

2-18-23 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Mishphatim* (“Judgments”)
Torah Portion: Exodus 21:1 – 24:18
Haftarah: Jeremiah 34:8 – 22, 33:25 - 26
Suggested Acheron K’tuvim: 2 Cor 10:3-5

The Middle East Conflict

Central question of this message: Do you understand the cultural dynamic which is playing itself out in the current conflict?

Today we are in parasha *Mishphatim*, which means “judgments”. It comes from the fifth word (English), or the second word (Hebrew) in the portion, translated as, “judgments”, or “ordinances”.

Ex 21:1-5

21 "Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them. 2 If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. 3 If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone.

לפניהם:	תשים	אשר	המשפטים	ואלה	21:1	
before them.	thou shalt set	which	the judgments	are	Now these	
<u>6440</u>	<u>7760</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>4941</u>	<u>9999</u>	<u>428</u>	
יַעֲבֹד	שָׁנִים	שֵׁשׁ	עֶבְרִי	עֶבֶד	תִּקְנֶה	כִּי ²
he shall serve:	years	six	Hebrew	an servant,	thou buy	If
<u>5647</u>	<u>8141</u>	<u>8337</u>	<u>5680</u>	<u>5650</u>	<u>7069</u>	<u>3588</u>
	חֲנָם:	לְחֻפְשִׁי	יֵצֵא	וּבִשְׁבַעַת		
	for nothing.	free	he shall go out	and in the seventh		
	<u>2600</u>	<u>2670</u>	<u>3318</u>	<u>7637</u>		
בְּעַל אִשָּׁה	אִם־	יֵצֵא	בְּגִפּוֹ	יָבֵא	בְּגִפּוֹ	אִם־ ³
were married,	if	he shall go out	by himself:	he came in	by himself,	If
<u>802</u> <u>1167</u>	<u>518</u>	<u>3318</u>	<u>1610</u>	<u>935</u>	<u>1610</u>	<u>518</u>
		עִמּוֹ:	אִשְׁתּוֹ	וַיֵּצֵאָהּ	הָיָא	
		with him.	his wife	then shall go out	he	
		<u>5973</u>	<u>802</u>	<u>3318</u>	<u>1931</u>	

This portion has so many statutes and ordinances, all of which are worthy of extended teaching. But I am continuing to be focused on the new direction that the L-rd has given me. And that is topics of concern to the Body of believers in this age.

Today I wish to bring some information and clarity to what you see going on in the Middle east today, particularly with the current war between Israel and the militant Islamic organizations which border Israel, being Hamas, and Hezbollah.

First some historical context.

After the destruction of the Second Temple, to the years 132-135 CE, we saw what is known as the Bar Kochba Revolt. He was a great leader, opposing the Roman occupation of Israel, and was doing such a great job that some had believed that he was going to be the Moshiach ben Dovid. But in 135 CE Bar Kochba was killed, and the rebellion died with him.

The Roman Emperor Hadrian then ruled that the Jews must be purged from “Palestine.”¹ Regardless of the illegitimacy of this renaming, it then persisted even to this age. This is the beginning of what the Jewish people call the “diaspora” which means the “dispersion.” Jews in exile are also described as being in the “galut” or “exile.” We are living in the third galut, or third exile of the Jewish people from the land.

In spite of this purging of Jews from the Land, also called by Jews “Haeretz,” there has never been a time during which there have not been Jews living in the Promised Land, a fact which irritated the enemies of Israel.

¹ The land of Israel was to be called “Palestine” because this name – that of the arch-enemy of Israel, the Philistines – would demonstrate the disdain for Rome of anything Jewish, and further to show that there was to be no longer a Jewish homeland. The Philistines had been defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in 630 BCE, and scattered abroad.

In March of 1475, a child named Simon in the northern Italian village of Trent, went missing. The child's body was located in a water body crossing the land of the most prominent Jew, and was reported by those Jews to the authorities. The discovery was on Easter Sunday. Locals blamed the Jews (only three families) for the death, and all Jews were arrested and tried.

During torture, some admitted killing the child and using his blood in their rituals. All 15 members of the Jewish community were convicted of this crime and were executed by burning at the stake.

The Christians in Trent then erected a church to honor Simon of Trent, and put his statue as a memorial in front of their church.



