

TORAH

RaYBaSH's Torah Thoughts
Parashah #48: Shoftim "Judges"
Devraim (Deut.) 16:18-21:9
By: Rabbi Yehudah ben Shomeyr

Summary:

The Torah portion this week covers a vast range of subjects. Remember we are still dealing with Moshe's last address to Beny Yisrael before he dies and before the 2nd generation from the Exodus gets ready to cross over and take the Promise Land. He was reviewing the Written and Oral Torah.

To summarize this portion Moshe:

- Commands Israel to appoint a judicial system for secular and religious affairs.
- Reviews the Laws prohibiting Idolatry and Sorcery.
- Explains the way to inaugurate a King.
- Instructs on the rules of engagement concerning War, and the terms in which to make peace.
- Establishing Cities of refuge for accidental homicides where the perpetrator can be safe from vengeful family members.
- Tell what the officials should do in the event of an unsolved murder.

Commentary:

Devarim 16:18 Speaks of Judges and Officers. In Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel) in a time of a Torah based government (past and future), Judges would deal with secular and religious issues, and the Officers would enforce the decisions and would circulate them in the marketplaces and or synagogues, which ever the issue at hand dealt with.

The Judges dealt with matters ranging from investigating a murder case which is a civil affair, to deciding on when the new moon is sited to begin Rosh Kodesh (a new month on the Hebrew calendar), which is a religious matter.

In exile we are to obey the laws of the land in which we are exiled, unless it goes contrary to Torah itself. Then we have a right and a G-d ordained obligation rebel in holiness.

In exile, we as Jews are not considered an autonomous people group to where we can render and carry our civil rulings, such as executing a murderer that is with in our midst.

Instead we establish in our synagogues what is called a “Beyt Din”. Which means “House of Judgment”; here we decide religious matters within our congregation, such as correcting a brother who is in violation of a Torah command, to deciding what liturgy to add to the Shabbat service etc. A Board of Directors is sometimes established outside the Beyt Din to oversee business matters of the Synagogue. For example deciding what color of carpet to install, or deciding on a budget, etc.

The Pirkei Avot says: “Do not judge alone, for no one can judge alone but the one (4:8).” This reminds us of Devarim 19:15-21 where it talks about rendering judgments upon the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses. And it turn reminds us of this same verse quoted in the Renewed Covenant in Matthew 18:15-20. Many take these verses out of its proper context and says that the binding and loosing part deals with “naming and claiming” what you need in prayer. Nothing can be further from the truth. This Renewed Covenant passage deals with exactly what we have been talking about, establishing rulings concerning correcting a brother, or establishing halachic rulings, the way a particular synagogue carries out certain Torah commands, and establishing tradition and customs among the congregation.

The Pirkei Avot also tells us: “By virtue of 3 things the world endures: law, truth, and peace (1:18).” Yeshua the Messiah is them all! He is the Law (aka: the Word, John. 1:1), the Truth (John.14:6), and the Sar Shalom (Prince of Peace) (Isa. 9:6).

The Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 4:2 says of this very Pirkei Avot passage, “The three are one and the same: if the Law is upheld, there is truth and there is peace.”

Verse 18 warns us to render righteous judgments, meaning that if there is righteous judgment, there can be unrighteous judgment. In other words as the following verses will detail, enforce Torah no matter what, don't be bias or show favoritism, or take bribes in any way. One on a Beyt Din must be impartial and unbiased to render judgment rightly whether it be a total stranger or your mother!

Bribery can be a relationship, not just something monetary or material.

“Aw, come on man, I’m your best bud, your brother! Remember blood is thicker than water.”

Unfortunately I have seen this sort of thing first hand, where a family member was in no uncertain terms guilty of transgressing a “major” Torah command. The Head of the Beyt Din was the Brother of the guilty party. He rendered judgment rightly according to the Torah and his whole family (parents included) ended up taking sides with the guilty party, though they were blatantly and quite haughty about violating a Torah command, and left the Synagogue. His family ended up putting family relations above the Word of G-d!

Acts 10:34 tells us that “G-d is no respecter of persons...” So if G-d doesn’t play favorites, neither should we.

Devarim 16:20 says, “Justice, Justice shall you peruse...” Rabbi Bunim of Peshicah said, “Why does the verse repeat itself? Is there a just justice and an unjust justice? Indeed there is. The Torah is telling us to be just also in pursuit of justice – both the end and the means by which it is obtained must be just.”

