

Shavua Tov



A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn Mc Williams

Torah Portion: *Shoftim*

שופטים

“Judges”

Appoint yourselves judges and police for your tribes in all your settlements that God your Lord is giving you, and make sure that they administer honest judgment for the people.

Shoftim veshotrim titen-lecha bechol-she'areycha asher Adonay Eloheycha noten lecha lishvateycha veshafetu et-ha'am mishpat tsedek.

Scripture for Study:

Devarim (Deuteronomy)

16:18 – 21:9

Haftorah Portion:

Yeshayahu (Isaiah)

51:12 – 52:12

The name “Israel” may be considered one of the most provocative names in use today. Wherever the name Israel is used, whether in political, military, religious, or recreational conversation, it evokes profound emotions and peculiar reactions. Due to the many different applications of the name Israel, it is almost always accompanied by some sort of explanation or definition. The first use of the name Israel appears in the story of Jacob, the descendant of Isaac and Abraham, wrestling with a man.

Genesis 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. ²⁶And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. ²⁷And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. ²⁸And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with Elohim and with men, and hast prevailed. ²⁹And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. ³⁰And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen Elohim face to face, and my life is preserved.

The identity of the man with whom Jacob wrestled is beyond the scope of this study.¹ For our purposes it is simply enough to understand that the name Israel was given to Jacob in response to his perseverance in the wrestling match. The name Israel is a compound name made up of two words. The first part of the name, *Ysra*, comes from the Hebrew root *sarah* (Sin, Resh, Hey), which means “he fought,” “he strove,” or “he contended.”² The second word *El* (Aleph Lamed) is an appellative or title for Elohim. The name Israel thus means “he wrestled or strove with El.” The story confirms this understanding and gives us the reason for Jacob’s new name.

Genesis 32:28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with Elohim and with men, and hast prevailed.

We should understand that this verse prophetically pointed forward to another time when YHWH would Himself change Jacob’s name.

Genesis 35:9 And Elohim appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. ¹⁰And Elohim said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and He called his name Israel. ¹¹And Elohim said unto him, I am El Shaddai: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; ¹²and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

Here we may note that the change of name is directly connected to the affirmation of the covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 12:1 Now YHWH had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: ²and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 15:5 And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. ⁶And he believed in YHWH; and He counted it to him for righteousness. ⁷And He said unto him, I am YHWH that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. ⁸And he said, Adonai YHWH, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

As Abram became Abraham, so Jacob becomes Israel. The name Israel here is directly connected to the covenant. We should also note that this name is also connected with fruitfulness and seed. It is not long in the story before we realize that the name Israel is not just limited to the man Israel, but is soon applied to his seed as well. Thus we see the name Israel applied to the children of Israel and the tribes of Israel. Eventually the name Israel becomes synonymous with the whole nation of Israel.

Genesis 32:32 Therefore the **children of Israel** eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

Genesis 46:5 And **Jacob** rose up from Beersheba: and the **sons of Israel** carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

Exodus 12:3 Speak ye unto all the **congregation of Israel**, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.

Exodus 16:31 And the **house of Israel** called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

Genesis 34:7 And the **sons of Jacob** came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in **Israel** in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.

Genesis 49:7 Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in **Jacob**, and scatter them in **Israel**.

In these last two references we see that the name Israel is now applied to the entire nation and no longer to a single man. We also should note in these last two references the use of both names, Jacob and Israel. By looking at the various texts where both names are used, we begin to see an important lesson emerging from the pattern. Let us take a brief look at some of these passages. What we shall see is that the name Jacob belongs to the physical realm, while the name Israel belongs to the spiritual realm.

Genesis 34:7 And the **sons of Jacob** came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in **Israel** in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.

Genesis 35:22 And it came to pass, when **Israel** dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the **sons of Jacob** were twelve.

Note that in both of these passages the more carnal and earthly actions and emotions such as working in the fields, grieving, and intercourse are attributed to the sons of Jacob. But when speaking of their unique connection as a people of YHWH, they are described as Israel. Let us look at a few more examples where both names appear and confirm this pattern.

Genesis 48:2 And one told **Jacob**, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and **Israel** strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

Genesis 49:2 Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye **sons of Jacob**; and hearken unto **Israel** your father.

