us that teachers will incur a stricter judgment?

Our intent is what makes the difference here. Does our intent match up with our words? YHWH knows!

Ivrim [Hebrews] 4:12

For the word of Elohim is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

If our intentions do not match up with our words, then deceit is present. When deceit is present, then we are in trouble. Let us take Avraham as an example of a vow. YHWH told Avraham to go and sacrifice his son as a burnt offering. Avraham made the commitment to go and obey. His intent matched his words. Therefore, YHWH spared him and did not require the task to be completed.

Do Not Make Vows

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:34-35

34 “but I say to you, swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of Elohim;

35 nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.”

Yeshua indicates that we would be further ahead if we did not even vow at all. Surely, the wisdom of this approach can be clearly seen. If we do not make a vow, then we cannot break it. And if we do not break a vow, then we have not sinned in the matter.

We are not to promise to do something, and then attempt to verify that promise by injecting something greater like the earth or His city or heaven or any such thing. When a person does such things as this, it is just that much worse for him when the vow is broken.

You are Not the Creator

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:36

“Neither shall you swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.”

The essence of what Yeshua is stating in this passage is that we cannot create. He is not dealing with something as simple as hair dye. This is only a temporary change and only changes the outward appearance of the hair. What Yeshua is stating, is that we do not have the means, power, or authority to change our hair from the inside out and make it a permanent change; only Elohim can do that!

Guard Your Answer

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:37

“But let your speech be, Yes, yes; No, no; and whatsoever is more than these is evil.”

I remember one time many years ago when YHWH first dealt with me on this passage. I was standing in the church foyer one day after service and someone came up to me and asked me to do something in the church. I thought for a moment and realized that I was not supposed to do that. So I said, “no.” They stood there and just looked at me. The expression on this person’s face clearly indicated that they were waiting on a reason why I was not going to do it. The longer we stood there looking at each other the more puzzled this person became. After an awkward silence, they turned and walked away.

This is typically what happens to people. One person will ask another to do something. If they do not want to do that, they will say “no” accompanied by a reason why they cannot do it. Some may think this is the polite thing to do, but it is not! It is sin according to Yeshua. So, once the reason is given, then the bargaining back and forth begins, with one person explaining why they can’t do it. Then the other person countermending the reason why the other can’t do it, with why he should. And back and forth

the game is played. As this game is played it is inevitable that lies and deceptions are told. The longer it is played, the worse it gets. It is clear why Yeshua said that anything beyond yes or no is evil!

When we say a simple yes or no it gives no room for the other person to attempt to bargain with us. It saves us a lot of heartache and trouble and keeps us out of things we shouldn't be doing in the first place. A yes or no answer is better for everyone involved, both the giver of the answer and the receiver of the answer!

Equal Weights and Measures

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:38

"You have heard that it was said,

'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;'"

Once again, Yeshua quotes another verse. He quotes Shemot 21:24. Every person alive or who has ever lived has a strong sense of fairness. That sense of fairness that each person has, is based upon the individual's concept of right and wrong and how it affects them personally. The closer to the person an incident or action is to a person; the stronger the feelings will be when that sense of fairness has been violated. The stronger the feelings, the more likely action containing some type of vengeance will be forthcoming from the person experiencing that fairness has been violated.

While Torah provides that whatever a person did that deprived another individual of something, even to the point of body parts, the person who did the depriving is to pay in like kind. And certainly when something like this happens to us personally, what we feel inside is something very much akin to treating the person in the same way that he treated us. However, Yeshua teaches us the true intent of this commandment of Torah.

Sowing and Reaping

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:39

"but I say to you, do not repay evil for evil; but whosoever smites you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also."

The above verse was taken from the Shem Tov and is slightly different than the Greek texts. This text was chosen because it seems to make much more sense in light of what Yeshua is teaching and in the larger context of Torah.

When a person does something to us to hurt us, we are not to repay in like kind. Just because someone has hurt us in some fashion, does not give us license to hurt them in return. Yeshua is calling us to live

above the base standards of this world, in which self is the motivating factor in most actions and reactions.

Later in this sermon Yeshua teaches this:

Matithyah [Matthew] 7:12

“Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Torah and the prophets.”

The standard that Yeshua is calling us to is the standard of heaven. It is a standard in which we are not to repay evil with evil. Rather we are to repay evil with good and kindness.

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:44-45

***44 “but I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you;
45 that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.”***

If we truly want to be counted as sons of our Father in heaven, then we must not allow the world to drag us down to their level of existence. We must take the higher road and walk in the fullness of the power of His love.

Do More

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:40

“And if any man would take you to court, and take away your coat, let him have your coat.”

The walk that Yeshua has called us to walk is not about material possessions. It is about hearing and obeying His Voice. If material possessions get in the way of doing that, then they are being misused and are not good for us. We should give them up.

We are to be detached enough from the material possessions that YHWH places in our stewardship that if a person wants something that belongs to us, we can simply give it to them without a lot of fuss.

