

## Righteousness Beyond Our Faith Leaders

*5Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure [am segulah] (special treasure to Me, NKJV) from among all people, for all the earth is Mine. 6So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim (priests) and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you are to speak to Bnei-Yisrael.” (Ex. 19:5-6, TLV) ... “9But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, ...” (1 Peter 2:9). “10But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, into his marvellous light”*

When *Bnei-Yisrael* in *Parashah Yitro* (the Hebrew name of Moses’ father in-law) were offered the opportunity to become a “*peculiar/special treasure, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (Ex. 19:5), the response by all of Israel was “*Everything Yah Adonai has spoken we will do (kol asher diber Yehovah naase)*” (Ex. 19:8). The generations of our people that left Egypt were willing to obey their Master, without reservation. This is always true at a wedding – the new bride is ready to honor, cherish, love and obey her husband-to-be! This *commitment* is one that must also still be in *KS* today. Will we implicitly obey whatsoever He asks us to do?

There are additional principles to note in *Exodus 19*: (1) The people had to *take a bath and be sanctified/ consecrated for three days*; (2) *To not draw near their wives*; (3) The setting of *boundaries*; (4) The *loud sounding of the shofar*; (5) *Moses speaking and Yah answering with a thunderous sound*; (6) *Moses/Aaron going up to the mountain*. Each principle is indicative of things that are relevant when we are to meet with *Yah*.

*Yeshua* tells us: “...unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and Torah scholars, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven!” (Matt. 5:20) What does this mean? Can it really mean the way it sounds? You see the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Torah were scrupulous in their observance of the commandments, and they were extremely zealous for the Word. They hungered and thirsted for righteousness. They were far more careful in their attention to the details of the *letter of the Word* than the disciples could ever be. How then, can the Master ask the disciples (and us) to reach a level of righteousness that is higher than theirs (e.g., Paul, Peter, John)? When the disciples heard this, their hearts must have sunk. Hard words, don’t you think?

To the point, *Yeshua’s* rigor draws out the *original intention* of the *Ten Commandments*. One of the things the people of His day (and today) believed was *the Messiah will explain all difficult things in Yah’s Word*. And in fact, *Yeshua did*. And He did more than just build *arbitrary fences* of additional legislation. He calls His disciples to do everything at the *very heart of the matter*. The standards *Yeshua* raises are at the core values of *Yah Adonai* Himself. He gives specific examples by going beyond the *prohibition of murder* with a *prohibition against anger, slander and insult*. He goes beyond the *prohibition against adultery* with a prohibition against *lust*. He raises the standard on the *sanctity of marriage* with a *prohibition of divorce for the sake of remarriage*. He raises the standard of the prohibition of taking *Yah’s* name in vain by refraining from oaths.

Original Commandment	<i>Yeshua’s (Matthew 5) Standard</i>
“Do not murder.” (Exodus 20:13). However, slave masters could severely beat their servants with or without anger (Exodus 21:21).	“22But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca’ shall be subject to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be subject to fiery Gehenna (Hell)”
“Do not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14). The Torah required two or three witnesses to convict a woman of adultery, or a trial by bitter water (Nu. 5:11-31).	“28But I tell you that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
“33‘Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall carry out your oaths to Adonai’” (Matt. 5:33; Deut. 23:23).	“34But I tell you, do not swear at all – not by heaven, for it is the throne of God... 37But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’ – anything more than this is from the evil one.”

<p><i>“<sup>19</sup>If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done, the same is to be done to him: <sup>20</sup>fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Just as he has injured someone, so it should it be done to him” (Lev. 24:19-20).</i></p>	<p><i>“<sup>39</sup>But I tell you, do not resist an evildoer. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him also the other. <sup>40</sup>And the one wanting to sue you and to take your shirt, let him also have your coat.”</i></p>
<p><i>“<sup>43</sup>You have heard that our fathers were told, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy” (Matt. 5:43; Lev. 19:18)</i></p>	<p><i>“<sup>44</sup>But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”</i></p>

Each of these *Yeshua* utterings built fences around the original commandments by the *raising of the standard of righteous living to the heart level (a deeper spiritual level)*. His words expose the internal deviancy of the heart of man. He cuts past external appearances and erects a new standard around each of the Ten Words that are *deep in the heart*. These are very high standards – higher standards of righteousness than that of the religious leaders of His time. Thus, by following *His commands, our righteousness exceeds that* of the leaders.

### Epilogue

**Loving *Yeshua* Means Keeping His Commandments:** *Yeshua* said, “If ye love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). He gave three promises to everyone who will do this: “<sup>21</sup>He that has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him” (John 14:21). Anyone who is loved by the Father through His Son *Yeshua*, and who intimately knows *The Messiah* will have a special ability to give wise and insightful testimony and counsel to others. Wisdom, and all the things that happen, are related to the goal of *knowing Him and being conformed to His image* (See Ro. 8:28-29).

**Keeping His Commandments Means Loving Others:** Since “*God has so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son...*” (John 3:16), surely we must also love one another. Loving those who love us back is easy – loving the world with all of its problems is hard. When we take inventory of the Ten Commandments spoken by *Yehovah* in Exodus 20, we realize how many of those have to do with others – relating to the world around us: “<sup>20</sup>If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from Him: that the one who loves God should also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21). Those who receive our words must be convinced that we are speaking out of a heart of genuine love. They will be able to discern this only if we love *Yah Adonai* with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength. It is on the basis of loving *Yah* that we do things for others, because: “*Amen, I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*” (Matt. 25:40).

**Keeping His Commandments Produces Light in Our Eyes:** The whole purpose of testifying or giving godly counsel is providing light for others to follow. Without the light of *Yah’s* truth, people stumble in the darkness (Prov. 4:18-19). We are to be *the light of the world* (Matt. 5:14). *Yeshua* explained precisely how to be that light in Matt. 6:22: “<sup>22</sup>The eye is the lamp of the body...” Thus, we are to *let the light of our eyes so shine before men that they will see the good works that we do for them and glorify our Father Who is in Heaven* (Matt. 5:16). Having the Light of Messiah in our eyes is also a vital means of discerning the motives of those who come and ask questions. Those who want the truth will come to the light, while those who are evil will stay away from the light lest their deeds be reproved (John 3:20-21). Many would be witnesses of the Gospel spend countless hours of useless time trying to help those who do not really want to be free from their evil deeds. On the other hand, those who are eager for lasting results will be open to one who radiates love for *Yah* and the light of truth. The relationship between the commandments and the light in our eyes is given in Psalm 19:8: “*The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes*” (NKJV). When we witness to someone with light in our eyes, it causes their heart to rejoice since “*The light of the eyes rejoices the heart*” (Prov. 15:30, NKJV).

The words of *Yeshua* in Matthew 5-7 are challenging and because we focus mostly on the *love aspects of a believer’s life* and we tend to not think about commandments often. Truly our righteousness must excel that of the religious leaders of our time as well. It is our job, as a disciple, to emulate our teacher and to make more disciples. I trust that we will allow *Yeshua’s* commandments (*mitzvot*) to go deep in our heart as the Revival begins resulting in righteous doers (*tzadikim*) and not just hearers of His Word. *Shabbat Shalom!*