

Shoftim 2024

Shoftim/"Judges", Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9, begins with the instructions regarding the establishment of judges and officers throughout the land of Israel at their gates. It is directly connected with ensuring that Israel remains in the Land of their inheritance by walking and establishing righteousness throughout the land. In fact, this seems to be the focus, that every individual from the judges to the king, is responsible and charged with understanding and having an intimate knowledge of the Torah and to walk according to these statutes in order to remain in the land of their inheritance!

With the cyclical nature of the Torah portion cycles, if they are guided by the hand of Yahweh to instruct us regarding the seasons we're in, then that same message should be mirrored in the Torah written in the Heavens as well – each one lending insight to the other, correct? As we find ourselves within the month of Elul and quickly approaching the Fall Festivals, the constellational sign associated with this season is Bethulah (Virgo), a picture of the Bride! The other decans and star names in this house as well point towards the coming of the Messiah, an anticipation of the coming one, or the desired or longed for one! Yet from the beginning of Creation, the intent of the Nachash has clearly been to usurp and pervert this message, as well as circumvent the divine appointments by arriving first!

*Could it be that the role of the shoftim – the judges who sit in the gates (guarding gateways) becomes paramount especially in this season and reveals an aspect that the Bride must walk in lest she be deceived again like in the Garden!

Deuteronomy 16:20 – “That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which Yahweh thy Elohim giveth thee.”

With this being directly connected to staying in and enjoying the inheritance and the promises that Yahweh has for us, we must ask what does it truly mean to walk in righteousness, to follow that which is just? Because it would seem then that the very failure to do this played a part in our ancestors' removal, and our restoration as well is predicated upon this!

***Just:** Strong's #6664 tse^hdeq תְּשֻׁבָה justice, rightness, righteousness, straightness; but to fully understand what this means from a Torah perspective we have to look at how it's used in context! The term tse^hdeq is almost always used contrasted to wicked (rasha' #7563) רָשָׁע wicked, unrighteous; but it stems from roots inferring one who departs from Yahweh or leaves the Covenant

A righteous/tse^hdeq person then is not one who lives a “religious/super spiritual” life, but one who is following the correct path – walking in Covenant and not wandering aimlessly! It is directly connected to the Melkhi-Tse^hdeq, the King of Righteousness, therefore Israel is challenged to stay on the King's Highway!

***(Numb. 20:17** – “Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the

water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.") Though this referenced a physical trade route as well, could it have been inferring something greater? **John 14:6** – "Yahshua saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

As we've said before the ancient meaning of the Greek name Zodiac (for Hebrew Mazzaroth) means the way! It has everything to do with Israel understanding the timing of the coming of the King, the Covenant message they are to govern and operate within, if they remain on the "King's Highway", then they'll be seen as a fit heir and co-regent with the King!

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

Judges: Strong's #8199 Shaphat שָׁפַט to judge, to govern, vindicate, punish; to rule, govern, litigate, or to defend any one's cause; primary idea appears to be to set up or to erect, with the focus being that it is righteousness and justice that is being set up or erected

*Interesting connection immerses as the very next verses reference the prohibition regarding planting (nata' נָטַע which also carries the meaning of establishing, fixing, or setting something upright; similar concept to shaphat) groves of trees near the altar. A connection easy to overlook if we don't connect that the altar itself functions as a gateway/doorway! The judges who are commanded to be stationed at the gateways then seem charged with guarding those gateways and are tasked with ensuring righteousness is followed in the Land and to ensure no "groves" are established.

What are these "groves" and what is the significance of ensuring they are kept away from the place of the altar?

Groves: Strong's #842 'asherah אֲשֵׁרָה groves for idol worship; specifically for worshipping the Babylonian/Canaanite goddess Astarte, the consort of Baal, and who is depicted throughout the Scriptures as the harlot, and she is seen in Rev. 17 as the great Harlot who rides the Beast, she is juxtaposed to the Bride of Messiah who is clothed in righteousness (Rev. 19 – pictured by Bethulah)! Could it be that Yahweh is revealing both the intended role of the Bride as well as the battle that will ensue over who occupies this place of authority?

This name contains the root stem Sarah (שָׂרָה), wife of Abraham, translated as meaning princess or noblewoman; but can also infer a senate or parliament that commonly in more complex societies operates in conjunction with a monarch (*Abarim Publications*); when Yahweh renames Abraham and Sarah by inserting the letter ה (breath, revelation) it was not merely inferring that jointly they are now in the position of a "princess" and one who is a "father of a multitude" which is the basic definitions.

A better definition of Abraham is "their strength" or "their protection". Together their new names (Abraham & Sarah) point towards the strength of synchronicity among states, among all those who would later compose the house of Abraham, the 12 Tribes who would each be their own "house" yet only fulfill the calling by walking in unity and moving at the

same time. As Abraham and Sarah are entrusted with becoming the doorway through which the Promised Word/Seed of Yahweh will be manifest, they are charged with guarding this point of access (the gateways) and ruling in righteousness alongside and on behalf of the King but notice there is a focus on timing! Their strength is found when they are in sync and in step with Yahweh – when they walk the King’s Way!