V.21-22 tells us not to mix worship of YHWH with paganism, nor adapt paganistic practices as means of worshiping YHWH or converting the Heathen. Catholicism is notorious for doing this on the mission field.

If we examine the verse carefully and look at the historical and cultural context it specifies that we are not to use sex or sexuality as a mode of worship of YHWH. Asherah poles were known phallic symbols and used as a means to secure favor with the gods so as to have a fertile family, flock, herd or crops. We are not to petition YHWH for such favors in such a lewd carnal manner.

Devarim 17:1-7 commands us to “investigate thoroughly” a matter in which the possible sentence would be the death penalty. Opposed to popular opinion among some Christians, the death penalty was actually rarely enforced in Israel on account that there be ANY doubt whatsoever that a person be innocent of a crime deserving death, all on account of this verse.

A Renewed Covenant example would be Yeshua letting the woman “caught” in the act of adultery, go (John. 8:1-11). Simply the whole event reeked of a set up,

Yeshua couldn't render a verdict any how, even though He was Messiah, He was not apart of a synagogue Beyt Din who took care of these matters.

On lighter issues where a death penalty is not involved we ought to "investigate thoroughly" so as not to be guilty of spreading bias, jaded and self serving propaganda that promotes ones personal view of doctrine, such as the Star of David is pagan, or the Name "Jesus" is honoring Zeus, etc. If we lead others astray by such irresponsible scholarship we will have hell to pay!

Matthew 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and [that] he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Devarim 17:8-9 Instructs the Beyt Din to go to the Kohen (Levitical High Priest) if there is a case too hard for the Beyt Din, and since the Levites were priests and experts in the Torah, they would render the final judgment. Kind of like our Supreme Court.

I could be wrong and am willing to be corrected, but I think that if the righteous judgment in a case eluded even the High Priest, they would consult the mysterious Urim and Thummim which according to the Talmud was behind the breast plate that contained the engraved stones with the 12 tribes, and when the priest would consult it, it would light up the particular letters to spell out a message. We see in Scripture where when King Saul backslid and G-d would not answer him by the Urim, or by any other means for that matter (I Sam. 28:6).

Devarim 17:10-13 says basically what ever the sentence of the Beyt Din or Kohen is, it's final. No appeals, no if, ands or buts about it. One must accept and comply with the ruling of the Beyt Din or Kohen.

Rashi said that even if the judge tells you that right is left and left is right, how much more so if he tells you that right is right and left is left.

In other words, even if what they say seems wrong and makes no sense to you, do it any way. Just as in the same way that we are to obey our parents, we are to obey

the verdict of a Beyt Din or Kohen, Why? Because G-d said so. Do as they say, for if they are wrong in their judgment the “blood” will be on their hands not yours. As we Jews say in exile and are unable to change a decision of someone else, “Let the sin be upon them.” You are free and clear, because you are obeying Torah by obeying their verdict, even if it was wrong.

Devarim 17:14-17 we see that at the end of Sholomo HaMelek’s (King Solomon’s) reign we violated every one of these prohibitions of a king (I Kings 10: 26; 11:1-11)

Devarim 17:18-20 Here is a Midrash (A Story) written pertaining to this very passage:

“Imagine that we are peering through the lattice of King Shlomo's palace. Seated upon the massive throne of ivory and gold and lions and precious stones sits King Solomon himself. The rich smell of cedar panels mingles with the fragrances of perfumes. Here are silks and delicacies and everything delicious to the senses. Around the throne servants hurry and fuss to anticipate every need and whim of the king. Solomon in all his splendor indeed!

But what is the King doing? Standing before him are two priests holding aloft a scroll of Torah. It is rolled open to the book of Devarim. Spread across Solomon's throne is another roll of parchment over which the king is hunched, pen and ink in hand. He is writing; he is copying. He is writing a Torah scroll. He is fulfilling the special mitzvah of the king: to write a copy of the Torah.

The commandment for the king to write a copy of the Torah is found in Deuteronomy 17. In what is surely an amazing coincidence, Deuteronomy 17 just happens to be the very chapter of Torah which Solomon is copying as we spy on him! Even now he is beginning to copy down the special section of laws that apply to the King.

