



“..again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.  
Matthew 13:45

**3rd September 2022    7 Elul 5782**

Shoftim - Deuteronomy 16:18 - 21:9

Haftarah/Prophets: Isaiah 51:12 -53:12,

Brit H'dashah/Renewed Covenant: Matt 23:23, Matt 5:38-42,  
Timothy 5:17-22, 1 Cor 5:9-13, Heb 10:28-31

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim.

From Shabbat to Shabbat may the name of the Lord be praised!

Soon we will be at the end of this year's study of the Torah, and what a journey it has been!

As we enter the month of ELUL we will be in the final month of the Jewish calendar. We are in fact in a transition month, joining one year to the next. Elul is an acronym for the phrase in “Song of Songs” (6:3): “I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me.” In Hebrew- ‘Ani L'Dodi, v'Dodi Li’.

As we journey through this month we take time to reflect on our personal journey through the Torah, and of course what we have learned alongside our ancient cousins. Each year of the reading of the scroll, should bring even greater change than the year before. Our hope is that the Word of God and His teaching find a place in our hearts and minds that bring renewal to our souls and in our relationship with YHVH, through Christ.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Elul is the 6th month of the calendar and because it closes the year, our reflection is an opportune time to prepare ourselves for the coming month of Tishrei in which we observe Rosh Hashanah, the trumpet warning blast or shout, signifying that the day of judgement is coming upon all the world, and Yom Kippur, the day on which the atonement for sin is made.

Although Yom Kippur is considered to be the main 10 days of repentance, Elul is considered to be ‘the month of repentance’ or reflection, and also in balance, the month of forgiveness or mercy.

The previous two months of Tammuz and Av are considered to be months of tragedy for the Jewish people. The worship of the Golden Calf and YHVH's judgement over the 3000 who lost their lives on that day, was in the month of Tammuz. On the 7th Av the destruction of Jerusalem took place on the, followed two days later on the 9th by the destruction of Solomon's temple in 516. The second

temple was built by Ezra and Nehemiah in 587BC and stood for around 420 years eventually being destroyed in 70AD on the 9<sup>th</sup> of AV.

Tisha B'Av or 9th Av is considered to be the saddest day of the year. It was also considered to be the day the twelve spies entered the land and brought back the bad report, invoking YHVH's judgement on the people. Elul is therefore considered to be an opportune time for 'teshuvah' or repentance.

Our time of repentance and reflection increases within the repentant the desire to return to YHVH and reconnect with Him.

So to our study. This week's reading will present to us the following:

Chapter 16: the Appointing of Judges to oversee all judicial and priestly matters  
V21: The prohibition on planting Trees as sacred poles for worship.

Chapter 17:1 The sacrifice of animals without defect  
17: 2, Judgement concerning transgressions of the covenant  
17: 6, The testimony of 2 or three witnesses  
17:8, Priestly judgements over controversial issues  
17:14, Appointment of Kings and the various prohibitions concerning their reign  
17: 18, The King's personal Torah's

Chapter 18: Offerings of the Cohanim  
18:9, Laws against pagan practices  
18:15, Appointment of another Prophet and judgment concerning presumptuous speaking

Chapter 19: Cities of Refuge – rules of sanctuary  
19:14, Movement of a neighbour's boundary  
19:16, judgements against false witness and proportional judgment.

20:1 Laws of war and exemptions against fighting  
20:16, Destruction of all the living is taken in the land in order to preserve pure worship  
20:19, Destruction of non-fruit bearing trees for building purposes and the preservation of fruit bearing trees.

We see in the opening of 'Shoftim' the designation and appointing of the judges of Israel. As the people enter the land, Moses, their mediator, will no longer be with them.

The wandering of the Israelites should have, by now, instilled in them how the application of God's laws will work once they enter the Promised land. What they have learned on their journey will now have to be put into practice. Moses emphasises the word of the Lord to the people, highlighting that that it will not be easy; however, if they lean upon all that they have been taught by YHVH, their transition into a thriving and blessed people will be enhanced. The ratification of the covenant is about to happen and the people must understand the enormity of what it means in agreeing to it. Joshua will be the one who will lead them into the land of promise. How strange that forty years previously Joshua and Caleb wanted to do exactly that. The days of Manna will end, and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will no longer attend to them as He did in the wilderness.

