



## Names

Kefa – Peter  
 Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ  
     in the Greek means to be smudged  
 Moshe – Moses  
 Shaul – Paul  
 Yeshua – Jesus' real name  
 Yĕhōvāh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)  
 Yochanan – John

## Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets  
 House – refers to a school or the Temple  
 Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible  
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible  
 Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah  
 Mishpatim – the 18<sup>th</sup> Torah portion

(We also use transliterations from Hebrew)

Mishpatim means, “judgments” and this portion contains more laws. There are about 200 applicable laws in the Torah. There are more than 10 commandments. God was giving them laws they needed for life. They began to live a new and good life through God's commandments. Just like Israel lived a changed life through God, we are to live a new life through God's commandments and the Messiah Yeshua.

Mishpatim begins with the laws regarding a Hebrew male slave. He is to be set free after six years and his wife with him unless his wife was given him by his master. The slave may choose to remain under his master. A daughter who is sold as a slave if married to her master must be treated well and if not, she is to be set free. If married to the master's son she should be treated as a daughter. If divorced she cannot be sold to a foreigner and she can be redeemed. We should remember that slavery for Israel was not like the abusive slavery of our world. If they were mistreated, they would be set free. The slaves were to be treated well and set free after 6 years. A slave could choose to work for their masters indefinitely. Shaul says that he has chosen to be a slave (doulos) for the Messiah Yeshua in Romans 1:1.

*The United States gave everyone equal rights,  
 so it is not a caste system or rule by only the privileged.*

I share this to show how improper slavery started in the United States, who the participants were, and the issue at stake. It is history, nothing else. In The American Story, slavery began in the United States with a Black slave owner in 1654 by the name of Anthony Johnson. He eventually owned many slaves and owned 250 acres. Before then, there were only indentured servants, and they were set free after they had served for a period of time. Only 3% of the

world's slaves went to the United States. There were many slave owners in the Southern United States who were black. So not all slave owners were White or Indian (many Indians also had slaves). For example, in 1830, a Black historian by the name of Carter Woodson did a study and found that 43% of free black households in South Carolina owned slaves.<sup>1</sup> The United States gave everyone equal rights. Ownership type slavery developed in the South backed by the Democratic party. The Ku Klux Klan was started by the Democratic party as a terrorist effort to keep slavery.

Lincoln was a Republican and the civil war in the United States was fought to free slaves who were being mistreated. The original settlers of the North were mostly white people who believed in the Bible and did not believe people should be treated that way. The people in the South held incorrectly to the idea that the Bible taught that slaves could be **treated merely as property**. The Bible does not teach the kind of slavery the South practiced.

As we can see, there is more to the story of slavery than some so flippantly give us. Prejudice was practiced toward every people group no matter whether White Irish, Jewish, Black, or various people groups. That is a different issue than slavery. Like other people groups, Jews often had to form their own settlements and they provided their own services for each other. Sometimes their services were used outside of their community.

This portion goes on; the person who kills someone is to be put to death unless it was an accident. If a person attacks or curses their mother or father, or is a kidnapper they are to be put to death. This cursing of their mother or father would not be spurious occasional words, but some form of abuse. A curse in the form of witchcraft is punishable by death according to Exodus 22:18. There must be grounds for being put to death. Also, a person who injures someone is to care for them until they are well. A person is to be punished for killing his slave. A person is to be fined for the death of an unborn child.

Appropriate retribution must be made, as an eye for an eye relative to the damage. It was always understood that "eye for an eye" would be some sort of remuneration for damages. It was never understood that we are to actually put out someone's eye as retribution. Some people don't know what they are talking about.

*The Mishna and the Talmud are  
not God's word as some treat them.*

Some things in the Talmud are extreme. The rabbis had differing opinions. For example, the house (school) of Hillel taught if a person had stolen a beam, they should make remuneration. The house of Shammai taught that the house had to be torn down and the beam removed and given back. The Jewish writings were commentaries and not God's word. They may have some good things to say, but they are not God's word as some treat them. In this case, the house of Hillel had a better approach.

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<sup>1</sup> Barton, David and Tim. The American Story. Wallbuilder Press. pp. 284-287.