Again note that when the man Jacob is lying on his deathbed he is referred to as Jacob, but when he is about to do something spiritual (bestowing blessings upon his grandchildren), it is

Israel that strengthens himself. Likewise in the second passage the earthly sons of Jacob are called to listen to the spiritual man Israel.

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up unto Elohim, and YHWH called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the **house of Jacob**, and tell the **children of Israel**.

Numbers 23:7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me **Jacob**, and come, defy **Israel**.

Numbers 23:10 Who can count the dust of **Jacob**, and the number of the fourth part of **Israel**? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

Numbers 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in **Jacob**, neither hath He seen perverseness in **Israel**: YHWH his Elohim is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

Numbers 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment against **Jacob**, neither is there any divination against **Israel**: according to this time it shall be said of **Jacob** and of **Israel**, What hath Elohim wrought!

Numbers 24:5 How goodly are thy tents, O **Jacob**, and thy tabernacles, O **Israel**!

Numbers 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of **Jacob**, and a Sceptre shall rise out of **Israel**, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

Deuteronomy 33:10 They shall teach **Jacob** Thy judgments, and **Israel** Thy law: they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar.

1 Chronicles 16:13 O ye **seed of Israel** His servant, ye **children of Jacob**, His chosen ones.

Psalms 22:23 Ye that fear YHWH, praise Him; all ye the **seed of Jacob**, glorify Him; and fear Him, all ye the **seed of Israel**.

Clearly we witness in these passages that the names Jacob and Israel are descriptions of certain attributes of not only the man Jacob, but also his seed or descendants. As we have seen, the name Jacob is clearly given to the biological or earthly line of Jacob. Conversely, the name Israel has a spiritual connotation, referring to those who share the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and are therefore spiritual descendants. We witness this concept of a dual lineage even in the covenant promises made with the patriarchs.

Genesis 13:16 And I will make thy **seed as the dust of the earth**: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

Genesis 28:14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Here we see that the seed or descendants of the patriarchs are compared to the dust of the earth. This is the physical or biological line. We may even call it the earthly line. But this is not the only comparison.

Genesis 15:5 And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

Genesis 26:4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Here we witness a comparison between the seed or descendants of the patriarchs and the very stars of heaven. I would suggest that this is a reference to the spiritual descendants that share the faith of the patriarchs. We witness a reference to both lines in the following passage.

Genesis 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.

Clearly the biological descendants of Jacob were originally a part of Israel. It was, after all, Jacob's biological descendants who went down with him into Egypt.

Exodus 1:1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob.

It was likewise Jacob's biological descendants who came out of Egypt with Moses and met with YHWH ELOHIM at Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up unto Elohim, and YHWH called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel.

Here we should note the usage of both names, implying that there were others besides the house of Jacob, the biological descendants, present at Mount Sinai at the time of the making of the covenant. This is exactly what the Torah teaches us.

Exodus 12:38 And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

Not only did the biological descendants of Jacob enter into covenant with YHWH at Mount Sinai, but likewise those who had come out with them. Thus we see that Israel is more than just a matter of biology. Being Israel is about keeping the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Being Israel is about keeping the covenant. While the name Israel has been applied to an earthly

kingdom and nation, it does not mean that everyone living in this particular earthly kingdom or nation belongs to the spiritual and heavenly kingdom of Israel. Thus Shaul would later write,

***Romans 9:6** Not as though the word of Elohim hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.*

Who are the rightful inheritors of the promise to the patriarchs? Again Shaul answers this question in a fashion consistent with the teaching of the Torah.

***Romans 4:13** For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: ¹⁵because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. ¹⁶Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.*

***Galatians 3:6** Even as Abraham believed Elohim, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. ⁷Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

It is truly a difficult and confusing matter in this day and age to speak about being the children of Israel without first defining the title Israel. The current secular state inhabiting the land of Israel has certainly made matters even more confusing. But the Torah makes it clear – Israel is the name given to those who share the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel and keep the covenant of Sinai. Israel refers to those who have willingly submitted their lives to the yoke of Torah as given by Moses and taught by Messiah Yeshua. While many may lay claim to this title, YHWH ELOHIM will be the judge in the end as to who is and who is not a part of the covenant He made with Israel. In the meantime we may exercise some measure of discernment by understanding the mission and calling given to the people of Israel.

