



Mishpatim / Right-Rulings

Shemot 21:1 - 24:18

Beit Emet Congregation ~ Vancouver, WA

Ben Ehrhardt, Shamash

2/2/08

www.hearoisrael.org

Our *parsha* opens in **Shemot / Exodus 21:1**, with; ***“And, these are the right-rulings which you are to set before them:....”*** This week’s Torah portion is named **“Mishpatim”**, and literally means **“judgments”**, **“ordinances”** or **“right rulings”**. In fact, according to Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, a **“mishpat”** is the **“sentence of a judge”** or **“ruling”** that is **“just”**, **“lawful”** and **“right”**; and carries the connotation that a **“penalty”** or **“punishment”** is being meted out. These **“right rulings”** are the basis of the Mosaic Code (*Hebrew law*), as they apply equally to all Israelites and those who sojourn with Israel (*both men and women*), at all times and in all areas of life. The **“right-rulings”** in our *parsha* and throughout our readings for the next several months, explain the details of this **“code of conduct”** implied in the **“Ten Commandments”**, that we read last week, in **“Parsha Yithro”**.

As a **“Legalist”**, this is the area of Torah that I really love to study. This is the **“fine print”**. ;o} This Torah portion, and all the rest that deal with the **“right-rulings”** and **“ordinances”** that make up the **“613 Mitzvot”** (or whatever number you like to use), are what explains to us, how to keep the **“Ten Commandments”**; which tells how to keep what Yahshua called the **“Two Greatest Commands”** on which hang all the Torah and the Prophets: **“Love Yahweh your Elohim”** and **“Love your neighbor as yourself”**.

Now, as we read through this *parsha*, you’ll notice that the very first **“mishpatim”** deal with slavery. This is very appropriate, in that they were delivered just 45 days earlier from slavery in Mitzrayim. Now, in Egypt (**Mitzrayim = slavery** – from **Metzar = constriction**), no slave could ever go free. Slaves were to serve their masters for life. But, our opening verses read, in **Shemot 21:1-11**; ***“And these are the right-rulings which you are to set before them: When you buy a Hebrew servant, he serves six years, and in the seventh he goes out free, for naught. If he comes in by himself, he goes out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children are her master’s, and he goes out by himself. (the Oral Tradition teaches that he could redeem his wife and children for the redemption price – see Wayyiqra / Leviticus 27) And if the servant truly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children, let me not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him before Elohim, and shall bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl. And he shall serve him forever. And when a man sells his daughter to be a female servant, she does not go out as the male servants do. If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master who has engaged her***

to himself, then he shall let her be ransomed. He shall have no authority to sell her to a foreign people, because of him deceiving her. And if he has engaged her to his son, he is to do to her as is the right of daughters. If he takes another wife, her food, her covering, and her marriage rights are not to be diminished. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out for naught, without silver.” She would then return to her father’s house and be free to marry.

Continuing with **Shemot 21:12-36**; *“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall certainly be put to death. But if he did not lie in wait, but Elohim delivered him into his hand, then I shall appoint for you a place where he is to flee. But when a man acts presumptuously against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you are to take him even from My altar to die. And he who smites his father or his mother shall certainly be put to death. And he who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall certainly be put to death. And he who curses his father or his mother shall certainly be put to death. And when men strive together, and one smites the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but is confined to his bed, if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who smote him shall be innocent. He only pays for lost time and sees to it that he is completely healed. And when a man smites his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall certainly be punished. But if he remains alive a day or two, he is not punished; for he is his property. (From the Hebrew “yom” which be a “year” or “time” in general – meaning if he survives and does not die of his current injuries) And when men strive and they shall smite a pregnant woman, and her children come out, yet there is no injury, he shall certainly be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband lays upon him. And he shall give through the judges. But if there is injury, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, lash for lash. And when a man smites the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he is to let him go free for the sake of his eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he is to let him go free for the sake of his tooth. And when an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall certainly be stoned, and its flesh is not eaten, and the owner of the ox is innocent. However, if the ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has been warned, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox is stoned and its owner also is put to death. If a sin-covering is laid upon him, then he shall give the ransom of his life, whatever is laid on him. Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this right-ruling it is done to him. If the ox gores a male or female servant, he is to give to their master thirty sheqels of silver, and the ox is stoned. And when a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it, the owner of the pit is to repay, he is to give silver to their owner, and the dead beast is his. And when the ox of a man smites the ox of his neighbor and it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the silver from it, and also divide the dead ox. Or if it was known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, and its owner has not kept it confined, he shall certainly repay ox for ox, while the dead beast is his.”*

