

# Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5779 years)

## SHABBAT SERVICE

September 7th – 10:30 AM -- Lolo Community  
"Synagogue"

12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah  
Study



**“You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns....  
and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.”**



**Justice, Justice you shall pursue**

## Deuteronomy 16:18-20

שֹׁפְטִים וְשָׂרִים תִּתֶן לְךָ בְּכָל־שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ  
שֹׁפְטִים וְשָׂרִים תִּתֵן לְךָ בְּכָל שְׁעָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ

**Shof'tim v'shot'rim titen-l'cha b'chol-sh'areicha asher Adonai Eloheicha noten l'cha**

You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God is giving you

לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת־הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט־צְדָקָה  
לְשִׁבְטֶיךָ וְשִׁפְטוּ אֶת הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט צְדָקָה

**lish'vateicha v'shaf'too et-ha-am mish'pat-tsedek**

according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

לֹא־תַטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא־תִקַּח שֹׁחַד  
לֹא תַטֶּה וּמִשְׁפָּט לֹא תִכִּיר פָּנִים וְלֹא תִקַּח שֹׁחַד

**Lo-tateh mishpat lo takir panim velo-tikach shochad**

You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe,

כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֶה עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים וַיִּסַּף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים  
כִּי הַשֹּׁחַד יַעֲוֶה עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים וַיִּסַּף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים

**ki hashochad y'aver einey chachamim visalef divrei tsadikim.**

for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous.

צְדָקָה צְדָקָה תִּרְדָּף לְמַעַן תַּחְיֶה וַיִּרְשֶׁת אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ  
צְדָקָה צְדָקָה תִּרְדָּף לְמַעַן תַּחְיֶה וַיִּרְשֶׁת אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ

**Tsedek tsedek tirdof l'ma'an tichyeh v'yarashta et-ha'arets asher-Adonai Eloheicha noten lach.**

Justice, (and only) Justice you shall pursue, that you may live and posses the land, which the Lord your God is giving you.

## **Worshiping God by Showing Our Distinctiveness as His People through Civil Laws**

In the Torah portion for this week, we find that God allowed His people to have judges, a king, priests and prophets, and elders to administrate His commandments, statutes, and ordinances, when they arrived in the land that the Lord has promised to give to them. God's people would be held accountable in every area of their lives by these appointed officials, who carried out God's civil laws, creating a just society. Priests, who knew God's law, were to instruct the people to listen to God's voice. This was their inheritance from God. Prophets were given to the nation to speak God's words, when the king or the people had deviated from them. We also observe in this Torah portion the

accountability of these same individuals to God. The common theme for this Torah portion is that by keeping God's civil laws, God's people "shall purge the evil from Israel" and thus be able to enter into worship with God. We, too, must be attentive to the **Ruach**, telling us what evil in our lives to purge.

As we begin the Hebrew month of **Elul**, we prepare for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which follows in four weeks. We look back on our lives over the past year to ascertain how we can become a more Godly person. We consider whom we might have offended and attempt to contact them to make amends. Over the next four weeks, let us review our actions and attitudes of the last year. The **Ruach** will let us know those who pleased God and those who displeased Him, so that our dedication to serve God in the coming year will be more complete.



## Judges Administer God's Law

In **Chapter 16**, verse 18, all of the towns in the land would be allowed to appoint for themselves "judges and officers." "Judges" (**shoftim**) were decision-makers, men of integrity, who were to apply God's case law righteously. Because they did not run for elected office, they did not have to secure political contributions, and thus were not beholden to anyone. "Officers" (**shotrim**) were those administrators responsible for record-keeping for their towns. Judges were not to "distort" (Hebrew: "twist or bend") justice, not to be "partial" (Hebrew: "not to recognize faces"), and were not to take bribes. Their honest pursuit of justice (Hebrew: "righteousness") and only justice was tied to the prosperity of God's people in the land. Today, in a time of political correctness, we are reminded that God's people are to abide by God's law alone. We are not to be governed by poll-taking judges, nor by judgments of political correctness. We are to remember that God is our ultimate Judge. It is He that we must please, so that the fruit of our lives ascends to Him as a sweet aroma. No town was so small ("in all your towns") that they were exempt from God's righteous judgments by honest judges. As the people were accountable to obey the decisions of judges, so judges were held accountable to

God in their application of His judgments, which Jewish sages have held must contain a tinge of mercy just as God extends mercy to His people along with His justice. "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, but **the Lord weighs the hearts**" (**Psalm 21:2**). For God's people to live as His distinct people before the world, they were required to live lives that were consistent with God's precepts. The same should also hold true for us today! Let us resolve to live lives that honor God by keeping His rules.