The notoriety of this conviction and execution inspired many Christians to engage in violence and similar accusations against the Jews in their communities, such as Venato, Lobardy, and Tyrol. Thus began the antisemitic practice known as “Blood Libel.”

Now jump forward to the 1800s, and a dramatic rise in antisemitism in Europe.

1819 – Hep riots in Germany, Denmark, Latvia against Jews.

1835 – Czar Nicholas I of Russia imposed severe limitations on what Jews were able to do, and what they could not do.

1844 – Karl Marx wrote, “On the Jewish Question: What is the Worldly Cult of the Jews?”

1853 – “Blood Libels”² throughout Russia.

1864 – More than 500 Jews were slaughtered in Morocco.

1871 – Pope Pius IX said, Jews are “dogs” and are disturbing Christians in all places.

1880s – Russian pogroms begin.³

1881 – Adolf Stoecker, a Lutheran Pastor, calls for the removal of all Jews from Germany.

1882 – a “Blood Libel” in Hungary.

1891 – a “Blood Libel” in Germany, 20,000 Jews expelled from Moscow, and Muslims appeal to the Ottoman Empire to prohibit all these displaced Jews from coming into the Land.

² A false teaching that Jews would murder a Christian child and drink his blood at Passover. In response to this, some in the Ashkenazi community stopped serving wine, and switched to salt water.

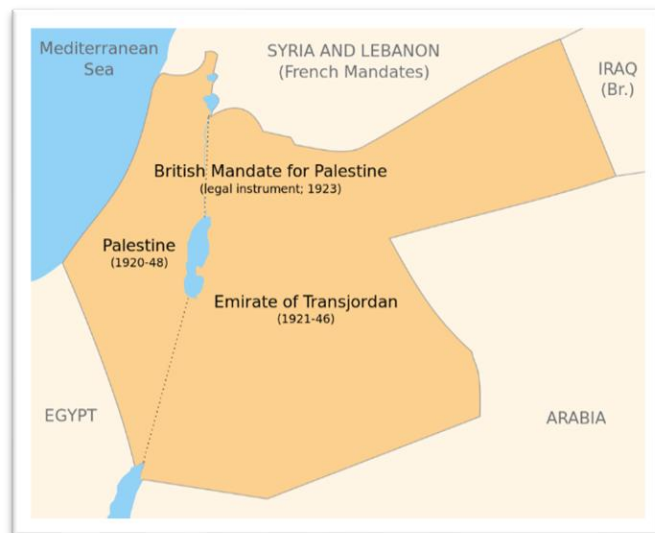
³ The story of one such pogrom is told in the famous production *Fiddler on the Roof*.

And the displaced Jews sought to have peace. They thought they could find it back in the land promised to them by G-d to Abraham. So, they tried to return to the Land.

Prior to the 1880s, it is estimated that the Jewish population in the Land was about 5,000 persons. In 1882, this Jewish population rose to over 24,000. In 1914, this population was 94,000.

By 1918, the Jewish population in the Land had diminished to 60,000, largely because of riots, protests and massacres of Jews in the Land.

Following World War I, the Land fell under British control, and the Jewish population grew again. Britain recognized the Jewish claim to the Land, which was under the “British Mandate.”



This land included what is today Israel as well as Jordan. It was still called Palestine Territory.

During this time, the Ottoman Empire controlled much of the Middle East. In it, there were certain people known as “Dom Groups.” They were in

essence, nomadic Arab “gypsies.” To those around them, these Dom Groups were looked upon as inferior people. In the Muslim world, even though they practiced Islam, they were seen as decidedly “lower class.” They were treated very poorly by other Muslims.⁴

As the Jewish people began coming back into the Land, and building up cities and thriving, many of these Dom people decided to work for the Jews. They discovered that the Jews treated them fairly, gave them proper wages and had courts which rendered justice. As the word spread of this good treatment, many of these gypsy groups came to the Land, and worked for the Jews.

This dynamic wasn't a great problem for the Muslims so long as the population of Jews in the Land was small. But once the Jewish population began exploding, the Muslims then appealed to the Ottoman Empire to stop emigration.