And now, **Shemot 22:1-31**; *“When a man steals an ox or a sheep, and shall slaughter it or sell it, he repays five cattle for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. If the thief is found breaking in, and he is smitten so that he dies, there is no guilt for his bloodshed. If the sun has risen on him, there is guilt for his bloodshed, he shall certainly repay. If he has not the means, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft is indeed found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he repays double. When a man lets a field or vineyard be grazed bare,*

and lets loose his livestock, and it feeds in another man's field, he repays from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. When fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes, so that stacked grain, or standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall certainly repay. When a man gives silver or goods to his neighbor to guard, and it is stolen out of the man's house, if the thief is found, he repays double. If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought before Elohim to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor's goods. For every matter of transgression, for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for garment, or for whatever is lost which another claims to be his, let the matter of them both come before Elohim. And whomever Elohim declares wrong repays double to his neighbor. When a man gives to his neighbor a donkey, or ox, or sheep, or any beast to watch over, and it dies, or is injured, or is driven away while no one is looking, let an oath of YHVH be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods. And the owner of it shall accept that, and he does not repay. But if it is indeed stolen from him, he repays to its owner. If it is torn to pieces, then let him bring it for evidence, he does not repay what was torn. And when a man borrows from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while the owner of it is not present, he shall certainly repay. But if its owner was with it, he does not repay. If it was hired, he is entitled to the hire. And when a man entices a maiden who is not engaged, and lies with her, he shall certainly pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he pays according to the bride price of maidens. Do not allow a practiser of witchcraft to live. Anyone lying with a beast shall certainly be put to death. He who slaughters to a mighty one, except to YHVH only, is put under the ban. Do not tread down a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Mitsrayim. Do not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you do afflict them at all – if they cry out to Me at all, I shall certainly hear their cry, and My wrath shall burn and I shall slay you with the sword, your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless. If you do lend silver to any of My people, the poor among you, you are not to be like one that lends on interest to him. Do not lay interest on him. If you take your neighbor's garment as a pledge at all, you are to return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What does he sleep in? And it shall be that when he cries to Me, I shall hear, for I show favor. Do not revile Elohim, nor curse a ruler of your people. Do not delay giving your harvest and your vintage. Give Me the first-born of your sons. Likewise you are to do with your oxen, with your sheep. It is to be with its mother seven days. On the eighth day you give it to Me. And you are set-apart men to Me, and you do not eat any meat which is torn to pieces in the field, you throw it to the dogs.

And now, some very interesting verses, in that they appear together, as a single thought. **Shemot 23:1-22;** *“Do not bring a false report. Do not put your hand with the wrong to be a malicious witness. Do not follow a crowd to do evil, nor bear witness in a strife so as to turn aside after many, to turn aside what is right. And do not favor a poor man in his strife. When you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall certainly return it to him. When you see the donkey of him who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall certainly help him. Do not turn aside the right-ruling of your poor in his strife. Keep yourself far from a false matter, and do not kill the innocent and the righteous, for I do not declare the wrong right. And do not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the seeing one and twists the words of the righteous. And do not oppress a sojourner, as you yourselves know the heart of a sojourner, because you were sojourners in the land of Mitsrayim. And for six years you are to sow your land, and shall gather its increase, but the seventh year you are to let it rest, and shall leave it, and the poor of your people shall eat.*

