

God's Ways in Judgment

Key Scripture:

*"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."
Ephesians 5:15-17*

Portion for the Journey:

"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD." Jeremiah 8:7

God would not have us ignorant of Him and His ways in judgment. Most Christians have a very negative view of judgment, as if it is a dark, ominous cloud, hanging on the horizon. God's Word has much to say about His ways in judgment and it is important, if we want to truly know His ways to study and meditate upon His Word regarding judgment. Jeremiah 9:24 explains it in one verse: *"...I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."*

It is out of lovingkindness that God brings judgment, with the purpose to establish righteousness and reconciliation with Himself. To continue in sin only brings death and destruction while God's heart is for healing and restoration. "...for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:9b) His Word equates it with vindication for His people. If we desire to truly know and trust God, we must examine His judgements and then with confidence declare: "...The judgements of the Lord are true, they are righteous altogether, they are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the drippings of honeycomb; in keeping them is great reward." Ps. 19:9

Digging Deeper in the Word

Definitions: The most commonly used Hebrew word for judgement is "mishpat" (mish-pawt) Strong's #4941. This word is from Strong's #8199 a primitive root; properly, a verdict (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree (human or [participant's] divine law, individual or collective), including the act, the place, the suit, the crime, and the penalty; abstractly, justice, including a participant's right or privilege (statutory or customary), or even a style. It can mean any of the following: to judge, i.e. pronounce sentence (for or against); by implication, to vindicate or punish; by extension, to govern; passively, to litigate (literally or figuratively): KJV-- + avenge, X that condemn, contend, defend, execute (judgment), (be a) judge (-ment), X needs, plead, reason, rule.

Vine's notes that in many contexts this root has a judicial sense. Shapat refers to the activity of a third party who sits over two parties at odds with one another. This third party hears their cases against one another and decides where the right is and what to do about it (he functions as both judge and jury). So Sarai said to Abram: "My wrong [outrage done me] be upon thee [in your lap]: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee" <Gen. 16:5>-- the first occurrence of the word. Sarai had given Hagar to Abram in her stead. This act was in keeping with ancient Nuzu law, which Abram apparently knew and followed. The legal

rights to the child would be Sarai's. This would mean that Hagar "did all the work" and received none of the privileges. Consequently, she made things miserable for Sarai. As the tribal and family head Abram's responsibility was to keep things in order. This he did not do. Thus, Sarai declares that she is innocent of wrongdoing; she has done nothing to earn Hagar's mistreatment, and Abram is at fault in not getting the household in order. Her appeal is: since Abram has not done his duty (normally he would be the judge of tribal matters), "the Lord decide" between us, that is, in a judicial sense, as to who is in the right. Abram granted the legitimacy of her case and handed Hagar over to her to be brought into line <Gen. 16:6>.

Shapat also speaks of the accomplishing of a sentence. Both this concept and those of hearing the case and rendering a decision are seen in <Gen. 18:25>, where Abraham speaks of "the Judge [literally, "One who judges"] of all the earth." In <1 Sam. 3:13> the emphasis is solely on "delivering" the sentence: "For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth...."

In other cases, "judging" really means delivering from injustice or oppression. David says to Saul: "The Lord therefore be judge and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand" <1 Sam. 24:15>. This sense (in addition to the judicial sense), "to deliver," is to be understood when one speaks of the judges of Israel <Judg. 2:16>: "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that [plundered] them."

Shapat can be used not only of an act of deliverance, but of a process whereby order and law are maintained within a group. This idea also is included in the concept of the judges of Israel: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time" <Judg. 4:4>. This activity was judicial and constituted a kind of ruling over Israel. Certainly, ruling is in mind in <Num. 25:5>: "And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, 'Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-Peor.'" 1 Sam. 8:1.

The military deliverer was the head over a volunteer army summoned when danger threatened (militia). In the time of Samuel this procedure proved inadequate for Israel. They wanted a leader who would organize and lead a standing army. They asked Samuel, therefore, for a king such as the other nations had, one who was apt and trained in warfare, and whose successor (son) would be carefully trained, too. There would be more continuity in leadership as a result. Included in this idea of a king who would "judge" them like the other nations was the idea of a ruler; in order to sustain a permanent army and its training, the people had to be organized for taxation and conscription. This is what is in view in <1 Sam. 8:6-18> as Samuel explains.

