

August 16, 2023

Excellence

Shalom,

The Torah portion we are studying this week is from **Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9** and is called **Shof'tim** or “**Judges**,” and shows God’s assurance to be with us and fight our battles, if we will just choose to let Him. He also shows us that **we must not fear**, and that we **never allow ourselves to infect others by slipping into doubt and unbelief**.

Included in this portion are instructions for all believers, that is, the ones who trust God, are led by the Spirit of God, are aware of the position that they have in the Messiah, and who are thankful for every blessing that YHWH has given by His grace, to walk as children of God and joint heirs with Jesus.

You are not to sacrifice to ADONAI your God a cow or sheep that has a defect or anything wrong with it; that would be an abomination to ADONAI your God.

(Deuteronomy 17:1 CJB)

Many, when reading the **older covenant**, look primarily for the historical context, and consider that since animal sacrifices are no longer offered, we can just skim over those sections, not realizing that much more may be learned and acted upon than just the act of sacrificing animals. **It is important that we recognize the condition of the heart of any person who would offer God less than his very best, or even use ‘giving’ to be seen of men.**

Teaching concerning **tithes and offerings** is given to us in this portion of Scripture. **So much misinformation and the lack of Biblical understanding are widely seen, even among those who believe.** Too many believe, either that tithing is no longer a part of a life of faith, or at the other extreme, that tithing is an absolute requirement that must be legalistically enforced to escape judgment. The following verse simply shows that those who bring their tithes should choose the first and best of their increase to the Lord, not to bargain with Him, or curry favor with Him, but from the heart, as an act of love and gratitude. The Lord seems to leave to those who tithe, the determination of what is best. Those who give from a heart of love are positively bringing forth in faith that which pleases God and showing an understanding of what it means to be united with Him.

You are to bring the best firstfruits of your land into the house of ADONAI your God.

... (Exodus 23:19 CJB)

This is true of material offerings to ministries or to the poor, giving of our time, or sharing our gifts in the body of Messiah. In every instance we may choose to give the best firstfruits and, in those Spirit-led good works, shine in the presence of men and bring glory to God. **We are equipped by the Holy Spirit to do everything we do with excellence.**

When we give God only that which is convenient or we can spare, that which is left over, or that which is worn out and no longer useful to us, we are offering a defective offering to Him that manifests an attitude of heart that is defiled and incapable of producing fruit. In addition, a person who allows that heart-hardened condition becomes incapable of receiving all that God makes available in His blessing.

The revelation that God gives us in giving and receiving is the same concept as bringing tithes and offerings to Him and begins with our love for Him and a recognition that what we give originated from Him and is an extension of who we are. Giving is not just physical substance or services. Giving is offering ourselves to God, including all that we possess.

I urge you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy, acceptable to God—which is your spiritual service.
(Romans 12:1 TLV)

In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16 CJB)

We must always guard against approaching God and His Word with a casual attitude. We must **never use grace as an excuse to be mediocre. What amazing and wonderful things are stored up for those who choose to keep their focus and their hearts on the High Calling that is ours in Yeshua the Messiah and remember that our destiny is to be conformed to His image.** He is our perfect example! He excels in all things, and because we are in Him, we will live and walk in His excellence!

For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29 AMPC)

Shining, in His image,
Terry

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