Bits of Torah Truths Vayikra / Leviticus 16:1-20:27, Ezekiel 22:1-19, John 7:1-52/John 7:53-10:21



Examining our Ways, Conduct, and Life before God

In this weeks reading from Parshiot Acharei Mot and Kedoshim (Vayikra / Leviticus 16:1-20:27), the Lord spoke to Moshe following the death of Aaron's two sons saying בַּ וַיֹּאמֵר יִהֹוָה אֵל-מֹשֶה דַּבֵּר אֵל-אַהֵרן אַחִיךּ וְאַל-יַבֹא בָכַל-עַת אֵל-הַקּדֵשׁ מִבֵּית לַפַּרֹכֵת אֵל-פָּנֵי הַכַּפּּרַת אֲשֶׁר עַל-הַאַרוֹ וְלֹא יַמוּת בּפַּבֶּרת: "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall כֵּי בַּעַבַן אֲרֵאֶה עַל-הַכַּפּׂרָת." not enter at any time into the holy place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat." (NASB) According to the Scriptures, Aaron was given the High Priesthood which required of him certain things, such as not touching the dead. In Vavikra / Leviticus 16:2, the Lord tells Aaron that he is not to go into the holiest place at any time he chooses or he might die. Thinking on these things, our being called in the Messiah Yeshua, the Lord also requires something of us as well. Just as Aaron was required to live in a certain way, we too are also required to live in a certain way. Have you ever been told that there is no requirement on you but to just believe in Jesus? Is the work of the Messiah effective if we are not striving to live for Him? Let's explore this topic further.

ספר ויקרא פרק יח

א וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר: ב דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְהָּ אֲלֵהֶם אָנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ג כְּמַצְשֵׂה אָרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר יְשַׁבְּתֶּם-בָּה לֹא תַּצְשוֹּ וּכְמַצְשֵׁה אֶרֶץ-כְּנַעַן אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מֵבִיא אֶתְכֶם שְׁמָה לֹא תַעֲשוֹּ וֹּבְחֻקֹּתֵיהֶם לֹא תַלֵכוּ: ד אֶת-מִשְׁפָטִי תַּצְשוֹּ וְאֶת-חֻקֹּתֵי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וֹשְׁמַרְתָּם אֶנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ה וֹשְׁמַרְתָּם אֶת-חֻקֹּתֵי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטֵי אַשֶׁר יַצְשֶׂה אֹתָם הָאָדָם וָחַי בָּהֶם אַנִי יִהוָה:

Vayikra / Leviticus 18:1-5

18:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 18:2 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am the Lord your God. 18:3 'You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. 18:4 'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. 18:5 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord. (NASB)

In the Scriptures we are looking at this week from *Vayikra / Leviticus* 18:1-5, the Lord speaks to His people exhorting them to not do what is done in the land of Egypt, in the land of their bondage. God's people are to live and walk according to His commandments and statutes. Much later in Israel's history however, we learn the people did not continue in God's ways as we read according to the prophet Isaiah in *Isaiah* 3:8-11.

Isaiah 3:8-11

3:8 For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, Because their speech and their actions are against the Lord, To rebel against His glorious presence. 3:9 The expression of their faces bears witness against them, And they display their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves. 3:10 Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their actions. 3:11 Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him. (NASB) דְּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם אֶל-יִהֹוָה לַמְרוֹת עֵנֵי כְבוֹדוֹ: ט הַכַּרַת פְּנֵיהֶם עֲנְהָה בָּם וְחַטָאתָם כִּסְדֹם הָגִּידוּ לֹא כִחֲדוּ אוֹי לְנַפְשָׁם כִּי-גָמְלוּ לָהֶם רָעָה: יִ אַמְרוֹ צַדִּיק כִּי-טוֹב כִּי-פְרִי מַעַלְלֵיהֶם יֹאבֵלוּ: יֹא אוֹי לְרָשְׁע רָע כִּי-נֹוֹ צַבִּין יַעֲשָׁה לֹוֹ: צִמוֹל יַדִין יַעֲשָׂה לֹוֹ:

Notice how Isaiah says that the people's speech (Leshonam, לְשׁלְּבֶל) and actions, the way they walked (u'maalleyhem, וֹמֵעֵלְלֵיהֶם), stand in opposition to the Lord. This suggests that the way one speaks follows through by the way one walks. A man's deeds proceed from what is in his heart. Note also the children of Israel had Aaron build them a golden calf (*Parashat Ki Tisa*) whereby, the words of their lips indicated their desire and plan to walk in sin before the Lord at the mountain of Sinai in the desert. In addition, David says in *Tehillim / Psalms 39:1 I said*, 'I will guard my ways That I may not sin with my tongue; I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence. (NASB) Here David says "I said, I will guard/keep my ways." He will take hold of, keep, Shamar (שמר), his ways so that he does not sin with his tongue.