B. Nouns: mishpat ^4941^, "judgment; rights." This noun, which appears around 420 times, also appears in Ugaritic. This word has two main senses; the first deals with the act of sitting as a judge, hearing a case, and rendering a proper verdict. <Eccl. 12:14> is one such occurrence: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Mishpat can also refer to the "rights" belonging to someone <Exod. 23:6>. This second sense carries several nuances: the sphere in which things are in proper relationship to one's claims <Gen. 18:19>-- the first occurrence; a judicial verdict <Deut. 17:9>; the statement of the case for the accused <Num. 27:5>; and an established ordinance <Exod. 21:1>.

The noun shepatim refers to "acts of judgment." One of the 16 occurrences is in <Num. 33:4>: "For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also, the Lord executed judgments."

The New Testament word for judgment, “krisis” (Strong’s #2920) gives us our word, “crisis.” “Krisis” means, ‘decision, judgment.’ Crisis is not a dead end; but a crossroad, one road leading to life, the other to death. God, out of love and compassion for His created beings, causes them to face their sin through judgment and presents an opportunity for deliverance. (1 Corinthians 11:32) There is the great day of judgment before God’s throne when we can no longer make a choice or decision to change our ways.

God intervenes through crisis (judgment). As intercessors we are to exercise spiritual discernment, and see judgment from God’s perspective. We must hear and respond to judgment as a rally cry for intercessors to take their place in prayer FOR the accused. Intercessors are called to intervene, to stand in the gap, to make up the breach sin has made:

*to acknowledge the sin that has brought the judgment. (Lev. 26:40-43; Ps. 85:2-3) There is a hardness of heart that causes us not to see our sin. God says, “I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.” (Jer. 8:6) “The foolishness of man subverts his way (ruins his affairs); then his heart is resentful and frets against the Lord.” Prov. 19:3 Amplified

Truths regarding God’s Judgment:

1. **He does not want to bring judgment, instead He desires all would repent.** *“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die . . .?”* (Ezekiel 33:11) I believe at this point God is saying, “Where is the intercessor?” see Isaiah 59:14-16

2. **As a God of holiness, righteousness and justice, He cannot ignore sin.** He must bring judgment on sin. (Romans 6:23) As a God of Love and Mercy, He desires to intervene to stop the death process and offers life. He is “long suffering toward you, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

3. **God warns before He judges.** In the Old Testament, God spoke through prophets to warn Israel and the nations of their need to turn to Him in repentance and the consequences if they refused to turn to Him. The prophet was responsible to speak the words God gave Him, even if they were not received. Amos 3:7; 2 Chron. 36:15-16; Jer. 6:10; Ezek. 33:6; 2 Chron. 24:18-21; 33:10; 2 Ki. 17:13; Jer. 25:4-5; Jer. 35:15; 44:4-5; Jonah

4. **In God’s plan, judgement is meant to be redemptive.** Without judgement, God’s plans of creation cannot be completed. Rev. 21:3 tells us that after judgement of the tabernacle of God will dwell with men permanently. John 9:39-41

5. **Judgement puts an end to the pathway of sin.** Judgement destroys every opposing force. Egypt’s power over Israel was ended when they were drowned in the Red Sea. Matt. 12:20; John 9:39

6. **Judgement glorifies God.** It reveals God’s character and holiness. (Ex. God judged Moses when he struck the rock. He did not allow him to enter the Promised Land. If God had not judged Moses the people would not have known whether God lost his temper or Moses, through this judgement God was glorified. Ps. 9:16 “Jehovah hath made Himself known, he hath executed judgement.” We glorify God when we declare His sovereign RIGHT to judge.