We continue with the portion; a slave is to be set free as compensation for personal injury from their master. An ox that gored someone is to be killed and not eaten. If has been known to gore, the owner will be put to death too; or the owner can be redeemed. Retribution should be made for a slave that is gored. A person is to make retribution for the loss of another's animal. A person that steals an animal is to make retribution even if the animal is recovered. We are mentioning some of the commandments in this portion.

A thief caught in the act at night that is killed is not considered murder. A person is to make restitution for another person's loss that they have caused. If a dispute arises over the ownership of an animal, they are to come before God and the one found not to own the animal will pay double. If something happens to an animal that is being cared for by another and it is not stolen, then the owner can swear it was not his fault. If it is his fault, he should make restitution unless he had paid a usage fee. A man who seduces someone who is not engaged must pay retribution - the bride price. He may marry her unless not accepted. A sorceress, someone who has sexual relations with an animal, or someone who sacrifices to another god is to be put to death.

They are not to abuse or oppress foreigners, widows, or orphans. They were not to charge the poor interest. If they take someone's clothes as collateral, they are to restore them the same day. They are not to curse God or their leader, they were not to delay their offerings, their firstborn sons and animals belonged to God, they were not to eat dead animals, and perjury is wrong. They are not to pervert justice, they were to return what belongs to others, and to help others regardless of their feelings for them.

Fraud is wrong and so is the oppression of the innocent, oppression of the righteous, and oppression of foreigners. Even in Israel today, their neighbors in Gaza may be short of food and supplies so Israel regularly sends them help. Gaza regularly sends rockets into Israel and Israel regularly sends them help in the form of food or supplies. If these people spent their money on helping their people instead of on rockets, perhaps they would be able to take care of themselves properly.

Bribery is wrong. In the seventh year, the land is to be fallow, they are to keep Shabbat, they are not to talk about other gods, and they are to keep the three feasts (of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot). They are to follow the rules for the feasts; they were not bow down to other gods. If they obey God, He will protect and bless them. They were not to boil a goat in its mother's milk is a reference to a fertility ritual done by the Canaanites. It has nothing to do with not eating meat with milk. Since this is mentioned more than once (Exodus 23:19, 34:26; Deuteronomy 14:21), the rabbis said there must be a reason, so they made up an inappropriate extra man-made law about not eating meat with milk.

I should say something about the Talmud at this time. The Talmud is a commentary put together by rabbis that some Jews consider to be biblical truths, but they are not. At times they have good advice, but advice is not a commandment of God. Sometimes they are a proper application of the Torah, but just like any commentary, we must weigh what they have to say

with what the Bible says. The Jerusalem Talmud was written around 350 AD and the Babylonian Talmud was written around 500 AD.

*Moshe did not say to put a fence around  
the Torah with extra commandments.*

The Bible says you are not to add improperly to God's commandments, so the thousands of extra commands of the rabbis are frequently wrong applications of the Torah or just personal beliefs. Pirkei Avot 1:1 (Chapters of the Fathers) says that Moshe and Joshua told us to put a fence around the Torah – namely, through extra laws. **Moshe said just the opposite.** Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

The misapplied commandments of mainstream Christianity are also wrong. God told us to keep His feasts. Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts." God said they are His feasts, and some mere humans say they are not. Who is right? They do not fear God. Malachi 3:5-6 says, "Because they do not fear Me, 'Says the LORD of hosts.' For I am the LORD, **I do not change.**" God does not change; they are still His feasts. These false leaders fear that people will reject them instead of following God right. Religion explains away truth. Let us do our best to keep God's commandments properly.

In this portion, God says He will send the His angel before Israel. Joshua meets the angel of Yĕhōvāh in Joshua 5:13-15 and he is told to take off his shoes because it is holy ground. Moshe met God (Exodus 3:4) in the burning bush and is told to take off his shoes because it is holy ground. Messianic believers believe God's angel that goes before Israel to be Yĕhōvāh in the form of the preincarnate Yeshua.

Moses then reads the covenant to the people, offers a sacrifice, and sprinkles the people with blood. Moses and the elders then ascend the mountain, and they all see God and they eat before Him; **His feet are standing** on blue sapphire. So, God appears as a man before all the elders of Israel and Moshe. Moshe then goes up the mountain for 40 days and nights to receive the tablets with the commandments from God. There is a lot more that can be covered from the portion.

### **What can you apply from the law?**

Respect everyone.

Trust in God and His food laws instead of diet fads.

