

Shoftim “Judges”

Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 16:18 - 21:9

Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 51:12 - 52:12

Study Notes

The Institutions of the Holy Community

1. Justice, levites, kings, prophets, and the military.

Justice

1. The Hebrew word of justice can also be translated “righteousness”. The same is equally true for the Greek word in the Brit Hadasha. This implies that “to be just” is also “to be righteous.”
2. Importance
 - 2.1. 16:20 is many times translated “Justice, justice, follow after it.” However, the Hebrew is much stronger. It carries the sense of actively pursuing it as a persecutor seeks out his victim.
3. Principles
 - 3.1. The judges were to act in justice the same way God does.
 - 3.2. Justice was not to be perverted (turned, twisted, or bended). 16:19
 - 3.3. The judge must be impartial. “You shall not respect someone’s presence.” 16:19
 - 3.4. Do not accept a bribe.
 - 3.5. Thorough investigation is required if justice is to be found.
 - 3.6. You must have reliable witnesses. 17:6.
 - 3.6.1. To drive this home, the chief witness is the first to begin the administration of the death penalty!

Levites

1. Responsibilities
 - 1.1. Help function in the judicial process, constituting a portion of the local and national religious courts. 17:9
 - 1.2. Primary religious teachers. 17:10-13

Kings - 17:14-20

1. Was having a king a command or a concession? Are these teachings requirements or regulations?
 - 1.1. 1 Samuel 8:5-8.

2. Limitations and Regulations

- 2.1. He must be God-appointed. 17:15
- 2.2. He must be an Israelite.
- 2.3. His soldiers, women, and money were to be limited in size. 1 Kings 10:4.
- 2.4. He must be a Bible student.

Theocracy

1. It is believed God never wanted them to have a king. They already had a king; it was the Lord Himself!
2. Israel's king was intended to be more than merely human. That is why the Messiah was to come.
 - 2.1. Zechariah 12-14 speaks of a king who will come to earth and fight Israel's battles.
 - 2.2. Isaiah 11 speaks of a king who will rule in absolute wisdom and gentleness.
 - 2.3. Isaiah 9 speaks of King Messiah, who although born human, possesses all the characteristics of the Divine.

Prophets

1. God's words were to be explained by qualified teachers: Levites, elders, and prophets.
 - 1.1. 18:9-14 warns about seeking information from other "spiritualists".
 - 1.2. 18:15 describes a special prophet who would be "like Moses".
2. At least in the late Second Temple period, this was understood as a messianic passage.
 - 2.1. "John the Immerser" was questioned if he was "that prophet" in John 1:25.
 - 2.2. One of the names the early messianic community had for Yeshua was "the Second Moshe."

Military - Chapter 20

1. The kohanim are to speak God's Word to them to encourage them.
2. Exemptions from service were:
 - 2.1. Those who just built a new house.
 - 2.2. Those who just planted a new vineyard.
 - 2.3. Those who are newly engaged.
 - 2.4. Those who are too fearful.
3. For cities that were not part of the inheritance peace was to be offered first. In cities of the inheritance all were to be killed...."So that they will not teach you to act according to all their abomination that they performed for their gods...." 20:17-18

Summary

1. Only Messiah will: judge perfectly (Is. 11), teach and make atonement for sin (Is. 53), be Israel's great High Priest (Heb. 8-10), govern Israel as God intended (Is. 9), and fight Israel's battles and deliver them from their enemies forever (Zech. 12-14).
2. Only one man has shared all of the characteristics which the Messiah is supposed to possess, Yeshua of Nazareth.
3. Since Israel was to be ruled only by God Himself, what, therefore are we left to conclude about the Messiah? Could he had been mere human and done all that Scripture says perfectly?