

TORAHSCOPE: Mishpatim (Ordinances)

by Mark Huey posted 12 February, 2010 www.outreachisrael.net

Exodus 21:1-24:18
Jeremiah 46:13-28

"Blood Covenant"

"So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Exodus 24:8).

Mishpatim gives the Torah student a tremendous variety of images to contemplate. For three chapters (Exodus 21-23), Moses records an array of ordinances that allow the people of Israel to, in essence, become "civilized" among the nations of the Earth. After all, one of the Lord's stated goals was to establish Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation:

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

From the following response, you can conclude that Israel sincerely desired to be the holy nation of the Lord. As Moses recounts all of the ordinances, the people answered with one voice the following response:

"Moses alone, however, shall come near to the LORD, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.' Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!' (Exodus 24:2-3).

Here at the end of a very lengthy list of rulings, Israel concludes that they will do all that the Lord has spoken. There does not appear to be any hesitation for them to obey, and so the Lord and Israel make this covenant and solidify it with animal sacrifices. Moses reduces the list of ordinances to writing and wakes up early the next morning to build an altar at the base of Mount Sinai. Interestingly, he builds an altar with twelve large stones that represent the twelve tribes of Israel:

"Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put *it* in basins, and the *other* half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!' So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Exodus 24:4-8).

Moses elicits the aid of some of the Israelites, and burnt offerings and peace offerings are sacrificed to the Lord. He then takes half of the blood and sprinkles it on the altar he had just constructed. Then, Moses takes the written commandments and reads them again to the people. Once again, they respond unanimously, "All that the LORD has spoken we will faithfully do!" (NJPS)

In order to seal the covenant between God and Israel, Moses sprinkles the people with the blood. He utters this statement, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (NIV). This was a very critical moment for Israel as they took on the personal responsibility for keeping the covenant with God and obeying His commandments. They understood the principle that the shedding of blood was required to seal a covenant. Is it possible that they were being shown a foreshadow of blood that would be required in the future in order to be able to keep the covenant and maintain their position as the Lord's

nation of priests? As I pondered this scene, the words “blood of the covenant” kept reminding me of a future event commonly referred to as the Last Supper. There on the night of His betrayal, Yeshua used the same terminology:

“And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many’” (Mark 14:24).

What do you think went through the minds of those who heard those similar words coming from the Son of God? Is it possible that they thought back to this scene from centuries earlier when their forefathers were literally sprinkled with the blood of bulls? At the time of the Last Supper, the thought of Yeshua’s blood being the atonement for sin was not fully understood. As you recall from the accounts, this was a very intense time for the Apostles. When those words were spoken, they did not know the crucifixion was about to take place.

But we, who live today and who have heard the gospel, do not have the luxury of ignorance. It has been understood ever since the Resurrection that the blood of the Messiah was absolutely necessary for atonement for sin. The author of Hebrews reminds us of the critical need for a blood covenant:

“For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore even the first *covenant* was not inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU.’ And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:15-22).

Today, as we contemplate and discuss the ordinances that separate Israel into a holy nation, it is far more critical to ask this profound question. Has the blood of the Messiah been shed for you to make Yeshua’s covenant valid in your life? Without this blood of the covenant and the sprinkling of the Messiah’s blood for your sin, you are without hope. **So turn to Him and cry out for mercy!**

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Mark Huey (B.A., Vanderbilt University in History and Graduate Studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) is the Director of Outreach Israel Ministries (www.outreachisrael.net). He is the author of several books, including: *TorahScope, Volumes I & II*, and *Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot*. He is also co-author of *Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study*.

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