## The Prime Directive

Leading into **Chapter 17** is the prohibition against syncretistic worship, setting up cultic worship figures alongside of their altar to God. The "prime directive" for all civil and religious law was that God's people worship Him alone! God is jealous for the unadulterated worship of His people.

We should always reserve our best offering to give back to God a portion from that He has given to us (vs.1). The worship of any other god or even the worship of God's creation was considered an "evil deed" (vs.5), punishable by stoning in order to "...purge the evil from your midst" (vs.7). **Deuteronomy 13:14** along with **17:4** admonished judges to investigate, search out, and inquire thoroughly before carrying out capital punishment. There must be two or three witnesses, who are both willing to testify and to carry out the punishment. False testimony would make the one testifying guilty of the same crime (**Deuteronomy 19:15-19**).

If the judge felt a case was too difficult for him to decide, he could send it to the central sanctuary, where the adjudicators would be a court of priests and Levites. Their verdict would be final. One should note that there was a similar investigatory protocol for church discipline given in Matthew 18:16, where the punishment was dismissal from the body of believers. Again the purpose of judgment is to "purge the evil" from the people. The section on judges concluded with what I call "The principle of deterrence:" "The people will hear and be afraid and will not act presumptuously again" (vs13).

Next, Moses prophesied that when the people arrived in the land, they would want a king to rule over them, much like the nations surrounding them. [This was consistent with **Genesis 49:10**, "The scepter (sovereignty) will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh (Messiah) comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples (gentile nations). **1st Samuel 8:7** states that by asking for a king, the people were rejecting God's rule. Due to dishonest judges - the sons of Samuel - the people asked to be ruled by a king.] Without addressing the notion that God was their king, who brought them out from slavery in Egypt into freedom in their promised land, Moses seemed to acquiesce, as long as they appointed a king whom God chose; one who was not a foreigner; one who would rely only on God and observe all God's law. It does seem to be the way of men to need a physical ruler to lead them. My opinion is that rebellious men need a target against whom to "**kvetch**" (gripe & complain). Today we continue to hear of some people, who still blame President Bush for hurricane Katrina and its damage. Acknowledging the leadership of God in choosing one's leader should not be lost on us. We should always choose righteous people, who follow God's law. In the time of Moses, a ruler was less likely to rely on God, if he was wealthy, if he had made foreign alliances... perhaps by marriage, and if he relied on a large army supported by cavalry. A ruler would be much more likely to rely on God's leadership, if he had on a copy of God's



law that he read each day and was ..."carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes..." (vs.19).

In verse 18, the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) mistranslates the Hebrew word "**mishneh**" ("copy" of the law) into the Greek "deutronomion tuoto" ("this second law"). The English title of this book, "Deuteronomy", "a second law," gives the unfortunate impression that Deuteronomy is another giving of the law. The actual meaning of this verse is that the king will keep a copy of God's original law with him, so that he can fully understand and submit to God's leadership. The application for us today is also clear. If we study God's word each day, so that we become very familiar with it, we will be more apt to submit ourselves to God's leadership in our daily lives and make better lifetime decisions.

## **God's Ministers - Occult Practitioners - Messiah**

In Chapter 18 the Levites were mentioned as God's ministers, who "stand before the Lord." Levites served as ministers to the priests in the central sanctuary. However in the Levitical cities and other small towns, the Levites had other roles. They were judges and teachers of the law (Deut. 17:8-9, 33:10, and 2nd Chronicles 17:8-9). They were also settlers of disputes (21:5) and made judgments concerning ceremonial defilement (Deuteronomy 24:8 & Leviticus Chs.12-15). In the Canaanite lands in which they would be living, they would be tempted with all kinds of "detestable" practices. But they were to remain blameless before the Lord. The Godly instruction of the Levites in all of their towns would serve to keep God's truth before the people. In John 1:19, it was the Priests and Levites from Jerusalem who came to John the Baptist to authenticate who he was. Without tribal inheritance, the Levites were to be provided meat from sacrifices and the first fruits of agricultural products and lambs' wool..."for the Lord your God has chosen him and his sons.... to stand and serve in the name of the Lord" (vs.5). The application in our day is that ministerial leaders should always put God's truth before the people, which holds them accountable to God for blameless living. In return, spiritual leaders should be provided their physical necessities.