The people must now do their part and apply all they have learned. Practically, they will have to prepare the land and build new shelters. They will have to work and uphold their end of the agreement, and they too, just like us today, must learn from the failures of the past how to build a successful and better future. They must understand their identity as the people of YHVH. This new identity will mark them out from all peoples. They will be the people of God, but the world will not like it.

The laws of society and in the worship of YHVH will be upheld by judges and priests. They must be dispensed with wisdom, justice and fairness. 'Shoftim' is therefore the legal constitution of Israel – the foundation of their social structure.

We must understand that though there are many laws not everyone comes under them. In other words specific laws relate to specific people, for example: the civil laws pertain to all people, the priestly laws are for the priests and the judges must observe the judicial laws in order to carry them out. In our own legal system we have Judges and Barristers who specialise in specific laws. One law does not fit all.

In the sentencing of the law, there is however another law that must prevail. It is expectant that the judge has capacity to pass the full extent of the sentence upon the convicted. A person who is truly remorseful and repentant of his crime can receive clemency and thus the law of mercy must take effect.

When YHVH judges, He looks upon the repentant and the unrepentant and thus He employs the law of judgment and mercy. Our position in Messiah Yeshua, places us above the full extent of the law. In other words, the hand of YHVH is held and mercy is given to all His children. However, because the law of mercy or grace is at play, this does not mean that we should continue in our sin.

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them: 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked should turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

YHVH desires all men to be saved, Tim 2:4.

Ezekiel 18:23 "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"

Let us read this passage in Romans 5:18 -6:1

18 So then as through one trespass [Adam's sin] there resulted condemnation for all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to [d]all men. 19 For just as through one man's disobedience [his failure to hear, his carelessness] the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one Man the many will be made righteous and acceptable to God and brought into right standing with Him. 20 But the Law came to increase and expand [the awareness of] the trespass [by defining and unmasking sin]. But where sin increased, [God's remarkable, gracious gift of] grace [His unmerited favor] has surpassed it and increased all the more, 21 so that, as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness which brings eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

6:1 What shall we say [to all this]? Should we continue in sin and practice sin as a habit so that [God's gift of grace may increase and overflow? 2 Certainly not! How can we, the very ones who died to sin, continue to live in it any longer? 3 Or are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? 4 We have therefore been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory and power of the Father, we too might walk habitually in newness of life [abandoning our old ways]. 5 For if we have become one with Him [permanently united] in the likeness of His death, we will also certainly be [one with Him and share fully] in the likeness of His resurrection. 6 We know that our old [c]self [our human nature without the Holy Spirit] was nailed to the cross with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin. 7 For the person who has died [with Christ] has been freed from [the power of] sin.

Even though YHVH administers justice, He must, nevertheless, judge sin. However, there is no clemency for the unpardonable sin. All other sin is open to YHVH's application of mercy. But what is the unpardonable sin? Let us read:

Matt 12: 30 He who is not with Me [once and for all on My side] is against Me; and he who does not [unequivocally] gather with Me scatters.<sup>31</sup> "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy [every evil, abusive, injurious speaking, or indignity against sacred things] will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit [by attributing the miracles done by Me to Satan] will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

So, when we ask for forgiveness, YHVH will act accordingly. He will prescribe His own sentence upon the sin and mercy upon the perpetrator. You see, the accuser, the enemy of our soul, tries to confuse the proceedings by combining the sin and person together, making them one and the same.

If we apply this argument to the sin in the garden, then YHVH would have according to His righteousness every right to destroy the whole of His creation and begin again totally.

But remember this, YHVH saw that what He had created was good and He was pleased with it. His great mercy was dispensed by wanting to save the man and the woman He loved and thus he released the process of His redemption because they were incapable of doing it for themselves.