And what they leave, the beasts of the field eat. Do the same with your vineyard and your oliveyard. Six days you are to do your work, and on the seventh day you rest, in order that your ox and your donkey might rest, and the son of your female servant and the sojourner be refreshed. And in all that I have said to you take heed. And make no mention of the name of other mighty ones, let it not be heard from your mouth. Three times in the year you are to observe a festival to Me: Guard the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib – for in it you came out of Mitsrayim – and do not appear before Me empty-handed; and the Festival of the Harvest, the first-fruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Festival of the Ingathering at the outgoing of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times in the year all your males are to appear before the Master YHVH. Do not offer the blood of My slaughtering with leavened bread, and the fat of My offering shall not remain until morning. Bring the first of the first-fruits of your land into the House of YHVH your Elohim. Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk. See, I am sending a Messenger before you to guard you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on guard before Him and obey His voice. Do not rebel against Him, for He is not going to pardon your transgression, for My Name is in Him. But if you diligently obey His voice and shall do all that I speak, then I shall be an enemy to your enemies and a distresser to those who distress you.”

There are a lot of things to consider in these chapters. However, the theme is constant; “**love Yahweh**” and mostly, “**love your neighbor**”. Now, the rabbis point out something very interesting here about how important this *parsha* is. These “**mishpatim**” or “**right-rulings**” are sandwiched in between some major **mitzvot** (*commands*) regarding the worship of Yahweh. Last week's *parsha*, **Yithro**, ends in **Chapter 20** with the description of the altar that Yahweh requires for the “**Korban'ot**”, the “**offerings**” or “**drawing near**”. Next week's *parsha*, **Terumah**, starts out in **Chapter 25** with the pattern of the Tabernacle (*Ohel Mo'ed* or the *Tent of Meeting*), which is where Yahweh will be worshipped. And in the second half of **Chapter 23**, that we just read from, we see that Yahweh is telling us that He expects the males of His people to come before Him three times a year; and, they/we better not come empty handed.

It truly would seem that Yahweh places pretty equal importance of loving our neighbor, as He does with loving Him. Now, I know we've discussed this before; but, we really need to ask here again, “*Who is our neighbor?*” The Hebrew word used in all of these verses above, as well as everywhere else this is discussed, is “**ray'ahi**” (*reish-ayin-hey-vav*), which is the plural form of “**ray'ah**”. So, first we see that this is plural, to mean “**neighbors**”. Now, “**ray'ah**” means, according to Strong's, Brown-Driver-Briggs and Gesenius' Lexicon, an “**associate**”, “**brother**”, “**companion**”, “**fellow**”, “**friend**”, “**husband**”, “**lover**” or “**neighbor**”. These are other Israelites; or, at the very least, someone who's sojourning with Israel.

OK, so while we are to love our fellow Israelite, we can treat true gentiles or pagans any way we want, right? Well, probably not. As we look briefly at part of our Brit Chadashah reading for both the last *parsha* and this week's, we see, Yahshua giving us the “**heart**” or “**intent**” of Torah. He raises the bar according to **Mattityahu 5:21-26**; “**You heard that it was said to those of old (code for in Torah), ‘You shall not murder,’ and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. But I say to you that whoever is wroth with his brother without a cause shall be liable to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raka!’ shall be liable to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to fire of Gehenna. If, then, you bring your gift to the altar, and there**

remember that your brother holds whatever against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go, first make peace with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Be well-minded with your opponent, promptly, while you are on the way with him, lest your opponent deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly, I say to you, you shall by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.” OK, this is still talking about “**loving**” your “**neighbor**”, right? Yes. But, then we see in **verses 38-39**; “**You heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’, but I say to you, do not resist the wicked. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.**” In other words; do not be the one seeking restitution. In other words, forgive.

