

EXODUS

Lesson 21 - Chapter 21

Chapter 21 of Exodus begins with these simple and straightforward words from YHWH: “ Now these are the rulings you are to present to them.....”

Well, maybe not so simple after all; Exodus 21 is one of those chapters that has to be looked at very carefully because some subtle ideas and notions are presented that can greatly affect everything that comes after it. Therefore, before we even read it, we’re going to spend this entire lesson discussing what to look for.

The subtleties begin with the very first word of chapter 21: in the original Hebrew the word is **ve-‘elleh**, which MOST literally means “**and** these are”; the key word being “and”. Why is it important to replace that one little word “now” with “and” or to add the word “and” back in to some versions where it’s missing? Because as Rabbi Ishmael says in the Mekhilta, the term **ve-‘elleh** is always a connecting term in Hebrew. That is, it indicates that what is **about to be** said is but a continuation of what has just been said. The context for what is about to be spoken has been set in what came just before the word “**ve-‘elleh**”.

We’ve talked about this before and I’m not going to repeat it except to remind you that the Scriptures.....OT and New.....were NOT written with chapter and verse interruptions and markings. It was far into the future after the Bible was written, in the 13th century AD, when the Archbishop of Canterbury (Stephen Langton) saw the advantage of breaking the Bible up into bite-sized chunks for easier study. And for all practical purposes it was his system of chapters and verses that is still in use today. About 200 years later a Rabbi did something similar (but ONLY for only the Old Testament) because he felt that Bishop Langton’s chapter and verse marks ruined the flow of the Hebrew, and Jews well knew that. Therefore, depending on the version of Bible you have, you might have some OT chapters longer or shorter than other versions, and some verses not numbered the same as in other versions.

The point is that chapter and verse marks are artificial and arbitrary. The case before us is a perfect example of this: we have just concluded studying the 10 Commandments of Exodus 20, and now we get this statement to start chapter 21 that “**these are the rulings you are to present to them...**” It has been the common gentile Christian premise that because of those beginning words of chapter 21 that what exists in Exodus 20 (the 10 Commandments) is therefore completely disconnected from what begins in chapter 21.....the laws and rulings that form the Jewish Law; that the context of Exodus 20 is at an end, and a new context begins with the initial words of chapter 21. It is this erroneous view that has allowed the Church, for centuries, to somehow disassociate the 10 Commandments from all other rulings and laws of the Torah. That is, we have a Church that says the Torah and the Law is abolished but at the same moment validates the continuation of the 10 Commandments. Yet what we see is that in

reality the 10 Commandments are plainly and literally but the first 10 laws, even though they are at the same time the grand principles under which all other law will be fenced in. It is much like the Preamble to our Constitution; the Preamble is NOT a separate document with a separate thought process apart from the Constitution. Rather, the Preamble is but the opening words of the Constitution, and it sets up the basic context and principles by which everything that follows it MUST be fenced in.

Let's move on to the next significant point contained in the opening verse of Exodus 21, and it concerns the word "rulings" that is most typically found in there. If you look from Bible version to Bible version, in place of the word "rulings" you may find the word laws, or ordinances, or judgments, or rules or statutes. And, these all have roughly the same sense in our modern way of thinking: that what is to follow is a written legal code of behavior; a civil code of 613 laws for the community of Israel that is most often referred to as "The Law".

The original Hebrew word that is usually translated law, rule, or judgments, is **Mishpat**...that is, putting the original Hebrew word **Mishpat** in vs. 1 makes it read "Now these are the **mishpat** you are to present to them (meaning Israel)..." So, God characterizes all that will follow vs. 1 as "**mishpat**". Even though this civil code is almost universally referred to as "The Law", the term "law" as we think of law, is NOT what **mishpat** means.

It is the important meaning of this word **Mishpat**, and another Hebrew word that often accompanies it, "**tzedeq**", that we are going to spend some time examining today because **Mishpat** and **tzedeq** contain within them some powerful, divine concepts that the Christians have not fully understood. This misunderstanding, coupled with the ever-present anti-Jewish bias that has been literally built-in to the Church practically since its inception, has brought about a persistent negative view of the OT, which wrongly colors our perceptions about how the Torah relates to the Covenant of Christ.