Therein it is written, "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests." (Deuteronomy 17:18). God commands the King to write a copy of the Torah. This provision is meant to insure that the King himself submit to the rule of law and not become a despot without accountability or boundary.

Specifically, the passage says that he shall write a copy of the Torah so "that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen." (17:20). In other words, the King is subject to the laws of Torah just like everybody else in the kingdom. He has no sovereign exemptions. He has no royal exception or special immunity. By writing a copy of the Torah for himself, the King is reminded that he is not above God's law. In the eyes of the Torah, the King is just another citizen of God's kingdom.

Knowing this, it is heart warming for us to see King Solomon so busily engaged in this important mitzvah. But pay attention. Notice the bored and distracted expressions on the faces of the two Priests who are supposed to be checking the King's work. Notice the sweat beading up on the King's forehead. Notice his nervous smile as he glances at the priest's and then uses his finger to daub a jot of ink off of his scroll. It looks as if King Shlomo has just erased a letter from the passage he is copying! The priests overseeing the work don't seem to notice.

The words, which the King is now supposed to be transcribing, are, "And neither shall he multiply for himself wives that his heart shall not go astray." (Deuteronomy 17:17). But what has the King done? He has erased the little letter yud from the word yarbeh (multiply). The yud is a letter shaped like an apostrophe and no larger than one. It is just a small jot of ink. But in erasing that letter, Solomon has changed the whole meaning of the sentence. Now it says, "And he did not multiply for himself wives that his heart shall not go astray." By erasing the letter yud, Solomon has simply changed the tense of the verb "multiply." It is a small and subtle change. But now the verse is no longer an imperative forbidding a king to multiply wives. Instead, it has become a statement implying that his past-tense multiplication of wives will not have the effect of leading his heart astray! Shlomo has removed a jot (yud).

The above scene is more or less described for us in the Midrash Rabbah (Shemot 6:1). There we find a crucial midrash which not only relates this amusing anecdote about Solomon, but also informs our reading of the words of the Master in Matthew 5:17-19. The Matthew passage is, of course, the famous pro-Torah declaration, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or tittle shall pass from the Torah until all is accomplished. Whoever then nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Within Messianic Judaism, this passage is often touted about with various

shades of meaning. But its deepest implications are laid bare by the Midrash Rabbah and Solomon's unscrupulous scribal editing.

"When God gave the Torah to Israel, He inserted therein positive and negative commands and gave some commandments for a king, as it says: '[The King] shall not multiply horses to himself... Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away . . .' But Solomon arose and studied the reason of God's decree, saying: 'Why did God command, "He shall not multiply wives to himself?" Is it not "That his heart turn not away"? Well, I will multiply wives and still my heart will not turn away.'"

In his great wisdom, Solomon supposed he understood the reasoning behind the commandment. Why did the Torah command a King not to multiply wives? Clearly God intended this law as a safeguard for the King's heart. Solomon apprehended the principal of the law. He understood the intention behind the law against multiplying wives. He thus reasoned, "If I keep my heart from going astray, then I am free to multiply wives." Therefore, he felt at liberty to edit the text of the Torah enough to reflect his new insight into God's law.

According to this logic, Solomon was able to ignore the literal prohibition against multiplying wives. In his mind, because he understood the principal of the law, he did not need to obey the literal meaning.

The Midrash continues with the story of Solomon's edited version of the Torah:

"At that time, the yud of the word yarbeh went up on high and prostrated itself before God and said: 'Master of the Universe! Has thou not said that no letter shall ever be abolished from the Torah? Behold, Solomon has now arisen and abolished one. Who knows? Today he has abolished one letter, tomorrow he will abolish another until the whole Torah will be nullified!' God replied: 'Solomon and a thousand like him will pass away, but the smallest tittle will not be erased from thee.'"

To recapitulate, the little letter yud that we saw Solomon blot out from his copy of the Torah was so offended that it ascended to God and filed a formal complaint against Solomon. The letter yud warned God that if this kind of editorial process were allowed to continue, the whole Torah would soon be abolished and nullified. God placates that letter yud by assuring it that not even the smallest decorative crown (tittle) would ever be erased from the eternal Torah. God points out that Solomon and men like him are temporal and passing, but the law of God is eternal.

Solomon may ply his wisdom and logic and creative scribal work as much as he likes, but God's law will still stand long after Solomon has disappeared.