In verse 9, Moses warned the people about occult practitioners they would encounter in the land. There were those who practiced human sacrifice, worshipping the god, Molech. Some practiced divination, "**k'sam**" giving false prophecy to determine the will of pagan gods through omens...Balaam in Joshua 13:22; Philistine priests in I Samuel 6:2; Saul sought a medium to conjure up Samuel in I Samuel 28:8; practiced by Israel in 2nd Kings 9-17. Some practiced augury, "**me'onen**," "one who causes to appear," as apparitions in Judges 9:36-7. There would be "enchanters," "**menachesh**" literally "to snake," using omens or objects to determine the will of gods found in Genesis 44:25, Joseph's cup for divination. There were also those who practiced sorcery, "**m'chashef**," witchcraft, practicing magic by incantations, as practiced by Pharaoh's sorcerers in Exodus 7:11, and seen in the prophecy of Isaiah 47:9,12 against Babylon because of their spells and sorcery. A "charmer," "**chover chaver**," who cursed people or cast spells to control them; literally, "the binding of a band," as found in Psalms 58:5, where it indicated unrighteous judges, who controlled the people. A spiritist, "**sho'el ov**," literally, "the asker of the pit," was a medium, who consulted with a "familiar spirit" or who told fortunes...Isaiah 8:19. A wizard, "**yid'oni**," literally, "a knowing one," obtained supernatural knowledge through communication with the evil world. A necromancer, "**doresh el-**

**hametim**," literally, "a seeker from among the dead," was a medium who communicated with the dead.

In contrast to these "detestable (abominable)" vs.12 practices, the Levites were told in verse 13 "to be blameless (perfect) before the Lord your God." Before the Levites could minister before God, they had to be blameless. What does "blameless" mean, and are we today as believer/priests accountable to God to also be blameless, as we come before God in worship? **Matthew 5:48** states, "Be perfect, therefore, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The context for this statement is Yeshua's command "...to love your enemies and pray for those to persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father, who is in heaven..." Therefore, one aspect of being "perfect" is to exhibit God's right-minded attitude towards others. As Rabbi Russ Resnik points out, "Yeshua is not speaking of sinless perfection here, but of a perfect, complete, unconditional attitude of respect and kindness toward all. Just as righteous judgment is evenhanded toward all, so Yeshua commands evenhandedness in our treatment of others." "Justice rooted in the worship of the one true and living God, will be expressed in our treatment of our fellow human beings." The position of this imperative indicates that those who practice the above detestable practices cannot enter into worship with God. Therefore the Levites and believer/priests today must flee from any association with these practices.

Moses prophesied the **future coming of Messiah** (verses 15-19) and gave instructions for the people to be ready to acknowledge this one particular person, whom God would send to them. God told them, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you (Moses), and I will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (vs.18). In the midst of occultism and false prophets, God will send His people one true prophet "like Moses." The Priests and Levites, as administrators of God's truth, were to recognize this prophet as being sent from God with His message for the people. They were admonished ..."whoever will not listen to My words, which He shall speak in My name, I, Myself, will require it of him" (vs.19). One of the administrative duties of the Levites was to recognize God's truth when they heard it and to differentiate between those who spoke God's truth from those who spoke "presumptuously." Their test of God's prophet would be that everything he predicted came to pass (vs. 22), and that he says nothing that would lead the people to go after other gods (**Deuteronomy 13:2**). So then, the question for the Levites and for us today is "Who was this 'prophet,' whom God said He would send to His people? Has he come to them yet, or is He still to come?" Have there been any other prophets "like Moses?" God told us in **Deuteronomy 34:10** that up to that point in history, ..."no prophet had arisen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face..." **Numbers 12:6-8** expands on who this prophet is, who knows God "face to face." "He (God) said, 'Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, shall make Myself known to him in a vision . I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; with him I speak ("**panim el panim**") mouth to mouth, even openly and not in dark sayings. And He beholds the form ("**T'munah**"...God's visible presence) of the Lord.'" This prophet will have the confidential friendship of God, which will allow them to speak openly like friends. Has this open and friendly communication between God and the other prophets in the Tanakh (old testament) ever occurred? No, there is no record of another prophet like Moses in the Tanakh. How about in the **B'rit Hadashah** (New Testament)? Yes, there are so many scriptures that talk about the fatherly relationship

between God and **Yeshua** (Jesus) that I can only list a few of them here: **Matthew 7:21, 11:25-27; Luke 23: 34, 46; John 10:14-18,27-30,38; John 14: 2,6,9,11,16,21,23,24,26; John16: 23,24; John 17:1-5.** A topic for another forum is the prophecies of Yeshua. Did they all come to pass? A few predictions you may want to research are the following: **Matthew 12:39-40**, the sign of Jonah - "the son of man (shall) be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"; **16:28** - "some of those standing here shall not taste death until they see the son of man coming in His kingdom;" **Luke 19:41-44 & 21:5-6** - the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD; **Luke 21:20-21** - the escape of Messianic Jews from Jerusalem before the Romans conquered the city.