Before we can better understand the uniquely Hebrew concepts of **mishpat** and **tzedeq**, we're first going to have to understand a couple of basic premises of the ancient Hebrew mind because they are nearly the opposite of the way that gentile Christians think. In fact, if you'll pay close attention to what I'm about to tell you, you will have a far greater understanding of the NT in general and the book of Romans in particular.

I'll begin by using an (admittedly) overly simplistic illustration: An often-quoted Christian cliché' about the mindset of too many modern day Believers is that 'we are so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good'. That is, some Believers are so concerned about what happens once we enter eternity and begin living with God in heaven that our time here on earth becomes secondary.... our physical lives being almost irrelevant, good deeds and duties to our fellow man are set aside, we are just in a waiting period as compared to what lies ahead.

The OT Hebrews, on the other hand, paid little attention to heaven or eternity, at least as it pertained to **a place** that THEY might someday exist; instead, all of their attention, particularly as concerned their relationship with Yehoveh, was focused on their **earthly** lives.....all that happened before they died.

There is very good reason for the ancient Hebrews to have felt that way. It might surprise you to know that in the OT we'll find almost nothing about what happens after someone dies. There is precious little discussion in the OT that addresses even the **possibility** of an afterlife. One of the questions I am constantly asked, and I'm sure other Bible teachers face the same inquiry, is 'what happened to the OT people, Hebrew and otherwise, who died', since Christ was yet to come?

Well, while the subject of death and the afterlife is of supreme interest to we Christians, it wasn't nearly so dominant to the OT Hebrews; and that fact has much to do with just how the Hebrews viewed all that God told them on Mt. Sinai, and what we see written down in the Torah. In general the ancient Hebrew view was that death is a natural end to existence just as birth is a natural beginning. Now, they certainly did NOT look forward to death anymore that we do, nor did they take it simply matter-of-factly or casually. But, they also didn't give much thought as to what happened, if anything, **after** death. Their main concern, as regarded death, was that they didn't want to die until they'd lived-out the fullest possible term of a natural life span. Their fear had little to do with what happened AFTER death; rather it was to avoid being "cut off"; cut-off being the Biblical term for a **premature** death that might come from sickness, or being killed in battle, or an accident, or being murdered, or even as a judgment from God. And, "cut off" was also what was to be the destiny of the wicked....that is, their wickedness was to be rewarded by a shortened life. Conversely, when we hear the Biblical phrase, "they breathed their last and were gathered to their fathers", it simply means that that person had lived to a ripe old age, which was all they really hoped for. But, it also indicated that they held onto vestiges of Ancestor Worship and that some essence of their being MIGHT, in some undefined way, commune with their ancestors after they died.

So, **premature** death was generally seen as the consequences of, the punishment for, unrighteous living.....that is, disobedience to the Law, up to and including downright wickedness. No further consequence for sin (beyond physical death) was contemplated, because in general, death was seen as the end of existence.

Sheol, to the ancient OT Hebrew mind, was the place of the dead. It has often been described by Pastors and Bible Teachers as but the OT version of the NT term, Hades, which is usually considered to be Hell. Now, from a theological standpoint, it is certainly arguable that technically, they may be correct. However, from a standpoint of what the ancient Hebrews actually thought about it, that's incorrect. Sheol, to the OT Hebrews, was basically the grave. Death and the grave was a mystery for them, and while there is the slightest hint that in some abstract way there might be "something" after death, they had no clue what it was. However the Hebrews, after Babylon, lets say 550 BC and forward, did eventually develop some ideas that *perhaps* a different kind of existence began after death, but it was certainly not **a better** life than the one they left....the one they had before they died. Whatever fuzzy view they did have about what happened once their lifeless bodies entered Sheol, their graves, these thoughts are scattered throughout the OT, in tiny snippets, and are difficult to piece together. But, most certainly, there was NO concept of living an eternity in the presence of God Almighty OR of 'going to heaven when we die'; in fact, the general thought we find in the OT is that Sheol, the grave, permanently **separates** the dead from Yehoveh. Those "separation" thoughts are what has led some Christian teachers to claim that Sheol was the OT version of Hell, a place of

punishment for the unrighteous.....and I feel certain they are wrong, because the OT states that ALL descend to Sheol.....which, once again, is basically a concept whereby all die and all go to the grave. Sheol, therefore, was viewed as the great common denominator for all mankind.... righteous OR wicked, all men died and their existence ceased. So, what mattered, was life.

