

Shof'tim (Judges)

Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

Isaiah 51:12-52:13

Matthew 5:38-42; 18:15-20

Acts 3:13-26; 7:35-53

Giving Yah Our Best

The deeper I read into the book of Deuteronomy I find such richness in its Truths. Each week I am challenged to single out only one or two points to reflect on. It is important to me to help set the stage for your own focus in seeking Father within these words. Seeking Him first and honoring Him with our best is the focus of this weekly commentary.

This week we are told to seek righteousness, by making sure Torah is being written upon our hearts not simply a quick read. With passion we are to be like Moses in upholding Torah. We read about preparing ourselves to live in cities and houses we did not build. There is a message revealed within this Torah portion that is inherent to understanding so as to comprehend the rest of its meaning.

In Deuteronomy 17:1 we are told not to bring a sacrifice with a defect or anything wrong with it. This is to not only be a starting point for this Torah portion, but a necessary instruction to understand more of our relationship with our Father.

You might be saying to yourself, "We don't have sacrifices to bring today." Rethink this thought and consider these actions as sacrifices for today. Our time spent in prayer, especially in the busyness of today's society. Adding a 9:00am and 3:00pm alarm on your phone as a reminder to recite the Shema requires a commitment. What about the dedication to honor and observe Shabbat? Include the time set aside for Bible study. Even consider preparation and observance of Father's Appointed Times. Along with preparation, what about setting aside ten percent of our income, as well as the additional funds for the Feasts, the widow, orphan and restoration of the Land and people of Israel? All of these actions require a sacrificial commitment of time, thought and energy to carry out for the glory of our King! Are we setting aside the best of our "flock" that is without spot or blemish or just whatever feels good to us?

There are many events and people that stand out in my childhood. Probably the most influential was my grandmother. She taught me many things about God through her actions. I recall one specific act that stood out to me regarding her giving unto the Father. Granny was not a rich woman and yet she never went without. Her life of faith impacted many people. This memory is especially important to me and reflected my thoughts in this commentary regarding giving your best.

At probably the age of eight or nine I would go with granny to the bank so she could deposit her social security check. I especially enjoyed the trip because the teller had a sucker for me! Granny would hand the check to the teller to be deposited and receive some cash back. The cash back was her preset tithe. Sure, this is normal procedure for many people. The point that stuck out to me was that Granny always asked for the withdrawal to be in new bills. The following Sunday when the offering plate was passed through the pews granny would sometimes give me the envelope with those crisp new bills to put in the plate. She did not have to explain to me her reasoning. I understood the lesson lived before my eyes. Granny wanted new bills; she saw it as a way of giving her best. That story may sound a bit silly to some, but even as I am writing, the memory brings tears to my eyes. The lesson I learned from that small action as a young child was to bring your best to the King in respect and reverence.

May I ask, “How are we doing today at bringing our best?” Are we giving reverence to Father by showing up on time to Shabbat gatherings? Knowing the Torah portion will be read during service, do we neglect reading it ahead of time? How about our offerings? Is it the first tenth of our income or what is left over after the bills are paid and refrigerator is full? Have you even thought about the offering set apart for the Feasts?

Let us take something from this Torah portion and allow it to speak into our lives and lifestyle. May we begin giving the King of kings our best! For in the end we may receive just what we have given; the defective least of our flock. Remember, we reap what we sow!

Father, may we humbly come before You, to reflect on the heart of our giving. May we, in love and faith, give You our best, remembering first that ALL that we have is because of You!