The Muslims knew that if the Jewish people returned in large numbers to the Land, they would lose control. The Qoran, in Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:21) explicitly encourages the Children of Israel to enter the Holy Land:

⁴ This practice persists among Muslims today, and even in other cultures, such as the Chinese.

“O my people! Enter the Holy Land which God has decreed for you, and turn back on your heels otherwise you will be overturned as losers.”

The traditional Muslim commentators from the eighth and ninth centuries onwards uniformly interpret this passage to mean that Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) has been given by God to the Jewish people as a perpetual covenant.

So, the Muslims encouraged these Dom groups to cause riots and cause discontent with the Jews. That succeeded, and many Jews in the Land were murdered.

Why did the Muslims see a difficulty with this great influx of Jews?

First, they know that the Al Aksa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock are built upon the Jewish “Temple Mount.” And in the mind of the Muslim, “The god whose temple is built on top, is supreme.” The fact that the Jewish Temple is not on top of that Jewish holy place, this proves to them that Allah is superior to G-d. So, if a lot of Jews are moving there, that puts their holy places on the Temple Mount at risk.

Secondly, they believe that Mohammed ascended to heaven from Jerusalem, and particularly from the place occupied by the Dome of the Rock.⁵

So, the atmosphere was that under Britain, the Land was dominated by a “Christian nation” who declared that Jews had the right to live in the Land. So, there is an opposition to Britain by the Arab Moslems in the Land. There were always skirmishes.

In 1941, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem appeals to Hitler, asking him to declare that Jews living in Palestine to be illegal. He also asked the same of Mussolini in Italy. So, you see that if the Axis powers had prevailed in WWII, we would have had a far different history for Jews in the Land. The “final solution” to the “Jewish problem” would have spread as far as the third Reich.

After the war, in 1948 the nation Israel was created *as a separate nation*. It had not been a separate, self-governing nation since the Hasmonean dynasty conquered Israel in 140 BCE.

This fact is important. Because when you see people holding up signs that say “Free Palestine” you need to know that the land they identify as

⁵ There is no written historical record, either in the Quran or in the other literature, that Mohammed ever came to Jerusalem.

“Palestine” *has never been* at any time in history a separate nation. It has always been a territorial part of another controlling empire of one ruler or another. Often, the “Free Palestine” movement is depicted with an upraised fist, which speaks of the intent of this movement to use violence as one of the main tools to achieve their goals.



With this background, we can address the current war in Gaza. Who are the Gazan people of today?

The various Dom groups which make up part of the population in Gaza.

Then there are Arab Muslims who see themselves as the top of the societal ladder. Within that subset, there are radical Muslim factions within them such as Hamas, which took power in Gaza in 2006-2007.

So, in Gaza there are two large categories of people. Arab Muslims (including Hamas), and the lesser Dom groups.

You saw that Israel urged the people to clear out of cities in Gaza when they were going in to fight the terrorists. Why did the people generally

not clear out? They believed that if they leave their homes and Israel comes in and conquers the land, then Israel won't give the land back again.

So far, there is no record I can find of any Arab nation who has asked either the USA or Israel, whether the people will be allowed to return at the end of the war. This might be intentional, and used to keep the idea in the heads of the people of Gaza.



The truth on the battlefield is that Israel drops leaflets in Khan Younis to flee, and failing that, they are putting their lives in danger.

But most of the people did not comply. That is because Hamas told them if they did try to evacuate, they would be shot by Hamas. The world calls this a “human shield” and this has been a prominent feature of Hamas’ warfare since the beginning. It has become a joke in the world. When civilians die, due to the “human shield” of Hamas, the propaganda arm of

Hamas gins-up a story of Israeli atrocities, and without one bit of hesitation the world press echoes that story.



So, it is in this way that the Arab Muslims use their “master race” position to their double-benefit. First, they are able to exercise strict control over the “lower-class” Dom people in Gaza, and secondly, they find others to absorb the Israeli bullets (and even their own bullets) for a great propaganda victory.

Israel has crafted its media, as well as its leaflets, to be very specific. They generally say, Israel is not coming to fight against Gazans, but coming to fight against Hamas.

Here is the exact wording of one of the leaflets dropped at the beginning of hostilities.