Keep the day of rest on the right day; Friday at sunset to Saturday at sunset.

Perhaps having insurance so we can make quick restitution for accidents.

Not cheating others.

Try to return anything of value that others have lost.

There are many many ways to properly apply God's commandments.

This portion begins with various rules or commandments. Rules for slaves, murder, abusing parents, reparation and restitution, accidents, self-protection, some sexual sins, not oppressing others, treatment of other believers, giving of the first born to God, dietary laws, lying and perjury, returning property, bribery is wrong. We are to only work six days and rest on seventh, on Shabbat. We should note that a number of these laws are not mentioned in the New Testament portion; some say they can be implied by spurious statements in the New Testament. Without the Tanakh we do not have a complete or best understanding of how to live right.

*We need the Torah to treat  
others properly and lovingly.*

For example, bribery which is mentioned in this portion it is not mentioned in the New Testament portion. We know that bribery subverts justice and is wrong. We need the full revelation of the Bible as instructions for life. Some people say we only need the New Testament, but they are mistaken. The New Testament portion is based on the Old Testament portion of the Bible. The New Testament does not include all the pertinent laws for life because they already had the Old Testament to refer to.

It says in Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV about God's Old Testament laws, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for **this is your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a **wise and understanding** people.'" Perhaps some of these laws do not apply in our culture. We should take some time to think about how these laws might be applied in our modern times and how they could apply to us. I was taught some of these laws as a child and learned how to apply them. Many of these laws are important for a peaceful society. Keeping the law is the proper way to treat and love others. God says He will judge those who break His laws because they are bringing pain and trouble into this world.

The Haftarah for Mishpatim is Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26. We read here essentially that just as God has established day and night, He will bring back Israel to their land and show them compassion. God could have used another way to describe bringing back Israel to their land, but in using "day and night" we can say that the passage definitely alludes to the idea of something permanent in the future; and perhaps that final future time is drawing near.

### **Live a New Life** **(Accompanying Teaching for Mishpatim.)**

We need to take the path God is giving us. We may want to forge ahead serving God the way we think we should, but God may have other things for us to do.

One of my favorite scriptures keeps things simple regarding the things of God.

Proverbs 3:5-10 NKJV:

"5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;  
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.  
8 It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.  
9 Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase;  
10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."

The very first thing we need to do with our lives is to trust in God. Do not make excuses and try to do things your own ways. Live a new life in our God and the Messiah Yeshua. If we follow His commandments, a lot of life falls into place. Do not think you are smarter than the creator God. Stay away from sin and evil. It says you will be healthier and be strengthened for trusting God.

A lot of people think the only way to add strength to their lives is through their own efforts. While it is important to stay fit and to develop our minds, God's ways actually simplify life. We are not led into unnecessary choices and even bad choices because we know what is right and can focus on doing what is right.

I have had many experiences where my first response was to take time to think about what I should do and then do the right thing. In a number of instances, the other person distanced themselves from me when I did the right thing. If they had a good heart, they should have welcomed my response. This approach perhaps saved me from getting involved with someone or something that was not good.

*Doing what is "right and good" (Deuteronomy 6:18) will keep you out of trouble.*

Also, we need to find out how God wants us to use our time. After going to a conference on translating the Bible, it seemed I would never use the information I learned, but over and over again, it has helped me in the study of the scriptures. Just understanding that the translators are sometimes at odds over the translation of the scriptures or that they will not change certain scriptures so they will sell more Bibles has helped me understand that all is not perfect in the translator world. I thought, of course we want to sell Bibles; that is a good thing. But if the translation is wrong, that is not a good thing. Especially if people end up believing in false doctrine because it needed to be changed.

Do not be so quick to jump into something that God does not want us involved with. I remember hearing someone teach as though politics should be the main focus of our lives. You would have thought that the Bible was all about who to vote for. I am not saying that voting for godly people is not important; we should vote for godly people. Find out who supports biblical principles and vote for them.

Focusing on following God and trusting in His ways should be our primary focus in life. These scriptures in Proverbs 3 also goes on to say we are to make sure we use some of our resources for God's kingdom. That can be a sticky subject for some people, but we should desire to be generous toward the things of God. It is a demonstration of where our heart is at. God will bless our desire to use our resources for God's kingdom. I always found it strange that some people **and even pastors** will hold onto their money like that is all there is to life. I've heard pastors brag about how many cars they have. How many cars do we need? If they valued God so

much, why are they holding onto their riches so tightly and not being generous with their resources?