In addition, Solomon said in *Ecclesiastes 5:1-7*:

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

5:1 Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. 5:2 Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. 5:3 For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words. 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! 5:5 It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. 5:6 Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? 5:7 For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God. (NASB)

We are told over and over again in the Scriptures to take heed of our ways, to examine our ways, which is something every man should do in his own life to examine his actions, conduct, and conversation like David is suggesting in his Psalm (*Tehillim / Psalms 39:1*). The Apostle Paul said the same thing in *1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. (NASB)* The taking heed of our walk before God (*as compared to Scripture*) is what it means to walk by faith, to walk in God's ways, in His truth and not in error. We are told to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, this is the path of righteousness and holiness according to the Scriptures. The path of holiness and righteousness is the path Yeshua has placed us upon. We are to seek holiness and take heed not to embrace error, whereby all of these things are done with a pure heart.

With these things in mind, the Torah portion for this week may be summarized in the following way:

Summary of Commands

- 1. The Scriptures say that the Life of the blood is in the flesh and it has been given (the blood has been given) to make atonement for our souls (17:11) therefore no person is to eat the blood of any animal (17:12-16).
- 2. Israel is not do what was done in the Land of Egypt nor do what was done in the land of Canaan (18:1-5).
- 3. The command against incest (18:6-20)
- 4. Homosexuality is an abomination (18:22)
- 5. Intercourse with an animal is prohibited (18:23), for these are the things the nations do and are the reason they are being cast out from the land (18:24).
- 6. In *Vayikra / Leviticus 18:30* we are told to not keep any of the abominable customs of the nations, this includes the holidays that are adopted from the nations.
- 7. We are to honor our father and mother and not turn to idols or molten gods (19:1-4).
- 8. It is commanded to eat all of the Shelamim Korban (Peace offering) by the third day. Anything remaining by the third day is to be burned with fire (19:6). The person who eats of the sacrifice on the third day will bear his iniquity and will be cut off from his people (19:7).
- 9. We are told not to steal, not to swear falsely, not to slander others, and not to hate your neighbor or brother (19:11-17).
- 10. "Love your neighbor as yourself" (19:18)
- 11. We are told that three years are to be given for freshly planted fruit trees before harvesting (19:23-24).
- 12. We are commanded not to practice divination or sooth-saying (19:26).

- 13. Do not cut your body for the dead or make tattoos or marks on yourself for "*I am the Lord*" declares the Lord (19:28).
- 14. Do not turn to mediums or spiritists, doing so will cause one to become defiled by them (19:31)
- 15. You are to keep the Shabbat (19:30)
- 16. Do not do wrong to the stranger in the land (19:33-34), and keep correct weights and measures (19:35-37).
- 17. The Lord God states that any person who gives his son or daughter as a sacrifice to Moloch is to be put to death (20:1-4).
- 18. The Lord declares that the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, He will turn His face against that person and cut him/her off from among his people (20:6).
- 19. We are to consecrate ourselves and be holy for our God is holy (20:7).
- 20. It is written that anyone who curses his mother or father is to be put to death (20:9),
- 21. If one commits adultery with another man's wife he is to be put to death (20:8),
- 22. If a man lays with his father's wife, daughter in law, incest, etc he is to be put to death (20:9-12),
- 23. If a man lays with another man (Homosexuality) they are to be put to death and their blood is upon them (20:12)
- 24. If a man lays with an animal he is to be put to death (20:15) and the same for a woman who approaches an animal (20:16).
- 25. It is repeated in the Scriptures כג וְלֹא תֵלְכוּ בְּחָקֹת הַגּוֹי 20:23 אֲשֶׁר-אֲנָי מְשַׁלֵּח מִפְּנֵיכֶם כִּי אֶת-כָּל-אֵלֶה עֲשׁוּ וָאָקִץ בָּם: 20:23

'Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them. (NASB) we are not to follow the custom of the nations.