To the people of the Gaza Strip: The terrorists and smugglers are well aware that their terrorist acts of digging tunnels to smuggle military ammunition is a target for the Israeli

Defense Forces, but they keep working and taking cover near your residences. Do not stand still. You are being used by terrorists who will not be by your side when you get hurt. Take responsibility for your future!

These messages recognize the two-tiered societal stratification in Gaza, and are hoping that the Dom people of Gaza will see that they don't wish to be part of this war, and will defy the Arab Muslim Hamas faction.

Now, let's expand our focus a bit and see how the USA fits into this scenario.

It is well known in the Muslim world that the British domination of Palestine was not a Muslim-friendly environment. Britain, being a "Christian nation" then exemplified an oppression that carried with it the stamp of Christianity.

And so, since the US is one of Israel's most powerful allies, the US now carries the banner of "Christianity" into this conflict as well. One of the largest population groups in Israel comes directly from the US. So, in the Arab mind, the US and Israel are linked, with the US being the "big brother" who often assists and protects Israel. And so it was in Iran, arguably the radical theological center of the Muslim world today, that the

idea of Israel being the “little Satan” and the US being “big Satan” took hold.



As Israel has continued to take the battle to the Hamas fighters, there is a great revival ongoing. There is a report from a soldier that in years past, maybe only five

persons in his company-sized unit who were actually professing faith in G-d, and praying regularly.

Between the 7th of October last year,



and 21 days later, when Israel went into Gaza, that ratio has reversed.



Now, he reports, maybe only 5 persons in his unit are not yet professing believers in G-d, and all are praying. Some are even putting tefillin onto their helmets, to wear them even into battle.

I am told that the Israeli airline El Al is telling the Israeli government that they are having difficulty finding enough flights to bring the Jews into Israel from America, who are coming to fight.

I hear of Israeli restaurants which did not adhere to kosher, are koshering all their kitchens and tables, and are now serving kosher food.

What does this tell us about this conflict? Yes, it is horrific, especially for those of the Dom people who have been duped into thinking that Hamas would in some way protect them.

The theological statement uttered many times every day from minarets of mosques around the world that “Alla hu akhbar!”⁶ is proving to be false. Allah is losing this war, and losing it badly. The entire Arab world can see this, and the message our G-d is giving them is loud and clear.

The promised retaliation by Iran that should Israel invade Gaza, it would attack... has proved to be hollow. There are some exchanges of fire in the north with Hezbollah, but that is thus far merely a distraction.



Thousands of Hamas operatives in Gaza have been killed or have surrendered. The leaders of Hamas are not directing operations any longer, but are running from hiding place to hiding

place every day. Those who surrender are giving up intelligence which allows the IDF to keep closing-in on the hostages, and emptying out the tunnel complexes under apartment buildings, hospitals, and even mosques.

⁶ Allah he is greater!

The Dom people in Gaza are realizing that the “humanitarian aid” is being confiscated by Hamas, and used to advance their war effort. These Dom people are beginning to defy Hamas threats, and are even turning-in the locations of the fighters in their homes.

Egypt won't allow any of the Gazans into Egypt, and I believe that is for two reasons. First, they also see the Dom people as lower class people, and they already have enough poor to deal with. Egypt is the poorest Arab nation, and employment normally runs around 38%. Secondly, Egypt doesn't wish any Hamas people to come into the country because they don't want another war with Israel. The last one they had turned out poorly.

And the Houthis have virtually stopped all commercial shipping through the Suez canal, which is a major income source for Egypt. Egypt, in my opinion, doesn't wish to do anything that might impede Israel and the US from destroying the radical Arab muslims, and restoring normal commerce to the region.

But there is an ongoing revival in Israel of increasing faith in G-d, and a return to Him.

There is certainly war going on in Israel today. But more importantly, there is a war across the globe today between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. To the degree that we are in the “army of the L-rd” we are part of the forces of light.

The IDF soldiers are placing their lives on the line daily to free their land from the scourge of evil. Although we do not hear bullets snapping past our ears today in our nation, we nonetheless are also in a battle. We fight for the success of G-d’s kingdom as well.

Let us put on the full armor of G-d, and step out of our doors into the battlefield of our community, and fight every day for holiness and repentance.

2 Cor 10:3-5

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

Let us pick up the divine weapons with which we will also destroy the hiding places of evil in our communities.