

September 1, 2012

KI TETZE - When You Go Out

When you read this *parasha*, you probably noticed that the laws listed here can be divided into two contrasting categories. There are laws concerning man and HaShem, and the laws concerning how one person treats another. We must be righteous toward HaShem and righteousness toward man. We must pursue right ritual and right ethics.

While we might prefer to treat these two strands of righteousness separately, the Torah speaks of them in one breath. The command is to provide justice for the stranger, the widow, and the orphan - the most vulnerable individuals within Israel. The rationale for this law is both ethical and theological. We are to protect the stranger for we were once strangers in Egypt before HaShem redeemed us. Therefore, the treatment of the stranger reflects the holiness and character of the God of Israel. We remember His redemption by practicing redemption ourselves.

Messiah Yeshua also taught that the two aspects of righteousness belong together. The first and greatest commandment is to love HaShem with all your heart, soul, and mind. The second commandment is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. Each is incomplete without the other. Love of a neighbor is not only ethical behavior, but also an expression of love for God. Love of God cannot be expressed in ritual alone, but requires love of neighbor.

The God we serve is concerned not only with proper ritual; He steps into the midst of our social arrangements to establish an order reflecting His redemption and justice. He demands that we not hoard His great act of redemption for ourselves, but disperse it among the needy. Baruch HaShem.

Focus:

Hebrew reading - Deuteronomy 24:17-18

English Reading - Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Haftarah Reading - Isaiah 54:4-5