***Exodus 19:5** Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: ⁶and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

The children of Israel were called to become a special treasure unto YHWH. Israel was called to restore the image of YHWH to an estranged world. By willingly, lovingly, and freely submitting themselves in body, mind, and spirit to the self-revelation of YHWH – the Torah – Israel would embody YHWH in the world. The plain and simple definition of Israel is those who keep the Torah. Those who keep the Torah embody YHWH in the world, making the invisible Elohim very visible in the world. Every commandment, statute, and ordinance of the Torah is a revelation of the will, nature, and character of YHWH. The covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel is one of great commitment. YHWH repeatedly promises to care for, provide for, heal, bless, and protect those who willingly and freely set themselves apart to living by His exclusive revelation. Israel pledged to live by the exclusive word of YHWH, thus embodying the image of YHWH ELOHIM in the world. Since Israel is to manifest the image of

YHWH through living the Word of YHWH, they are neither allowed to add to the Torah nor diminish from it.

Deuteronomy 4:2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of YHWH your Elohim which I command you.

Deuteronomy 12:32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

To change or alter the revelation of YHWH in any manner would be to present a false image of YHWH ELOHIM; therefore it is imperative that the children of Israel understand and live out each statute, ordinance, commandment, and teaching as YHWH has given it. As we have said above, each of these teachings, commandments, statutes, and ordinances portrays some attribute of YHWH. This is made most especially clear when it comes to the matter of justice and righteousness.

The words "justice" and "righteousness" are translations of the same Hebrew word – *tzedek* (Tsade, Dalet, Kof). In the Ancient Hebrew ideographs the Tsade is a picture of a man lying on his side, and may be understood as meaning "side." The Dalet is a picture of a tent flap, or door. The Hebrew word *tzad* (Tsade, Dalet) means "stronghold." The final letter Kof is a picture of the sun on the horizon and can imply sunset, diminishing light, or growing darkness. Together these ideographs may convey the idea of justice or righteousness as a man with his side against the door refusing to allow the growing darkness entrance into his house, heart, or camp. We may define justice or righteousness as resistance against doing evil or wrong. The testimony of Scripture is clear that YHWH ELOHIM is indeed a resister of evil and wrong. YHWH is righteous and just.

Psalm 7:17 I will praise YHWH according to His righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of YHWH most high.

Psalm 35:28 And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise all the day long.

Psalm 45:4 And in Thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.

Psalm 45:7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore Elohim, thy Elohim, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Psalm 48:10 According to Thy name, O Elohim, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth: Thy right hand is full of righteousness.

Psalm 50:6 And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for Elohim is judge Himself. Selah.

Psalm 65:5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O Elohim of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea.

Psalm 72:13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

Psalm 89:14 Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before Thy face.

Psalm 97:2 Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

Psalm 97:6 The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory.

Thus if the people desire to be Israel, they are bound to make manifest the image of YHWH by manifesting His attributes of righteousness and justice. We need to clearly understand here the connection between righteousness and justice and the image of YHWH. Since righteousness and justice are attributes of YHWH, we should not be surprised that YHWH commands that judges and officers be appointed to help maintain and manifest these attributes among the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 16:18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment. ¹⁹Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. ²⁰That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee. ²¹Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of YHWH thy Elohim, which thou shalt make thee. ²²Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which YHWH thy Elohim hateth.

What follows these verses in our portion are clearly instructions for those appointed to judge. Here we are given instructions concerning the need for two or more witnesses, two witnesses in capital offenses, a case of no witnesses, as well as instruction concerning false witnesses.

Deuteronomy 17:2 If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of YHWH thy Elohim, in transgressing His covenant, ³and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; ⁴and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: ⁵then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die. ⁶At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. ⁷The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

Deuteronomy 19:15 *One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. ¹⁶If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; ¹⁷then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before YHWH, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; ¹⁸and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; ¹⁹then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. ²⁰And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. ²¹And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

Deuteronomy 21:1 *If one be found slain in the land which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: ²then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: ³and it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; ⁴and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: ⁵and the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them YHWH thy Elohim hath chosen to minister unto Him, and to bless in the name of YHWH; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried: ⁶and all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: ⁷and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. ⁸Be merciful, O YHWH, unto Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto Thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. ⁹So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of YHWH.*

We also witness the establishment of a supreme court type system that gives both citizens and judges the opportunity to appeal to a higher court until finally it is decided by YHWH at the Temple.