Reading through these commands, are these commands binding upon us today? Christians continue to ask this question about the Torah and the answer is most definitely "YES." Note how each of these commands are given both for the glory of God, and also to define the meaning of living a righteous life before God. Do you believe these laws have passed away in Yeshua the Messiah? It is interesting to study Paul's words to the Galatians, because it appears he is speaking on this very same set of commands. Most people believe Paul was quoting Yeshua's words when he said "love your neighbor as yourself." However, both Yeshua and Paul were quoting from Parashat Kedoshim out of the Torah. Paul quotes from Vayikra / Leviticus 19:18 in Galatians 5:14 to love your neighbor as yourself. In addition to this, Paul may possibly be basing his exhortation to the Galatians out of Parashat Behar in Vayikra / Leviticus 25, "to not do wrong to one another" versus "death and life being in the power of the tongue." In Paul's discussion on the tongue, the biting and devouring one another he contrasts the walking in the Spirit to walking in the flesh. He lists the characteristics of those who walk according to the flesh as opposed to those who walk according to the Spirit. Paul says the deeds of the flesh are: "immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing," and things like these (see Galatians 5:19-21). Notice how Paul appears to be summarizing the commands found in Vayikra / Leviticus in a very concise manner. Whereas, the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) He says those who walk in the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God, and those who walk in the Spirit, against such there is no Law. The most interesting aspect of these Scriptures is that the one who walks according to the Spirit, does not nullify the Torah, but upholds the Torah in his life. (Romans 3:31) Paul speaks of loving our neighbor and doing no wrong to one another and walking in the Spirit. It is apparent that walking in the Spirit is synonymous to submitting our lives to these commands. This is also the meaning

of submitting our lives to Yeshua the Messiah, our abiding in Him.

This week's Torah portion lists prohibitions that are based in the customs of the nations; we are not to practice these things because we are a holy people that worships a Holy God. Solomon says the Sacrifice of fools is offered by those who do not guard their ways. Solomon says (*Ecclesiastes 5:1-7*) it is better to avoid sin than to offer sacrifices; but, if offered, they should be presented with a repentant attitude, and not merely, as fools offer them, for the purpose of complying with the Law. This is consistent with the rabbis according to the *Talmud Bavli Berakhot 23a*.

Talmud Bayli Berakhot 23a

רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן מ"ד (קהלת ד, יז) שמור רגלך כאשר תלך אל בית האלהים שמור עצמך שלא תחטא ואם תחטא הבא קרבן לפני וקרוב לשמוע (דברי חכמים) אמר רבא הוי קרוב לשמוע דברי חכמים שאם חוטאים מביאים קרבן ועושים תשובה מתת הכסילים [זבח] אל תהי ככסילים שחוטאים ומביאים קרבן ואין עושים תשובה כי אינם יודעים לעשות רע אי הכי צדי־ קים נינהו אלא אל תהי ככסילים שחוטאים ומביאים קרבן ואינם יודעים אם על הרעה הם מביאים אמר הקב"ה בין טוב לרע אינן מבחינים והם מביאים קרבן לפני

Rabbi Shmuel Nachmani said that Rabbi Jonathan had said (Ecclesiastes 4:17) Keep your foot when you go to the house of God, keep yourself from sin, if sin comes before the sacrifice, then draw near to hear (the words of the wise ones / Sages) Raba said Hoyi, draw near to hear the words of the wise, if sinners bring a sacrifice and do Teshuvah, a gift of the fools [sacrifice] Do not be as fools that sin and bring a sacrifice and do not perform Teshuvah, for they know not that they do evil as compared to the righteous. They will be as fools that sin and bring sacrifice and they will not know what is good, they come with evil, they come to the Lord not knowing the difference between good and evil.

