

Parashat Behar / פרשת בהר

Shabbat Iyar 12, 5768, May 17, 2008
MATSATI.COM / Rightly Dividing The Word of G-d
<http://www.matsati.com> | matsati@matsati.com

Do you have a Greek or Hebraic mindset?

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Leviticus 25:1-26:2

Haftarah: Jeremiah 32:6-32:27

B'rit HaChadashah: Luke 4:16-21

Of all the many wonders found in the Word of G-d, one of the greatest in my opinion is the revelation of the character of G-d. For example, we know that G-d is the creator of all things (*Genesis 1:1-2:3; Isaiah 45:6*) and the redeemer of his people (*Exodus 14; Isaiah 43:1*) and that by these actions (works) G-d demonstrated his immeasurable and unparalleled power. Another way we learn about the character of G-d is by certain divinely inspired descriptions of G-d, such as “majestic in holiness” or “awesome in glory” (*Exodus 15:11*). Another remarkable way in which we learn about the character of G-d is when G-d describes himself as compassionate, gracious (*Exodus 34:6*), and holy (*Leviticus 11:45; 19:2*). These are some of the most well known attributes of G-d’s character. In this week’s parsha, Parashat Behar we find G-d has revealed something more about Himself in the manner in which is similar to our responsibility to redeem our family members in the year of jubilee (yovel, יובל) shown in the following verses. To understand this I would like to discuss a little bit about thinking hebraically.

Leviticus 25:34-42

25:34 The fields in the open land around their cities may not be sold, because that is their permanent possession. 25:35 "If a member of your people has become poor, so that he can't support himself among you, you are to assist him as you would a foreigner or a temporary resident, so that he can continue living with you. 25:36 Do not charge him interest or otherwise profit from him, but fear your God, so that your brother can continue living with you. 25:37 Do not take interest when you loan him money or take a profit when you sell him food. 25:38 I am ADONAI your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt in order to give you the land of Kena'an and be your God. 25:39 "If a member of your people has become poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him do the work of a slave. 25:40 Rather, you are to treat him like an employee or a tenant; he will work for you until the year of yovel. 25:41 Then he will leave you, he and his children with him, and return to his own family and regain possession of his ancestral land. 25:42 For they are my slaves, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; therefore they are not to be sold as slaves. (CJB)

In order to think hebraically we need to establish a frame of reference for the purpose of combating our presumptions that we might have while reading the scriptures. To begin we need to look at a quick overview of the church and what is called Greek thinking. What we will discover when we overview the Christological process in the church is most of the discussions that take place do so in a western world view where ontology is the focus. What is ontology? Ontology is the question of ultimate reality. Ultimate being, what is real and what is not. (For example, the illustration of a mirage, we know water isn't there, but it looks like it is there).

Studying Greek theology, the ontology, or the essence of what is and what is not is the sum and substance of Greek philosophy. What is real, what is the ground of being ... this is what the Greeks are all about. Ontology is, the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being. Such is the philosophy of Plato and Neo-Platonists in which the idea or concept is the primary reality which gives meaning to the physical aspects of our world. You see, Plato said, what you touch, what you feel, what your senses know is not the real thing; the real thing is the "idea of that." The early Christian church relied upon primarily Christian leaders which were schooled in the Greek academy therefore it was only natural the bible would be read from the Greek perspective. So the understanding of G-d arose from the metaphysical academy of the knowledge of G-d from the sense of essence and being, in other words, the early Christian church when they went to look for leaders, who did they look for? They looked for men of education ... you won't find one church father in the early church that has one thoroughly Jewish name. They are looking for Greek men, trained in rhetoric, philosophy, and in the Greek mindset. When it came to Yeshua what question were they going to ask? They were going to ask what was the nature of his real being? Was he made up of 50% deity and 50% humanity? Was he fully deity? Was he fully man? The conceptual and mental exercises were typical of Greek thinking and therefore the reason the Council of Nicaea (*AD 325; First ecumenical council of the Christian Church, held at Nicaea; now Iznik, Turkey*) focused upon defining who G-d was, i.e. G-d in three persons, etc.

Now, understand this is completely foreign to the Jewish mind. Simply put, we find that the G-d of Israel, in the Tanach, describes himself differently. So to begin we ask "how do you define G-d?" What do you say? He is the creator; He is the one who made the heavens and the earth, the one who redeemed you from Egypt, I am Adonai eloheycha, am I not the G-d who brought you out of ... etc. In the scriptures it is primarily in these two activities that G-d is defined. He is unique, because he is the creator; he is the only one who ever took a nation like Israel out of a nation like Egypt. He is absolutely unique in these two activities. This tells us something very important, if we want use the word ontology with the Hebrews they are not going to understand the Greek version rather, the key point is: for the Hebrews "functionality" defines ontology. What you do defines who you are! If you want to define G-d you define him by what he has done, by what he is doing, the same is true by any perspective on anyone. If you want to define a person, who he is, the kind of person that he is, you define him by what he does in life not by other kinds of things.