We can therefore see that Mercy and Grace were not first dispensed at the cross. It was the penalty for sin that was paid at the cross by the sacrifice of our precious saviour.

Here is where the great confusion lies over Law and grace. The wages of sin is death — that is the law. Without the law there can be no judgement of sin, so sin cannot be condemned. The scriptures tell us that there is no longer any condemnation for those who are redeemed and in Messiah because they have the righteous covering of Him.

Romans 8: 1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man, as an offering for sin. c He thus condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit

This however, does not negate the fact that we are to live righteously under that covering of Christ's righteousness. The hyper grace doctrine preaches that the law is done away with. This can only imply that lawlessness is at work and thus the people are lawless and in rebellion because they choose to ignore YHVH's law.

Yeshua taught that if we love Him we will obey His commands (John 14:15)

Loving YHVH with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and declaring His divine sovereignty institutes the impulse to please Him. We even sing about our love for Him in our worship but how many are reflecting our love for Him in reality, and how many are actually worshipping in spirit and truth.

The working of the Spirit of Truth in our lives, helps us to uphold the law of God and the law of mercy.

YHVH searches for those who seek to worship Him in spirit and truth. This statement therefore implies that not every body does.

*John 4:22 You people don't know what you are worshipping; we worship what we do know, because salvation comes from the Jews. 23 But the time is coming — indeed, it's here now — when the true worshippers will worship the Father spiritually and truly, for these are the kind of people the Father wants worshipping him. 24 God is spirit; and worshippers must worship him spiritually and truly."CJB*

This wholehearted response toward YHVH, reflects the heart attitude of the bride toward her husband. Friends, when YHVH sees this attitude of His bride toward Him, when He sees her cry for Him, He will release Yeshua to come and get her. He will see that she is now ready and the time has come.

Friends, are our hearts ready for Him? Is Yeshua hearing the cry of His bride for Him? Is YHVH looking down and seeing that she has still some time to go before she is ready?

Moving on we see another aspect of the law at work — the testimony of witnesses.

Deut 19:15 *"One witness alone will not be sufficient to convict a person of any offence or sin of any kind; the matter will be established only if there are two or three witnesses testifying against him. 16 "If a malicious witness comes forward and gives false testimony against someone, 17 then both the men*

involved in the controversy are to stand before Adonai, before the cohanim and the judges in office at the time. <sup>18</sup> The judges are to investigate carefully. If they find that the witness is lying and has given false testimony against his brother, <sup>19</sup> you are to do to him what he intended to do to his brother. In this way, you will put an end to such wickedness among you. <sup>20</sup> Those who remain will hear about it, be afraid and no longer commit such wickedness among you. <sup>21</sup> Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

This the reiteration of the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment:

*“Do not give false evidence against your neighbour.*

It is therefore deemed that the breaking of this command is directly against YHVH.

*Isaiah 43 10 declares -“You are My witnesses,” says Adonai,  
“and My servant whom I have chosen,  
so that you can know and trust me  
and understand that I am He —  
no god was produced before Me,  
nor will any be after Me.*

*<sup>11</sup> I, yes I, am Adonai;*

*besides me there is no deliverer.*

*<sup>12</sup> I have declared, saved and proclaimed —  
not some alien god among you.*

*Therefore you are My witnesses,”  
says Adonai. “I am God.*

*<sup>13</sup> Since days began, I have been He.*

*No one can deliver from my hand.*

*When I act, who can reverse it?”*

In this passage we are brought into relationship with the heavenly witnesses to declare the formation of the world and all of creation by YHVH. Thus making the statement true.

Justice must therefore be done in order that the people will see their wickedness and refrain from doing it.

In the final part of this chapter, Moses admonishes those who about to go to war to remain fearless, for YHVH is with them. There are also the rules of exemption that apply to able-bodied men, disqualifying them from active service.

<sup>5</sup> “Then the officials will **speak to the soldiers**. They are to say, ‘Is there a man here who has built a new house, but hasn’t dedicated it yet? He should go back home now; otherwise he may die fighting, and another man will dedicate it.