Now, this is a very stark contrast to what the entire rest of the ancient world believed. Other than for the Hebrews, virtually every culture ever archeologically uncovered had some kind of extensive cult of the dead. We're all fairly aware that the Great Pyramids were built as much as a protective place for the Pharaohs to live their afterlife in peace and comfort as anything else. A fully developed Underworld myth, the spirit world of the dead, even belief in reincarnation was standard operating procedure for the entire ancient world.....except for the OT Hebrews.

What mattered to the OT Hebrew, therefore, was what happened during his lifetime. They believed that life, physical life, was the beginning and apparently the ending of your existence AND....now this is the key..... your ONLY time to serve God. However, by the time of Christ, much Hebrew doctrine and tradition had developed on death and afterlife, even the concept of resurrection; the term, in Hebrew, that was used to encompass BOTH life after death AND at times a new world after Messiah comes, was "**olam haba**" (in English, "the world to come"). While we won't find much on the subject in the OT Scriptures, we **will** find it in books that were REMOVED from the Bible by we Protestants only a couple of hundred years ago.....the Apocrypha. That's right, there were several other books included in the Bible but they were removed by the Protestant Church at around the same time as our Revolutionary War and the Declaration of Independence.

The books of the Apocrypha span the time from the end of the OT, about 400 BC, to the beginning of the New. And, as might be expected, we find in those books much disagreement over which of the many influential Rabbis had the proper view of death and afterlife. Why so much disagreement?..... because the source of these views had very little to do with Scripture, and far more to do with men's thoughts and philosophies. But even then.....we must realize that the **afterlife** STILL held only a minor place in the minds and purposes of the Israelites, except in times of extreme persecution, such as under Antiochus Epiphanies in the 2nd century BC, and under the Romans before, during, and after Christ's time. The here and now was everything for the OT Hebrews.....and even after they developed an interest and some theology on death and beyond, it still didn't dominate their thoughts or dictate their lives, in general. And, what is so important to understand is that the notions of death and afterlife that developed shortly before Christ was born were generally not Biblical.....they were based on newly developed manmade traditions, and heavily influenced by Greek thought which was now pervasive in much of Judaism.

Now, based on what I just told you, if you were a Hebrew in OT Biblical times, particularly from the time of Moses onward, how would YOU have lived your earthly life? A life that, as far as anybody knew, ended at the grave with no real thought of anything further. If you loved God, you'd probably see to it that the 70 or 80 years you were alive revolved around your relationship with Yehoveh; and if you were **very** serious about the lordship of Yehoveh you'd do all you could to be righteous before God because once you died you believed that your

relationship with Yehoveh permanently ended. You had no more opportunity to please God, or even communicate with Him. Being righteous, and pleasing Yehoveh, meant being **obedient** to Him...in fact, that's **exactly** what we were told in the 10 Commandments. So the ancient Hebrew worked diligently to please Yehoveh in their every day activities, in every phase of their lives. This was their goal and their life's purpose.

Now, contrast that ancient Hebrew mindset with our modern Christian view. I think its fair to say that perhaps our primary goal today, as Believers, is obtaining Eternal Security; that is, that we are assured, unequivocally, of having an afterlife, and that it will be far better than our earthly lives, and that it is forever, and it will be in the very presence of God. So, Christians tend to focus on the hope of an eternal **future** with God, as a reward for an important **decision** that we make while alive..... to accept Yeshua as Lord and Savior. On the other hand, ancient Hebrews looked primarily to the present.... because, generally speaking, they felt that the present life was all there was. That whatever reward they might receive from Yehoveh occurred during their lifetimes, based on their daily obedience and decisions, and that the most tangible reward was to live a longer life.

Can you see how these two very different views held by Christians, versus the OT Biblical Hebrews, on life, death, and afterlife, make such great impact on how we each accept our duties to God; or even how important, or unimportant, we view our absolute obedience to God's commands in our daily walk? It also makes an enormous difference on the meaning we attach to God's principles, and to His Word.

These two different views also extend to how Hebrews and Christians each think of salvation. Even today, when you say "Salvation" to an observant Jew, it means something totally different than what we think Salvation entails...again, NOT how you get it, but what it IS. While it is not unanimous, in general the Hebrews thought, and continue to think, of salvation as an accomplished fact by means of their forefathers. That is, God in all of His Grace and Mercy, established the set-apart group, the saved people, through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and therefore if, by God's Grace, you were fortunate enough to be a member of that set-apart group, the Hebrews, the Israelites (expressed sometimes in the Bible as *the seed of Abraham*), you **were** saved. Saved from what? From not being a pagan.