Deuteronomy 17:8 *If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which YHWH thy Elohim shall choose; ⁹and thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: ¹⁰and thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which YHWH shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: ¹¹according to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. ¹²And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before YHWH thy Elohim, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. ¹³And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.*

I need to mention here that this teaching refers to the judge and *Cohen Gadol*³ who had access to the Urim and Thummim that were used for the purpose of divine revelation. The Torah does not teach that we must blindly follow the teachings of rabbis and popes! We should also be clear here that the sentence that was issued was from the Torah. The judge or *cohen*⁴ was to be able to demonstrate the reason for his sentence or judgment right from the Torah. Sin is a transgression of the Torah. To be convicted of sin, one must be shown to be in violation of the Torah. We must be extremely clear on this point. Unlike the United States or even the current secular state of Israel, there were no “lawmakers” making up new statutes, ordinances, and laws as they saw fit. The Torah is the Constitution of Israel. One may not add to it or diminish from it. Israel is not a democracy but a theocracy. The judgments that are to be made are not man’s judgments, but YHWH’S.

Deuteronomy 1:17 Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is Elohim's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

The judges were charged not only with applying the Divine Constitution to those in the covenant, but also with assuring that the image of YHWH was being protected and manifested by the children of Israel in the world. Thus we witness that the first case that is mentioned to the judges is that concerning someone breaking the covenant.

Deuteronomy 17:2 If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of YHWH thy Elohim, in transgressing His covenant, ³and hath gone and served other elohim, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; ⁴and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel.

So we see that the judges were responsible for resisting the darkness and keeping evil out of Israel. The Torah repeatedly warns the children of Israel against any type of injustice.

Leviticus 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

Leviticus 19:36 Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am YHWH your Elohim, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 1:16 And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

Deuteronomy 16:18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

Deuteronomy 16:20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee.

Deuteronomy 25:15 But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee.

We should also note, however, another theme that subtly underlies these teachings. As we have said above, Israel is responsible for embodying or manifesting the self-revelation of YHWH through keeping the Torah. To change the Torah is to change the image of YHWH. If YHWH is righteous and just, then Israel must likewise be righteous and just. Therefore we see within the instructions concerning the judges several references to idolatry, blemished offerings, and false and presumptuous prophets.

Deuteronomy 16:21 Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of YHWH thy Elohim, which thou shalt make thee. ²²Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which YHWH thy Elohim hateth.

Deuteronomy 17:1 Thou shalt not sacrifice unto YHWH thy Elohim any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto YHWH thy Elohim.

Deuteronomy 18:9 When thou art come into the land which YHWH thy Elohim giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. ¹⁰There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, ¹¹or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. ¹²For all that do these things are an abomination unto YHWH: and because of these abominations YHWH thy Elohim doth drive them out from before thee. ¹³Thou shalt be perfect with YHWH thy Elohim. ¹⁴For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, YHWH thy Elohim hath not suffered thee so to do.

Deuteronomy 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. ²¹And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which YHWH hath not spoken? ²²When a prophet speaketh in the name of YHWH, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which YHWH hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

What the Torah is teaching us is that injustice and unrighteousness among the children of Israel or its judges are as unacceptable to YHWH as a blemished sacrifice and are as abominable as idolatry. In fact, injustice and unrighteousness on the part of the children of Israel are idolatry. Since Israel by definition is the keeper of the covenant and the manifest image of YHWH ELOHIM in the world, then to act unjustly or unrighteously is to add to or to diminish from the Torah; it is to present a false image of the Holy One.

It is nearly impossible to overemphasize this point. We need to clearly understand that justice and righteousness are unmistakably a part of the revelation of YHWH. It is the fact that YHWH is both righteous and just that is at the heart of the Gospel of the Kingdom. What makes the news of the coming reign of heaven upon earth “good-news” is that the King of that Kingdom will reign with righteousness and justice.

Psalm 9:4 For Thou hast maintained My right and My cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

Psalm 9:8 And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

Psalm 72:2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

Psalm 85:11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. ¹²Yea, YHWH shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. ¹³Righteousness shall go before Him; and shall set us in the way of His steps.