Contrasting with the true prophecy of Moses, there will also be those who will say, "Thus sayeth the Lord...," speaking presumptuously words that God did not say. Their false prophecy can be diagnosed when it fails to come true. Even if it does come true, if it leads the people to follow after other gods (**Deuteronomy 13:2**), both the prophecy and the prophet should be rejected.

## Cities of Refuge



**In Chapter 19**, elders have been set as administrators of justice in all cities (see Ch.21), including cities of refuge. Moses told the people to set aside three more cities West of the Jordan (along with the three cities East of the Jordan already given). East of the Jordan, there were Golan, Ramoth, and Bezer. Western cities of refuge were Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron. These six cities would shelter and protect someone who unintentionally killed another person, allowing them to flee to a place of safety, so that the "blood of the innocent" (vs.13) would not be shed. A distinction was made for the person

guilty of premeditated murder. If such a person were to flee to one of the cities of refuge, the elders of the city would deliver him to the "avenger of blood" for justice, so that the evil would be purged from among God's people. Others would hear that justice had been meted out to those guilty, deterring the others from breaking God's laws. The Law of Retribution (Lex Talionis) prevented judges from exercising excessive retribution in their judgments. Only "punishment in kind" was allowed....eye for eye, tooth for tooth, etc. Yeshua expanded on this law from the standpoint of the innocent victim (Matthew 5:38-48), whom Yeshua said should not be so quick to claim his rights to the detriment of the perpetrator. The victim could chose to "go the extra mile," giving up his rights to show love to his neighbor, even though his neighbor might be an enemy, who is persecuting him. It seems that Yeshua's emphasis was the repairing of relationships by loving one's enemy, rather than simple "investigative justice." This Shabbat consider how you think the Matthew 5 portion jibes with Deuteronomy 17:12-13 & 19:19-20, purging the evil; others hearing about judgment and deterring them from similar actions. Restoring the relationship between enemies would solve their immediate problems, but would it have the lasting effects of deterrence deemed necessary in Deuteronomy 17 & 19?

Today, believers in Yeshua have a place of refuge to flee to in times of trouble. We flee to Messiah, who will never leave us, nor forsake us!

## Protocols for War

Chapter 20 provides God's protocol for war. While the over-arching principle of warfare is to remain in relationship with God and allow Him to fight His enemies through us, here God gives His people His battle operational orders. A distinction was made between Canaanite cities in their land versus cities farther away that were outside the land of their inheritance. All who inhabited Canaanite cities within their "promised land" were to be totally destroyed, so that their detestable, occultic practices of serving other gods would not infect God's people. Cities outside their "promised land" would be offered terms of surrender. They would become subjects of Israel. If they would not agree to these terms, all their men would be killed. The women (nashim - translated "young girls in Numbers 31:18) and children would be allowed to take for themselves the God of Israel. As they approached these cities, the priests told them to put their confidence in God. No matter how strong the army of their enemies, they were not to be afraid because God was fighting for them. To illustrate that they were not relying on the strength of their army, officers went among their fighting men, removing from battle those who were newly engaged, had just built a house, planted a vineyard, and anyone who was afraid. Today, we can also apply this principle of warfare. God wants to use those of His people who are the most committed to Him; those free from distractions, who have enough confidence in God to allow Him to fight His battles through them.

## Worshiping God by Showing Our Distinctiveness as His People through Social & Family Laws

Chapter 21 explains one of the administrative duties of the elders of cities. If someone was found slain outside a city, and no one knew the guilty person, there still needed to be a blood atonement and prayer of forgiveness for the shedding of innocent blood. Both elders and priests would be involved. Elders would determine which city was



the closest to the crime scene. Then the elders and Levites from that city would sacrifice a heifer, whose blood would atone for the death of the slain person. The principle was that God holds all human life in high regard. **Anyone who takes human life (the elderly or babies still in the womb) is guilty of the shedding of innocent blood.**

# SHABBAT SHALOM

