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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Mishpatim – Love The One Who Hates You

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Mishpatim (Mish-pah-teem), which is Hebrew for “Judgments,” and it goes from Exodus 21:1 to Exodus 24:18.

In this Torah Portion, Moses sets out a series of laws governing many different things: Slavery, property, restitution, the Shemithah and Yovel—that is, the Sabbatical year and Jubilee—and the three pilgrimage festivals.

This parashah concludes with Israel’s acceptance of the covenant with God followed by Moses ascending Mount Sinai to get the tablets of stone.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to present just a thought on not being led by our emotions.

Exodus 23:4-5

If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

In this commandment, we clearly see that the concept of loving one’s enemies is not only a New Testament teaching—it’s right here in the Torah! If *our enemy* loses something, we are commanded to go out of our way to return it to them. If someone who “hates” us needs help, we are told that we must not ignore them, but stop and help them.

Keeping this commandment might look different in today’s culture. For instance, most of us probably don’t encounter oxen or donkeys going astray. But the principle is the same. We are to go out of our way to help someone in need—and not just anyone, but our enemy. That’s not always easy if we’re honest with ourselves.

If we have enemies, it's natural to feel angry and perhaps even vindictive towards them. Why would we want to help someone who hates us? But that is exactly what the Torah is commanding us to do. In other words, in some circumstances, we are commanded to ignore our emotions.

These commandments follow directly after a passage that concerns upholding justice in court:

Exodus 23:1-3

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.

This principle of putting our emotions aside to do what's right applies here as well. For instance, we are to care about justice and truth above all. And while we might feel inclined to side with the majority because it's more comfortable to stick with the crowd, we are not to pervert justice. While we might feel bad for a poor person's circumstances, we are explicitly commanded not to slant our testimony in favor of them in their lawsuit. Our sole concern must be what is true and right, regardless of how we feel. After all, if justice isn't about truth, it simply isn't real justice.

Getting back to loving our enemies, as followers of Yeshua, we are commissioned to uphold righteousness and justice. We are to love people, even when it's difficult and it hurts. And that's how we know our love is real.

Besides, when it comes to our enemies, going out of our way to help them might go a long way in potentially reconciling with them.

But regardless of that, the bottom line is that we are to do the right thing simply because it's the right thing. God has not called us to be led by our emotions, but by His Spirit and His Word.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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