600 years after the covenant of Abraham first established the set-apart people came the advent of a new covenant from Yehoveh, the Covenant of Moses. Upon the covenant of Moses, one's intent to be obedient to that New Covenant, what is commonly called the Law, was what **kept** you in the set-apart group.....**kept** you saved, kept you from being a pagan. So, for the ancient Hebrew being saved happened by first being a member of the group whom God set aside as His own special people, the Israelites, the Hebrews, and then by **remaining** in the group by means of your dedication to obeying the Law. Being born a Hebrew, and being a part of the Mosaic Covenant through obedience to the law was your REWARD, so to speak. That is, simply being part of God's people, being part of Israel, was what salvation consisted of. Nothing more. The thought of any additional future reward after your life was over was simply not part of salvation by the thinking of those who wrote the OT Scriptures.

Again, contrast this with the Christian viewpoint that Salvation is mostly about what happens

AFTER we die. For us, Salvation has to do with forgiveness of sins in this present life, obtaining a righteousness based on what someone ELSE did (Jesus Christ), and as a result we receive an afterlife, for all eternity, with Yehoveh. Our reward takes place PRIMARILY in the future, in a spirit world, after we die.

With all of that as a background, perhaps we can NOW better understand the mind of the Israelites, those ancient Hebrews, and all their descendants, in their fervent desire to follow the 613 Laws of Torah in their short life span on earth. The type of righteousness we Christians seek is mainly to get us into Heaven; the type of righteousness Hebrews hoped for was, in some ways, a day-to-day earthly issue, with the primary reward simply knowing that you were obedient, and therefore pleasing to Yehoveh, and thus remaining part of His set-apart people.

Part of my purpose and goal in this Torah class is to reveal the Word of Yehoveh to you within the mindset and culture of the people God gave it to in the first place. Outside of that mindset we get some distorted ideas of what was going on in the Bible AND what God intended for us to learn. So this overall view of life, death, and generally the absence of any afterlife (and if there was an afterlife it was apart from Yehoveh), greatly affected the OT (notice I said OLD TESTAMENT) Hebrew concept of exactly what God meant by the foundational words **Mishpat** and **Tzedek**, which in turn affected just how they viewed what the Law WAS, what it was FOR, and how they were to relate to it. And it was VERY different than how Christians have been taught to see it. The Hebrews, in general, did NOT have a works-righteousness approach to their faith; rather, it involved an obedience-righteousness approach, stemming from a recognition that it was Yehoveh's grace that made the Hebrews His chosen people and that it was any individual Hebrew's great fortune to be a Hebrew. That is a FAR cry from the rather mean spirited accusation of legalism that the Church constantly hurls at Biblical Hebrews.

Oh yes, Tradition...manmade doctrine... had really muddied the waters by the time of Christ, and as a result most Hebrews rejected, and continue to this day to reject, both their need of true Salvation and the One who was sent to save them. But, it wasn't because they thought that their own form of righteousness *earned* them eternal life with God..... most didn't think such a possibility even existed, and what few did believe that simply remaining true to the Covenants of Abraham and Moses already HAD assured them of such a future. And, BTW: manmade doctrines have also muddied our Christian waters. So, let's not feel too high and mighty, and kind of scoff at those ancient Hebrews as primitive and ignorant.

Now, let's see if we can begin to determine what those two CRITICAL and central words **mishpat** and **tzedek** mean. Remember, **mishpat** is how God characterizes the body of so-called laws He was about to give to Moses and Israel, beginning in Exodus 21. Most of the time **Mishpat** is translated in our Bibles as "judgments or rules", and **tzedek** as "righteous" or "righteousness". So in our OT's, most of the time when we see the English word "judgment or rule or justice", the Hebrew being translated is one form or another of the word **Mishpat**. When we see "righteous" or "righteousness" in the OT..... the Hebrew being translated is almost always a form of the word "**tzedek**".

Now, we could probably spend the entire session just wrestling among ourselves as to what the word "righteousness" in ENGLISH means to us.....that is, just how might we each define it?