Yahshua goes on to say, in **verses 43-48**; “**You heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those cursing you, do good to those hating you, and pray for those insulting you and persecuting you, so that you become sons of your Father in the heavens. Because He makes His sun rise on the wicked and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those loving you, what reward have you? Are the transgressors not doing the same too? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Are the Goyim (nations) not doing so too? Therefore, be perfect, as your Father in the heavens is perfect.**” That’s what Yahshua did. He loved those who hated Him. He was the Son of His Father in the Heavens. And, He calls us to be His brothers.

This is the “**heart**” of Torah. I’m going to share something I think is truly beautiful from this parsha. When we were in Florida, just a month ago, for the conference; Monte Judah shared this truth, as part of one of his teachings. It really struck me. As Yahweh is describing how we are to come before Him with our offerings, He says in **Shemot 23:17-19**; “**Three times in the year all your males are to appear before the Master YHVH. Do not offer the blood of My slaughtering with leavened bread, and the fat of My offering shall not remain until morning. Bring the first of the first-fruits of your land into the House of YHVH your Elohim. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.**” Now, we’ve discussed before, how the phrase “**in its mother’s milk**” is a Hebrew idiom for the fact that this goat, or any animal, has not been weaned. It’s still “**in**” or “**nursing on**” its mother’s milk. So, Yahweh is commanding here that we do not bring an animal to Him, that’s still nursing, as an offering, a “**korban**” or a “**drawing near**”. We should not attempt to draw near to our Elohim with a nursing offering. Have you ever wondered why?

Even when it comes to the “**first-born**”, Yahweh said, in **Shemot 22:29-30**; “**Do not delay giving your harvest and your vintage. Give Me the first-born of your sons. Likewise you are to do with your oxen, with your sheep. It is to be with its mother seven days. On the eighth day you give it to Me.**” The mother is to feel and enjoy the completeness of giving birth and to feel the presence of her offspring for a week. Yahweh also says in **Debarim / Deuteronomy 22:6-7**; “**When you come upon a bird’s nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young – let the mother go without fail, and take the young for yourself, so that it might be well with you, and that you shall prolong your days.** So, what is that about? Really? Ever wonder? It’s all about “**kindness**” and “**respect**”. It’s about living longer because we have Yahweh’s “**loving-kindness**” in our hearts and “**respect**” for His creation. In our drawing near and in our serving Him, we need to serve with love and kindness and respect. Not just toward Yahweh; but, toward all that He made.

In this movement, we are all guilty of some pretty unloving behavior. We get our feelings hurt, when we try to tell our friends and family about what we've learned; and, they say we're in a cult. Yet, we're pretty good at correcting everything they say and do; because it's all pagan. This is why Yahshua said in **Mattityahu 7:1-5**; ***“Do not judge, lest you be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. And with the same measure you use, it shall be measured to you. And why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not notice the plank in your own eye? Or how is it that you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the splinter out of your eye,’ and see, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you shall see clearly to remove the splinter out of your brother's eye.”***

We read one chapter of Scripture, **Debarim / Deuteronomy 32**, and come to **verse 21**; ***“They made Me jealous by what is not El, They provoked Me with their worthless matters. But I make them jealous by those who are no people, I provoke them with a foolish nation.*** We read this and think it is speaking of Yehudah only, as making Yahweh jealous. And, we think that by our excellent keeping of Torah that we'll make our brother Yehudah jealous. The truth is, Yehudah is not jealous of us at all. Certainly not over our keeping of Torah. They don't see us as keeping Torah. Here's just one example. They see many of us wear our Tzitzit on our belt loops. We smugly say that wearing a tallit katan is a foolish rabbinic tradition. What we fail to understand is that they know and have seen Ephraim go into the stall in a public restroom and pull down his pants. They see the tzitzit on the floor. We don't see that the tallit katan at least keeps them off the restroom floor. They see us as acting ***“proud”*** because we wear them; but, we have no respect for the tzitzit or Yehudah's respect for what they see as a ***“set-apart”*** command. We're all too happy to point out what we see as ***“the rabbinic splinter in their eye”***. I could go on and on. But, I know I don't need to. It's all about respect and loving-kindness.