Go More

Matithyah [Matthew] 5:41

“And whosoever shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two.”

In those days of Roman occupation it was Roman law that if a Roman soldier asked a common person to carry their burden or to do something for them, they must comply and go up to one mile with the soldier. But Yeshua is teaching us that we are to go further than what man's law compels us to do; we are to do what YHWH's Law commands. In His Law, Yeshua teaches us that we are to go further.

Give More

Matityah [Matthew] 5:42

"Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away."

We as the talmidim of Yeshua are to do more, go further, and give more. That is the standard that Yeshua has set forth.

With these things squarely in our minds, particularly my own, let me address some additional issues in light of this passage, and in light of what I have been through in my own life.

Life Experience

First, let me state that I am fully aware that I have not done everything exactly right in my own life. But it was not because I was not trying. The supreme desire of my life is, and always has been, to lovingly please my heavenly Father. The path that YHWH has led me down in my life has not been an easy path to walk. It has been full of hardship and heartache, both for me and those who are closest to me. I only hope and pray that those closest to me have learned along with me.

Several people spoke to me while in the midst of this last trial I went through, about keeping the vow that I had made. I would dearly have loved to do that. It was my full intention to keep that vow when I made it. After all, I legally signed over the deed to our home to someone who *claimed* to be a brother in our faith. If that is not commitment, I don't know what is. My *intent* was pure.

The person that we signed our home over to *also* made a vow. This person *also* vowed to take care of and provide for us as we worked together to build YHWH's kingdom. It was a two-sided vow.

When I received the email from the person to whom we had signed over our home, *demanding* that we vacate our home, although we had done *nothing* wrong or sinful, to say that we were devastated, only begins to describe what we were experiencing. I had a home with a wife and six children still living at home.

Let me express to you who are reading this, that the experience that I was just beginning to enter at that moment in time, was to forever change me in many ways. I believe those to be good changes, but at

the time they were extremely painful changes. In the end, I would understand to a much greater degree what our Master went through as He faced accusations that were false and misleading, yet He stood in silence.

I read the portion of Scripture in this passage many times during this ordeal. This passage, along with others related to it, were pointed out to me many times by well-meaning, but misguided individuals. First, I would like to point out that nowhere in the above passage does Yeshua speak about our homes. He speaks about our clothing and our time. Some would argue that verse 42 could include our home as part of our possessions. However, that is not a reasonable conclusion based upon the context of this passage or upon Torah.

YHWH has always taken me down the road less traveled, simply because He knows that I will walk it in love with Him. He has my permission to work in my life any way He sees fit. When we made the decision to sign over our home it was done with a lot of prayer and a lot of seeking His face in this matter. It was not done lightly. I believe that it was the right decision at that time. There were things that YHWH needed to teach me that could only be taught to me in such a situation.

One of those things, was the depth of what we must do to *protect* one another. While I have always known that we are to be our brother's keeper, this experience taught me the depth of what that means.

Brethren, there are in our world many wolves who take on the clothing of sheep. But what does that mean? It means that these wolves will keep Shabbat. These wolves will keep the mo'edim. These wolves will dress modestly and wear tzitziot. These wolves will do all the outward things that the sheep are supposed to be doing. But inside they are still wolves.

Matithyah [Matthew] 7:15

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves."

These wolves are sometimes very difficult to detect because of the great care they have taken to perfect their camouflage.

Matithyah [Matthew] 7:16-20

16 "By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Therefore by their fruits you shall know them."

Sometimes it takes time for a tree to produce fruit. Sometimes it will even be years before that happens. Sometimes it will be when the pressures of life come crashing down that what is inside of a person will come out and be seen by all. We must be patient and prayerfully watch for the fruit. It will manifest itself at some point.

Here is what I know. I know that YHWH protected us. I know that the reason that we did not lose our home was because YHWH was leading and directing. I know that YHWH gets all the praise and glory! With that said, we did not retain our home without cost. But it is okay, because it is just a reminder of those things that I could have done better. One final thought and then I will close.

Kohelet [Ecclesiastes] 3:1-8

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:

2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

I am sure that you are all familiar with this passage. Please take the time to read it through thoughtfully and prayerfully several times. There are times and situations in all our individual lives in which we are faced with a choice. Is it a time for ..., or, is it a time for...? That is what I was faced with in this situation. I had to determine what time it was. No one could do that for me. It was between me (my wife) and YHWH our Elohim. While others could give their input, it would only be us that lived with that determination for the rest of our lives.

It has been our experience that YHWH has confirmed in many ways since that time, that we correctly determined what time it was for us and our family. We praise Him for His grace and mercy in our daily lives!

My prayer for each one of you, is that YHWH will help you to determine what time it is in your life and that His people will be there to support you in love.

ABBA YHWH, we are listening for the sound of Your Voice. Please open our ears that we may hear clearly, for our desire is to obey You and what You tell us; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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