In the Midrash, Solomon goes on to explain his rationale to us. Solomon says, "The reason why God has said: 'Neither shall he multiply wives unto himself' was only lest the king's heart should turn away . . . God is with me, and I will withstand this temptation ."

Solomon is confident that his own wisdom is superior to the rule of Torah. With a terrific sense of irony the Midrash continues:

"Yet what is written of Solomon? 'For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods' (I Kings 11:4). R. Shimon Bar Yochai said: 'It would have been better for Solomon to clean sewers than to have this verse written of him.'" (www.rabbiyeshua.com)

Devarim 18:1-8 Tells us that a Levite, a priest has no inheritance with the rest of Israel, YHWH Himself, and service to Him at the Temple is their inheritance. Many Christians believe that when Yeshua returns to reign from the 3rd Temple that the sacrifices will be done away with. However the Prophets foretell of the 3rd Temple and speaks of us bringing our sacrifices there (Is. 56, 66; Zech. 14:16-21).

I would like to quote an excerpt from my book, "Get Back to the First Century" a portion I call, "Salvation and Sacrifice"; hopefully this will clear up the matter of Sacrifices and the role of the Levitical Priesthood.

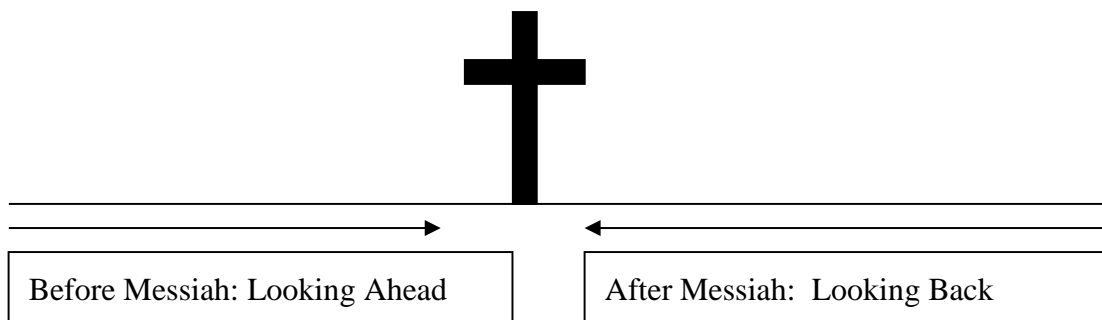
"In the Messianic and Christian arena's the issue of Salvation and Levitical animal Sacrifice has caused charged heated debates and cause congregational and denominational splits. How were the "Old Testament Saints" saved? Will there be animal sacrifice during the Third Temple when Messiah reigns, and if so, why? Wouldn't animal sacrifices slap Yahshua and his sacrificial atoning work on the cross in the face? Many like questions, circle, submerge and emerge continuously. As a Netzari Jew, let me put this weary animal to rest. If you don't like the answer, take it up with HaShem and His Word. If it blows down your little theological house of cards, then maybe you should question the materials you have used, or the foundation it has been founded upon; YHWH's Word, or tradition and doctrines of men?

Let me first tackle the issue of salvation. It is the misconception of many that the "Old Testament Saints" were saved by works, keeping the Torah (law) in

combination with the Levitical animal sacrifices, and “New Testament Saints” are saved by “Grace” and Yahshua’s death on the cross. How fair is that!? Christians say there is only one way of salvation. This view would contradict that. This is purely a Christian false doctrine; nothing could be further from the truth.

Then how were the Believers before the death and resurrection of Yahshua, saved!?

I believe the saints in the Tanak were saved the same way as the saints in the Renewed Covenant. The difference is perspective. Those in the Tanak looked forward to, and believed in the Messiah and His atoning work that was coming. The Renewed Covenant saints (us) look back and believe in the Messiah and His atoning work that already came, and is coming again! The sacrifices of the Tabernacle and Temple era, before Yahshua came, never atoned for or removed sin. In the Renewed Covenant, Hebrews 10:4 states “It is NOT possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” The sacrifices just rolled the sin back like a credit card debt until Messiah came to pay the debt in full, atoning for them all past, present, and future (Isa.53:6; IPt.2:24; IJn.2:2; Heb.1:3; 5-10). I believe that Yahshua worked within the framework of Torah, and the sacrificial system set up therein.