7. **Judgement brings light and exposes darkness and sin.** Judgement exposes all hidden things, manifests the true character and causes us to know ourselves. We are told that when God judges the world, all hidden things will be made manifest. All deception is removed and we can see what kind of character a person or nation has. 1 Cor. 4:3,5

8. **Judgement brings forth righteousness.** Isa. 26:9 “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.” Isa. 1:25,27

9. **God’s judgment is always marked by a beginning and an end.** His judgment is for a set time only, but the fruits are eternal. When Israel was taken into captivity God foretold the end of the captivity would be in seventy years. Jer. 25:12; Jer. 25:10-11

America: A people under judgment

As many Americans have turned away from God and our foundation as a Christian nation, we have turned away from God’s ways. Current national philosophy and tenets have replaced God’s Law as the law of our land, and because of this, America is a nation under judgment. Proverbs 30:2-3 Amplified)

There are national sins which weigh heavy on this country. A national sin results when man’s laws violate God’s Law, His Word and Commandments. Examples of national sins are legality of homosexuality, recognition of homosexual marriage and abortion. The weight of national sin falls on nations as well as on individuals engaging in those sins.

National sins need national repentance. Intercessors must identify with the sin and say, “WE, as a people, as a nation, have sinned.” As citizens of the nation, we are included in responsibility before God for the sins of our country (Ezra, Neh., Dan. 9). As citizens of the nation, we can also pray and intercede for our nation, city or state.

As we follow Scriptural patterns of repentance, (Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel 9) grace will be released: blind eyes will see their sin, deaf ears hear the pronouncement, “guilty,” on their sins and come under the grace of conviction. There is a grace to release a spirit of repentance and supplication in the sinner, so that he may turn, be converted and move into restoration.

It is as individuals that we respond and walk in repentance. As individual lives are changed, the Church is being changed and a nation is affected for righteousness.

Our Place as Intercessors:

As Christians, we are called to confess not only our own personal sins but to stand in the gap for the corporate, national sins of our nation. A common misconception keeps people from receiving the charge of the intercessor to confess corporate sin. Yet Scripture clearly states concerning Daniel, the intercessor, “And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel...” (Daniel 9:20; Ezra 9:6; Nehemiah 9:2) As intercessors, we:

1) to stand before God for the land that He not destroy it. “And I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap BEFORE ME for the land, that I should not destroy it . . .” Ezekiel 22:30 Amplified, Psalm 106:23,30

2) to call out to God for mercy, for a release of grace for repentance and salvation. It is at this point, that the intercessor can bring life into a death situation. Ask for God's compassion and patience to mark our prayers for the lost, with the same fervency we would pray for a loved one. (2 Peter 3:9) Intercessors have the privilege of praying Jesus' prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34

As intercessors we are called to humble our souls through fasting and allow our prayers to pierce our own hearts, pray and seek God's face, to confess sin and move in repentance so that God can move in forgiveness of sin, and heal our land. (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 35:13) 2 Chronicles 7:14 is so familiar we think we've done it, but we haven't until we are living and walking in repentance.

The Lord is looking for intercessors who will stand in the gap between God and man as Moses did (Exodus 32:11; Psalm 106:23; Ezekiel 22:30). He also promises that He will provide abundant protection and provision in times of judgment to those who trust in Him. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jeremiah 17:7,8

PRAYER APPLICATION FOR EFFECTIVE INTERCESSION

Before prayer, refresh yourself in ministry to the Lord, worship Him for who He is, for His solutions to our problems. Meditate on some of the Scriptures set forth for prayer insight and direction. Sharing the quickened Word with those you pray with will build faith as well as bring the many facets of prayer into sharp focus. Pray out what God has quickened to you; pray out the prayers of others, going beyond surface prayers for a finished work.

Pray for hearts to be turned to God. Pray that He will use this to humble men and cause them to see their need and dependence upon Him. Stand in the gap on behalf of the nation that we will turn from our pride and self-sufficiency to once again exalt Him as our Lord and God in whom we trust. Ask God for His perspective and heart of compassion as we pray for those who are suffering and for what could follow.

It is our privilege to be intercessors "at such a time as this." "For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; ... and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? (KJV) Esther 4:14