The idea is that the fool brings a sacrifice by route, just to fulfill the mitz-

vah, and does so without a repentant heart. In a previous Torah portion, we were told to make a distinction between the clean and unclean and we are not to make ourselves detestable by being disobedient because the Lord God has separated us from the unclean thing. This is illustrated in the scriptures that states, Vayikra / Leviticus 20:25 'You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that creeps on the ground, which I have separated for you as unclean. 20:26 'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine. (NASB) All of these commands are given to us to warn us to watch carefully what we do so that we do not defile ourselves and become detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Does believing in Yeshua the Messiah opt us out of the capability of becoming detestable in God's eyes? The Scriptures say in Vayikra / Leviticus 20:26 'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine. (NASB) (see also 1 Peter 1:16) This is what the Lord has done in Yeshua the Messiah, therefore we must be very careful how we live our lives, to watch, and guard ourselves against sin.

The point is, have we given the Lord all He deserves? Everything of any importance in our lives as believers has to boil down to our relationship with our Creator, and yet we have been taught to settle for something lukewarm. Some people have relegated their walk with God to little more than a hobby. Have you done this in your life? The Scriptures tell us that the Lord God is passionately in love with His people. He has revealed Himself to us as Father, Husband, King, and Master and has called each of us to become a child, bride, ambassador and servant. How do you meet His level of commitment or expectation? Is your level of commitment to the Lord done in a way that honors Him and proclaims His glory and truth to the world? Yeshua's words brings this out in a more personal manner, when He speaks of our standing before the judgment seat, as He says in *Matthew 7:21-23*:

Matthew 7:21-23

7:21 'Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter 7:22 'Many will

say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 7:23 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' (NASB)

The Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:19 and 5:20 speaks about these verses from the Gospel of Matthew and directs our attention to those things that cause one to be labeled as "the one who practices lawlessness."

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:19

One who has these three things is of the students of our father Avraham. [One who has] three other things is of the students of Bilam the wicked. [One who has] a good eye, a low spirit, and a humble soul is of the students of our father Avraham. [One who has] an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a broad soul is of the students of Bilam the wicked. What is the difference between the students of our father Avraham and the students of Bilam the wicked? The students of our father Avraham eat in this world and inherit the World to Come, as it says (Proverbs 8:21): "That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and their treasuries I will fill." But the students of Bilam the wicked inherit Geihinam and go down to the pit of destruction, as it says (Psalms 55:24): "But You, God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and deceit will not live out half their days. As for me, I will trust in You." בָּרָהָם שֵׁלְשָׁה דְבַרִים הַלֵּלוּ, מְתַּלְמִידֵיו שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם שָׁלשָׁה דְבַרִים הַלַּלוּ, מְתַּלְמִידֵיו שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אַבִינוּ. וּשָׁלשָׁה דָבַרִים אֲחָרִים, מְתַּלְמִידֵיו שָׁל בִּלְעַם הַרַשַּׁע. עֵיַן טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ נִמוּכָה, וְנֵפָשׁ שִׁפַלָה, מְתַּלְמִידֵיו שֵׁל אַבְרָהָם אַבינוּ. עֵין רַעַה, וְרוּחַ גִבוֹהָה, וְנֵפֵשׁ רְחָבָה, מְתַּלְמִידֵיו שֵׁל בִּלְעַם הַרָשַׁע. מַה בֵּין תַלְמִידֵיו שֵׁל אַבָרָהָם אַבִינוּ לְתַלְמִידֵיו שֵׁל בְּלְעֵם הָרָשַׁע. תַּלְמִידֵיו שָׁל אַבָרַהַם אַבִינוּ, אוֹכְלִין בַּעוֹלַם הַזֶה וְנוֹחֵלִין בַּעוֹלַם הַבַּא, שֶׁנֵאֵמֵר (משלי ח, כא), לְהַנְחִיל אֹהֶבֵי יָשׁ, וְאֹצְרֹתֵיהֵם אֲמַלֵּא. אֲבַל תַּלְמִידֵיו שָׁל בּלעַם הַרַשַּׁע יוֹרָשׁין גיהנַם וְיוֹרְדין לבָאר שַׁחַת, שֵׁנָאָמַר (תה־ לים נה, כד), וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהִים תּוֹרִידִם לְבָאר שַׁחַת, אַנְשִׁי דַמִּים וּמַרְמַה