Then what is the purpose of the animal sacrifices?

1. It was to be a physical object lesson that pointed to the coming Messiah and what He would do. It acted as a credit card that covered, did not take away, and rolled back the sin debt until someone, Messiah, could come along and pay it. In the time of the Third Temple the sacrifices will be a reminder of the Messiah who came and what He did (Is. 56, 66; Zech. 14:16-21). The sacrifices that took place before Yahshua came, only pointed to the Messiah

which was to come. The sacrifices that will take place after Yahshua, and that will take place in the Millennial Reign, point back to Messiah's atoning work.

2. It provided and will provide food, materials and income for the Priests and their families (Leviticus 5-10)."

Devarim 18:9-14 Again tells us not to be influenced by nor adapt pagan practices in order to worship YHWH or try to communicate with YHWH, that such things are an abomination. Meaning G-d loathes, hates, is disgusted by and totally abhors such things. To Him it is like a child covered in animal dung wanting to be hugged and kissed. Though the parent loves the child the parent is nonetheless disgusted by the fecal matter and demand that the child clean up before hugs and kisses commences.

These verses are trying to tell us that if we attempt to adapt pagan rituals in order to contact or worship YHWH that we will actually be contacting and worshipping demons.

This speaks to us today about not consulting horoscopes, Ouija boards, animal entrails, psychics, palm readers, tarot card readers, or mediums in regards to discerning the will and worship of YHWH, the future or to contact the dead or the spirit realm.

Devarim 18:15 "A prophet from among you, from your brothers, like me, the Lord, your God will set up for you, you shall hearken to him (Stone's edition of the Tenach), Is quoted reference to Yeshua being that very prophet. Acts 3:22-23 Kefa (Peter) addresses the people using this verse to proclaim Yeshua the Messiah as fulfillment of that prophecy, and Stephen does so also in Acts 7:37.

V.16-22 The people of Israel spoke wisely out of reverential fear, fear of becoming too casual and thus disrespectful by desensitization and hence end up being rightly destroyed. The people by this thus permitted a body of elders to be over them as Moses' Father-in-law Jethro suggested. This created standards on which to compare those who come and claimed to be an elder or a prophet and we could rightly measure the validity of such claims by an individual. This also prophetically set up a holy standard and criteria whereas the coming Messiah was to be known.

Devarim 18:20 speaks again of a false prophet, I will not delve into it here since It was sufficiently addressed in last weeks Torah portion. I will also leave out

Chapters 19, 20 and 21 dealing with the Cities of refuge, Laws pertaining to war, and unsolved murder cases for another time.

Deuteronomy 19

V.1-13 Speak of the creating of the cities of refuge that one may flee to in order to protect ones who are proven to have innocently and accidentally killed someone, from a distraught and vengeful family member of the victim.

V.14 Moving a property marker in order to expand ones own property is a form of theft and is prohibited by YHWH and His Torah.

V.15-21 Two or more trustworthy reliable eye witnesses' testimony must confirm one another when they are questioned separately in order to convict or pardon someone of a sin and or crime. This helps the innocent from being wrongfully charged or for a guilty person to be pardoned.

The Levites were Judges appointed to hear out a case in those days, today in lands of exile, cases involving religious matters, they are heard by the elders and Rabbis appointed by each synagogue. If it is a civil or secular crime such as theft it is heard by the local courts of the land and if it is a national issue such as treason it is heard by the supreme court of that country.

No matter who the judge or judges are, they need to thoroughly, with a fine toothed comb, study the case, its facts. He/They must review every witness, testimony and evidences with out bias or partiality in order to come to a right, fair and just ruling.

And if it comes to light that someone was framed, the true guilty party, the evil witnesses will have done to them what would have been done to the victim if the truth never came to light.

I want to conclude the discussion of chapter 19 by focusing on Devarim 19:21 the famous “eye for and eye a tooth for a tooth” passage. This, in many Christian arenas has been grossly taken out of context. Especially with Yeshua's comment on this passage in Matthew 5:38-42.