And the truth is; we are the jealous ones. The prophet wrote, speaking of the day of our ingathering, in **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 11:12-13**; ***And He shall raise a banner for the nations, and gather the outcasts of Yisra'el, and assemble the dispersed of Yehudah from the four corners of the earth. And the envy of Ephrayim shall turn aside, and the adversaries of Yehudah be cut off. Ephrayim shall not envy Yehudah, and Yehudah not trouble Ephrayim.*** Let's face it; we're jealous because they know how and we don't yet. They grew up with Torah and we grew up thinking all that Jew stuff was done away with, at Calvary. And then, we get upset because they're reluctant to show us how. And, when we have an opportunity to learn from them, we say we don't want to learn their man-made laws, their rabbinic traditions of men. The truth is, if you wear tzitzit, you're no doubt wearing a knot pattern that some rabbi approved of.

I'm not saying that we need to go ***“rabbinic”***. But, we need to keep an open mind and an open heart towards our brother; especially when it comes to learning how we can keep Torah. We tend to listen to those within this movement with their own ***“man-made”*** rules and ideas. I see people carrying around, with their Scriptures, books like *Fossilized Customs*, *Come Out of Her My People* and Avi's book on *Galatians*, instead of reference materials that help us study Torah. They want to be armed to take on the christians and the Jews. There's nothing wrong with these books, I own them and recommend them to others) unless we take them for Scripture. Let's learn how to teach each other from the Word of Elohim and not the word of man. The purpose of these books should be, and I believe is, to point us toward Torah and help us understand it. Let's not get into that kind of ***“replacement theology”***.

Now, as we get ready close for today, I want us to read the last chapter, **Shemot 24:1-18**; *And to Mosheh He said, "Come up to YHVH, you and Aharon, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Yisra'el, and you shall bow yourselves from a distance. But Mosheh shall draw near to YHVH by himself, and let them not draw near, nor let the people go up with him." And Mosheh came and related to the people all the Words of YHVH and all the right-rulings. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the Words which YHVH has spoken we shall do." And Mosheh wrote down all the Words of YHVH, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve standing columns for the twelve tribes of Yisra'el. And he sent young men of the children of Yisra'el, and they offered burnt offerings and slaughtered peace slaughterings of bulls to YHVH. And Mosheh took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that YHVH has spoken we shall do, and obey." And Mosheh took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "See, the blood of the covenant which YHVH has made with you concerning all these Words." And Mosheh went up, also Aharon, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Yisra'el, and they saw the Elohim of Yisra'el, and under His feet like a paved work of sapphire stone, and like the heavens for brightness. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the chiefs of the children of Yisra'el! And they saw Elohim, and they ate and drank. And YHVH said to Mosheh, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there, while I give you tablets of stone, and the Torah and the command which I have written, to teach them." And Mosheh arose with his assistant Yehoshua, and Mosheh went up to the mountain of Elohim. And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we come back to you. And see, Aharon and Hur are with you. Whoever has matters, let him go to them." And Mosheh went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain. And the esteem of YHVH dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. And on the seventh day He called to Mosheh out of the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the esteem of YHVH was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain, before the eyes of the children of Yisra'el. And Mosheh went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And it came to be that Mosheh was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.*