Today when you ask someone who G-d is, you will hear ... he is eternal, he is holy, he is righteous, he is good, etc ... what occurs is people begin to list things not with his actions per say but with G-d's essential attributes, his essential being (this is distinctively Greek). If we desire to know G-d from the scriptures then we cannot expect the scriptures to define G-d in the sense of essential being because the authors of the scriptures were Hebrews and not Greeks. When they sought to define the G-d of Israel as one G-d, a unique G-d, and the only one worthy of worship and to be worshiped, they did so in terms of Him being creator and savior of Israel. In similar

fashion, when the disciples described Yeshua in the Gospels they did so by describing his actions and works, they did not do so by describing his essential being. If we wonder why Yeshua did not explicitly make the statement that he was G-d it was because doing so would have made no ontological sense to the ancient Semitic mind. Anybody can go around saying "I am god" that can mean anything ... the question is what do you do? G-d is known by his works and not by a category of divinity! For example, when John the Baptist went and sent disciples to Yeshua to ask him if he was the one or should we wait on someone else?

Luke 7:18-22

7:18 Yochanan's talmidim informed him of all these things. Then Yochanan called two of his talmidim 7:19 and sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who is to come? Or should we look for someone else?" 7:20 When the men came to him, they said, "Yochanan the Immerser has sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come? Or should we keep looking -- for someone else?'" 7:21 Right then he was healing many people of diseases, pains and evil spirits, and giving sight to many who were blind. 7:22 So he answered them by saying, "Go, tell Yochanan what you have been seeing and hearing: the blind are seeing again, the lame are walking, people with tzara'at are being cleansed, the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised, the Good News is being told to the poor. (CJB)

Yeshua's answer was look at the works I am performing; the reason is because of the Hebraic mindset. This is also why Yeshua said if you know me, you know the Father in Heaven. (*John14:7 Because you have known me, you will also know my Father; from now on, you do know him -- in fact, you have seen him.* (CJB)) Constantly Yeshua was demonstrating who he was in his works. Furthermore, the concept of knowing and identifying who the messiah is in G-d's miraculous activity in conjunction with the reign of his anointed one can be seen in a lengthy description of the messiah in the Dead Sea scrolls, written before the B'rit Hachadashah (New Testament).

*For the Heavens and the Earth will listen to His Messiah, [and all] that is in them will not turn away from the holy precepts. ... For the Lord will observe the devout, and call the just by name, and upon the poor he will place his spirit, and the faithful he will renew with his strength. For he will honor the devout upon the throne of eternal royalty, freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted. ... And the Lord will perform marvelous acts such as have not existed, just as he said for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the meek, give lavishly to the needy, lead the exiled and enrich the hungry. (Messianic Apocalypse 4Q521, fragment 2, as translated in the standard scholarly edition of Florentino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Lieden: Brill, 1994), 394.)*

The Dead Sea Scrolls clearly establishes how the Messiah was to be identified. G-d's miraculous activity in conjunction with the reign of this anointed one is almost identical to what is written in *Luke 4:18-19*.

Luke 4:16-21

4:16 Now when he went to Natzeret, where he had been brought up, on Shabbat he went to the synagogue as usual. He stood up to read, 4:17 and he was given the scroll of the prophet Yasha`yahu. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written, 4:18 "The Spirit of ADONAI is upon me because he has anointed me to announce Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the imprisoned and renewed sight for the blind, to release those who have been crushed, 4:19 to proclaim a year of the favor of ADONAI." 4:20 After closing the scroll and returning it to the shammash, he sat down; and the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. 4:21 He started to speak to them: "Today, as you heard it read, this passage of the Tanakh was fulfilled!" (CJB)

Yeshua fulfilled this passage in the Tanach by fulfilling the Torah commandment that is pictured here in this week's parsha. Yeshua is our Jubilee year. Yeshua came to release the captives, to set free the oppressed, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. Throughout his life Yeshua demonstrated to us works revealing himself to be G-d's anointed one. Yeshua's death pays the debt of sin that we cannot repay. By faith in Yeshua our sins are forgiven, we are set free from the bondage of the adversary and in him we have a rich ancestral inheritance in G-d's Promised Land that is what salvation is all about in Yeshua the Messiah. Something else to note, the jubilee year is announced on the Day of Atonement and the Day of Atonement teaches about the Messiah's atoning sacrifice and the forgiveness of sins.

Taking into consideration all of these things, isn't it time to place your faith, and trust in G-d's Messiah?

Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
"Yeshua" King Messiah forever and ever