*Hence the significance placed on protecting and guarding the gateways that are created both by time and place, there are gateways created at physical locations, but there are also gateways created by time – the Divine Appointments of His Feasts! And this is exactly the role and position Asherah/the Harlot seeks to usurp alongside her consort Baal/Lucifer!

It was revealing that they were being entrusted to govern and rule alongside the Great King (Melchizedek) it is the same root seen as well in the naming of Jacob to Israel – **Gen. 32:28** – “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power/sarah with Elohim and with men, and hast prevailed.”

This root indicates to contend with, have power, persist, to place in a row or set in order; this encounter as Jacob prepares to return to the land of his inheritance dealt with Jacob being recognized by Yahweh as one who was a fit or worthy ruler and results in a covenant agreement connecting heaven and earth which would be culminated upon the arrival of the Messiah! It is a continuation of same covenant agreement seen previously with Abraham and his encounter with Melchizedek in **Gen. 14:18**! In Gen. 14 Melchizedek (the King of Righteousness) is introduced as the Priest of El Elyon (Most High God).

*El Elyon is a name that highlights Yahweh’s authority both as the ruler of earth (‘El) and the ruler of heaven (‘Elyon), which once again emphasizes from the very start the ability of the Melchizedek High Priest (Messiah Yahshua) to operate both on earth and in the heavens! If this is the case, then those who would take on this mantle and walk after this order as well would be charged with functioning as a connection between the two (a role emphasized in the Our Father prayer by Yahshua– “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”).

And yet as the nation of Israel now prepares to understand the role they too must step into they are warned regarding the battle over these gateways! Of the counterfeit who as well attempts to usurp this role of authority and wear this garment – the ‘asherah/the harlot who will welcome in the counterfeit king!

These “groves” are prohibited from being “near the altar” (the place of access)!

Near: Strong’s #681 ‘etsel לְצֵדָה beside, near, proximity; from the root meaning to join or connect together! The altar itself represented a gateway, a doorway connecting the spiritual to the natural, intended for man while in a “fallen condition”, while dwelling outside of His Presence, would still have a means to access and communicate with Yahweh, yet there was now a cost to accessing that doorway, a sacrifice required! This same wording (‘etsel) describes where the ashes of the burnt offering (‘olah offering) were placed. Olah itself inferring an ascent, stairway, or steps – something that connects and provides access.

*"Beside/near the altar ('etsel) points towards the proof of the cost paid to access that gateway!

It is interesting to note that the 'olah offering (whole burnt offering – which was seen prior to the Levitical priesthood, seen specifically with Noah and Abraham when meeting with Yahweh) provided the one officiating as priest with a new garment - **Leviticus 7:8** – “And the priest that offereth any man's burnt offering, *even* the priest shall have to himself the skin of the burnt offering which he hath offered.”

*Everything is burned, but the skins of the offering are given to the Priest! Could this be pointing towards the fact that in order to access these gateways, a new garment is required? The garment of the flesh can't enter here, but the garment of the Melchizedek authority, the one capable of operating on earth and in heaven is required! And it's a garment reserved for the one who is called the Bride, who will be co-regent with the Messiah!

Further connecting this, 'etsel/near is first seen in connection with Joseph's garments – the garments of the Melchizedek Priest! It is first seen in Gen. 39 when Potiphar's wife attempts to join herself to Joseph and usurps his garment! **Gen. 39:16** – “And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.” The harlot seeks to usurp the garment, therefore the authority, the identity, and the access afforded to those who would walk after the order of Melchizedek (the King of Righteousness)!

*This woman, Potiphar's wife, is not named in the text, simply referred to as ishet-adonayiv/his master's wife אִשֶׁת־אֲדֹנָיו which has a numerical value of 772, the same value as Shavuot שָׁבֻעֹת which as well can be translated as “oaths”, the very Feast/appointment when the Bride is to be presented to receive her Ketubah, or the Groom's oath, and she in turn proclaims hers!

Joseph's wife who he is later joined to is named Asenath אֲסֵנַת and connects back to the same root stem as Sinai! The one who is at the right place, at the right time, receives her Ketubah and stands in stark contrast to Potiphar's wife who attempts to usurp this garment!

Could it be that the institution of judges in the gates of Israel has quite a deeper significance than what we've understood before? That in order for Israel to stay within the land of their inheritance, the judges/shoftim were charged with conveying and teaching regarding what it means to walk in righteousness! This was vital to understand in that it was the clothing that would identify them as the Bride of the one who owned the title deed to the land, and would distinguish from those who would fall into the category of the harlot yet still attempt to usurp that garment, position, and authority!