Well, so as to avoid that, let me just ask you to accept as fact that in the modern Church environment righteousness, **tzedek**, has come to indicate “piety, holiness, perhaps even Godliness”. These are all very spiritual terms....that is, very **spirit** oriented, as opposed to soulish or a condition of our flesh. And this is because we Christians see our spirit lives as somewhat separate from, and more important and more dominant than, our physical lives.

Think back, now, to what we have just learned about the ancient Hebrew mindset. Since they were more concerned with their physical life, the here and now, believing there was nothing discernable beyond the grave, they were therefore more concerned with living out their faith in God in everyday activities and dealings with their fellow man. So rather than see “righteousness” as the kind of lofty spiritual goal as we Christians do, they saw it in an everyday practical down to earth matter of personal behavior and decision making. And, therefore, to the ancient Hebrews a man’s righteousness, his **tzedek**, revolved around him being fair and equitable in all his dealings with others...his family, his friends, his business associates, his customers, even his enemies. So righteousness to the typical OT Hebrew meant being fair and just to his fellow man. And where did they learn what the *standard* for being fair and just WAS? The Law. The Covenant of Moses. Their intent was to be fair and just with their fellow man according to what Yehoveh wrote down (through Moses) in the Torah.

So while Christians view a man’s righteousness as more of an intangible, internal spiritual condition, the OT Hebrew saw his righteousness as all wrapped up in his fair and just behavior and attitude. The Christian wants God to see our holy, internal condition, created as a result of our union in Christ, as righteous; the Hebrew wanted God to see his fair and just external activities as righteous.

So which of these seemingly opposite viewpoints is the proper view of Biblical, **God defined**, righteousness, **tzedek**? Were the Hebrews right, that righteousness is embodied within our fair dealings with our fellow man? Or were they wrong, and we Christians have it correct, as righteousness being ONLY a condition of our spirits, produced by Christ? Well, actually, what I think we’re going to discover is that both are right, and both are wrong. Because God has a definition of righteousness that is not MAN based, but God based. So generally speaking neither the Hebrew nor the Christian faith can claim that they are fully representative of God’s viewpoint of righteousness, yet each does exhibit SOME of its elements.

Let’s pause our discussion of **tzedek** momentarily and turn our attention back to the Hebrew term “Mishpat”; because what is almost universally termed the Law, by both Hebrews and gentiles, Yehoveh calls His “Mishpat”. So what exactly is that supposed to mean to us?

Scholars have wrestled with that for eons. Martin Luther was also fascinated with the word **Mishpat**, and, quite interestingly, he often translated it to mean, “to keep God’s Word”. At other times he translated **mishpat** as “to do justly”. Still that’s not fully satisfying, nor does it encompass the word’s meaning; but we’re getting closer. So, as an example or illustration, let’s take a look at an incident with Abraham that, I think, validates and perhaps expands Luther’s definition of **mishpat**, which is getting us closer to the truth.

Turn to Genesis 18:19

“For I (Yehoveh) have made myself known to him (Abraham), so that he will give orders to his children and to his household after him to keep the way of Yehoveh, to do what is right and just, so that Yehoveh may bring about for Abraham what He has promised him”.

Let's focus on the phrase, *to do what is right and just*; in Hebrew, this reads, “to do ***tzedek*** and ***mishpat***”. Aha; here we have a terrific case of Scripture defining Scripture because we are told in the half-dozen words just before the phrase “to do ***tzedek and mishpat***”, exactly what that means; it means, “to keep the way of Yehoveh”. So, by doing ***tzedek*** and ***mishpat***, doing what is right and just, one is keeping the way of Yehoveh; at least it is in this instance with Abraham. And, that fits pretty well with how Luther saw it.

Let's summarize to see what we know so far: ***tzedek*** and ***mishpat*** at least **partially** involve ***keeping the way of Yehoveh***. The way of Yehoveh is taught to man in detail in the Covenant of Moses. And the way of Yehoveh is characterized as being “just” and “right”, as in righteous. Yet the way of Yehoveh is in no way characterized as a harsh, rigid, merciless self-justifying law code, nor is it negative or punitive.