In short it is NOT, “You poke my eye out, and I get to poke yours out!” It is well established and understood in Judaism that this is referring to monetary and medical compensation for injuries. For no one could inflict the same injuries upon

the other person. If a person received 20% blindness in one eye, how could the other person be guaranteed to have the 20% blindness inflicted upon him? This is impossible right? Well, the Rabbi's and Sages knew this and therefore knew this was referring to monetary and medical compensation for injuries inflicted. Yeshua was just simply saying be forgiving and don't milk more out of the lawsuit than is necessary to meet your medical and monetary needs. Forgive the guy for what he did to you whether he did it accidentally or intentionally. We see in the story of the Good Samaritan that the Samaritan took it upon himself to do what the robbers would have been made to do if they had been caught. The Samaritan took care of the beaten man's medical and financial needs.

Deuteronomy 20

V.1 Our Elohim is a G-d of order, He created the Universe and the order therein, yet he commands His people to defy logic that is perceived with the eyes.

Israel is out gunned and out manned, yet YHWH tells His people not to fear, but to be reminded of the miraculous deliverance from Egypt.

As you will read further their victory despite whatever odds is solely dependant upon their faithfulness to YHWH and His Torah.

V.2-8 The Kohanim (Priests) are to gather Israel's fighting force together and give them a pep talk, remind them of YHWH's favor and faithfulness to His people and if after the pep talk those remain that by Torah law they are not permitted to fight, such as being a newlywed or a new home owner they are permitted to leave without having to feel embarrassment or shame. Those that are still afraid after the pep talk, they are permitted to leave without losing face because fear, doubt and negativity is like a highly contagious and fatal illness and the armies of Israel cannot afford to be compromised like that.

V.9 Like Gideon's process of elimination, whoever is left is organized into units.

V.10-15 Those who say the "God of the Old Testament" is a blood thirsty and vengeful god fails to realize all the centuries prior they had to repent, just as those who perished in the Flood. Secondly, we read here that one last chance of peace and surrender is given before the enemy is engaged in mortal combat.

Surrender meant either conversion or servitude, which if you read the laws in Torah regarding slavery it is human and non-cruel, unlike what the West has come

to know as slavery with the Negro, Native and Asian slave trades that sullies and soils the history of the United States.

V.16-18 The danger in allowing unrepentant and non-surrendering Canaanite nations to live is future attack and the influence of their paganism rubbing off on Israel.

V.19-20 Here we see that in justifiable times of war that nonetheless we are to be careful not to permanently harm the environment.

I am miserably sick of the ignorance of people in regards to their attitude about war. Look, I don't like war and don't necessarily agree fully with the current war in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it does not give anyone the right to spout out ignorance and mean it. Things such as:

“We ought to just set off a nuclear bomb and be done with it!”

You may not want to step in a pile of dog crap, but once you do, you have to deal with it, and that doesn't mean kicking the dog that did it and slinging the dodo on someone else. Anyway, sometimes, how do you know which dog to kick right? Who left the pile?

We are in this war, like it or not and there is a proper way of dealing with it. And the proper way does not mean it will be quick, easy and mess-less. Quite the opposite, it will be long, drawn out and messy. The Torah Portion demands the innocent be spared if at all possible and this is hard to do when the enemy hides in the open among the innocent and use them as shields.

The use of nuclear weapons are out of the question because it is a glorified buck shot that kills the innocent with the guilty and for years ruins the land and fruit bearing trees and foliage which is also prohibited by Torah.

I don't have all the answers and I'm not a war strategist, but what I do know is that a nuclear weapon or a “Shoot'em all and let God sort them out” attitude is NOT the answer!

Deuteronomy 21

V.1-9 Here the Torah implements a little CSI work. If an unidentifiable murder victim is found outside the limits of a city or village, and the murder is unsolvable, the elders of the nearby towns are to assess which city the body is closest to. This may imply where the victim possibly came from and under this assumption the nearest city is to atone for this murder by the sacrifice and ritual that is prescribed here in these verses. They are to wash their hands of the misdeed and vow that they had nothing to do with this murder in knowledge or deed so divine retribution would not fall on them or their people.

As always I pray this is edifying and educational for all my readers.

Shabbat Shalom and Shavuah Tov!

-- Rabbi Yehudah

Torah on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UP7BzAM7coc>

HAFTRAH

RaYBaSH's Haftarah Hashings
Parashah # 48: Shoftim "Judges"
Isa. 51:12-53:12
By: Rabbi Yehudah ben Shomeyr

This Torah Portion mainly deals with the G-d ordained government of Israel under the rule of Torah, which is not how the state of Israel runs things today, but it will once again be in the time to come under the rule of Messiah Yeshua. This Torah portion also deals with the rules of engagement in regards to warfare.