Psalm 94:15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

Psalm 96:13 Before YHWH: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.

Psalm 98:9 Before YHWH; for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity.

Isaiah 11:4 But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.

Isaiah 16:5 And in mercy shall the throne be established: and He shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.

Isaiah 32:1 Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

Clearly if we desire to fulfill our calling to manifest the image of YHWH in the world as well to establish His reign upon the earth, then we must submit ourselves wholly to the Torah and do righteousness and justice upon the earth.

There are two points that I want to make as I close this Torah portion. First, that it is impossible to be Israel, the covenant people of YHWH, and not keep the Torah. Being Israel is not about where our DNA comes from. Israel is defined by the Torah as given to Moses and taught by Messiah. Israel consists of those who embody YHWH in their lives by willingly, lovingly, righteously, and justly living out the self-revelation of YHWH. Israel is also a kingdom which is ruled by a King. The Sinai covenant is a Suzerain-Vassal covenant.⁵ As the children of Israel,

we have agreed to live for the King. This means we must live by the constitution of His Kingdom. This constitution is the Torah. There is no way to live in the Kingdom of Heaven without living by the Torah or laws of the King. There is no way to advance the boundaries of this Kingdom without encouraging others to live under the reign of the King. What makes this reign attractive to others is the fact that this King reigns in righteousness and justice. Thus every evangelist, if he be true to his calling, will encourage others to submit themselves to the just and righteous reign of the King.

A second point that I also feel compelled to make is the fact that many of us are living in exile. Many of us are living in a land that is not our own. We live under pharaohs, presidents, prime ministers, dictators, and kings. While some of these systems of man's government may be more just than others, we must all admit that we are not living in a world solely under the reign of Messiah. Since we are not in the land, we are lacking in truly appointed judges. When we have conflict present in the body of Messiah, we unfortunately take it upon ourselves to declare ourselves just and righteous while our opponent in the conflict is clearly unrighteous and unjust. Without a Bet Din (House of Law) we often accuse the other while justifying ourselves. The Proverbs contain much wisdom on this matter.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in YHWH with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear YHWH, and depart from evil.

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but YHWH weigheth the spirits.

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but YHWH pondereth the hearts.

The Proverbs wisely remind us that we tend to see things from our own vantage point and perspective, which is the reason we need righteous and just judges. We should also remember that as members of the covenant we no longer live for ourselves, but for YHWH. When we entered into the covenant, we willingly became bondservants of YHWH. It is no mistake that one of the first teachings of the Torah after the giving of the Ten Commandments is the teaching on Hebrew servants.⁶ As bondservants we have given our rights for personal justice over to the Master. It is YHWH who will seek our justice for us; it is YHWH who is our righteous judge. Without appointed judges to hear our complaints and conflicts, we run the risk of simply being a talebearer who complains to everyone in hopes of finding someone to side with us and justify

our complaint. These people who agree with us without hearing the other side of the complaint may be well-meaning friends; but they are not following Torah, nor are they just. Messiah warns us not to be quick to judge others lest we ourselves be judged.

Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

In all such matters of conflict we would do well to make peace with our adversaries quickly,⁷ taking our complaint to the cross while putting our faith in YHWH to know the truth and see to our justice. Unfortunately we often become accuser, witness, judge, and executioner all at the same time. We choose to throw stones instead of quietly taking the matter of our personal justice to the cross. It is not easy to trust YHWH in all things. It is not easy to turn the other cheek. It is not easy to love and feed one's enemy. But this is what it means to be Israel and a member of the body of Messiah.

SHAVUA TOV !

¹ See my study on Vayishlach

² A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English, Ernest Klein, MacMillan Publishing, Pg. 691

³ High Priest

⁴ Priest

⁵ A typical Ancient Near Eastern Suzerain (Sovereign)-Vassal treaty followed the pattern of a preamble outlining the Suzerain (Sovereign) and the vassal entering into the agreement, a historical narrative explaining the reason and occasion for the treaty, the conditions of the covenant, the blessings and cursings for keeping or breaking the covenant, and the conditions for the continuation the covenant from generation to generation.

⁶ Exodus 21:1ff

⁷ Matthew 5:25; Luke 12:58