Now let's look it this in another context; if we were to start thumbing through the prophets Isaiah and Micah we would see the word “judgment” used a lot (around 50 times, depending on your Bible version). I don't think I'm climbing too far out onto a limb to say that the word “judgment” carries a harsh sense to it in our way of thinking. That is, wrath or punishment (even divine destruction) might be good synonyms for the Biblical term “judgment”. While that is certainly not a unanimous Church view it is the generally accepted train of thought that due to the frequent appearance of the word “judgment” in the Hebrew Scriptures, the OT must be all about God's wrath while the NT is all about His grace and mercy.

600 years ago when the Bible was first translated to English (even before the KJV) the word judgment was a rather benign and neutral term...that is, it was neither particularly negative nor positive, nor did it indicate something harsh or severe. It was meant, in those days, more in the sense that if someone asked you your opinion on something and you responded, “Well, in my judgment, I think thus and so”. By the phrase “...in my judgment” you certainly didn't mean, “in my wrath...”. You just meant that you had come to some kind of conclusion or decision on the matter.

So most of the harshness that we **think** we see in the OT, which primarily comes from the frequent use of the word “judgment”, is actually a misunderstanding of the sense of the word “judgment” (***mishpat***) itself. The truth is that most of the time when the word judgment occurs in the Bible it actually is meant to have a very joyous, redemptive tone to it..... almost the complete opposite of how we typically have been taught to see those passages.

We've already seen that ancient Hebrews saw man's righteousness, *tzedek*, as meaning fair dealing in God's eyes, while we Christians take it to mean that we have a spirit of holiness in us. But.....and please catch this..... both the Hebrew and the Christian view of those ideas of righteousness are all about OUR righteousness, MAN's righteousness. What we need to do now is try and determine what God's righteousness is. And what we find is that we need to take GOD's righteousness as, above all, being all about salvation; that is, in the Bible when

righteousness/tzedek is “of God”, it is referring to His saving will, His saving purposes, and all that happens at His direction to create a set-apart people for Himself....a saved people, a sanctified people, a redeemed people.

But since that definition of righteousness concerns ONLY GOD's righteousness (not Man's) then what is righteousness when it is referring to MEN, from God's viewpoint? Well, men are the objects of God's saving will, right? God's saving will is intended FOR US, it is directed AT us.....mankind. So a righteous man is one in whom God's saving will is being carried out.....God's saving will is happening in that man just as God intended.....we would say today, since Christ, that a righteous man is, therefore, a Believer; one who has accepted God's saving will for his own life .

Well, if in God's eyes righteousness, tzedek, is all about salvation, then what is mishpat about? And, why are those two words, mishpat and tzedek, usually so connected in Scripture? Mishpat is the detailed standard of what is right and good according to God under His system of justice. So if a man is doing God's mishpat, it means that man is behaving according to the standard of right set as ordained by the Lord as part of His saving will. Remember how Luther translated mishpat: “to keep God's Word”? He was really on to something. The only difference I would have with that is that I would add the word “saving” to Luther's definition....that is, mishpat generally means ‘to keep God's SAVING Word’.

Let's see if I can illustrate that just a little. Take a look at a passage in Isaiah which is clearly recognized as being about salvation, and we'll apply what we've learned.

Go to Isa.1:27

“Zion will be redeemed with judgment; and those who repent by righteousness”.

Many versions will say ‘redeemed by justice’. But whether the word used is justice or judgment this passage is all about salvation; it is NOT about some punishment or wrath of God. Yehoveh is not going to redeem the people of Zion (BTW, Zion is just another word for Israel) by visiting wrath, divine judgment, upon them. Rather, He is going to exercise HIS Mishpat, His saving will, which is HIS form of justice, upon them. And the Lord's saving Will, His idea of Justice, His mishpat is that mankind will not pay the due penalty for our sins against Him. Rather Yehoveh HIMSELF, in the person of Jesus Christ, is going to pay the price for Mankind's sin. That is God's mishpat.....that is God's form of justice.....that is God's saving will.

Now catch this: the picture that is forming shows us that GOD's mishpat, His righteous justice, is ALL about His saving will... from Genesis to Revelation. And long ago the Church developed a term, which we're ALL familiar with, to be used when referring to God's saving will that is revealed in His saving Word.....and that term is “the Gospel”. Let me say that again: the term “Gospel” is what the Church has chosen as a title for all this is God's salvation. But “Gospel” as we commonly use it today, is really just a Christian sound bite because if I asked 10 of you what the term The Gospel means, I'd get 10 different answers even though they'd all revolve around Christ and Salvation. The scholarly definition of the term “the Gospel” is that it is “the revealed Word of God's plan of salvation for all mankind”. I think we can all agree with that.