I was compelled this week to combine the 3 readings into one commentary because the verses fit so well together on the subject at hand.

Deuteronomy 20:2-4 And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

A Day is coming that we may once again have to take up arms and literally fight for our survival as did the Children of Israel and the Priests in the time of the Maccabees. If and when this occurs we can once again apply this passage on the Pashat (Literal) level. But until then let us look at it on the Sod (Spiritual) level and how we can apply it to our lives in the here and now.

Whether your conflict at hand be opposition from the whole gamut of religions, philosophies and movements that come against The Faith, or whether it is a battle standing your ground for your religious rights in the workplace. Or perhaps it is a humanistic friend, relative or neighbor in which you must defend yourself. Whatever the battle, whether physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, financial or what have you, the passage quoted above still holds true! Remember also these verses of encouragement:

Psa. 24:8 Who [is] this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Psa. 140:7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

Prov. 21:31 The horse [is] prepared against the day of battle: but safety [is] of the LORD.

Rom. 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us?

John.14:13-14 Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it].

Perkei Avot 2:4 “Treat His will as if it were your own will, so that He will treat your will as if it were His will. Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your own will.”

Our Haftarah Portion fits well this message of protection and triumph:

Isa. 51:22-23 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

All these passages are contingent upon our total submission and obedience to YHWH, His Messiah and His Torah.

Just as in real mortal combat, we must be vigilant and mark well our allies lest we be guilty of killing off our wounded and initiating a deadly bout of friendly fire.

The Torah defines clearly how a soldier should conduct themselves and even how we are to look. Yet even in the Torah, there is wiggle room so to speak in regards to appearance and Methods of operation. For not all military or its allies wear the same uniform, or have the exact mission we may have. There is Infantry and Black ops, the Army and the Navy, spies and tech specialists, US and Israeli forces, desert and jungle warfare, all of which are a part of the same team, yet each has its own distinct uniform and mission; so too in regards to our Faith. Let us remember the words of our Messiah.

Mark 9:38-40 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.

Just as our Torah Portion is called Shoftim, “Judges” may we be careful as we “Judge” who are our enemies, and who are our allies.

Shabbat Shalom and Shavuah Tov!

-- Rabbi Yehudah

Haftraha on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_5UmYwgxuU

BRIT CHADASHA

RaYBaSH's Brit Chadashah Connections

Parashah # 48: Shoftim "Judges"

Mark 9:38-40

By Rabbi Yehudah ben Shomeyr

This Torah Portion mainly deals with the G-d ordained government of Israel under the rule of Torah, which is not how the state of Israel runs things today, but it will once again be in the time to come under the rule of Messiah Yeshua. This Torah portion also deals with the rules of engagement in regards to warfare.

I was compelled this week to combine the 3 readings into one commentary because the verses fit so well together on the subject at hand.

Deuteronomy 20:2-4 And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

A Day is coming that we may once again have to take up arms and literally fight for our survival as did the Children of Israel and the Priests in the time of the Maccabees. If and when this occurs we can once again apply this passage on the Pashat (Literal) level. But until then let us look at it on the Sod (Spiritual) level and how we can apply it to our lives in the here and now.

Whether your conflict at hand be opposition from the whole gamut of religions, philosophies and movements that come against The Faith, or whether it is a battle standing your ground for your religious rights in the workplace. Or perhaps it is a humanistic friend, relative or neighbor in which you must defend yourself.

Whatever the battle, whether physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, financial or what have you, the passage quoted above still holds true!

Remember also these verses of encouragement:

Psa. 24:8 Who [is] this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Psa. 140:7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

Prov. 21:31 The horse [is] prepared against the day of battle: but safety [is] of the LORD.

Rom. 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God [be] for us, who [can be] against us?

John.14:13-14 Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it].

Perkei Avot 2:4 “Treat His will as if it were your own will, so that He will treat your will as if it were His will. Nullify your will before His will, so that He will nullify the will of others before your own will.”

Our Haftarah Portion fits well this message of protection and triumph:

Isa. 51:22-23 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

All these passages are contingent upon our total submission and obedience to YHWH, His Messiah and His Torah.

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