In fact, shaphat (to judge), has a numerical value of 389, the same value as the phrase “beyn ha'arabim” בֵּין הָעֲרָבִים – between the evenings/between the mixings. A significant moment of time as it is the timing of the Passover sacrifice (**Ex. 12:6**), as well as the time when the Menorah/lamps were to be lit daily and the incense offered in conjunction with the daily evening sacrifice/oblation (**Ex. 30:8, Ex. 29:41, Numb. 28**).

Hmm...could it be that the “judges” who sit in the gates (as Israel had expanded from being encamped centered around the Tabernacle), now also function as a reminder of the daily appointments with the King? The daily appointment at the “altar” – the Gateway into the Presence of the King, and the Menorah as well was tended to at the timing of “beyn ha’arabim”.

*The Menorah (representing the Bridegroom/Messiah/Light of the Word as well as the King and title owner of the Land) stands across from the Table of Shewbread – the 12 loaves, representing both the 12 Tribes of Israel as well as the 12 constellation signs in the Mazzeroth. It was a continual rehearsal of the same pattern seen in the Heavenly Tabernacle, as the Sun (Menorah) would make his circuit and shine into the 12 Constellational Houses. In other words, it was identifying who was walking on the King’s Highway, who was in sync and in step!

The daily morning and evening offering are referred to as the ‘olat tamid עֹלֹת תָּמִיד (Ex. 29:42), gematria = 954, the same as the Hebrew phrase meaning “deer/hind of the dawn” אַיֵּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר ‘Ayyelet HaShachar seen only in the title of Psalms 22:1, the very psalms quoted by Yahshua when hanging upon the tree at His execution.

*Psalms 22:1 – “[To the chief Musician upon Aijeletth Shachar, A Psalm of David.] My El, my El, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*”

Aijeletth: Strong’s #365 ‘ayyelet אַיֵּלֶת doe, deer, hind; stems from the root (#352) ‘ayil אֵיִל ram, door or pillar, a chief leader or strong man, and finally a mighty terebinth tree (Covenant marker).

*This is connected to “Shahar” from the Hebrew root Shachar meaning dawn, the twilight just before morning. Shachar according to the ancients was identified as a royal divine being (*Past. David – Restoring the Calendar pt. 1*)! Pointing back towards the first release of light – “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3), the start of the calendar and record of keeping time that would lay the first foundation stones of the King’s Highway directing the steps for His Bride to meet with Him and walk in step alongside Him!

The ‘olat tamid (the daily offerings) proclaimed every dawn and every evening the arrival of the King, the Strong One, and revealed His promise to redeem and restore His people by being offered up as the lamb upon the terebinth tree to seal the covenant promise and guarantee His Bride access to this door!

She (the Bride) was to be standing at the gate waiting His arrival! Digging deeper into the phrase “between the evenings” – Beyn ha’arabiym בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים – Beyn has the same 2 letter root as Ben/Son בֵּן and ha’arabiym comes from the root (#6148) ‘arav עָרַב to pledge, to exchange, become a surety for, to undertake; implies a tangible sign of a current or soon expected reality.

*The same letters rearranged form ‘abar עָבַר to cross over, pass through (root of the term ‘Ivriy/Hebrew), ‘abar is seen in Gen. 15:17 when the burning lamp and

smoking furnace passes between the pieces regarding a covenant promise that Abraham is witness to in which his seed will inherit the land!

Every time the 'olat tamid was offered up it was proclaiming and revealing the Son who would walk between the pieces, exchanging His garments (the Melchizedek authority) to ensure His Bride was clothed in righteousness and able to walk with Him! This is why the judges are stationed in the gates – they are to ensure and proclaim the timing of the coming King, to guard the gateways lest another try to enter in, and to represent the Bride waiting on His arrival! And if Israel would walk this path, they would intimately know their King and would not be fooled by another!

It's no accident Lucifer, the counterfeit, who attempts to always arrive before the King, calls himself Hallel Ben Shachar (**Isaiah 14:12** – “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning/Hallel Ben Shachar! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”)

He attempts to usurp the role of the King, and we see the culmination of this in **Daniel 9:27** – “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

*This is referring to the 'olat tamid! A pattern that was fulfilled by Messiah, who declared upon being offered up “between the evenings” – it is finished! (**John 19:30**) – in Hebrew it is the word Kallah – the same root for Bride! The Son who was promised had come and restored the broken altar, paving the way for access for His Bride to walk with Him in unity at the set times.

The counterfeit however seeks to once again start the 'olat tamid in order to access a gateway and throne he has no right to sit upon as he attempts to masquerade as the King, and all who are duped by him will be made desolate! But for those who have walked the King's Highway...who know the timing of His coming and going, the timing of His Mo'edim, who stand as shoftim guarding the gates, they will know His timing and will not be fooled!

Revelation 19:7 – “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”