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:20

Yehudah Ben Teima says: Be strong like the leopard, light like the eagle, quick like the gazelle, and mighty like the lion to perform the will of your Father in Heaven. He would say: The strong-faced go to Gehenna, and the shame-faced go to the Garden of Eden. May it be Your will, Hashem our God, that You build Your city speedily in our days and give us our share in Your Torah. יְהַנְּ שִׁבְּיָבְי, וְגִּבּוֹר בָּאֲרִי לַעֲשׁוֹת רְצוֹן אָבִיךְ שַׁבַּשְׁמִים. וְבַשְׁׁתִ לְצִוֹן אָבִיךְ שָׁבַּשְׁמִים. וְבַשְׁת בְּנִים לְגַן עֵדֶן. יְהִי רָצוֹן הַוֹּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַז פָנִים לְגֵי הָנָם, ובשֶׁת פָנִים לְגַן עֵדֶן. יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְבָנוֹ בְּתוֹרָתֶּךְ: יִי אֱלֹהֵינוֹ שֶׁתְבָנָה עִירְךְ בִּמְהֵרָה בִיְמֵינוֹ וְתֵן חֻלְּבֵנוֹ בְּתוֹרָתֶךְ.

The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot speaks of the righteous as opposed to the wicked. The righteous have three things, "a good eye, a low spirit, and a humble soul." The wicked, on the other hand, have "an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a broad soul." The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Most people focus on the second part of the verse, "to die is gain," and contemplate the joys of heaven, but overlook what it means to live as the Messiah lived (1 John 2:6). The importance of the phrase "to live is Christ" cannot be overstated and this is the point of our Father in heaven giving His Torah, so that we can live in the fullness of what the Lord has for us, in the blessings of this world, in the joy of fellowship with our Father in heaven, and with the expectation of the World to Come. The phrase, "To live is Christ" means that we imitate the example of Yeshua. Everything that Yeshua did and said is what Paul wanted to do and say.

"To live is Christ" means that we speak of Yeshua the Messiah to all peoples, to all the nations, that we pursue knowledge of the Messiah which is to learn more about Him and His ways, studying the Torah, just as Paul said in Philippians 3:10-11, "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead," therefore "To live is Christ" means that we are willing to give up everything to serve Him, even down to the little things in our lives

such as what we eat. When we make the Messiah our focus, our goal, and our chief desire, we will have a mind, heart, body, and soul that is centered upon Him, a love for God our Father in heaven, and a desire to serve the Lord according to His commandments (see *John 10 and 14*). As we run the "race marked out for us," we lay aside the entangling sin and worldly distractions, "fixing our eyes on Yeshua" (Hebrews 12:1-2), and occupying ourselves in the manner we should be occupying ourselves like it says in the Mishnah Pirkei Avot 2:2.

Mishnah Pirkei Avot 2:2

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi said: Excellent is the study of the Torah together with a worldly occupation, For the exertion [expended] in both of them causes sin to be forgotten. And all [study of the] Torah in the absence of a worldly occupation comes to nothing in the end and leads to sin. And all who work for the community, let them work for the [sake of the] name of Heaven, For the merit of the [community's] ancestors sustains them, And their [ancestors'] righteousness will endure forever. And as for you [who work for the community], [God says:] I credit you with a great reward, as if you [yourselves] had [actually] done [everything on your own]. רבן גמליאל בָּנוֹ שֵׁל רַבּי יָהוּדָה הַנַּשִׂיא אוֹמֵר, יַפָּה תַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה עם דֶּרֶךְ אָרֶץ, שָׁיָגיעַת שָׁנִיהֶם מִשַּׁכַּחַת עֲוֹן. וְכַל תּוֹרָה שֵׁאין עמַה מִלַאכָה, סוֹפַה בָּטַלָה וְגוֹרֶרֶת עַוֹן. וְכַל הַעַמלים עם הַצבּוּר, יהִיוּ עַמלים עמַהֶם לְשֵׁם שָׁמַיִם, שָׁזְכוּת אֲבוֹתָם מְסַיְעָתַן וְצִדְקָתָם עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד. וְאַתָּם, מַעַלֵה אַנִי עַלֵיכֶם שַׁכַר הַרְבֶּה כָּאָלוּ עֲשִׁיתֵם:

In the Torah portion for this week that is titled, "Examining our Ways, Conduct, and Life before God," I believe our attitude is a very important aspect of living by faith in Yeshua the Messiah. Though we sin, we are striving to turn from our sins, and to walk in the light as John wrote in 1 John 1, seeking our Father in heaven, in the name of Yeshua the Messiah, by the power of His Holy Spirit for the Glory of God. Praise His Holy Name!