God is the giver of life and the supplier for His purposes. We owe everything we have to God. God will accomplish what He wills, and He allows us to take part in that. Hebrews 13:21 NKJV asks God to, "Make you complete in every good work to do His will." Of course, in Jewish thought, "good work" refers to keeping God's commandments; we are doing His will when we keep God's commandments. For example, Shaul tells us to love others by serving them in Galatians 5:13 and then quotes Leviticus 19:18.

It says in the context in Leviticus 19:17-19 NKJV, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. You shall keep My statutes." There is a lot more to the context of loving our neighbors, isn't there. Keeping God's commandments is part of loving our neighbors. Shaul talks about loving others as ourselves in Ephesians; he says be tender, kind, and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32).

*Shaul quoted the Old Testament portion.*

We should understand that Shaul's reference for the things he says in his letters is the Old Testament portion. That is why he quoted Leviticus 19:18 in Galatians. He is also referencing Leviticus 19:18 in Ephesians 4:32 NKJV, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." In Leviticus it said to forgive and love your neighbor. That is also what it says in Ephesians. The Old Testament portion are rules that bring blessing and goodness into people's lives; they are the most loving way to live.

People do not know that because they do not know the Old Testament portion of the Bible. Read the Bible. I recently was told by someone that, 'you are not Christian because you believe what the Old Testament teaches.' Shaul used the Old Testament scriptures and so did Yeshua. I think my company is rather good in this matter.

God can use us to show kindness and treat others well. We can do God's will by serving others in so many ways. When the Israelites were fleeing the Egyptians, they must have worked together to accomplish that and they no doubt served each other. That was not supposed to stop. In this portion, God commands them not to abuse or oppress foreigners, widows, or orphans. They were not to charge the poor interest. We can show others the goodness of God in so many ways.

God reaches out to a cold and spiritually barren world with His goodness and we are part of the solution through our lives. Yeshua said, "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant;" Matthew 23:11 NKJV. Instead of making ourselves out to be something special, we should make God out to be special by serving others.

Set out doing what God wants you to do. Do not be moored and become ineffective.

Shaul tells us in Romans 12 that we are to think modestly of ourselves. He says we each have different functions in the believing family, the body of Messiah. God has given some the gift of prophecy, others serving or teaching. We are to love others (like Leviticus tells us to) and do not do evil. Be kind and respect each other. Romans 12:11 NKJV says. "Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." We are to be servants of God.

Do not be moored and become ineffective. If you were in a ship that was moored, it would be sitting there without the ability to be of much use. Proverbs 30:19 talks about how wonderful it is to see a ship at sea. It is not so wonderful if it is moored on some rocks. Kefa said in 1 Peter 4:10-11 NKJV, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified." God has given us abilities and spiritual gifts. Minister, serve, each other.

God's light shines on a world that lacks substance and understanding.

We say be good, be kind, be a blessing and the world comes back with nothing but excuses. They say believers are weak; they say we are strong and opinionated; they say we are fools for caring about others; they say we do not care. The worldly say anything to justify their behaviors and to get away with doing what they want and getting what they want. They contradict themselves to manipulate and fool people into complying.

*People are certifiably in need of God's light and understanding.*

He is the creator; God knows all. "Is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether;" Psalm 139:4 NKJV. God knows all and knows how we should live. "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite;" Psalm 147:5 NKJV. The world needs us whether they know it or not. Serve one another and serve others so that God can be glorified.

In this portion, the people seal their covenant with God, and Moshe goes up the mountain to receive more commandments. How wonderful and amazing is it to be in covenant with the creator God, and what a wonderful privilege it is to live as believers in our God Yĕhōvāh and Messiah Yeshua. God has given each of us a path to forge ahead on, so serve God the way we should. God gives life. He gave a new life to the people of Israel as they left Egypt and they received God's good commandments. He also gives us new life through His commandments and the Messiah. We can now live as part of a Messianic covenant. Choose to follow God, do what is right, and find purpose spiritually. Do not be moored on the rocks doing nothing with our lives but be effective. God's light shines on a world that lacks substance and understanding. The world needs people who desire to live as people of light. Be a light and live the life our good God wants for us.