What's really interesting here is that In **Shemot/Exodus 24:5** we're told; *And he (Moshe) sent young men of the children of Yisra'el, and they offered burnt offerings and slaughtered peace slaughterings of bulls to YHVH.* OK, now these are the "**slaughter offerings**" from which Moshe gets the blood for the altar and to "**spatter**" on the people. Up until now, Moshe and Aharon have made the offerings for the people. And, they and the priests that will follow will in fact do this throughout the rest of Scripture. So, what's up with Moshe sending "**young men**" to do this here? Well, the Hebrew word here is "**na'ari**" (*nun-ayin-reish-yud*), which means "**lads**", "**youths**", "**young men**" or "**to roar**" or "**growl**" and is also one of the Hebrew words for "**servants**". Now, "**na'ari**" is the plural of "**na'ar**". So, while the translators chose "**young men**", the connotation is that they were acting as "**young male servants**". These were perhaps the "**first-born**", as the Levitical priesthood had not yet been established. The rabbis teach that these "**young men**" represented those "**young in the faith**" or the "**converts**" from out of the "**mixed multitude**" of slaves, that joined B'nei Yisra'el, as they came out of Egypt; those who said they would "**Shema**" or "**hear and obey**" all the words that Yahweh would speak.

The simple truth is, all the people standing there were "**converts**". No matter what their origin of birth, they had all been redeemed and delivered out of slavery by their Creator / King. They heard from His own lips, the rules of the Kingdom; and, they agreed to them. They all said that they would

“hear and obey” all the rules of the Kingdom. And thus, the nation of Yisra’el was born. As the prophet Yeshayahu said, a nation was indeed born in one day. On that day, these people were grafted into the *Olive Tree of Yisra’el*. As they were still standing before their King on His Mountain, Moshe read to them the **“Book of the Covenant”** and again they said that they would **“do and obey”** all the words of the Covenant. Then, Moshe spattered the blood of the covenant offering upon the people and said in **Shemot 24:8**; **“See, the blood of the covenant which YHVH has made with you concerning all these Words.”**

And then, in **verses 9-11**; **And Mosheh went up, also Aharon, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Yisra’el, and they saw the Elohim of Yisra’el, and under His feet like a paved work of sapphire stone, and like the heavens for brightness. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the chiefs of the children of Yisra’el! And they saw Elohim, and they ate and drank.** Here, Yahweh Elohim of Yisra’el met with the government of this new Kingdom-Nation, face-to-face: Moshe - the prophet, Aharon and his two oldest sons – the priesthood, and the Seventy Elders – the Sanhedrin – the court. They saw Him in His esteem, bowed before Him and Yahweh did not take their lives. Instead, they dined before Him and thus ratified the Kingdom Covenant for all time, there at Horeb.

Yahweh would re-affirm and strengthen this Covenant with the next generation at Mo’ab, just before B’nei Yisra’el would go in to take possession of the Land. We read in **Debarim / Deuteronomy 29:9-15**; **“Therefore you shall guard the words of this covenant, and do them, so that you prosper in all that you do. All of you are standing today before YHVH your Elohim: your leaders, your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Yisra’el, your little ones, your wives, and your sojourner who is in the midst of your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water, so that you should enter into covenant with YHVH your Elohim, and into His oath, which YHVH your Elohim makes with you today, in order to establish you today as a people for Himself, and He Himself be your Elohim, as He has spoken to you, and as He has sworn to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzaq, and to Ya’aqob. And not with you alone I am making this covenant and this oath, but with him who stands here with us today before YHVH our Elohim, as well as with him who is not here with us today.”** This Covenant is so important, that Yahweh would come in the flesh and re-affirm and strengthen it by His own blood.

As we work to learn and follow the Torah of Elohim, let us not be like the Scribes and Pharisees that Yahshua spoke to in **Mattityahu 23:23-24**; **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you tithe the mint and the anise and the cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the Torah: the right-ruling and the compassion and the belief. These need to have been done, without neglecting the others. Blind guides – straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!”** We could add here the verses about pointing out the splinter in our brother’s eye. Don’t think for a minute that this is addressed only to Yehudah, or the **“rabbis”**. If the kippah fits..... Oh, but I don’t wear that rabbinic tradition. My point exactly. We’re going to look much more deeply into **Mattityahu 23** and **“call no man rabbi”** next week. For now, let’s remember that **“love”** is the operative word in both of the **“two greatest commands”** in Torah: **“Love Yahweh”** and **“Love your neighbor”**.

Baruch HaShem Yahweh!