<sup>6</sup> “**Is there a man here** who has planted a vineyard, but hasn’t yet made use of its fruit? He should go back home; otherwise he may die fighting, and another man will use it.

<sup>7</sup> “Is there a man here who is engaged to a woman, but hasn’t married her yet? He should go back home; otherwise he may die fighting, and another man will marry her.’

<sup>8</sup> “**The officials will then add to what they have said to the soldiers: ‘Is there a man here who is afraid and fainthearted? He should go back home; otherwise his fear may demoralise his comrades as well.**

Note that all these exemptions apply to serving soldiers. When we look at the final rule we see that those who are afraid and fainthearted must leave the ranks lest they cause others to fear too.

Does the act of cowardice here conflict with Moses admonition to those who will remain and put their trust in the Lord?

<sup>20</sup> “When you go out to fight your enemies and see horses, chariots and a force larger than yours, you are not to be afraid of them; because Adonai your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you. <sup>2</sup> When you are about to go into battle, the cohen is to come forward and address the people. <sup>3</sup> He should tell them, ‘**Listen, Isra’el! You are about to do battle against your**

**enemies. Don't be fainthearted or afraid; don't be alarmed or frightened by them; <sup>4</sup> because Adonai your God is going with you to fight on your behalf against your enemies and give you victory.'**

**V:10 "When you advance on a town to attack it, first offer it terms for peace. <sup>11</sup> If it accepts the terms for peace and opens its gates to you, then all the people there are to be put to forced labour and work for you. <sup>12</sup> However, if they refuse to make peace with you but prefer to make war against you, you are to put it under siege. <sup>13</sup> When Adonai your God hands it over to you, you are to put every male to the sword. <sup>14</sup> However, you are to take as booty for yourself the women, the little ones, the livestock, and everything in the city — all its spoil. Yes, you will feed on your enemies' spoil, which Adonai your God has given you. <sup>15</sup> This is what you are to do to all the towns which are at a great distance from you, which are not the towns of these nations.**

Friends, let us not forget that YHVH has placed within the heart of Israel and His people, the precept of peace making. Yeshua declares 'Blessed are the peace makers for they are the children of God. Matthew 5:9.

Peace brings unity and commands the blessing. It is for all of YHVH's people to endeavour to dwell in it and strive for it. Israel is by no means a perfect nation. In fact, there is a lot within the nation that should not be desired. But nonetheless, we see today how Israel endeavours to make peace with her aggressors despite the constant barrage of taunts and the rhetoric of the nations that surround her. The principle rule that YHVH wishes to establish is peace in heaven and on earth.

Maybe you can consider this. 'Is there peace in heavens now? If YHVH's people are spiritually in a battle then there is no peace at all?

In verse 19, we read: "When, in making war against a town in order to capture it, you lay siege to it for a long time, you are not to destroy its trees, cutting them down with an axe. You can eat their fruit, so don't cut them down. After all, are the trees in the field human beings, so that you have to besiege them too? <sup>20</sup> However, if you know that certain trees provide no food, you may destroy them and cut them down, in order to build siege-works against the town making war with you, until it falls.

The prohibition of not cutting down trees seems to create a comparison with humans and trees. However, this is more of an environmental issue. Fruit trees are useful in providing food whereas the non-fruit bearing trees have utilitarian value. The aspect on which YHVH wants our attention is that all living things are sacred and live in conjunction with man and that he has been given responsibility in looking after the earth. This again, is a law that maintains good stewardship and balance upon the earth. However, it is clear that in our society today in order to sustain our life styles, that we have indeed abused much, if not all, of our responsibility over what YHVH has created.

The result, if only in part, and neglecting the Torah, has brought curses upon us and our land, as we will see in subsequent studies. Maybe you can discuss this?