What this all comes down to is that mishpat, when it is used in the context of the Lord's mishpat (like in the Torah) is nothing more nor less than the OT term for the Gospel.

Let's begin to pull this altogether by looking at [Isa.42:1-4](#). This is an obvious prophetic reference to Yeshua. Now follow along with me in YOUR Bibles as I read it. (READ THE VERSES).

OK, let's read it again, and each time we encounter the words justice or judgment, which in the original Hebrew is mishpat, I'm going to substitute the word Gospel....a word familiar to us, and a word which paints a picture that we all pretty well understand. Watch what happens.

"Here is my servant, whom I support, my chosen one, in whom I take pleasure. I have put my Spirit on him; he will bring the Gospel to the gentiles. He will not cry or shout; no one will hear his voice in the streets. He will not snap off a broken reed or snuff out a smoldering wick; he will bring forth the Gospel of truth. He will not weaken or be crushed until he has established the Gospel on the earth, and the coastlands wait for his Torah".

Pretty astounding isn't it?

The Covenant of Moses, what Hebrews and Christians alike have so long mischaracterized as "the Law" is simply the ongoing process of the Gospel. We tend to think (because that's what Pastors and Priests have told us to think) of the Gospel as beginning with the advent of Christ. In fact it was first announced not with the birth of Christ, or really even with the Covenant of Moses, but actually with the covenant of Abraham. And, we're reminded of that fact in Galatians 3:6-8; listen to the Apostle Paul:

"It was the same with Abraham: 'He trusted in God and was faithful to Him and that was credited to his account as righteousness'. Be assured, then, that it is those who live by trusting and being faithful who are really children of Abraham. Also the Tanakh (OT), foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News (the Gospel) to Abraham in advance by saying, 'in connection with you, all the Goyim (gentiles) will be blessed'".

So, we need to dispel this false tragically non-Biblical doctrine from our minds that the Gospel began when Yeshua was born.... in fact, it was first revealed to man, specifically to Abraham, 2000 years before Yeshua was born. From here on out I hope and pray that when you think about the Law, the Torah that you will think of it instead as the original Gospel. The OT is the Gospel, Act One. The NT is the Gospel, Act Two. Revelation, the 2nd coming of Yeshua and the end of all history, is the finale of the Gospel, Gospel Act Three. Oh, what a different light that puts on what we'll read in the months ahead in the remainder of the Torah, and how guilty we are of presuming to characterize God's Torah as a legalistic, harsh, unfair, unattainable code of works-righteousness and self justification, that has been abolished and replaced with grace.

But our study today, also points out the awesome and mysterious REALITY of DUALITY that we will find all throughout Scripture: that is for every instruction from God, OT or New, there is an earthly physical manifestation of it on the one hand, and there is a parallel spiritual heavenly manifestation of it on the other.

The ancient Hebrews erred by seeing the revelation of the Gospel given in the Covenant of Abraham and then Moses as earthbound...physical, and therefore all wrapped up in ritual and behavior and being purely temporal. We modern Christians err by seeing the Gospel as almost exclusively heavenly..... spiritual with little or no requirement for our obedience to Yehoveh, our obedience to His system of justice, His mishpat. The Gospel is not one or the other, it's both; but it's also not half and half. Christ was our perfect example of what the essence of the Gospel is: as Yeshua is 100% man and 100% God the Gospel is 100% physical and 100% spiritual. We are to approach our time of life on earth with an extreme sense of fairness and equitable justice toward our fellow man, and a determination to obey God, as did the Hebrews; but with the equally extreme sense of unwarranted and imputed righteousness given to us by Christ, and of being guided by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and of the hope of eternal life with Yehoveh, as is the Christian understanding. We are not to set aside this life as being unimportant; yet this relatively short present life does, indeed, precede our future spiritual eternal life. We are to see our physical lives as a training ground; that time whereby we learn and practice God's perfect, never changing, never ending, way of right and justice....His mishpat and tzedek.... as told in His Torah. Because, we're going to be administering that very same way of right and justice for all eternity.....even administering it to the Angels.

The bottom line to our study today is this: when we read Exodus 21 verse one, it could and perhaps should, legitimately read "This is the Gospel you are to present to them".