Finally in this last chapter we are introduced to the law of 'Eglah arufah

*Chapter 21 "If, in the land Adonai your God is giving you to possess, a murder victim is found lying in the countryside; and the perpetrator of the murder is not known; <sup>2</sup> then your leaders and judges are to go out and measure the distance between it and the surrounding towns. <sup>3</sup> After it has been determined which town is the closest, the leaders of that town are to take a young female cow that has never been put to work or yoked for use as a draft animal. <sup>4</sup> The leaders of that town are to bring the heifer down to a vadi with a stream in it that never dries up, to a place that is neither plowed nor sown; and they are to break the cow's neck there in the vadi. <sup>5</sup> Then the cohanim, who are L'vi'im, are to approach; for Adonai your God has chosen them to serve him and to pronounce blessings in the name of Adonai; they will decide the outcome of every dispute and matter involving violence. <sup>6</sup> All the leaders of the town nearest the murder victim are to wash their hands over the cow whose neck was broken in the vadi. <sup>7</sup> Then they are to speak up and say, 'This blood was not shed by our hands, nor have we seen who did it. <sup>8</sup> Adonai, forgive your people Isra'el, whom you redeemed; do not allow innocent blood to be shed among your people Isra'el.' And they will be forgiven this bloodshed. <sup>9</sup> Thus you will banish the shedding of innocent blood from among you, by doing what Adonai sees as right.*

This law presents a dilemma, as it is incumbent upon a Jew to bury a fellow Jew who has been murdered. Even a *kohen gadol* (high priest, who is forbidden all contact with the dead) is obligated to become ritually impure to observe this stipulation. In principle, if a traveller who is journeying across land borders is murdered, the closest town to the site is responsible for burying the body. Atonement of the calf was made to YHVH and forgiveness sought for the shedding of innocent blood.

The underlying principle is that for all of us, if a situation arises in front of our eyes, even though it does not concern us directly, we have a responsibility to do something about it for having witnessed it. It is our duty therefore to influence the outcome positively.

Summary.

The focus of this week's study is principally on the appointment of the judges and officers. The message impresses upon us that the rule of law must be established in YHVH's people and for the various communities within. The sages, referring to Deuteronomy 16:18, teach: The human body is a city with seven gates—seven portals to the outside world: the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and the mouth. Here, too, it is incumbent upon us to place internal "judges" to discriminate and regulate what should be admitted and what should be kept out, and "officers" to enforce the judges' decisions.

It shows us that in order to enforce the Torah Laws that righteous judges and officers must be placed to oversee them so that the community functions in harmony.

The month of Elul is a month of reflection but also draws us to the knowledge that, 'The King is in the Field'. You might also ask, if Elul is the month of mercy and repentance, then what about Yom Kippur?

Elul is an appointed time where YHVH is considered to leave His heavenly estate and visit us in our place – the field. It is His decision to make the first move toward us. It is the time when 'The Beloved' draws near.

YHVH's initiative, evokes in us our expression of love toward Him.

It is said that it is in the field that YHVH reveals Himself at a level that can be apprehended by us.

At 'Yom Kippur' — another appointed time — YHVH is not in the field but in His Palace. It is here that YHVH is in the attribute of His Divine Majesty.

In essence the King visits us to see if we are observant — reflecting our love toward the study of His Word/Torah.

#### Song of Songs

1. **Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth—**  
for your love is more delightful than wine.
- <sup>3</sup> Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;  
your name is like perfume poured out.  
No wonder the young women love you!
- <sup>4</sup> Take me away with You—let us hurry!  
Let the King bring me into His chambers.

The allusion in the first line, is that the words of YHVH — His very breath is upon our mouths. This reminds me of the life giving spirit that YHVH breathed into the lifeless body of Adam. How wonderful!

That life giving spirit is in you now. Let it rejuvenate and vitalise you and bring healing to your bones.

Friends, take the opportunity to go out and meet the King in the field. He is near. Consider this time and reflect upon your life and the gates of judgement. Remember our responsibilities to one another not only in our immediate but extended families. Pray for the peace of the Lord and the Prince of Peace to come. May He give you great favour.

I have been blessed by this study. I pray that you are too.

Shabbat Shalom.

Be blessed and walk in the Light of His love.  
May the YHWH bless and keep you and make His face shine on you and give you shalom. Till next time.

Grant Marshall  
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Numbers 6:

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

## Glossary

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*Aggadah*) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**), otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.